

Opening  
Day  
in the  
House of God

65 Leaders

Cut the Ribbon

to the

Church of Tomorrow



THE **FUTURE**  
**CHURCH**  
*Lions in the Pews*



## INTRODUCTION

by Jim Rutz

If you are like most Christians today, you have never seen the church.

When you do see it, it is going to take your breath away! All around the world, you will soon witness an electric phenomenon: millions of conventional, ineffectual laymen turning into roaring lions who know the power of God and do things every day they never dreamed of in a lifetime before.

So far, you have only seen shadows – mere glimpses of the family of God working together as a potent, loving force, drawing on the strengths and talents of everyone.

Soon you will see the reality: men and women taking their true place as full participants in gatherings of the church. Not spectators. Not audience members. Not lower-caste believers doomed to sit and listen in passive anonymity for the rest of their lives.

Instead, Christians will become what the Lord called them to be: confident, fully-functioning lions of God, gifted with priceless spiritual talents – each person accustomed to contributing to the pure worship, true sharing, and free ministry that you will find in the fully-open church of the future.

*Opening Day in the House of God* will prepare you for the excitement you'll soon experience in your own church—if you haven't already. It contains the complete transcript of the 65 interviews excerpted in *The Future Church* (each expressing his or her views, not necessarily ours). Whether you scan for [bold face] highlights or read the entire book, you'll be awestruck by the breadth and depth of this move of God ... and highly motivated to bring these liberating changes into your congregation.

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**Side 2:** Jim Rutz, Dick Staub, *Paul Returns*, with Russ & Cheryl Clarke, Dennis Garner, and John Loux.

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**Side 2:** Ern Baxter, Chris Smith, John Rowell, Graydon Snyder, Gene Edwards.

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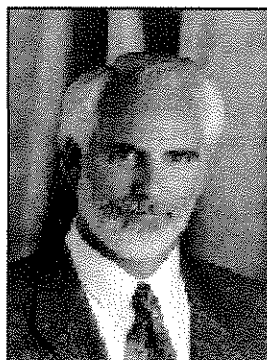
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FINALLY. . . THANK YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST! YOUR INSPIRATION ALONE HAS MADE THE FUTURE CHURCH MY BEST EFFORT TO FACILITATE "THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY."

Sincerely,

David Bradshaw  
Producer







# DEDICATION

*The Future Church* endeavors to present a wide spectrum of opportunities for the expression of Christ's visible kingdom on earth, through His Church. Throughout history godly men have carried this vision.

We want to acknowledge three such men who have greatly influenced Western Christianity in the 20th Century:

**Jamie Buckingham**  
**Ray Stedman**  
**Ern Baxter**

All of these men carried a vision for the restoration of Biblical Christianity—all supported the open church concept—that the Body of Christ would be equipped to *do* the work of the ministry. And although they are now with their LORD, their dream lives on.

As the 20th century now draws to a culmination, we approach the greatest of all challenges—to see the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The time has come to pass the baton to the next generation of Christian leadership.

It is to YOU the future church will be entrusted.

**\*Producers Note:** Please listen and read Ern's commentary carefully ... as this was his last interview prior to his passing, on July 9, 1993.



## Ern Baxter —Canonical Christianity

**Dave:** *It's such a joy to be able to listen and share with brethren who have been working at understanding God's call for many years. One such gentleman is Ern Baxter. He has been in public ministry over 60 years. He is nearly 80 years old himself.*

*Ern, there is no doubt that the American Church is in transition right now. There seems to be a new sound emerging in the Church as we come into some degree of maturity. It seems like the major trends, if you boil them all down, are a restoration of the message of the present rule and dominion of Christ, the message of the Kingdom of God. You eloquently lay this out in our interview in part one of The Laymen's Seminary on dealing with John 17 and the paradox of being taken out of the world and the world's system being taken out of us, but then we are candidates to be sent back into the world. So all over we see Christians beginning to wake up to the implications of Christ's present "rulership."*

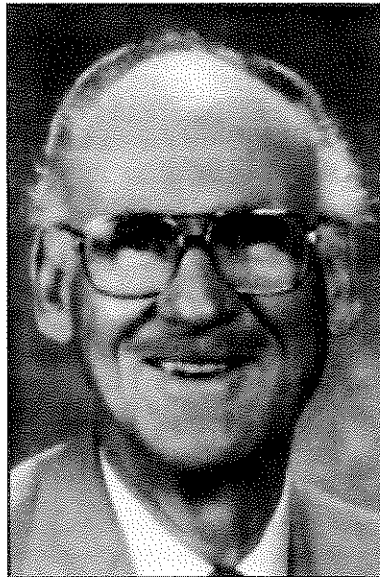
*Another issue that I want to focus in on is the priesthood of all believers and, as you call it, "the raising up of the ecclesia." You are involved with a house church ministry there in the San Diego area, and yet you have worked and been in pulpits, speaking to thousands of people. Tell me from your perspective what you see that is new that is beginning to emerge in the Church as we see laymen waking up to the fact all over that they can be involved in ministry every bit as much as the man behind the pulpit.*

**Ern:** Some years ago, in the latter part of the '40s, there were certain people making certain unilateral claims. Some troubled people came to me and asked, "What do you think of these claims?"

Well, I said, "I follow a simple principle, and that is, the divine emphasis on truth never comes through a spigot. It always comes by way of rain. If God has something to say to us in terms of a special emphasis, it's not going to come to one man. It's going to come through two or three witnesses. So if I hear several people hearing the same thing, I take notice. But

when it comes from a single spigot, then I have concern, because God's purpose is that when He gives truth, it will have a confirming witness, and it will be in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

What I am observing right now is that there is a fairly widespread, non-collusive, (nobody seems to be in collusion) concern that there be, for the crisis of our times, a restoration of the purity of canonical Christianity and certainly a canonical Church. When I hear this, I have to take notice. My own personal journey has been one where



I probably come from the pulpit, big church idea to the present time where I realize the small gives integrity to the large. The seed in the womb gives integrity to the body that is birthed. The seed in the ground gives integrity to the tree that is grown and so on. We seem to have that backwards now. The big is the important thing, and the small in incidental. It does seem to me that it is a principle in creation and in society as well, that something has to be born as a seed and that the integrity of what comes out is in the seed.

I believe that much of what is being said now is a reminding of the nature of New Testament Christianity and going back to the canon and saying we have got to establish our views from the canon.

That's a crucial point. If we are going to say, "It's the canon PLUS," then the plus opens the door for every kind of thing. But if we are going to stay with the canon, then we have to confine ourselves not only to the conceptual content but to the practice of the early Christians. And this is what I see happening — and happening on such a scale that it can't just be a freak. God seems to be impressing many people with it.

**Dave:** *It seems as though we are seeing a fresh emphasis on holiness and on the declaration of the centrality of the Lordship of Christ. So the focus then comes off any human leader and begins to focus on Christ. This is a wonderful and important paradigm shift for the Church. After having come through the '70s and '80s, I am a child of the escapist generation, a child of superstar Christianity. There seems to be a new wave of leadership that is not going to settle for the way it's been for the last ten or twenty years. There seems to be more emphasis on community, on relationship, on small groups. Do you see us coming full circle back 2000 years after Christ's time, seeing the early Church modeled or something even more glorious than the early Church as we approach the 21st Century, coming back to the home?*

**Ern:** It would be larger, quantitatively at least, because of the increased population of the earth. So at least it would be quantitative and might well be qualitative. Number one, let me say this, by way of protecting us from an unkind radicalism: I believe there are many men with whom I disagree who are good Godly men. We must not make our position abrasive.

A lot of the men who are going to make adjustments — and I'm just going by my limited number of contacts because of my age and inability to get around — in the area where I have information available, I know a number of ministers who have got burned out and have got so discouraged and so unable to go along and maintain their particular status quo that

they are making inquiries about house churches and about the smaller configuration. When I addressed a group of men a couple of years ago, I just talked about Acts 19 and 20. Then we had a question-and-answer period. I was deeply disappointed to find that they were not concerned to comply with the Word. They wanted to know that, if they did comply with the Word, what would it do to their building program? What would it do to their salary? What would it do to their influence? All the wrong questions were asked.

I felt like I hadn't been heard, or that God hadn't been heard. I do realize that a lot of these men are men who want to do God's will, but they've got caught up in systems that have drained them. And now they are starting to look around. If they go to the Bible, they are going to find out that there is a simplicity there. I'm not sure but what historically Paul's concern was not evangelical where he said to the Corinthians, "I fear lest, as the serpent seduced Eve, so you shall be seduced from the simplicity that is in Christ."

We seem to have felt that the answers in the canon are not sufficient, and that we've got to do all kinds of extra things to make a success out of God's work. I think what is required is a going back and considering the canon and saying, "That's the way God planted it. That's the way God planned it. Why don't we return to Plan A and once more see God move?"

We are in a restoration period. We have been in it this whole century. When you think that at the beginning of this century, Pentecostalism broke out. In the middle of the century the Charismatic movement. And now in the last 40 years or so, we have had New Testament scholarship addressing pneumatology, a much neglected subject. There is a lot of restoration taking place. The time has come to look at quality. We've got quantity, but where's the quality?

I just have to say personally that being in a house church has done a great deal for me. Number one, the

configuration is the gathering. It's not academically set up. You're not speaking from a pulpit to a bunch of people looking at the back of each other's heads. As you sit around in the circle of the house church and you edify one another and you sing, and you worship and you hear the Word of the Lord, there is no place there for what you have called super stardom. But as I sit in that group at my age with the years I have traveled and the experience I've had, I realize that the only claim that I have upon them to hear me is my gifting. It's not my clothing. It's not my car. It's not my history. It's whether I have a gift to share with them as they have gifting to share with me. I think it will do a lot to bring down the pompousness that sometimes unfortunately gets mixed up in ministry. It will bring us back to a simplicity and release to all of God's people that manifestation of the Spirit of God which is given every man to profit the rest. It is just a delight to me after many years of pulpit ministry, and I still do it when I have the strength. To sit there and listen to some simple, unschooled person open his or her heart by the Spirit of God and say things that bless me and build me up and edify me, I can't tell you what a refreshing thing it has been for me. It's just a joy to find this new dimension!

I can see nations thrown down with these powerful cells who, when they come together in celebration, make a public statement out of their unity. They will have influence.

I recently read a yet unpublished chapter out of Dr. Gordon Fee's book that I believe is going to be published in November on soteriology and the Holy Spirit. He says in I Corinthians 14 that when it says the whole Church comes together, that is the aggregate or total of the house churches in that area. I think the quality of pastoring, the quality of sharing, and the quality of maturation will be manifest in these smaller groups. And when that is put together in a large celebrating group in the area, it will be a mature declaration to the world around us, and we will at

last have earned the right to be heard because we are fulfilling our Lord's Word in John 17: "Father, I pray that they may be one as You and I are one, that they may be one in us, that the world may know."

And if you run that back negatively, it would run like this: "Father, if they will not be one together and one in us, then the world will not know." I think that's where we are right now. **The bottom line of this is to get God's people together on a Biblical basis so that they can then go public in a demonstration of Kingdom power and authority.**

*Dave: It sounds like we all have so much to unlearn. We need to go back to square one. You were talking about Paul writing to the Corinthian church. There is a verse in chapter 14 dealing with the public meetings. Paul said, "And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged."*

*If that is in the context of a public meeting, have we gotten the idea of the public meetings all wrong where we thought that our job was primarily to have one man at the helm preaching with no interaction from the rest of the Church; or is there a proper place for, as Jim Rutz points out in his book, the one time that we all gather once a week on Sunday is the one time that most people are not allowed to share anything, and so it's just all bottled up inside. In many ways the home meetings, which have been going now for 20 or 30 years in the States have splintered off and fizzled because it has not been the heart of the Church. Many of those are sort of a band-aid on the problem of people being able to really share what God is saying to them in a dynamic way in the public meeting.*

**Ern:** I have a list of eight extension groups — home groups, care groups, project groups and so on. Many of the big churches have groups, but they are an extension of the big — with the big — being the definite entity. Whereas what I see is that the house church is the Church. For instance, people say, "Well, it's a house group." The minute you start to play games with the

identification of that gathering, you water it down and in many instances give it no reason for living.

I said recently to the house group where I attend, "Folks, what is this morning. What are you here for?" I went on to say, "This is church." Now we think we are just a group of people just meeting in a house. Paul didn't say it was a group of people meeting in a house. He said it was the church at the house of Chloe or at the house of Philemon or whatever. I said, "This is church." The place was honeycombed with qualitative bodies of believers binding together in a functional way where they can edify one another and then all of those groups in a given area come together for celebration.

Then you have what I envision in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was undoubtedly transitional, but it was representative in the way the Church functioned. Number one, there were at least 5,000 believers there, and it would be pretty hard to get 5,000 believers together every Sunday, so there was ample evidence that Jerusalem was full of house churches. John Mark's mother had one where Barnabas and Paul would go. When Peter got out of prison, he went to his own company. Then it says they met by common consent on Solomon's porch. Now when they all wanted to come together, they said, "Let's go to Solomon's Porch. We are still all Jews, and we have access to the Temple." That was temporary, but it at least presented us with an example of the relationship between the integrity of the small coming together to hear an apostle or a prophet in the larger gathering.

I don't think we are going to lose anything if we can have the country sewn down with quality groups who know that they are not an end in themselves, but that they are part of a cosmic Church, number one. They are also a part of the church of the area. By common agreement they can come together in some large rented facility and celebrate and declare the glory of God. It would do a number of things. Number one, it would give

the small house church the awareness that it's not a spar on the roof top. It's not a little group there alone and isolated, it's a part of God's people in the area. That to me is extremely important.

*Dave: When Paul raised up churches, do you think it was his perspective that he evangelized in order to raise up churches, or did he raise up the church in order to evangelize? It seems that in some ways we may have the cart before the horse here, that without a community functioning, without an ecclesia, we say this is the way life should be lived. When we hold these large, evangelical meetings, we invite all kinds of people into a nonfunctioning family. What do you think about that?*

**Ern:** In our group we are talking about evangelism. We are seeing some fruit from it. We feel that the most ideal place to evangelize is in the house and to bring your friends in. We may be going through a transition here because I am hearing the people in some of the large churches who are inquiring of house church members who I know, asking, "Where do you go to church?" And they say, "Well, we are members of a house church." The response is, "Oh, I'm interested in that." There seems to be a growing discontent with the content in large non-participant situations where people go and do their religion, but they are not really part of the process.

*Dave: There is such a need for relationship today. We really are seeing systemic failure, as Jim Spillman has said. We are seeing family institutions, government institutions, and in many ways, the church as an institution failing the people. You said that you really believe that God is sovereignly bringing down the institutional church and raising up the ecclesia.*

**Ern:** Yes, that's a personal observation. I submit it for people's judgment. They can climb all over it if they like. I have been observing for some time now, and it seems to me that I see institutional Christianity, by and large, not filling the bill. And I see so much of it coming down. I see the membership attrition in the old

denominations, and I just see so much that is Biblically non-functional. It has to import all kinds of modern business programs and processes to try to make the thing work. But it still isn't working.

Probably this is where it's at. If what I see in the Scripture with other brothers is the small group as the essential group, then if God is going to give us a restoration in that area, it follows that these other things, sincere as they may be, are substitutes for the Biblical reality. Then it follows that if God is raising up one, He's probably bringing down the other.

*Dave: Christianity is the only religion on earth that began with no special clergy and no special buildings.*

*It seems like we are coming back to a time of an informality where we are all much more open with one another and real rather than the plastic fantastic version.*

*Ern, what would you have to say to those listening who are saying, "Look, what you are saying is resonating with me. I'm in church leadership, and I want to sit down and work through some of this in Scripture." I know you have put out a bibliography.*

*In the resource directory will be your address for people to get ahold of you. You have spent a lot of time researching that.*

*What would you say to those pastors and leaders who are saying, "Where do we go from here? How can we begin to reopen and recover that early dynamic of seeing the Church be a family rather than something dry?" What were some of the steps you went through? Did you come to this overnight?*

**Ern:** I was going back over my notes of 40 years. In my notes I deal with the house church. But I'm dealing with it as a phenomenon of the early church, as something that happened back there. At that point in my life, I was involved in conferences and conventions and large church meetings, etc. When I would teach on that subject, I would teach that it was something that happened back then. Now that I realize that it had ongoing validity, I am chagrined to think that I was so blind to it when all the time it was in my notes.

This is why I think is why I would urge a kind and conciliatory note. If there is anyone who would like to talk about this, I would be happy to talk with them. If people are really hungry, they just need to come and ask somebody and dialogue.

*Dave: It's just a matter of coming to a place of humility and saying, "Maybe I don't have all the answers even though I have a big church, and it's big in numbers."*

*Pastor Jack Hayford, my former pastor, said, "God is more interested in big people than He is in big churches." What we are coming to is that the quality of our Christianity is going to be put under more pressure in the days ahead.*

*Ern, do you have a closing thought on this theme the rebirth of the Church, of seeing the Church open up? What kind of exciting things do you see coming?*

*Many people believe we are going into a dark hour of the Church. Others see it as being a period where it is darkest before the dawn and that we are headed for some exciting and wonderful times. I know that your worldview is that you see the Church being purified through the problems and emerging on the other side with some degree of victory while we are on earth.*

**Ern:** What comes to mind is China, and what is going on there. China is honeycombed with house churches. One of their leaders recently was with a friend of mine. My friend asked, "Are you planning on building church buildings?" The Chinese leader replied in horror, "God forbid! That would ruin what is happening!" I have a video here of what is going on in China. It is very exciting and very grassroots!

As far as my worldview is concerned, I see ultimate triumph. However, the road to that could be through persecution. When I see what is happening in this nation and the potential for a thumbs down attitude officially on the Church, then I am wondering if we don't need something more underground. For instance, when the Communists took over Russia, it

was very easy to spot the Church. They just went and took over all the big orthodox cathedrals, turned them into museums and munition dumps and so on. If something happened here, God forbid, you would certainly know where to find the Church if you were going to go to it by way of a building. But if you've got the people of God meeting in homes, and having said home, I have triggered a whole other line of thought. Home was the initial sociological entity. In the beginning Jesus taught in homes. If the country were honeycombed with homes where Christians meet, the government would have a hard time putting their thumbs on Christians. But right now they know exactly where to go. All these big buildings open up another whole category.

*Dave: Only God knows. It could be that the movement toward decentralizing the Church and meeting in homes is not only to see the ecclesia come to maturity but is also a preparation for a time of testing in which we really need to identify much more privately than we do right now.*

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## George Barna — *What Americans Believe*

**Dave:** Mr. Barna is the president and founder of the Barna Research Group, the marketing/research firm in Glendale, California, that is dedicated to the needs of the Christian Church. George is also a noted author, having written books such as *Marketing the Church*, *The Frog in the Kettle*, and *User Friendly Churches*, the latter of which is currently on the Christian best-seller list. George's company has been commissioned to conduct studies by organizations such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Willow Creek Community Church, Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Methodist Publishing House. Ron Sellers recently interviewed George discussing his book entitled *What Americans Believe*.

**Ron Sellers:** *Can you briefly describe what this book, What Americans Believe, is all about?*

**George:** It is based on a study that we do at the beginning of every calendar year where we attempt to figure out what is it that people in America believe, how their lifestyles and values are changing, and what religion has to do with who they are, what they think, and how they live. It's an attempt to give a fairly crisp overview of where America is at today.

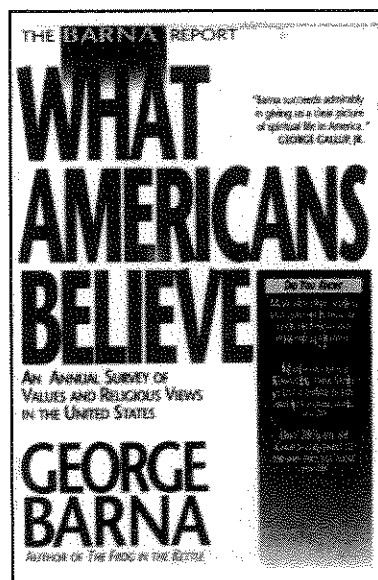
**Ron:** *What are some of the specific topics covered in this book?*

**George:** The book talks about a number of different dimensions of people's lives. We look at how they spend their time and other dimensions of their life-styles and activities. We look at the kinds of things that they say are important to them, the kinds of things that they believe in, their value systems. We look at the media and electronics. We also look at things like their perceptions of the future. And toward the end of the book, we also take a more exhaustive look at how religion fits into the overall

picture, into the overall framework of their life. What do they believe? What kind of activities are they engaged in related to their religious life, and how involved are they in a local church?

**Ron:** *It sounds like a lot of information.*

**George:** It is quite a bit of information. We have done our best to try to take away some of the mystery related to research and to try to make it user friendly, if you will, giving commentary about each



of the questions, along with charts and pictures to make it easier to understand what the point of the information is.

**Ron:** *This isn't a book just for a research expert or somebody who is just into numbers.*

**George:** No, I fear that if we wrote a book like that, we would have an audience of about four people for it. We try to make it something that could be usable to a Christian person any where in the country, something to give them a sense of, "Who are the people that I have been called to reach? Who are the kinds of people that I might find in my church? What are some of the

things that I need to be aware of as a thinking Christian who wants to make a difference with my life?"

**Ron:** *I would like to focus for a second on the overall purpose of the book. What did you hope this book would accomplish? Did you have any kind of vision or purpose for writing it?*

**George:** Actually we did. This is part of our attempt to help people who are involved in church leadership understand the context for ministry in America today. One of my contentions is that part of the reason the Church struggles so much is that we operate on the basis of assumptions. Those assumptions are based on outdated information. What we are trying to do now on a continual basis is give church leaders current, accurate, reliable information that they can make better decisions with. So it's going to be a book that comes out every year. We will be updating it constantly, keeping some questions in it from year to year so we can see what kind of change is happening. We will have other questions that are new each year, which will give us yet a different perspective. But the idea is to help leaders really understand the ministry context.

**Ron:** *There's a tremendous amount of information in here. How did you go about gathering all of this?*

**George:** We do telephone surveys with a nationwide, random sample of adults in the American population. What that means is that rather than going out and doing a census like our government does every ten years, which costs millions and millions of dollars, we take a small number of people — in this case, we interviewed a thousand and five people — who are scientifically chosen from locations throughout the country. We interviewed them for about twenty minutes, doing a telephone interview where we went through the broad range of questions and

tried to get a sense from those people of what they believed. We know that statistically, because of the way that they were selected from the overall population, they do represent the population at large.

**Ron:** *So just interviewing a thousand people actually can represent a nation of what, some 200 million people?*

**George:** Yes, we have from about 248 to 249 million people in the country today. Yet the size of the population, when you are dealing with statistics like this, has nothing to do with the number of people that you should be interviewing in your survey. In interviewing a thousand and five people, because of the way they were chosen, and that is very important, we know that our data for those thousand and five people are accurate within plus or minus four percentage points. In other words, if we had done the census and interviewed all 249 million people and then compared it to what we got by interviewing a thousand people, the answers would be within four percentage points.

**Ron:** *I think that's news to a lot of people who don't realize that surveys like this actually are giving an example of what is going on out there. They think it's only a thousand people and there are millions out there so it doesn't mean anything. That's one of the things that fascinates me about marketing research.*

*Let's focus some on of the findings from the book itself. You have a section in here about Americans' religious involvement. Really, how involved in religion and the Church is the typical American?*

**George:** Well, it's an interesting thing to study because Americans are a very religious people when compared to individuals in other countries, and yet what we note is that our involvement in religion tends to be decreasing, and the depth of our spirituality is also getting thinner and thinner. To give you some perspective on all this,

four out of five people in our country today call themselves "Christian". We also find that two out of three people in this country say that they consider themselves to be religious. And yet if we go a little bit deeper and try to figure out what they really believe and how we might also categorize them, we find that roughly about one third of the population can be considered to be born again Christian.

**Ron:** *Defined as . . . .*

**George:** Well, that's interesting too because we looked at that two different ways. The usual way that surveys will look at that is to ask a person, "Are you a born again Christian?" So we did that, and we found that about one third of the population said, "Yes, I'm a born again Christian."

But the way that Barna Research usually goes about the process is asking people a series of questions, the key one of which are, "Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that's still important in your life today?" We found that about again two thirds of the population say they have made such a commitment. And with those people ask, "What's going to happen to you after you die? What do you believe about life after death?" And we read them six possibilities, one of which is "When I die, I will go to heaven because I have confessed my sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior." We find that about half of the people who say they have made a personal commitment to Christ believe that they will also go to heaven as a result of confessing their sins and accepting Christ as Savior.

So overall that means that again we have about one third of the population being "born again Christian" by that definition. The interesting thing is, when you ask a person directly, "Are you born again?" or when you take the approach that our company takes, asking the series of questions about their beliefs, although both

approaches wind up with one third, they are different people. So in other words a lot of the people who would be categorized as "born again" by one of those definitions, would not be categorized as "born again Christian" by the other.

**Ron:** *So again, relating this to how the average lay person like myself might use some of this information, when we are talking with people and when we ask, "Are you born again?" And the person says, "Yes." That doesn't necessarily mean that that person actually has a relationship with Christ?*

**George:** Absolutely! There is a very considerable proportion of people who call themselves "born again Christians" who do not say that they have any kind of personal commitment to or personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Ron:** *Who is attending church? In other words, what kinds of people go to church, and what kinds avoid church?*

**George:** What we find is that individuals who attend church really represent a broad spectrum of the population. There are limited differences in terms of who does and who does not go to church. But it's interesting when you look at it more deeply, you find, for instance, people from minority groups, or that minority groups are more likely to attend church than the Caucasian or white population would be. You also find for instance that married people are more likely to be attending church services than single individuals. Income also has an interesting relationship with church attendance. We find that people with higher levels of income actually are more likely to attend church services, but the people who attend most frequently are the people with lower household levels.

**Ron:** *George, why do Americans attend Church? What are they looking for?*

**George:** There are a lot of different answers to that. I think people come



for many different reasons. But realize that today in America people are in kind of a search mode. They are looking for answers to this tough stuff of life. Many of them are people who have been away from church for a while, and they are coming back, hoping that they can get some real answers to what they are struggling with on a day-to-day basis. Many of the people are coming with a desire to worship God, those people who have a relationship with God through Christ. And frankly a lot of it boils down to felt needs, people's felt needs. They come to church because they think they will exit from that place better people as a result of that involvement.

**Ron:** *What are some of those felt needs?*

**George:** Once again, it varies dramatically. For instance, there are many single parent adults who come to church looking for support, somebody to say, "You know what? You've been through a tough time. We're going to love you and support you."

There are many parents with young kids coming to church today, and they don't know how to raise the kids. They are coming, looking for answers to: "What do I do with these kids? Is this normal behavior? How do you inculcate values in kids?" Many older people who are coming are looking for companionship, looking for many different kinds of bridges and ties within the community.

There are a lot of young adults trying to figure out, "What is a reasonable value system in America today? I've tried money. I've tried sex. I've tried drugs. I've tried this, that, and the other things that society said would work. It hasn't worked. What if I tried religion? Does that have anything to offer?"

So it really varies and it's hard to pigeon hole any given individual.

**Ron:** *Okay, let's look at it from the*

*other side. Why do so many Americans avoid church? Do they not believe in God? Do they not have the time? What's the reason?*

**George:** We find that it's relatively rare that an individual does not believe in God. We also find that it's the relatively rare individual who has not been a consistent part of a church at some part of their life. Most people who are not in a church today used to be, but they have been driven away by the Church.

Among the reasons why they stay away is either they have had bad experiences with churches — that's only about one out of five of church people, by the way. We find that to many of them, the Church simply doesn't have anything of benefit or value to offer to them. They give excuses like, "I'm too busy. I don't have time." But really what they are telling you is, "There are other things that I can be committing my time to that will have a greater impact on my life than what I think this church has to offer."

**Ron:** *Knowing this information, how might a church or a lay person change the ways in which they are trying to get unchurched people into church?*

**George:** There are a lot of different possibilities. One that we have got to explore is not focusing on Sunday morning as the time to bring the person to Christ. In a study that we did called, "Never on a Sunday", we tried to look at unchurched people and what they experience, what they are looking for in life. We learned that most unchurched people will not go to a church on Sunday morning as their first experience with a Christian Body. What they are looking for are other things that will enable them to understand, "Who is this group of people? What are they like? Are these the kind of people that I want to spend time with?" So they are looking for social events. They are looking for different kinds of educational events. They are looking for entertainment events. They want to know, "Does this place

really have something that will fit with my life style? Is it a place where I can feel good? Is it a place where I can get connected relatively easily?"

We've got to get away from the mentality that Sunday morning is really the entry point for entry into the Kingdom of God.

**Ron:** *What are some other ways?*

**George:** We can also look at things such as personal relationships. Not many churches focus on the importance of having people who are part of the Body conscientiously and intentionally building relationships with people not part of the Church. Some research has been done which shows that once a person has been a Christian and is an active member of a Church for six months, they probably have fewer than one person who is outside of the Church that they have any kind of an ongoing relationship with. Over time they are likely to lose that as well.

So what that means is that increasingly over time, as we become more involved in our faith and in the Church, we lose all ties outside of the Church. Therefore, if we don't have those connections, we can't be bringing new people into the Kingdom because we simply cease to have relationships with them.

**Ron:** *How effective is evangelism in America today? Are we making any headway with all the efforts we are putting out there?*

**George:** I'd like to say that we are, but the evidence suggests that we really are not doing the job. There are a lot of different ways we could attack it. Let's look for instance at the proportion of people in this country who could be considered to be born again Christians. Over the last eight years, that really hasn't changed at all, and that is in spite of the fact that more than a quarter of a trillion dollars, that's two hundred and fifty billion dollars, has been spent by Christian ministries just within the

geographical borders of the United States. In an eight year period of time, to spend a quarter of a trillion dollars and have virtually nothing to show for it is really pretty devastating.

When we look even at churches that are growing quickly, what we learn is that most of them are growing by transfer, not by conversion. In fact, it is estimated that more than 80% of all church growth is done by transfer, that is, by changing from one church to another, as opposed from conversion growth where we take a person who is not a Christian and converting him into a Christian. So I would have to say that, by and large, there are some real gaps in how we are doing evangelism.

One other thing I would like to point out is that we found that Christians are increasingly less likely to be sharing their faith with people who they believe are non-Christians. Earlier this year when we did the study, *What Americans Believe*, we learned that although we did that study during the period of time of the Gulf War, which was a tremendous time to be sharing one's faith because many people had an open mind of, "What's going to happen if I die? There's this crazy man loose on the other side of the earth. What happens if it all goes up in flames tomorrow?"

Christians were less likely to be sharing their faith earlier this year than they were a year ago, and we've seen that trend progressing over the last few years where fewer and fewer Christians are actually witnessing.

**Ron:** *But what about the Bible? How often do people read the Bible?*

**George:** On average, what we find is that somewhat less than a majority of the population read the Bible in a given week. I think it's around 40%. But we also find on average, those people read it probably twice during the course of a week. We know from other research that they spend

somewhere around the order of from 15-20 minutes per sitting reading the Bible. So the average American today probably spends somewhat less than an hour a week reading the Bible, and that's among those who read the Bible.

**Ron:** *How do church attendance and Bible readership vary from one region of the country to another?*

**George:** Let's take church attendance first. If you look at that, what you find is that the highest levels of attendance are in the Midwestern states and in the Mountain states. In the Midwestern states, about 55% of the population attends in any given week. In the Mountain states it is about 51%.

Then you look at the Southern states. You've got about 49% that would attend in a given week. In the Pacific states — California, Oregon, and Washington — 47%. Lowest attendance in the country was in the Northeastern states. About 43% of adults would attend church on a given Sunday.

If you look at Bible reading, you find a slightly different pattern. The highest Bible readership actually occurs in the Southern states where half of the people, about 54%, say that they would read the Bible at least once a week outside of a church service. In the Midwest, 49% would do so. The Mountain states, 47%. The two laggards in this particular category would be the different coasts. In the Pacific states, only about 43% of the people living there would read the Bible in a given week. In the Northeast, only about 33%. So that's significantly lower than anywhere else.

**Ron:** *In What Americans Believe, you list what you felt were the ten most important findings from the research. I'd like to focus on one of those for a moment, the one you described as the mission field. To quote from the book, "If we hope to find a large population that needs to hear the gospel, we need not send people overseas. Millions of people whom we need to reach live in*

*America, and best of all, they are coming to us. According to the data in this year's study, next Sunday morning, more than half of all the people who attend a church service, 52%, will not be born again Christians.*

*That just flabbergasted me! Half of the people in Protestant Church on any given Sunday have not accepted Christ as their Savior?*

**George:** Not only is that true, and it really is an eye opener to see that kind of information, but we found that most of those people claim to be members of a church, and in fact they had been attending the church that they currently attend for an average of six to ten years. So the thing that says to me is, we've really got to radically revisit what it is that we are doing in our churches. When a person can come into the sanctuary week after week after week, hear sermon after sermon, sing the songs, say the prayers, do all the things that we do, and never have any kind of a personal relationship with Christ, we've got a serious problem. I think that in many ways what we may be doing is inoculating people to Christ rather than introducing them to Christ.

**Ron:** *In other words, the Church is having more of a negative effect on a lot of these people than it does a positive effect.*

**George:** I'm not sure that I would go so far as to say its having a negative effect, but I would go so far as to say it's not having the intended effect from the Biblical perspective, that of bringing people into a personal relationship with Christ and then nurturing that relationship.

**Ron:** *How could something like that be corrected in our local churches?*

**George:** What we are trying to do with a study like the book *What Americans Believe*, is to help people to understand the situation so that we don't continue to take the same actions that we have taken over the course of the years. We stop and

think through the whole process. If we know that people are able to come in and see and experience what we are doing and yet not know Who Jesus Christ is, we had better rethink, "How do we preach our sermons? What difference does the service itself make in people's lives?" We've got to investigate. Do people have a series of relationships within the congregation where they are being challenged in their faith, where individuals are asking them about growth in their spiritual life? All these kinds of things are assumptions that are killing us, and we've got to go back and reinvestigate some of those assumptions. We can't assume that simply because a person is in church, he is a Christian. We can't assume that simply because we are putting on a service on Sunday, it's impacting people's lives in a positive way.

**Ron:** *Another finding I would like to spend some time with is how Americans feel about the relevance of Christianity to their lives. How do they feel about the relevance of going to church?*

**George:** Interestingly enough, one of the things that we learned was that about 47% of the adult population strongly agree that the Christian faith is relevant to the way they live today. The other thing that we found related to that is that, just about half as many, 28%, strongly agree that the Christian churches in their areas are relative to the way they live today. There are a couple of things that you have to think about: 1. It's not even a majority people in this country who would strongly agree that Christianity is relevant to the way they live. But the other thing with this was while people are willing probably to embrace Christianity as something that is relevant or could be made relevant, they don't see local churches as being relevant. In other words, the problem isn't with the FAITH. It's with the DISPENSARY OF THE FAITH.

Once again, the question comes back to the local church. What are we doing that may be keeping people from Christ rather than getting them into a deeper relationship with Christ?

**Ron:** *But, playing the devil's advocate here, should we really be trying to make Church relevant? Isn't that compromising what we believe or watering it down suddenly?*

**George:** Oh absolutely not! If you study the life of the Apostle Paul for instance, you read what he wrote to the churches. Take I Corinthians 9:19-23. Paul talks about the importance of understanding the people who you are going to minister to, getting a good feel for how they live, what they think, what they believe, and then knowing your own beliefs well enough so that you can communicate effectively to them, never compromising what you believe but contextualizing it, making it pertinent to the way the people live so that they can see and understand and embrace what it is we see and believe.

**Ron:** *In other words, you don't really want to change the message. You want to change the way it's communicated. Is that what you are saying?*

**George:** Yes, some people in the marketing industry would communicate it this way: "We're not trying to change the product. We're trying to change the packaging." What we want to do is to make sure we are not compromising. But you see, compromise is not inherent in the message. If there is compromise, the problem is not the technique. The problem is the technician. We individually have to make sure that we are remaining true to what we believe, but that we are also remaining true to the people who we have been called to minister to by understanding them intimately enough to give them something that is uncompromised but that is life changing.

**Ron:** *If someone came to you with a copy of What Americans Believe and*

*asked you to pick out one specific fact that you would like to share with our listeners, other than what you have already shared, what might that be?*

**George:** It's a hard thing to do in a book that has got so much in it. In fact, in my last chapter, I tried to point out ten things that I thought were some of the most important. Maybe one we haven't touched on to this point is that the majority of Christians, or the majority of people in this country today, 60%, do not believe that Satan is a living being. Most people believe that Satan is simply a symbol for evil. What that says to me is that, it's not that surprising that the Church is not having an impact on the world around it because many people don't even believe in the enemy. They have no sense that there is a warfare going on and that we really have to be prepared for the nature of that spiritual battle. I think in many ways what we have done is that we have taken Satan and made a kind of spiritual caricature out of him, and therefore, we don't take him seriously. So I think that too ought to awaken those of us who are involved in churches and in ministry to think through what we have been called to do.

**Ron:** *It's real sobering, but is there any real hope for the Church in America today?*

**George:** Oh, I think there is a lot of hope. I think there is a lot of challenge out there on the horizon, but I think there is tremendous hope. We have more and more people who are saying they want their lives to count for something that is important. We have people who want meaningful relationships. We have pastors who are very anxious to make a difference through church. We could go on and on. Yes, there is a lot of reason to hope.

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## Bill Beckham — *The Two-Winged Church*

**Dave:** *We are talking with Bill Beckham about the emergence of the cell church. The cell church model has been discussed quite a bit in Dr. Ralph Neighbour's book, Where Do We Go From Here? They have an exciting publication called Cell Church Magazine to which Bill is a contributor. Bill served 15 years in mission work in Thailand. He has worked with Dr. Neighbour in church planting and small groups and is currently pastoring at Shepherd Community, a two-year-old cell church in Houston, Texas. He has almost completed his first book, The Two-Winged Church, which provides an in-depth look into the cell-based church.*

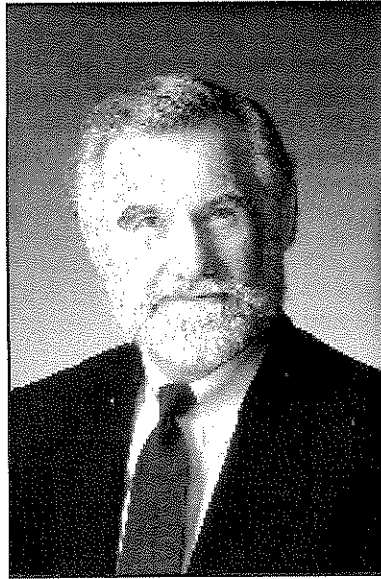
*In Volume 2, Issue 2, of Cell Church Magazine you discussed a chapter out of your book, From Constantine to Consumerism. You said, "The New Testament clearly shows a church meeting in homes and public meetings in the synagogue on the Sabbath." Does the cell church acknowledge that there is room for both the cell group meeting and the larger gathering, that it is not an either/or?*

**Bill:** The idea is balance. This is why I call my new book *The Two-Winged Church* because this is a parable that the Lord gave me to help me see the balance. There is the small group wing and the large group wing. With this balance the Church can be what God created it to be. We do not have to make the choice between one or the other. It is a both/and situation. I see this in the New Testament, and I see it happening today. There is a restoration of the Church in that balance.

**Dave:** *You discuss the concept of the gathered Church and the scattered Church. The gathered Church is when the whole Church comes together for celebration, and the scattered Church means as they meet in homes and as they are in the work place during the week. You have a very interesting history of church wineskins, starting with the pure Church and ending up with the 21st century Church. Why don't you go through that for us?*

**Bill:** The concept I have tried to

capture was to understand what had been happening to the Church over the past centuries. It seems to me that the Church began with the pure cell church, the pure wineskins, which were there from the beginning as the Church that the Lord established Himself. However, very quickly with Constantine, the Church began to change. From the pure Church, it became a political Church. Constantine officially relegated the Church to an old wineskin of the cathedral church. Then, in my thinking, the Church for many centuries became the Roman Catholic church for more than 1,000



years. The wine in that old wineskin simply evaporated. The old wineskin could not contain the life of the Spirit as the Church was affected by the Cathedral approach. Then the Reformed church, with Luther and the other Reformers, tried to reform the wine, but they poured the wine right back into the old wineskin. It is fascinating to read history and see how Luther understood the small group and how the new wine needed a new wineskin, but for political reasons he never did it. Then there was the remnant church of John Wesley who actually developed small groups as new wineskins. However, he also ended up pouring this new wine back into the Anglican and Methodist churches, so it eventually died out.

"The revived church," I call it, is what happened over the centuries when revival movements came that somehow revived the wine in the old wineskins. Sometimes these revivals had tremendous dynamic and power in societies, but it was not a lasting thing because the revivals that came of the Spirit were placed back in the old wineskin. "The renewed Church" is what I see happening, which Peter Wagner calls "the third wave" or the waves that have been happening in this century. It is where the renewed Church, the Pentecostals and Charismatics, poured the wine of the Spirit into the old wineskins. What I see happening today, now, is the cell church, the small group church where God is creating new community wineskins to hold the new wine that He began to bring into focus in the 21st century. The 21st century Church I see will be new wine in new wineskins. I believe we will see in the 21st century a recreation of the dynamic that we saw in the first century.

**Dave:** *I agree, and I'm sure many will say "Amen" to it. What's holding it up? In your article "Constantine to Consumerism," you touch on the fact that the Empire imposed the cathedral form on the Church and, "since that time, theology has changed from church to church; the type of worship has been different; the approach of leadership may look nothing alike; but one constant in the last 1700 years of Church history has been the cathedral structure." Can we bring the dynamic of the early Church back into the cathedral?*

**Bill:** I believe it is possible for God to restore the two-winged church. If we simply try to do more in the one-winged church, then it will not work. We have been doing that for 1700 years through programs, etc. I think what God is doing today is a whole new paradigm. It is the difference between a one-winged bird and a two-winged bird. They may look alike, but a two-winged bird is entirely different in what it can do and how it functions. So I believe God will use the traditional cathedral church. In fact, I believe over the last few decades He has

been preparing a whole new kind of church, a church that I call a creative church that He has prepared in a very special way to be an instrument for transitioning and recreating the kind of church He wants for the 21st century.

Out of the Roman feudal system, Constantine developed a way for the church to be organized. The characteristics were that people went to a building for a special day of the week, and someone did something for or to them for a price — the people paid for these services. This was the basic characteristic of the organization that Constantine established in the fourth century, and we have not changed that.

Now today, God is coming and has developed an entirely new kind of church. He was aware that the traditional church could not immediately change. The models He is setting today will be through these creative churches. We saw them begin to develop about 30 years ago. They have different names such as Jubilee Church of the Redeemer, etc., not First Baptist or First Presbyterian. They are different in their whole outlook. They are not program-based churches. Neither are they cell churches, but at the heart they have cell church and New Testament church values. They have streamlined many of their activities. They have a whole different way of worshipping. These are the churches that God has raised up, that through them, He will create this new kind of two winged church through which He will be able to function as He did in the first century church.

Dave: *Such churches will be able to soar to the heights that God has for the Church. Why has the cathedral church survived so long and even flourished? You quote John Wesley, "Even in the first century the mystery of iniquity began to work in the Church, culminating in the baptism of the Emperor Constantine, productive of more evil to the Church than all the ten persecutions of the Church put together. For at that time the Church and State and kingdoms of the world were so strangely and unnaturally blended together that they will ever hardly be divided until Christ comes to reign*

*upon earth." You write that the Constantine church suppressed the small group. What are some of the characteristics that changed when we moved from the focus on the small to the large group?*

Bill: When I first began to understand the dynamic change that happened when we stopped being that two-winged church, I read in a commentary by William Barclay about the change that took place in the Lord's Supper when it moved from the small house fellowship where it was an informal, agape meal and was brought into the cathedral, the large building. The whole dynamic changed. It began a formal, symbolic meal, something that you had to have professionals responsible for. So Barclay noted that what happens in the typical church today is so different from what happened in the New Testament that it is almost as if it is not the same thing. But this dynamic type of change took place across the board. And the reason is that the two-winged Church expresses the nature of God. God expresses Himself in two ways, and the structure of the Church had developed to express these two natures of God. One aspect of God's nature is His eminence, and if it has no structure for this to be expressed by His people, then this will have a tremendous impact on the Church and how it operates. However, administration changed. When it was a small group type of situation, there was an integrated type of administration. Everything worked in relation to the small group and could take place within the small group. Discipleship, witness, worship, prayer, everything took place there. There was one basic unit and structure through which everything could be done.

When it changed to a large group, every task became departmentalized as we see in the traditional church today. So, for example, Bible study changed. In the New Testament Church there was a transformation of life as the written Word became a Living Word. But it became simply the sharing of information, and this is what it is primarily today. In a large group you can pass on information, but in a small group, transformation takes place.

Leadership changed from gifted to professional. There had to be special people to run the large organizations. It had to be organized, so we became far more professional in leadership. Whereas, in a small group, the gifting of God was sufficient for the group to operate.

Witness changed. From the small group context, we see more of a relational type of witnessing. There was an overflow of witness out from these small groups, which resulted in a dynamic witness to the world. But today we see a change more to salesmanship because the large groups do not enable relationships. So we end up trying to sell the Gospel.

Also, membership then changed from producer to consumer. When we have the large group alone, we are trying to attract people to come in, and we set up a consumer type of relationship with people. I believe in the small group approach where people become producers who are part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Likewise, fellowship changed from in-depth to surface. Missions changed because, when they lost the small group context, they lost their cutting edge delivery system where the harvest is. Every church had been a mission church. When I was serving overseas and came back to the States, people saw me as their missionary. I was supposed to be doing missions for them. This is what we get from the large group concept because the Church does not have a focus or a structure where it is on the cutting edge doing missions.

Every aspect of the Church was affected when it changed from small group to the large group orientation.

Dave: *The result is a form of spectator Christianity that frustrates the leadership because they feel that the whole weight of ministry is on their shoulders, and it frustrates the member because he feels this whole thing would go on whether he is there or not. Thus, Jim Rutz wrote The Open Church as a wake-up call for the Church to say, "We are tired of this structure. It is not Biblical. It is not working." It is time to stop exporting it all over the world and start looking to see what God is*

sovereignly doing in other models. You have written, "Those entering the cell church movement are often tempted by the 'instant cell church mentality', and just looking at the size and success of cell churches can deceive about how they actually begin." Also, you wrote, "The factors contribute toward a critical mass, M E S S." What are the stages to a church developing?

Bill: When I was in Thailand and looking for urban church strategies, I studied Paul in depth to see how Paul planted churches. Then one year I asked myself, "How did Jesus plant His Church?" He said, "I will build my Church." So I went back to study in depth the Gospels to try and determine how Jesus built His Church. I began to see a stage-by-stage process that Jesus had. It is a continuous process, which He is developing. Part of the process was to develop a team of innovators of two or three people. Then He developed a core of leaders, the twelve. There was a support group around that, the 30 to 40 committed adults who networked around the core leaders. Then Jesus came to the place where He was building for a base congregation, the 120 brothers, who could have been 120 men plus the women. We aren't sure. This base congregation of 200 to 250 adults was the critical mass, the mass that Jesus had been developing before Pentecost. He carefully developed that process. I am seeing in my own experience with the cell church movement that these are the very simple stages that we go through in developing a cell church. If Jesus did it then, I believe He will do it today. The two to three innovators are the stack pole to make it happen. The core leaders are the 10 to 12 disciples who share the vision. The support network were also committed and prepared to implement the strategy. Then there was the base congregation, the 120 brethren in the upper room. From that came the first Church and then the expansion from there.

If He had not taken them through the step-by-step process, I do not believe Pentecost would have been harvested. What if, in the very first year of His ministry, he had come and said, "Okay, these large crowds are following Me well enough." Yes, they were following Him, but He had no structure that

could lead them and firm them up to be a viable unit. Therefore, He spent the three years primarily developing His leaders. I envision it like a stream within a stream. He was interested in the broader stream of ministering to people, but in that stream of people He had this other focused stream, the disciples, as His leaders. Robert Coleman in his book, *The Master's Strategy*, said, "His men were His strategy." I believe this is the kind of strategy we need if we are to develop a viable cell church. We must develop it through the leaders. This is where John 17 comes in. Jesus was reporting to the Father about what had happened, and He was reporting about his men because this was His strategy. So the critical mass is the base congregation. If we come and try to develop a strategy for a 10, 20, or 50,000 member church, that is almost impossible. But if we can develop one cell church base congregation in purpose, values, structure, and leadership, then we have learned everything we need to know about being His kind of Church. We do not have to do anything different. All we have to do is keep doing what we learned to do and develop that one base congregation. This is why I call the base congregation the critical mass. If we do not do it this way, then we end up with a critical mess.

When I was in Thailand, many would go to Dr. Cho's church in Korea and come back and draw every wrong conclusion because they would be seeing that huge church, but they didn't understand the steps and process that it had gone through to become a base congregation where it could begin to grow. This is why the Lord has been leading me to try and understand the process that Jesus takes us through. The years before Pentecost are extremely important. We have to live through that stage-by-stage development if we are going to develop His kind of Church.

Dave: *From your perspective, what is happening to this movement in the U.S.A.? What kind of churches are making the transition to this type of structure, and what kinds of problems are they running into? How is the cell church movement progressing, and do you think it is the thing to come?*

Bill: I have been involved in church

ministry since 1956. I believe this decade of 1990 is different. It is not the same as I have seen in the past. Maybe part of that is where I am. Through the conferences and seminars of which I am involved, I see people asking questions that are different than those asked in the past. I believe that in the '90s in America, God is raising up cell church models. We have models all over the U.S.A. Part of this is happening because over the past three decades, God has been developing a different kind of Church. Dr. Neighbour in his book makes the comment that a program based church cannot transition. This affects people in different ways. Some get angry about it, and some agree with it.

When I first came back to the states a little over three years ago, there were only two kinds of churches: the program-based, designed church and the cell church. There was a big gap between the two. I believe God has raised up a creative church, which is a church in the middle. These churches do not have such a dramatic experience in transitioning.

In fact, they have been on that track for the last three decades. These churches were happy to make changes in the ways they worshipped, and they grew through the worship. They had some small groups, but mostly they centered in on worship like they were on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus building a tabernacle. What I saw happen is that two or three years ago God began to deal with them in a different way. All of a sudden, it was as if God said, "You have to come down off the mountain, down into the valley, and I'm going to use you in a special way." My experience has been that during the last two or three years, these churches, by the scores, have been given by God a new vision. We want a balance. We want the celebration of worship, but we also want the small groups. I have had contact with churches like that all over the U.S.A.

There is the Jubilee Christian Center in San Jose, California, which has over 5,000 members, and they are in transition. God has given them this vision. In Grand Prairie the Shady Grove Church near Dallas has been one of the premiere praise and

worship churches for the last three decades, but all of a sudden two to three years ago God gave them a new vision. These will be the churches that God will establish as models through in this decade. But I believe by the year 2000, we will see churches all over the U.S.A. who have become models of the functioning two-winged type churches, functioning in celebration and small groups in a balanced way. Along with that will be some mainline denominational churches that will also do this.

I am excited about this because if we had moved into transition from a pure program-based church to a cell church, the distance is too great. Most program-based churches must first shift to becoming a creative church before they can become a cell church. God has not allowed Himself to be left without those churches to fulfill His purposes. He has already raised this up, and it has been tremendously affirming to me to see what God has done. He has prepared a Church to enter into the 21st century.

*Dave: Christ really can build His Church.*

**Bill:** Yes, He can. I have learned, after pastoring three churches and being involved in church planting for over 15 years, that I cannot build His type of Church. There is a dynamic of His living presence and power that is absolutely essential. I can build my type of church, but the kind of Church that the gates of hell will not prevail against, only He can build. I have begun to experience more and more the absolute necessity of His presence and power to be that force that is building His Church. The closer we get to the New Testament Church, the more we realize that this is not an organization. It is an organism. We can build an organization, but we cannot birth an organism. This is only something God can do.

*Dave: Yes, as you said, it requires DNA. Why are cells so successful? Why are they growing through multiplication to such gigantic proportions?*

**Bill:** For fifteen years I have tried to determine what makes a small group cell successful. I have asked

all kinds of questions and looked at the various elements of a small group. But the more I have gotten into it, I see that the small groups are His Body. He, Christ, in the midst of His body is the DNA, the life source that causes everything else to take place. What I found myself doing is trying to make the groups successful by techniques, leadership development, materials, etc., that could be promoted. Over and over I saw that they would function for a while and then fail because the dynamic of the New Testament was not there. I came to understand that what Christ promised to those first disciples in the first century is what He promises us today. He said, in John 14, "I will not leave you orphans. I, Jesus, will come to you. The Father and I will abide with you, and the Spirit will be with and in you." So the DNA, the life force of these small groups, is His Living Presence. A thought He gave me from the beginning was, "What He indwells, He empowers, and when He indwells and empowers, He uses." So I have gained a complete new appreciation of the Church as the Living Body of Christ, because what I have come to believe is that the early Church experienced His promises. He never made them orphans. When they came together in those small groups, they were not meeting with some techniques and studying different things. Christ did what He promised He would do. He was in their midst, the incarnate, Living Christ. That is what continues to happen today, and it is the source of the power of the small groups. This is why the small groups can grow all over the world, regardless of the political pressure and persecution. When He is in the midst as the indwelling Christ, it becomes His body and He also empowers and uses that Body for ministry and evangelism. Thus, it is much simpler for me. I used to develop urban strategies that were terribly complex. But what I am seeing today and what was happening in the New Testament has been simplified. It has become far more practical. So our groups come together to focus on Him.

*Dave: When you come together for celebration, you have something to celebrate.*

**Bill:** Yes, we do, and the way I see it, when we come together for celebration, we come into His Presence, and He wants us to experience Him in His transcendence and eminence, the Most High God. We come before His throne in our celebration. But in our small groups He enters into our presence as He promises He will. "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst." This is the dynamic that gives such tremendous power to the Church as He designed it. He designed the Church structurally as the small group and the large group in a very simple structure so He could express His very nature to the Church. Thus, we can experience Him in that twofold nature — the God Most High.

When we come before His throne, we come into His Presence. When we meet in our homes, in small groups, He comes into our presence. This thought from the New Testament has gripped me as I see what is happening today. When the Triune God enters into our midst, this means it is not just another little meeting. We become His Body, His Living Presence, and His power and purpose are fulfilled in those groups when they come together.

*Dave: For our listeners, I want them to know that they can call 1-800-735-5865 for a free subscription to Cell Church Magazine.*

**Bill:** The seminar is a two day seminar in which we go through why do it, what is it, and how do I do it? We show the overall concept, the structure, and the strategy.

It is exciting to be part of what God is up to! I believe we are part of something that the prophets of old may have longed to see. When God's Church begins to function in the design that He made it, then some very dramatic and dynamic kinds of things are going to be happening. I am convinced we are going to see the Church operating in some ways that we have never seen before. For information write or phone:

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## David Bercot — *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*

**Bradshaw:** *Christianity was originally a revolution, and it challenged the attitudes, lifestyle, and values of the the ancient world. It was more than just a mere set of doctrines. It was an entire way of life. In the next segment, we are going to join author David Bercot, a Christian attorney who has been a student of early Christian history for the last eight years. He is located in Tyler, Texas. His book, Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up, is very provocative, and I am going to suggest that anyone listening to this tape get a copy of it if for no other reason than to begin to examine what the early Church Fathers, from Constantine all the way through Church history, the Reformers, believed and how it lines up with Scripture.*

*David, the title of your book alone is provocative. Your subtitle is A New Look at Today's Evangelical Church in The Light of Early Christianity. Let me read from chapter two, which asks, Who were the early Christians? Let me define some terms. by the term early Christian, I am primarily referring to Christians who lived between 90 and 199 A.D.*

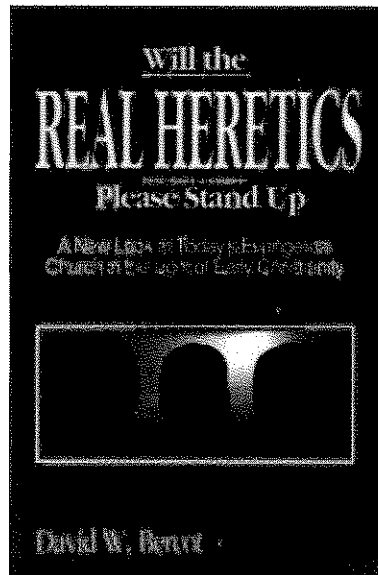
*You begin to discuss some of the early church fathers, eight major writers: Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius.*

*Give us an opening comment on why you think we have departed from the early Christian belief and have mixed in the traditions of men with the truths of God.*

**Bercot:** I think probably the primary factor is what I call at times Newton's First Law of Theology, sort of tongue in cheek, or Pendulum Theology. When there has been something wrong in the Church, reformers have so often tended to go to the opposite extreme to counteract it. So what has happened when you have nearly 2000 years of this, the Church deviates some way on a doctrine or on a life-style, and then comes along a reformer who is so upset about that, he wants to go to the opposite extreme to counteract it.

Between the two, so often what the early Christians were originally practicing or teaching got lost.

**Bradshaw:** *In your chapter, Citizens of Another Kingdom, you talk about the importance of the balance between what Jesus spoke of many times. "We are in the world. We are not of the world." He takes the world's system out of us, but then He sends us back into the world. Somehow our brain overloads when we try to comprehend that, and we tend, as you say, to go to an extreme where we consider ourselves either pietistic and out of the world's system, or so concerned with*



*the things of this earth that we are really not serving the purposes of the Kingdom.*

*You said that the early Church stressed separation from the world, number one, the unconditional love and obedient trust. Let me talk about this statement: "The supreme example of the early Church dynamic was the absolute trust in God and their acceptance of persecution. Every Christian of that time lived with a death sentence hanging over his head." Do you think that the fact that the Church today has comfortably merged with the world is one of the reasons why we need to go back and examine the roots of our faith?*

**Bercot:** I think that, right at the heart of it, persecution always does

act as a refiner's fire. You can look at the difference between evangelicals in Russia and evangelicals here in the United States and the difference in their commitment to the Lord and their willingness to be different from the world. When you have centuries of being tolerated or even courted by the world, what seems to inevitably happen is that the Church does influence the world, but then the world influences the Church. Here in the United States, of course, we have had that from the beginning. We have really had no direct persecution of Christians per se, sometimes of various denominations or sects, but not just from being Christian, and so we lose that refining edge as a result.

**Bradshaw:** *You point out in a chapter here that the Greek word for witness is martyr. How many Christians, even those of the remnant who go out witnessing, really understand what it means to lay our life down, putting our pride down. The early Church had a little different understanding when they witnessed. They knew their lives were on the line.*

*Let me read from chapter four, Is Right and Wrong Simply a Matter of Culture? "Early Christianity was a revolution that swept across the ancient world like fire through dry timber. It was a countercultural movement that challenged the pivotal institutions of Roman society. As Tertullian wrote: 'Our contest lies against the institutions of our ancestors, against the authority of tradition, against the man-made laws, against the reasoning of the worldly wise, against antiquity, and against customs.'" You point out that most of the cultural issues facing twentieth century Christians are the very same issues that faced the first century Church. Could you explain?*

**Bercot:** Yes, that was one of the things that excited me the most and challenged me at the same time. When I first got into the early Church writings, I was looking for answers to theological questions. I was not expecting to have my life challenged. I did not get very far before I realized, "Hey, those



people were facing the same issues — divorce, ungodly entertainment, abortion, and teaching that man got here by accident or chance rather than by a Creator. The same kinds of issues we face today, they had to face as well."

**Bradshaw:** *Even abortion, which we think is the epitome of issues facing Christians today, you discuss that the Romans took care of unwanted pregnancies in three ways. They either strangled the newborn babies, they abandoned them at the roadside, or they aborted the fetus. The early Christians took a strong stand against this. Tertullian explained, "In our case, since murder is forbidden in any form, we may not destroy the fetus in the womb." Obviously we in the twentieth century suffer from discontinuity from what has gone on in the past. We need to learn history. We need to go back and dig and learn.*

*Moving ahead in your book, you discuss the difference between the Christian and the pagan teachers. "As anyone who teaches principles to live by and molds the characters of others, I ask, 'Is he not obligated himself to live by the principles he teaches? And if he does not live by them, his teaching is nullified.' If you are so convinced that it is possible to live contrary to natural impulses, let me first see you practice the things that you teach, and I will know that they are possible. For this very reason, no one obeys the teachings of the philosophers. Men prefer examples to words because it is so easy to speak but difficult to act." These are the words of Lactantius, one of the early Church Fathers.*

*From your perspective, doesn't this hit on the key issue that we are facing today and that is that the world system does not mind philosophers. They are perfectly happy "to jump in bed with" New Age gurus, Eastern mystics, or even a nice cozy, warm, fuzzy Christianity that does not call them on the mat. But when you start talking about people's lifestyles, all of a sudden, you are challenging the world's system.*

**Bercot:** That is one of the reasons the early Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire — because their Christianity was not

just a matter of theology, but it infected their lifestyle and challenged the culture of the Roman Empire.

**Bradshaw:** *Let's talk about when that began to change. You identify early Christianity up to 199 A.D. What began to happen then about the beginning of the third century?*

**Bercot:** As the Church grew — this seems to be a natural process that happens with every organism — pretty soon it gets more institutionalized, and you have not as many new converts. You have people whose parents were Christians. So there seems to be a lot more carnality and greater institutionalism in the third century.

**Bradshaw:** *Now let's talk about the watershed issue in A.D. 313 with the first "I am here from the government, and I am here to help you" Emperor Constantine. You say that he was probably one of the worst things to ever happen to the Church. Let me read from your chapter, How Early Christianity Was Destroyed.*

*"Constantine was a born leader — a decisive man of action who could both inspire and organize people... Eusebius, the church historian, later described what Constantine told him had happened," dealing with his "conversion." "He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the cross of light in the heavens above the sun, bearing the inscription, 'By this, conquer.' Constantine said, later that he had a dream in which Christ told him to construct a military standard in the form of a cross." At that point, Constantine began to shower blessings on the Church. The Edict of Milan was in A.D. 313. You say that Constantine did not make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. He simply gave Christians legal recognition for the first time, putting Christianity on equal footing with other religions of the empire.*

**Bercot:** A lot of people have the idea that Constantine made Christianity the state religion, meaning that you have to belong to that religion. Constantine did not do that. Up to that time, it was

technically illegal to be a Christian, and that is why there was sporadic persecution. Usually governors did not do anything about it. But every now and then, something would happen, and they would just massacre the Christians. The law was already there, hanging over their heads. So for the first time with the Edict of Milan, you could actually be a Christian, and nothing was going to happen to you for being that.

Secondly, since Constantine did believe in Christianity as the true religion, he started promoting it. Christians were given places in government, etc. So now it became fashionable to be a Christian. Instead of being this religion of the persecuted, of the poor, of the ragged, it became the religion of the high class. The stability of society was now in Christianity, and so it changed the nature of the Church.

**Bradshaw:** *One of the big things that also happened was that during Constantine we began paying salaries for a separate class of leadership called clergy, which made everyone else laity.*

**Bercot:** The state paid salaries for the first time. Up to that time, the Church had believed it was heretical to pay salaries, not heretical to support the ones in the ministry. In fact they did believe that those who taught the Word should live by the Word, but it was not a job where, "Okay, I agree I will get paid x number of denarii a month." You lived off the free will offerings like the widows and orphans did. But now you had not only salaries, you also had money coming from the state in many instances.

**Bradshaw:** *You point out that the walls were beginning to crumble at this point on Apostolic Christianity, and the Church no longer equated change with error, which was something the early Church had strictly held to. "Rather the Church began believing that Christianity could actually change for the better. Before long, the name Christian became meaningless. One of the immediate effects from the Church, friendship with the world, was that it began*

*adopting the world's methods. This was inevitable because the world cannot do things God's ways."*

*So what happened was that the character of Christianity changed. For the first time Constantine went on a giant building program, and the intimacy, the warmth, the fellowship, and the accountability, which we saw primarily functioning in homes was lost. Do you think that we are still struggling with the effects of that today?*

**Bercot:** Obviously so. It has still affected the Church, and sometimes we have overreacted to that problem. Other times we have just continued to pursue it. It certainly is a challenge to how do we get back to what the Church was, because obviously it has changed. We are living in a situation where we are not being persecuted. I do not think we are to go out and try to get persecuted. But it does mean that we have quite a challenge to be able to live the same sort of life they did, now that there are more artificial Christians and more of a nominal structure out there. And you have a society that says it is fine to be a Christian, and they are not going to do anything to you particularly as long as you do not challenge their lifestyle.

*Bradshaw: Let's talk about how Constantine tried to bring unity in the Church as he brought about the Council of Nice. You mentioned at the end of chapter 13 that with the Council of Nicea, the goal was to have a church-wide council and every congregation represented through this.*

*"The metropolitans were generally the overseers of the churches. Where the apostles who had once personally taught. So this new canon law was derived from the earlier voluntary practice of referring questions of the elders to these churches. However, the previous practice was not based on the current belief that the current overseer of those churches had any continuing authority or revelation from God. In contrast, the metropolitans were now hailed as having such continuity authority from God. Submission to them was no longer voluntary." Here we see the Church moving from*

*an autonomous individual congregational rule with decentralized leadership, to the priest essentially stepping in, saying that he has directly descended from the Apostles and now all decisions will be centralized. Do you see a problem with that? That it violates early Christianity?*

**Bercot:** Yes, although it is important here that we perhaps define our terms or put them in the context of the early Church. When you and I say that there were the autonomous congregations, that is exactly correct. On the other hand, the churches had a very real commitment to the belief that there is one flock, one Body of Christ. So there was voluntary submission to the Church as a whole. One congregation did not just go its own way even though there was not anybody who had judicial authority or legislative authority over that congregation. But congregations did work together when issues came up. They met together. The overseers, the presbyters from the congregation, would meet together and try to work out something that would be consistent throughout the whole region. So sometimes we have overreacted to the later practice of institutionalizing everything and putting men called patriarchs or whatever over the churches, which was a chain, but we have to be careful in that we do not overreact, saying, "I want to do things MY way. I do not have to answer to the rest of the Body."

**Bradshaw:** We need to recover that equilibrium.

**Bercot:** Exactly.

**Bradshaw:** Here we have the Nicene Creed. You say, "From a human standpoint, it appeared that Constantine had accomplished something wondrous. The Church would never again be torn apart by controversies and divisive practices." Yet you are skeptical. You say, "300 years of ultra conservatism could not be undone quite so quickly. Nice did not bring about the Church unity that Constantine hoped for." Please explain.

**Bercot:** What they were trying to do at Nice was — of course the first

issue was Arianism, which was a definite heresy — but to combat it, they came up with a creed that included a term that is not in Scripture. Now the term is consistent with Scripture, and it is consistent with what the early Christians believed. But you had a lot of the elders and overseers in the churches react against that because they said, "Wait a minute, we are adding something new to the faith that was once delivered to all the saints. Not that we are changing the faith, but we are adding a new word that now becomes a password of whether you are orthodox or not. They saw that there is a danger in this because if we do that here, somewhere down the line they are going to keep doing it, and the next time maybe it will not be such an orthodox thing when they do it. It might be a word that is actually unscriptural.

So rather than having a unified church, before Nice, you did have one church even though there were squabbles from time to time and all of that. But not too long after Nice, you finally ended up with whole sections of the Church going their own way and not being in communion with other whole sections of the Church. So man's way of trying to work it, really did not work out.

**Bradshaw:** Yes, and if that is not bad enough, under Constantine, they had a misguided view that it was the Church's job to wield the sword because the Church and state to a large degree did blend together. So you had Christians picking up the sword. Today we get in verbal arguments, but back then they were chopping off heads and crucifying people and all kinds of vicious slaughtering over doctrinal differences.

*You point out that the fabric of Christianity began to fade and tear and the emphasis continued to shift from Christian life to Christian doctrine.*

*Let's move ahead to discuss what you consider the most influential of the Church Fathers, Augustine, the Fourth Bishop of Hippo. You say he was the most influential teacher of all time, and he was not just influential on Roman Catholicism but also the*

*Father of Protestantism. Please explain that.*

**Bercot:** Yes, when I say he was the most influential teacher in the Church, I am limiting that to the Western Church. The whole Eastern Church, for the most part, has not been influenced by Augustine. He was a real thinker. He was trying to defend the Church against schism, against heresy, but he had such a brilliant mind, he would come up with these very good sounding arguments to counteract some heretic. Back to this rule again of Newton's Law of overreacting. For example, with Pelagius, who was essentially teaching, or at least as it got interpreted, he was teaching that we could be saved without grace. Of course that is very contrary to the message of Christianity. But then Augustine, trying to counteract that, ended up with the teaching that we cannot even serve God because we are so depraved. So salvation is all a matter of predestination. We are either predestined to heaven or hell before we are ever born based not on anything we have done, just simply on God's whim of what He wants to do. It was that teaching that was actually the Reformation teaching both of Luther and of Calvin.

**Bradshaw:** *Let's talk now about the Reformation. As a result of this merging of the Church with the world, we fell into the Dark Ages. It was nearly one thousands years of trudging through Crusades and through a period of time in which God's Word was abused. It was used as a hammer on people. We see just a horrendous time in the Church during that period, and then you state here in the chapter dealing with the Reformation, A Return to Early Christianity, that in the eleven hundred years between Augustine and Luther, Western Christianity had moved from side to side and all around, but it ended right back where Augustine left it. Luther did eliminate many post-Constantinian practices in the German church, such as the use of images, relics, and prayers to saints and masses for the dead in purgatory. Let's certainly give credit to Luther for restoring sola scriptura and putting the Bible ahead of the Church's authority.*

*But you say here that even Luther's model of sola scriptura was de facto only in myth since Luther took great pains to make certain that the Christians did not hear the Scriptures alone. Give us a little idea of what you mean.*

**Bercot:** Although Luther mouthed the slogan "sola scriptura, only Scripture," he was quite intolerant of anybody's interpretation of Scripture that was different from his own. Even in his Bible translation, he put introductions at the beginning of each of the books of the Bible, at least at the beginning of the New Testament books in which he then tried to mold the reader's thinking so that when his reader would read the Book of Romans or the Book of Acts, he would already be influenced by Luther's interpretation of that book, so the reader would not get just the Scriptural interpretation alone. In a few places, Luther even added words to Scripture that are not there in order to make it fit his theology.

**Bradshaw:** *Let's now talk about another wing of the Reformation, a group that was often times historically referred to as the heretics, the Anabaptists. You say here, "Of the three wings of the Reformation, the Anabaptists were the furthest removed from the theological seminaries and dogmas of the Catholic Church. Both Calvin and Luther had studied theology in Catholic universities. Casting off centuries of Catholic dogma and tradition, they wanted to restore the pure New Testament Christianity by independently studying the Scriptures." Give us an example.*

*You discuss an example of their concept of the separation of Church and state. You say they taught that infant baptism was invalid. What are some of the parallelisms? Anabaptism has been attacked many times for various things, but you seem to be standing up for it here and suggesting that many of the things that they taught are more Scriptural than some of the things that the Reformers taught.*

**Bercot:** Yes, they worked perfectly. They did make some theological

errors, but more than any of the other wings of the Reformation, they understood the concept of Christ's Kingdom being no part or not of this world and that we are to live a life that is not of this world.

Sometimes they went into extremes where I think they tried to almost physically get out of the world, which is not what we are called to do. But they were an important witness to so many of the things that the early Christians preached and believed and which Jesus and the Apostles taught of living separately from this world; of taking the Sermon on the Mount, and instead of viewing it as something that applies to another dispensation or just a nice thought for the day, that this was actually what our Lord taught, that He expected us to live by, at least to the extent that we are able.

They are the only ones out of the Reformation who recovered that truth that the Sermon on the Mount is something real for Christians today. It is what Christians took as their statement of faith in the early centuries.

**Bradshaw:** *Let me read from The Rebirth of Early Christianity, discussing the Anabaptists. "They stood in stark contrast to the Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic churches in their brotherly care for one another. Anabaptists declared, 'This mercy, love, and community that we teach and practice and have taught and have practiced these seventeen years, God be thanked forever that although our property has to a great extent been taken away from us, and is still daily taken, and many a righteous father and mother are put to the sword or fire, and although we are not allowed the free enjoyment of our homes as is manifest. . . yet none of those who have joined us, nor any of their orphaned children been forced to beg.' "*

*You talk about how they preached the message of the Cross. They refused to fight back or retaliate against their persecution. Would this be seen as the birth of pacifism in the Church?*

**Bercot:** Or non-resistance — that we do not have to use the means of the world to defend the Church and to propagate Christianity. When

Christians depended solely on the protection of God, the Church thrived even though the mightiest empire in the world had ruled them illegal. When it was punishable by death just to be a Christian, yet the Roman Empire was never able to stamp out Christianity. What happens when we take the sword to preserve Christianity, which is what happened during the Middle Ages, is that pretty soon, yes, sometimes we are successful, and we defend the institution, but we lose what the whole point of Jesus' teaching is all about.

**Bradshaw:** *I noticed that when Jesus rebuked Peter for cutting the ear off, they were wearing swords, so He was not against them having some personal means of protection. Is this taken to an extreme among some who advocate that Christians should never be involved in any form of self-defense even?*

**Bercot:** People have had some different thoughts on that. I guess I would not view it as going to an extreme. I have seen the examples of people's lives who have lived by that commitment and really trusted God, and God has protected them. On the other hand, I think we can be a bit judgmental toward people who are living in this world in dealing with some of these tough teachings of Jesus Christ.

**Bradshaw:** *The Anabaptists were called "the heaven stormers." They completely rejected the doctrine of predestination. Would some trace the Neo-pietism of the twentieth century to an extreme view of the Anabaptists being "so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good" type of thing? Or would that be traceable somewhere else?*

**Bercot:** I would like to hear more twentieth century people saying that. Maybe you have observed things I have not. I have not seen that many people really living with their heart and head in heaven. They might be saying that, but so often their lives speak differently.

**Bradshaw:** *I guess what I mean is believing that Christ can redeem us individually but not believing that*

*there is any call to bring redemption to the other institutions such as the area of civil government or law. I am not saying to bring it under the sword. But I am saying that that I am concerned about the pietism that we have seen, which is an escapism, meaning that Christians become so concerned about themselves alone that they are not concerned with reaching out to the culture. Did the Anabaptists reach out and have a keen desire not just within their own group but outside of that, into their existing society?*

**Bercot:** Some did. Some withdrew into a shell, as I mentioned in the book, which is not the right course of action. The early Christians did not teach that government was evil and that we are to just stay as far apart from it as we can. In fact they always prayed for the Emperor. The Scriptures teach to do that. On the other hand, it does raise a lot of questions when you have "Christian government." How do you affect society without being tainted by society yourself? That is something I do not think there is an easy answer to. I think there is always going to be a dynamic tension there of being not of the world and yet caring about society around us.

**Bradshaw:** *Yes, that is our job in life, to learn how to walk that balance.*

*You ask in your book, "What does this all mean for us? I am suggesting that the evangelical Church needs to face up to early Christians. For the most part, evangelicals simply ignore early Christians."*

*Our approach to early Christians is very similar, you point out, to Scripture from Matthew 21 where the Scribes and the Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus, and they finally said, "We don't know." That seems to be the position of the Church. "We cannot say their beliefs were orthodox, because then we would have to acknowledge that our own beliefs are not. On the other hand, we do not want to accuse them of being heretics, because we can't deny their unconquerable faith and genuine Christian love."*

*You are now calling for the Church to come to the point of doctrinal humility*

*— unity without uniformity. Why don't you lay out some of the things that you think we can learn from the "heretics from history"? Give us a little bit of your prescription so we can see some healing in the Body of Christ and can begin to come together and see God's Kingdom advanced.*

**Bercot:** I think my basic proposition is that, first of all, there needs to be a real commitment on all of our parts that the Body of Christ needs to be one. It is sin to have this sort of division among us.

On the other hand, the answer is not, "What is the lowest common denominator that we can find among all professing believers?" (Sort of the World Council of Churches approach, so that we can all be one by throwing out many of the key doctrines of the faith.) That is not the answer. The answer is that we need to go back and see what the Christians believed when the Church was one during that period before Constantine when there was only one Church, when the Church not only was one but really lived its Christianity.

We need to lay down our different denominational barriers and just go back with humility and look and see what did these people believe, what did they live, and can we return to that? I guess for me, that should not be that hard of a thing to do. I wish it was not such a revolutionary idea because it really is such a common-sense thing that we all should want to do in order to really all be one all together.

**Bradshaw:** *As you look around at the Church in America, there are some new winds blowing here and there, bringing back the importance of the early Church intimacy, the relational networking rather than more and more doctrine. As Gene Edwards has said, "Many pastors are preaching the people to death." Again, there is a balance that needs to be struck here. But do you see the recovery of the emphasis of the small group focus rather than the emphasis on the megachurch — maybe moving to a smaller base, whether house church or whatever you want to call it, or a traditional church broken up? What are you experiencing there in your church life in Tyler, Texas?*

**Bercot:** We would be part of that movement of small house churches not necessarily because we want to be small, nor do I feel it is wrong to meet in a building. But I do see a problem with the other trend, which is toward the megachurches.

There seems to be sort of a polarization. I see this trend of small churches, of home churches growing, but I also see the megachurches as being a growing movement as well. So often, to be able to function as a megachurch, it means having to compromise a lot of the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ because those are not going to always appeal to a large group. Usually it means having all sorts of things, extra things, programs and such. I am not saying they are sin, but the megachurches use those sorts of things as tools to attract people to the church. It makes me think so much of Constantine's era, of making the Church desirable from the fleshly standpoint. You do attract people that way, but you end up with a very carnal church.

I am excited that there are more Christians willing to move back to the more intimate, small group sort of thing. The only caution I would have with that, that I have so often seen, is that so often it does center on somebody's individualism — that they just do not want to go with other Christians. They want to be their own apostle. They want to take Scripture and just interpret it by themselves without having to look at what Christians over the last 2000 years have believed.

As we have said throughout this, there always has to be that balance there. I guess from my perspective, I have seen much more openness to even going back and looking at what the early Church believed in the small groups. I have not had any megachurch that has volunteered to go back and dig and see. I have had a lot of small groups who have done that.

**Bradshaw:** *I would concur with that. Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up is a fascinating overview of the early Christians — who they were, how they lived, what they believed. We need to recover some of that spirit of the early Church.*

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## Johnny and Juanita Berguson — The Dynamic Model

**Dave:** *The Bergusons serve as volunteer staff co-ordinators for Open Church Ministries. They operate an INC. 500 company entitled Kingdom Tapes and are launching a new project called Kingdom Praise. Their conversion to Christ was through a Billy Graham film in the 1970s. Later they became involved with the Armstrong cult and, when coming out of it, felt they should minister to people in cults. Still later, Johnny trained an Arabian horse and traveled the nation in an evangelistic ministry. Tell us something about that.*

**Johnny:** I trained an Arabian horse named Sheik. When we began performing, we were billed as Johnny and the Sheik. My horse performed without a bridle, with only a saddle, and did dozens of tricks. We went to horse shows, fairs, and community festivals and appeared on Christian television programs numerous times, as well as secular programs. Our main objective was to go and reach people who might otherwise not hear the Gospel and to let them hear it outside the Church setting. We also did special programs for churches and in an attempt to draw people from the community. We saw thousands of people make decisions for the Lord.

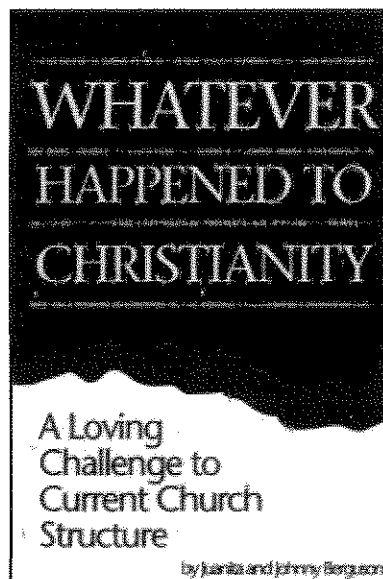
**Dave:** *You have mentioned that, as you traveled the country, you began to see that the Church in the U.S.A. is in serious trouble. Please explain what you mean.*

**Johnny:** As we traveled, we went to churches of many different denominations. We were there because the churches were concerned about souls. So those churches had us there in an attempt to reach people. We learned that the pastor and a handful of people would be seriously overworked, often without seeing the results you would expect. There were many other people who did not know what to do or how to function. We would also see that the people who made decisions for the Lord were not knit into the local churches. I had one man who came out to see us and got saved. This man had not been to church in eight years. Two years later he phoned and asked that if there was anything he could do to help our

ministry, he wanted to do it. I replied, "Everything is fine. I really do not need anything, but are you involved in a church?" He answered, "No, but I am reading my Bible every day." He had gotten saved but never got knit into a local fellowship. Many of the churches did not know how to knit these people in although they tried very hard.

**Dave:** *Juanita, how were you involved?*

**Juanita:** I was very supportive in our traveling. We had two children and



did a lot of road work so there was a lot to be involved in there. Early on when we found that people were not being knit in the Church, and we were trying to figure out why, I read a book on discipleship by Juan Carlos Ortiz. This was quite an eye opener for us since we saw that Jesus' main ministry was individual to individual. We asked ourselves, "What if we took just the Bible, what kind of Church would it look like?" Out of that study I wrote a book called *What Ever Happened to Christianity?: A Loving Challenge to Current Church Structure*. This put a lot of our thoughts into perspective.

**Dave:** *What happened when you were traveling with Sheik?*

**Juanita:** When we were traveling with Sheik, I was largely a

physical support to my husband. We had two children who traveled with us. Because I was interested in the spiritual aspect of the ministry, we spent a lot of time discussing the problems we saw in people being knit into the local churches. Sometime around the latter part of our ministry we came across the book, *Disciple*, by Juan Carlos Ortiz, and I read it and shared with Johnny. This was a real challenge to us because he emphasized person-to-person ministry while a great deal of what we did was program oriented. Through that book, we began to question the fundamentals of the way the Church was organized, in terms of what we see today, compared to what we see in Scripture. At that time we felt we were the only ones. When we came across Jim Rutz, we became aware of the fact that there were a great number of people across the nation who were concerned about the structure of the Church and how it was organized and how it should function. A lot of our conclusions melded right in with what a lot of other people had come to as well. I feel my role in this has been one of a pathfinder: looking at Scripture and our worldview and then seeing how it fits together and what should it look like.

**Dave:** *With Open Church Ministries your involvement is trying to present some dynamic models for the greater Church to consider. In your booklet, What Ever Happened to Christianity?, you discuss the fact that Christianity began as something much more simple than what we see today, that there are many structures built that people feel are necessary. What are some models that you feel are most viable?*

**Juanita:** The Scripture is where we must start, and in the Bible the Church is spoken of as a family. I think that whenever we get away from that, we have gotten away from our roots. The real undergirding of the Church function has to be modeled off the Church in the love and care that family members show toward each other. The family structure can be preserved and operated in a large church structure if thought is used in how the

structure is built and how the body interrelates with each other to make sure the family element is maintained. The reason we are seeing a lot of people addressing the current Church structure is because overall people somehow realize that we have moved from a family structure with close, interwoven relationships to more of an organizational structure where it is sometimes business as usual. The family structure really is not there because you can come and go and not ever feel knit in, or cared for and taken care of. So, largely what we are addressing in all our efforts is to restore the family emphasis of Scripture.

**Johnny:** I would like to interject something here. If someone does not think the Church should be a family, why do we call each other brother and sister? God intended that there be a love relationship and a close relationship. When the early church met, they ate together, broke bread together, and met together daily. We cannot meet daily, but we can have a lot closer relationships with each other than what usually happens within a congregation. We also believe that each person should utilize their gifts. Who gave anyone the right to prevent someone from using their gifts or to hinder it? The Scriptures command us all to use our gifts. We are not saying that anyone commanded anyone not to do it, but the way our structure is set up, it inhibits people from utilizing their gifts. There are only so many gifts that can be utilized in a program-based church. If the whole program is set, and there is no time set for open sharing, how can someone who has some of the other gifts ever be expected to function?

**Dave:** *Your conclusions brought you to go to your pastor and share some of these things. What was his response?*

**Juanita:** Our church's response was like that of several other pastors we had shared it with. They were interested. They said it was valid, but they did not know how to implement it in the current structure. In the open church network, this is one of the goals we are striving to realize. We want to help people to not only recognize that there are principles we are not utilizing, but

also to give them real resources and connect them with other people who are, in fact, using principles of operating the Church successfully.

**Johnny:** The end result of all this was that our Church, with 100% approval of the church leadership, sent Juanita and me out to start a church in our home that was completely autonomous. It is not organizationally connected with that congregation. They laid hands on us and sent us out with their blessing. They did not want to control us but to help us do what we felt the Lord leading us to do.

We did start a church in our home, and it has functioned very well and grown. We are to the point now where we are ready to begin other churches in homes functioning right alongside the traditional churches. We are not involved per se in a home or house church movement. We believe that the Lord has led us into this so we can learn many things that have been lost or perhaps things that have not been understood since the time of the Reformation. Through meeting in our homes, we have learned many things that are very obvious in the Scriptures. Things we saw in the Scriptures we have lived out. Because of that, the Lord has shown us ways we can bring some of these things back to the traditional Church. We want to bring as much back to the traditional Church as we possibly can without breaking anything. We do not want to tear anything down or destroy. We want to build up. There are many principles that we and others have learned that the traditional Church can use. So, I believe there are new wineskins coming.

**Dave:** *Share with us what you have learned as to how to restore open sharing, open ministry, and worship that Open Church Ministries is promoting.*

**Johnny:** Our church has no one designated to contribute on a given Sunday morning. If the Holy Spirit did not act, we would have no church service. Usually, one or two people will come with a very brief message. When we get to Church, someone will speak extemporaneously. When they have concluded, someone else will say, "That's just what the Lord showed me to prepare," and

they will share their portion. Finally a third person will share something that fits right in. Frequently we will have one to five people share on the exact same topic, with each sharing a little more. The Holy Spirit is in control. It took us a long while to get to the place where we could trust the Holy Spirit to do this. People have asked us if they could come and speak, and we have told them that they probably will not be the only person to speak. The message they would bring, the Holy Spirit has used right along with the other messages that other people might speak in our service. What do these people say? Some will bring a teaching. Some will bring a word of encouragement. Others will bring a song. But the Lord intends for all of us to participate. The Scripture says that everyone of us are to participate — to bring a song, a teaching, or a revelation.

**Juanita:** The thing we have learned through our experience in home church is that we can trust the Holy Spirit to guide in our meeting. There are those who bring words of instruction, words of teaching, and encouragement. All the different gifts are presented and used to encourage the whole Body. It is one thing for us to say that it is theoretically possible to happen. It is quite another thing to actually live through it and actually see it happen. The members must have a dynamic and living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Dave:** *What would you say to those who say that we already do that in our weekly Bible study fellowships, and when we come together on Sunday, we want some fancy preaching and a choir. We do not want to meet in homes. We want to meet in buildings.*

**Johnny:** We would encourage them to continue what they are doing but to set a time aside in their service where they can have open worship, sharing, and ministry. It will do much to revitalize the life of the congregation. We encourage them to have their choir, to have their speaker, but to set a special time aside for this open sharing. Even if you start with just five minutes, we believe that before long, you may need a half hour. You will find that real ministry happens. God does

things that we could not dream of happening, and the Lord has had to really teach me to trust Him in this. There have been several times where I knew that four or five people who might bring a good teaching were absent, and I wondered, "Who will bring a good teaching?" I asked the Lord, "Should I prepare something?" Almost every time the Lord has told me not to prepare anything. I was fearful that no one would bring a teaching. "What is going to happen?" I would ask myself. For example, one time all those who I thought could bring anything deeply spiritual were away. Sunday morning came, and about five minutes into our singing in walked a gentleman who had moved away two years before. After just a few minutes, he said, "The Lord showed me this morning that I should prepare something," and he gave a fantastic teaching. That was followed by someone else in the group who was not that mature but who brought a teaching that perfectly correlated to the first teaching. What the second person shared would not have been that significant by itself, but when put with what the first person shared, had a deep impact. So we can trust the Holy Spirit to bring the message that He wants brought and what He wants to take place during our meeting. There is a time when someone needs to be loved, to pray, or to share a deep-felt need, and then for the Body to reach out and respond to that person. Others may want to give testimony and spontaneous praise to the Lord as they rejoice in what the Lord has done for them.

**Dave:** *When we talk about the problems in our current system, what do you see as the focal point or the crux of the matter?*

**Juanita:** The way I see it is that the coaches are the players. If you can imagine going to a ball game and seeing the players lined up in rows on the sidelines and the coaches going out on the field to play the game, you would know that something was not right. In a lot of respects, this is what is expected of the average believer. They are to live their lives vicariously through the leaders. The leaders play the game. The members watch and

listen but leave the ministry to the professionally trained ministers and leaders.

**Johnny:** **I think many believers know that they are not supposed to just sit and do nothing, but there is no opportunity for them.** They are waiting for the day when they can share and when they can teach and do something valuable. Many believers think that maybe someday they will be called into the ministry or off to the mission field or into some special project, but that is not the way God intended it. In the fourteenth chapter of Corinthians, Paul talks about when the whole Church comes together in assembly. In verse 26 it says, "What then is the outcome, brethren? When you assemble, each one, has a psalm, a revelation, an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." There is a place where every member can participate in the assembly. Now perhaps not everyone can participate on every Sunday, but there can be a place or time when those who did not plan to speak can.

**Dave:** *In the early Church model, we see meetings in homes with everyone ready to share and participate. What is the key element that perpetuates the current situation when it is not found in the Bible?*

**Juanita:** The structure in the early Church was primarily defined by relationships. The underlying organization supported those relationships and enhanced them. In the current Church, the structure is primarily defined by the organization or institution. It is very modular in the current system with pastors, Sunday school teachers, and youth leaders. It is often a very plug-in-play system. In other words, if a change is made, you unplug this leader and plug in another leader. The system perpetuates itself in that it remains. The leaders change, the faces in the congregation change, but the program remains intact. In the New Testament model, it was a dynamic, growing model. If change came, it was as a result of growth. In a family you expect to have children and for them to grow up and leave home. In the current model, growth inhibits the function of the Church or Sunday school class. It originally starts with dynamic relationships

and lots of exchange, but as growth happens, the ability to have those exchanges decreases, where growth either levels off or you have a regression.

**Johnny:** I believe that the Church should raise the leadership from within, from people they know. In the New Testament there is no example of importing church leadership or of hiring someone from a distance to come in and minister to you. The Scripture talks about a hireling, that in time of danger they flee, but that the shepherd stays with the sheep. I am not saying that pastors who are hired will flee, but until they are there for several years and get to know and love the people, they cannot relate to them in the same way as someone who does know and love them. If you raise sheep or people from infancy, you are going to have a much different relationship with them than you would if you just came into a situation where there was a problem and you are expected to deal with it. You are at a disadvantage because you do not know these people. That is not the pastor's fault. It is just the situation that the current system puts him in. Ideally, we have to raise up people to leadership from within, and then the shepherd will know the sheep.

**Dave:** *Dudley Hall says that in the early Church "life begged for structure, whereas today, structure begs for life." Why then does the current structure struggle for life?*

**Juanita:** I think the key element is the leadership of the Church. Ultimately they are responsible for the Church, God having entrusted that to them. Our current system has problems, and unfortunately, the pastors are the biggest victims of the current system.

**Dave:** *Let's talk about some solutions. What are some of the models of change affecting the Church. Can it be changed? Is it "do-able" in our lifetime?*

**Juanita:** Yes, I think it can be changed and that it is happening right now. There is a new awareness of the Church and how it should function. God is sovereignly moving and bringing this awareness to people to bring this change. The



process starts with creating awareness. That is one of the reasons I appreciate this series because it creates a key block in that foundation. I know when we began to see the difference between the current structure and the Bible, we felt that we were the only ones. I remember feeling like Elijah. "Lord, there is just us." Now, you can go into a Christian bookstore and pull a couple of dozen books off the shelf that are essentially saying the same things — that the structure needs to change.

The next phase we need to go into is putting the things we are learning into practice. That will have to be a trial-and-error process, because the traditional structure causes us to trust in leaders who are given a pre-assigned role and the others are to follow. The new model is much more of a team model wherein we learn to play the game together. This is more difficult because we have to learn what the different functions and roles are of the different members. It would be nice to think that, if we just opened up the Church, the members would do what God has given them to do. However, as I talk with pastors and various people who are working in this, there is the initial fear that, if they open up the Church, everyone will want to take over. But the reality of the matter is that when the Church is opened up, the people do not know how to function. So one of the main roles of the leadership is to equip and encourage the members to discover and exercise their gifts and function as a team. For example, if you have a ball team where the members do not know how to pitch, hit, or throw the ball, the ball will be dropped, and the game will not go smoothly. It is the same way in the Church where we have members who do not know how to function. Thus, they need help. The Scripture says that, when all the members function together, the Body will experience growth and, thus, up build itself in love. The key is to get all the members to function.

*Dave: There are a lot of differing views as to whether the New Testament model can co-exist with the current model. What are your views on this?*

**Juanita:** I think they have to co-exist, at least to start. Otherwise

God would have to wipe us all out and start over again. The current system is in our minds, not only of the believers, but of the unbelievers as well. Everyone knows what they can expect of the organized Church, but we know that some of the tradition is based on Scripture and some is not. The sorting out process is going to take a long time. It is not going to happen over night. At any point, both of them have to exist together. I think the key is to have the vision of where we are going and to move consistently toward that vision, letting the things that do not fit with the vision fall off and die and nourish those things that are in the vision.

*Dave: So it is not either/or, but both/and. In your book, you said that a local church should be able to reproduce itself, and that probably about any structure can work but that some are better than others. You have talked about a "dynamic Church model." Could you tell us more about that?*

**Johnny:** This is something that the Lord showed Juanita after we had examined some of the other models. How could we put this together in a manner so that it would function? It is our goal to bring these concepts to the traditional Church without breaking or cracking anything.

**Juanita:** We have heard from people about the cell model and about some of the other models. The dynamic model is not so much a different model but a conglomeration of what is actually working. The key is what works and what is in harmony with the New Testament and its basic goals and objectives. If you have a vision that is in harmony and works, it is a workable vision. The dynamic model presents four levels: the individual level, the small group level, the congregation level, and the celebration level. Each level needs to be reproductive. Those levels exist in the current or traditional Church now. At the individual level, there is unlimited possibility. You are limited only to what you can personally produce. However, reproduction becomes difficult when you move up to the other levels. When you move to the small group level, for example, the Sunday school classes, the choir, and youth groups are limited in their

reproductive ability. If they grow, the reason for the growth in the first place is undermined. Usually the group is growing because they feel comfortable and connected, but as the group grows, that feeling dissipates, because it is hard to have meaningful relationships in larger groups. As the structure is undermined, you get to the point where growth either stops or falls off. The same problem exists for the other levels, perhaps not as much in the celebration level.

But in the dynamic model, what we have done is create a model that can be reproductive at all four levels. The primary element of the dynamic model is the individual — developing the individual to the full potential that God has given them. People can use their gifts, they can function, they can do what they need to do to build the Kingdom of God. As they are equipped, they are able to function at the other levels of the Church. This stands in contrast to the traditional model of the Church where at the higher levels, it is usually reserved for the professional. In the dynamic model, when the individual is equipped to function at all levels, it frees up the pastor to follow his main gifting and calling. For example, if the pastor is an evangelist, he can put much more time into that or any other gift he has, because in his current status, he probably does not have much time for expressing his strongest gifts. If a pastor has an apostolic calling, the ability to lay the foundations of a local church and see that it begins functioning, then he is able to raise up leadership, which will set him free to function in the larger area of the Church, perhaps to other churches in the area or in foreign missions. So the dynamic model is actually a model that enables people to start at the beginning stage and move up to through all the levels of the Church. Thus, there is an unlimited potential to where ministry can lead.

*Dave: If we get the revival that we are praying for, it does not seem that there is any other way to deal with the numbers who will be coming into the Church — to truly equip them to minister to their fullest abilities.*

**Juanita:** Growth is the key.

Anything that is alive grows and reproduces. You can keep an institution alive for centuries if you have well defined traditions that are easy to follow and give meaning to people. It will survive even long after most of the meaning has gone. **But if a congregation is to function as an organism, there must be growth.** There has to be the process of new births, growth to maturity that leads to reproduction. If those elements are missing, that institution will die.

**Johnny:** What you are saying is that there must be real life if the organism is to grow. If there is no life in an institution, it should be allowed to die so the people can go where there is real life instead of trying to maintain the old stone structure because great Aunt Edith's husband helped found the thing. We do not want to see churches going out of business. We want to see them having life. But, even the old dead church can come alive by opening up and allowing new life to flow as you allow and encourage people to function in their gifts. We have to break away from the idea that the only important gifts are those of teaching or preaching. What about someone with a song to share? It is difficult in the current situation for that person to share his/her gift from the Lord to the whole Body of Christ.

The thing I am most excited about at this time is a new venture we have started called **Kingdom Praise**. We are releasing music from Christians around the country who might not have otherwise had the opportunity to have music released. The music will have a "copyright release." If you like the music, you will have our blessing when you copy it and give it to someone else. You cannot sell copies, but you can reproduce it for any kind of non-profit ministry purpose. Right now, a church cannot legally project the words to a song on a screen or wall or print them in a bulletin unless they have the copyright holder's permission. They need permission for each and every song. This can be burdensome. So we are starting something that will release music from people, some of whom may only have one or two songs or many, but they are given to bless the Body of Christ. Can you imagine David writing the Psalms

and then not making them available to be freely used by the rest of the believers? We will pay royalties on the songs we sell, and all who participate will have to agree with the concept. But, we hope that this will enable more people to get their music to a greater number of people. We plan to go to various parts of the country and record music from people in that area. Then we will ask people to buy the first copy so we can pay royalties and cover expenses for doing more recordings. The whole idea is ministry. There are many people with gifts that are not being given the opportunity to express and bless the Body with their gifts. Whether it is music, drama, or whatever, we want to help open this process up.

**Dave:** *You have found some artists who are willing to say, "Freely we have received. Freely we will give."*

**Johnny:** Yes, some of the people who are excited about this already have many songs in the current music system, but they feel they have been given more from God, and they have some songs they are willing to release. There are others, equally anointed by God with a song, but they cannot break into the current system, and, therefore, we want to help them bless the Body.

**Dave:** *I am sure many will want to know how they can participate. What can you offer?*

**Juanita:** Primarily we are working through local churches right now and citywide or regional celebrations. Individuals should work through their local church. If the local church wants to get involved with this and feels that they have people who have gifts to bless the larger Body, the church should get in touch with us. Right now we are setting up an agenda as to what tapes we will produce, where, etc., so it is a very open field.

**Johnny:** We believe that even the music should come up through local churches.

**Dave:** *Let's wind this down. In summary, you are saying that the existing church structure needs to be more flexible and give place for the development of the individual so we*

*can see the cells and the congregation mature. Ultimately, you see a citywide gathering of many congregations in a celebration. Explain that.*

**Juanita:** As the dynamic model is applied and grows and leaders are released to work in the wider community, there will be a desire on the part of the believers to come together for times of celebration. This idea of celebration comes from the festivals and feasts that we see in the Scriptures for the Hebrews. That principle is still alive today. **There is something very dynamic that happens in times of celebration.** The gifts are released and shared on a wider bases as they celebrate the Lord together.

**Johnny:** And we are not talking about congregations in the same denominations getting together. We feel God's Body from different traditions needs to come together and edify each other. We must recognize and value each other as more important than ourselves. I am not saying that we should not strive to have solid doctrine, but I believe there are some areas where believers can have honest differences, which should not be allowed to divide us. We can come together to bring people to Christ, join in our efforts to produce disciples, and fulfill the Great Commission.

**Dave:** *There is a clue in Jesus' words, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another." He did not say it was by our correct doctrine but by our love. We are excited by what God is doing in your lives. Could you let our readers know something about the Volunteer Network?*

**Johnny:** We are looking for people who are willing to share the open church concepts with other churches in their areas and regions. We are looking for those who believe in this, who are willing to go and give whatever help they can to pastors or other churches that would like to receive.

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## Mike Bickle — *Passion for Jesus*

**Dave:** *Mike Bickle serves Metro Vineyard, Kansas City, a pioneer venture with a prophetic ministry and prayer where he is the senior pastor. However, he believes in a plurality of leadership. Give us an overview of what God has been doing in your fellowship, which has grown to several thousand. What kind of things are happening at Metro?*

**Mike:** Structurally we have been and are going through a significant change over the last 12 to 18 months as we try to get people out of the pew into serving God and one another — outside buildings. While the vast majority [of our people] are applauding the changes, it is difficult. We are systematically taking them through training. That is what we are working on now.

The main emphasis is that we are trying to see the two great commandments instilled into the hearts of the people. The first is, "Love the Lord your God," and the phrase I would use is "passion for Jesus" or a "deep life of intimacy with God." The second is, "Love one another." The phrase we have been using in Kansas City is a "prophetic, servant community" where people are serving one another, ministering to one another, and touching the unbeliever outside the building as we create a structure to help facilitate that kind of natural flow of life and relationship outside the regular Sunday meeting.

**Dave:** *You mentioned to me earlier that the writings of Jim Rutz, Carl George, and Ralph Neighbour have had an impact. Are you seeing the Church begin to make that transition where the heart of the church is being expressed in the weekly meetings of the small groups?*

**Mike:** Yes, it is happening, not that we are setting records, but at a mental level the people have embraced it. They are saying, "Yes and amen! This is the right idea." But, when it comes down to the actual, practical doing of it, people's lives and emotions and their lives in a deeper way have to

participate. It is more than saying, "Yes, we have to serve people." Serving has always been inconvenient. Though there is a satisfying way of relating to people in a deeper way, when you get people embracing the Cross to where they deny themselves and take upon themselves the cares of believers and unbelievers, there is little more than a mental concept. So mentally we are there, but getting them to actually do it in larger numbers with great enthusiasm — we are in a good growth stage, but we are not where we want to be.



**Dave:** *By way of counsel to others in leadership, when you began to awaken to the reality of the plurality of leadership and seeing believers released into their ministries, how did you begin this? Did you start with your leadership?*

**Mike:** First I want to distinguish between the plurality of leadership and getting the Body to participate in a daily way to the ministry of Jesus. We have always been committed to the plurality of leaders. This is something I was committed to 15 to 20 years ago. We built the Church around the traditional, programmed based design model, but the plurality of leadership concept was very strong. When that group of leaders got committed to freeing the Church to

go and do the ministry of Jesus outside the normal Sunday structure, this made it easier. We have fifteen full time pastors. So the first thing we did was to cancel the midweek service. This seemed like heresy because we had about a thousand people coming to the service. We used that time to train the people in a whole new point of view as to what the Church is. The church community is made up of people who are to keep the two above commandments. But I pointed out how little we were actually living out our love for God and others, outside the context of our meetings. So we identified over 400 lay leaders, and we began to meet with them on a weekly basis instead of in the midweek service. We took them through several key books. One was by Ralph Neighbour. We did not settle on his book as the model for our final structure, but we used it as a catalyst, because it really stirred up a whole new paradigm of church life. Then some of our leaders read Jim Rutz's *The Open Church*, Carl George, Gene Edwards, etc., so we could use their materials in our teachings. We would meet with these leaders and share for 45 minutes. Then we would break up into small groups and have an hour to an hour and a half discussions on the materials that had been shared. Over a period of about six months, we were changing concepts and values. Then we announced to the general congregation what our plan was to be over the next 12 to 18 months. That is how we have begun to transition our congregation.

**Dave:** *Is your congregation typically on the younger side, say under forty?*

**Mike:** Yes, the average age is 35, with three children per family.

**Dave:** *What kind of response have you had from the congregation?*

**Mike:** About every response you can imagine. The greatest response has been, "Praise God! We want to do this because we are for real. We want to get our church life to the place where you can help us to

facilitate this ministry to one another, so we honor and value this ministry." Another group felt threatened, because when you get the ministry outside of the Sunday morning meeting, a whole lot of things surface in people's lives. The most obvious thing, of course, is that they actually are expected to serve one another. They have to sit in a room and talk with other people about their lives and then do inconvenient things — which they don't like — to serve others. And there is an element of our church that does not want to do that. They want to remain hidden and live in isolation and receive just enough "churchianity" to remain respectable. Then there were some [people] who thought [the idea] was error because we were forsaking tradition. We were a nondenominational church and, [thus, were] not supposed to be taken up with tradition, but we found out that we had a lot more [tradition] than we thought we had. However, you don't know that until you challenge the existing structure. Certainly, the vast majority were in the first category. But there were those who resisted it for "personal" and "theological" reasons, and it is painful. You take time with them, but not all of them will make it through this transition.

*Dave: Dennis Peacocke reminded me one time that Jesus was the greatest crowd thinner in all of history. I know you have a vision for seeing the churches in a community work together, especially in prayer and in bringing the city leaders together. What is happening in those areas? Do you think we need more judgment for it to come?*

*Mike: We got off to a bad start because we ended up planting six congregations, most of them from 200 to 400 people, and we had one name, which threatened others in the city because they felt we were trying to take over the whole city under one tight structure. We sent out many wrong signals that we were "the only ones who were it" and this and that. We [had to take] a step back from that. We still want to see a city wide church, but need to structure it, with all the churches under us being in a more*

loose structure so we are not sending the wrong signals to the other churches in the community. We are also going out of our way to relate to other pastors in the city. I have two groups who I am relating to now. One has over a hundred evangelical pastors from traditional backgrounds and some from charismatic, which meets in two different configurations each month. The other group of about 40 charismatic pastors has had some difficulties in the past, which have been resolved, and so our team is flowing with them as well. This was a major wound that has been healed, and we are rejoicing. So this is where we are now, but we are looking forward to reaching out to more churches around the city.

*Dave: We rejoice at the healing within the Body of Christ. Tell us something about your book, A Passion for Jesus: Cultivating an Extravagant Affection for God, scheduled for release in summer of '93, published by Creation House.*

*Mike: I think our response to the grace of God is defined in the context of the two great commandments. What Jesus did for us on the cross and what He provided for us is one thing, but the response to that grace is loving God and loving people. When we try to do one without the other we always end up with one tire in the ditch. I have seen groups (and I have done it myself) who tried to focus on one to the exclusion of the other. It may be accidental, but we end up doing it. Loving one another will never be stronger than our passion and devotion for God. But of course that will never be greater than the knowledge of His love and affection for us. It really starts there. His deep love for us awakens a deep passion for God. Then there is an overflow of patience and heartfelt love for other people. I believe those two legs have to stand together. I feel there is need for a stirring in the hearts of the people of God to not just give themselves to a right mission or to a right doctrine or a right mandate but to a real person, Jesus Christ, Who is extravagant in the passions in His own personality. I like to use the phrase, "the personality of God."*

*I like to talk about the passions and pleasures in God's personality. As I have gazed upon them through the meditation of the Word and through a life of prayer, I have discovered some things about the life of the Lord so enticing and so awakening in my own heart that it awakens a fresh fervency in my own heart back toward the Lord, making me more patient and persevering with people.*

So the whole cry for the Church to become a community, which is what Jesus prayed in John 17:21, "that we be one like the Father and the Son are," is really community. He said the same thing in John 15:35. We were to love one another as He loved us, and then "the whole world will know that you are My disciples." Love and unity are really community. So the cry that Jesus has for the Church to become community I don't think will ever be stronger than our passion and intimacy in our own personal lives and our history with God. Thus, my passion for community starts with trying to awaken and stir people's hearts to have a passion for God in an individual way, which really starts by showing them God's passion for them in the first place, manifested through the work of the Cross and God's heart for us as people individually.

*Dave: The house that God builds begins on the inside. It begins with our fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then that expression goes out through our families to the local church and overflows into the community, eventually infecting and affecting whole nations. How do you see the growth of Metro Church measured? In numbers of people or the growing up of people and releasing them to start other churches in a multiplication process?*

*Mike: I see both. The real issue is effective cells. If someone wants to talk about numbers, I am much more interested in talking about the numbers of people who are effectively functioning in cell life together through the week rather than how many sit and hear a sermon on Sunday. Peter Wagner makes a strong point when he says church planting is the most effective way of evangelism. But I*

have a vision for large and small. I believe there is going to be a wind of the Spirit come across the land and a real surge of conviction and power, and I believe the Lord is getting the nets ready. Thus, I see what is going on through Rutz, George, and Neighbour as preparing the nets for the harvest. I believe the net will be cell based, small group oriented and is going to have all different sizes of congregations. But, the numbers coming in are going to be so vast that even if we tried to keep things small, some are going to get big any way, something like the Cho syndrome in Korea. If the Spirit of God is moving, they are going to cluster in different sizes. But I am adamant about the cell structure.

*Dave: So, it will be both/and, not either/or.*

*What do you think of the house church movement, the basic spontaneous group that decides they can meet without special buildings? Since the essence is relationships and this can best be done in homes, why put all the bucks in large buildings?*

**Mike:** Because it is the move of the Holy Spirit, it will never be stopped. Because a few may do it out of an independent spirit or as a reaction, we do not need to conclude that the majority are doing it for that reason. There will always be people doing things in less than a perfect way, but I believe [the house church movement] is a move of the Spirit and that the majority of the people doing it are doing so as a response to the Spirit of God, not a reaction to bad people doing bad things.

Thank you for what you are doing, Dave, and for what some of the men are doing with the painstaking hours to get the resources together and do the research and lay out some creative thinking so the rest of us do not have to reinvent the wheel. We can understand what the Holy Spirit is doing from them, and then we can better help the people looking to us for a greater participation in the Gospel.

*Dave: One of the things that Rutz talks about is bringing the dynamic of*

*the small group into the larger Sunday meeting. Some say it is impossible to bring open sharing and opening teaching and ministry into the larger Sunday meeting. What is your perspective on this?*

**Mike:** I have a real strong thought on that. I go back to C. Peter Wagner who talks about the three different aspects of a healthy church experience. He talks about the cell, the congregation, and the celebration. I think there is a place for the intimacy of the cell. A hundred or one hundred and fifty Believers can have a community feeling that is bigger than the ten of the cell group. And I also feel there is a place for a thousand or more people to gather, because an inspirational dimension is possible that is different than the other two. I am aiming for a structure that embraces all three, that does not pit one against the other two. The challenge to me is not picking out one or two and ignoring the other, but getting the right ratio, the right amount of time in the course of month or two given to those as they are needed in a right ratio. There is a place for all three.

I do not believe there will ever be a substitute for the anointed preaching of the Word of God. When it is anointed, it stirs hearts. The teaching ministry is very helpful, but every cell group leader does not have the teaching [gift].

*Dave: Rutz feels that as the Body matures, there will come a time when some of what takes place in a small group will be able to be shared in the larger celebration. The problem seems to be to how to keep it organized.*

**Mike:** Or to keep it relevant. Since Rutz is not a pastor, I believe he has an automatic limitation in his understanding. Because as a preacher who has preached to large gatherings of 5,000 people in various parts of the world, there is a reason why these people travel long distances and stay in hotels to hear some preachers. There is something that an anointed preacher does that no one else does, and people long for it and they should not be penalized for that

longing. Again, the key is ratio and keeping in balance.

*Dave: There is always a tendency to react and swing to one extreme.*

**Mike:** There are some who are anointed to teach in power, which the average small group leader simply cannot fulfill. I will push for the small group because the other will take care of itself. There will always be a demand for it. I am on Rutz's team a hundred percent, fighting for the same principles.

For additional information:

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## Jerry Brandt — Action Evangelism

**Dave:** *When I think of action, I think of Action Evangelism and Jerry Brandt. Jerry, a gifted musician and recording artist, has written resources to help mobilize the real needs in our cities. He is seeing the Gospel demonstrated to those in real need — the downtrodden, the hungry, and poor. Jerry travels around the world ministering.*

*What are some of the steps that you take to mobilize a city for action evangelism? What [process do you go through before] the organ starts playing, before you worship God and begin to see miracles happen?*

**Jerry:** The preparation of prayer — marching and walking through the streets — we call "territorializing the Kingdom of God." About eight weeks before the outreach, we get our intercessors mobilized by walking through the streets of the city [where they] begin to pray and see what God is saying. We focus on, where the strongholds are and what are the areas of needs. The intercessors then become the sensory perceptions of what God is doing in that city and where the real felt needs are. So, that is step one.

**The whole ministry is mobilizing — getting the people out of the churches into the city.** That is what God has really called me to do. We started in 1985 and began going [in]to the streets of San Francisco and the Bay area. It has grown from there.

**Dave:** *You've crisscrossed the country and gone to Eastern Europe. How have the people responded to the Gospel when you take food and clothing out into a park and begin to worship God? You believe that worship precedes the proclamation of the Gospel and evangelism is a natural outworking of worship. Is that right?*

**Jerry:** Absolutely! But we don't just plop down in a park. We do a lot of preparatory work with the city. We go to the social services and tell them we are trying to find where the hurting people are. Often times the city will coordinate with us when they see the heart of the churches. They don't fight us. They

join us. This is what we are experiencing in our city, and we are waiting for the churches to come alive and meet these needs [because] the [churches] can really meet the needs of the people. The [social services] just do patch work, because they don't have the personnel or the resources. Most of the social services groups are over-loaded. So in preparation for going to the park, we go in and find out what the real needs are. And finding that — and they are pretty much the same in every city — we then network the church families around their own block to gather food and clothing



items. They take about a week and a half or two weeks' period to do that. This creates a joint venture around the block to help the needy in the city, and that opens doors for evangelism. For example, a church of a hundred families will make around 2,000 contacts with their neighbors as they get ready to take the food and clothing to the poor. So, evangelism happens in the neighborhood in a way which really is exciting. When the neighbors read about it in the newspaper or see things or report what happened, it is a similar thing that happened with Jesus when He sat at the well and asked the woman for a drink. He opened her heart to Him by allowing her to serve Him. We have neighbors who are touched very deeply by the

workers who gather the food and clothing and who establish themselves as people who are concerned about the poor. When they go by their house, they say, "Oh, that's where the people who are concerned about the poor live." And that is the light of Christ. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine that they may see your good works." When the food and clothing have been gathered, we do a school of evangelism and training. I teach on Kingdom of God witnessing, which is a little different than the old Gospel of grace in evangelicalism than we are used to, the Four Spiritual Laws, etc. We don't teach that as a "how to," but we teach a concept of how to go out and minister the presence of Christ to the city.

After the school of evangelism, we then go to the park, set up the equipment, and begin to worship. Now, you must remember, a lot of prayer has gone into this. People are actually walking through the park and praying before we set up. Thus, as a result, the presence of the Lord is the key thing. I believe very strongly in the tabernacle of David in Acts 15 as the key to the Gentile harvest. James said, "After these things, I will return and restore the tabernacle of David so that all the Gentiles may seek me." So, the key to the Gentile harvest is the tabernacle of David, which is, as I understand it, [is] the presence of God over the city, the presence of Jesus in the New Testament. We do everything we can to bring the presence of the Lord in, and an enormous love is starting to flow out there as people begin to network. People [who] wouldn't before touch [certain other people] are now embracing and praying and loving and caring. The worship really sets the tempo, because I tell all the workers that you are not going out there to minister to these people. "First of all," I say, "you are to minister to the Lord." And as we stand there and really minister to the Lord, we have experienced people literally coming up and beginning to weep. In San Francisco we had a prostitute come up and fall on her knees during the worship

and began to weep. It is the presence of God that draws the people and then brings the results that we want to see.

**Dave:** *Where the presence of the Lord is, there is liberty. Once people have experienced liberty, they don't want to go back to slavery, do they?*

**Jerry:** The atmosphere of the presence of God — and unless you have experienced it — is hard to talk about it. There is an aura in those parks and plazas that is so joyous that, even after the outreach is over, people literally hang around for two or three hours. It is like the abiding presence and anointing is there, and [people] don't want to leave that. Most have not experienced that on the streets, and when they touch it, it touches them. It reminds me of one [man] who came to sell drugs, because he saw [that] it was a gathering of all his clients. After his Christian conversion, I was interviewing him on a radio program and said [to him], "You came down and found Jesus!" He said, "No, Jesus found me!" What he was saying was that Jesus was there, and when [this man] got there he couldn't escape [the Lord Jesus Christ]. Jesus captured his life, and now he is one of the workers in my home church. So it works.

**Dave:** *When these people come and are reached, is there a strategy to plug them into a small group in a local church and disciple them?*

**Jerry:** The strategy is very simple. You birth the new child — they are your responsibility. I have had pastors working in a city who ask, "How are we going to divide up the converts?" I tell them, "We're not! Everyone who leads a person to Christ is now responsible to get that person in[to] a local church and take them on in Christ." We have found this to be successful. So, the churches who want the greatest results will have the greatest involvement. We have a victory rally the day after, on the street, and the whole day becomes a victory rally. The goal there is to celebrate the results, the harvest we found on the streets. Often times we have many baptisms, people

networking, and people committing to really walk with the new converts by getting them jobs, off the streets, and into apartments.

I remember one family who came to Christ. The man was given an old car so he could get to a new job, and someone in the church had an apartment for them, and so in one weekend the family got off the street, and got involved in a church. That is real Christianity.

**Dave:** *This is personalizing the Great Commission. We are to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and disciple the nations. You are showing that each individual believer can take responsibility for, rather than delegating it, to the institution.*

**Jerry:** I feel a deep frustration right now in the Church. The lay people in the Church have not been given the authority to go and minister. So even if they do minister, they feel they are in competition with the Church. They feel frustrated, because they are waiting for the leadership of the Church to literally lay hands on them and release them. Jesus gave authority to the disciples when He sent them out, once in Mark 3 and again in Mark 6. He gave them authority and then sent them. And the people are sitting in the pews and literally waiting for leadership. Thus, when I speak in a church, at the end of the invitation I will say something like, "I know some of you people have been waiting to be released out to the city to win the city to Christ. You have been waiting for someone to lay hands on you and transmit an anointing authority on you." I don't make it an emotional thing. I just tell them that if they want me to pray for them, they are to just come forward. In the last six months, almost the entire Church is coming forward. For example, in Santa Rosa, I was there for three hours after the service, laying hands on people, praying for them, and releasing them to the harvest. People are ready for this.

**Dave:** *It is sort of like the desire that David had to see the house of the Lord built. There is a fresh desire in the hearts of people to see the Kingdom of God come to the earth. Theologians argue about it, but the people of God*

*want to see it happen. So your coming into a church serves as a catalyst to release scores of ministries that have been "chomping at the bit" to get going. As you have traveled in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, do you see the need to release people for ministry?*

**Jerry:** Let's take Romania as an example. The number of churches [there] has doubled in three years, from 750 to over 1500 churches. I'm working with the Romanian Pentecostal Churches. That is all good, but the people [there] came from underground to the surface, and largely the churches filled up with existing Christians already in the area who now had a place to gather without hassle. So the gathering has not come through evangelism. What we will be doing, when we go there in June [1993], is taking teams from the churches out into the city plazas, training [them], and showing them how to do street evangelism. There is still a lot of fear among the people [who feel] that if they go out in the open, they will end up in prison. It is a mind set from 40 years of communism. But, when they go out and see how easy it is and the results that come from it, they get excited! We were in Bucharest and went into a shopping center and got permission to set up [there to] begin worshipping. A crowd began to gather. We worshipped for about an hour, and the crowd became huge. We then began to pray for people's healing. We had to get up on the base of an old statute of Lenin that had been torn down, because the crowd was pressing in on us. We prayed for people for hours and finally had to just quit because of another appointment. [We had] more people in line than when we began. There is a hunger, and the neat thing is that the church went back and said, "We can do this. We don't need this evangelist from America."

**Dave:** *Is the church there going through the edifice complex that we have here, or do they meet in homes?*

**Jerry:** What I see happening is very frustrating to me because they want to duplicate what we have in America. They hear the reports, and some brothers even fly over

here and see the wonderful buildings we have. Their idea is to go back and do the same thing in Romania. So I see some of the same things happening there that have happened here. They get into bondage to buildings. The Christianity they had under communism was so effective, because they met in homes where they [were able] to meet each other's needs and [to] protect and care for each other. Now the complexion is changing, and while this may sound strange, I'm not so sure but that what they had before was better.

**Dave:** *That's a strange thought. You'd think we would learn better after almost 2,000 years of history.*

**Jerry:** I'll tell you what was better under communism. When someone made the decision to commit to Christ, it was a life and death choice. My hope is that Christianity will not become cheapened because of convenience.

**Dave:** *Let's talk about open worship. In Jim Rutz's book, The Open Church, he is calling for a time of open expression, open sharing, and ministry, and of making it possible for someone to share a song or a word of testimony. Do you see an openness to a return of the Biblical model for how the church functioned in their weekly gatherings?*

**Jerry:** [Among Charismatics there has been the] idea of being in bondage to things. We have criticized others because we really follow the Spirit. However, in the last five years, it is my observation, that the Charismatics have become just as ritualistic as the Catholics and Episcopalians. If you try to interrupt that flow of the service, they feel as threatened as the Catholics would in the middle of a Mass. But, I do see a shift in which pastors are beginning to say, "Let's let go." One thing [we try to do] when we take a team in[to] a church [is that] we [attempt] to create by example. The result is that people come up and tell us that they sensed a freedom to open up and minister, and they enjoyed it. The pastors, on the other hand, still have a real fear of giving up control. This is my honest experience.

**Dave:** *There seems to be a dynamic tension between the Scripture telling us to have order and yet also to have freedom.*

**Jerry:** There is a divine order that is not confusion. We need to learn God's divine order and to trust it, because when that happens, good things happen.

**Dave:** *What do you see before us?*

**Jerry:** I see a very strong emphasis upon evangelism in the '90s. We have come to the period of harvest. The frustration level is still there in the churches between what the laity want to see done out in the world, compared to what is actually being done. I think that God has heard their prayers, and a lot is beginning to happen. The small group thing is becoming very vital. I see it happening in a lot of churches around the country. I'm excited because that means more of a neighborhood type of evangelism. We will see more neighborhood groups rise up to evangelize around their [own] areas. Another thing I see is an excitement about releasing believers' ministries, calling them forth with authority to do what God has called them to do.

We see more and more churches with street ministries. It is becoming more common to see whole churches go out and march in the streets. So I see the 1990s as a time of mobilization of the churches, not so much for social issues, but for evangelism and really touching their cities. Churches are getting out of their buildings and going forth with God's anointing. When they experience that, they want more of it. I tell people that the only experience they can have in America that is similar to third world evangelism is street evangelism. So I encourage any who want to get involved to do it.

**Dave:** *I know you have been involved in mobilizing hundreds of pastors for times of worship and celebration citywide. Do you see that as something that is welling up — a periodic, citywide celebration of the Body of Christ?*

**Jerry:** Yes, as matter of fact, just two weeks ago during the National Day of Prayer here in Sacramento, I led worship, and there was a tremendous move of God. A year ago we did Candlestick Park, and 183 pastors were together there. It was great to see pastors from every denomination and thousands of Christians come. [It was great] to see the pastors kneeling on the football field, weeping and praying for the city. The churches are coming together. Here in Sacramento we had the Jesus Marches. I was at a meeting of pastors this morning who have a real heart for this. I've never in my life seen so many pastors willing to drop the walls around their kingdoms. We are in the early stages of it, but hopefully in the next five years we will see more of that happening, because it has an effect on the city and releases it from the bondage.

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## Barry and Anne Byrd — Christian Covenant Community

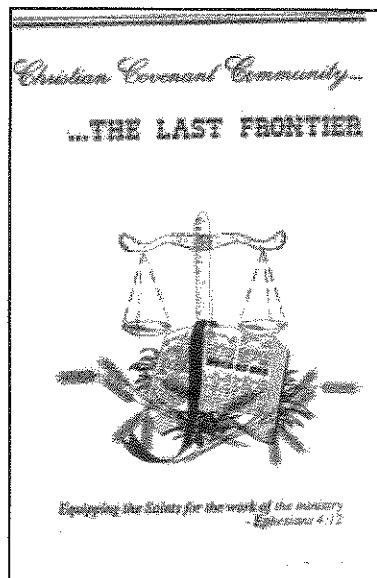
**Dave:** *This discussion will cover a project of Barry and Anne Byrd, which they have been working on for about two years, the Marble Community Fellowship. It was established in February, 1991, with the vision to re-establish the Biblical concept of Christian covenant community. In a word, KOINONIA. The dynamic lifestyle that was lived out by the primitive Church is really possible. The Local Church began with the vision and leadership of Barry and Ann and their daughter Danny of Watchmen Ministries. It embraces about 150 people. Marble is located in Northeastern Washington. Marble Flats. When you moved up there, you returned to your home of 20 years. You had a vision and have 30 other families who have joined in your vision. You believe that the Church that God is building is "something of a parallel culture."*

**Barry:** We looked at what was going on in our society, at the breakdowns. The Lord lead us to a rural community. Thus the rebuilding of community is a rebuilding of society.

**Dave:** *Your recent article in Crosswinds Magazine discusses how God provided the Puritans with able and visionary leadership through John Winthrop. Please explain the concept of covenant.*

**Anne:** Covenant is a concept that we have almost forgotten in America today. A quote out of *The Light and the Glory* is, "Covenant is a word almost never heard in American life today, for it speaks of a commitment to Christ and to one another which is deeper and more demanding than most of us modern American Christians are willing to make. And as a consequence, most of us modern American Christians are of little use to God in the building of His Kingdom. The building of the Kingdom requires total commitment. We have just seen in our extensive travels and in working with the Church that the sense of being in a local body by revelation is almost a forgotten concept. that the Church is indeed supposed to be the family

of God, the family of Christ with the same kind of glue that holds people together. Thomas Jefferson made the statement, "Our unique security in America is a written Constitution." We feel that for every church that a covenant is an articulation of a vision. It's a vision statement, and it's an agreement between the members of that church to be accountable to the Word of God and to be involved in the vision of that local assembly. It is not in the sphere of voluntary association as is commonly thought or taught throughout the Body of Christ, but rather it's an act of



obedience to God in a specific area of revelation. So covenant is very deep and very significant and very lasting thing and should not be entered into lightly.

**Dave:** *Are you really seeing in this intensive workshop of life called community that you can work through problems without people throwing their hands up and saying, "I just can't handle this any more. I'm too well known in this small community." Is it really feasible on a larger scale in the traditional church structure in cities that find it difficult to live in rural areas? Is it working there? Is this something you see as non-optional as we move toward the 21st Century?*

**Barry:** Absolutely non-optional.

The whole idea of community is based on covenant. Covenant is based on being able to reconcile differences and not being split up. God took us in the building of our community through the first step, which was to be able to solve problems interpersonally, understanding that covenant doesn't allow an option for broken relationships. It's not in the concept at all. We don't just have differences and split and go our separate ways, we work things out. Problem solving on all levels starts with problem solving on the level between two individuals. God has certainly called the Church to the ministry of reconciliation. God took us through teaching, both learning ourselves and teaching the people here how to work through the problems. The first step has to be commitment, a total commitment to the covenant relationship and that we won't run away when things get hard. Once a person gets that revelation from God — and it has to be a revelation from God — that we have a covenant, that God has worked a covenant between us, as Ann was saying, the Church is not a voluntary association, God places people in the Church. And once we submit to that, then the process can begin, just working through differences, just not giving up. Matthew 18 is our pattern. We teach a course on self-confrontation through the Biblical Counseling Foundation. It's just looking at our own sin first. In every situation that comes up we are challenged to judge ourselves first and let the Lord deal with our hearts. You talk about breaking down walls. When people start really practicing judging themselves first by the Word of God, letting the Holy Spirit convict their hearts, it starts to build community.

**Anne:** One of our models was the Puritans. When they arrived in Salem, they discovered that the Salem Plantation was coming unraveled at the seams. When Jonathan Winthrop compared the Salem Plantation to the Plymouth Plantation, which was established by the Pilgrims, he realized that the missing ingredient at the Salem

Plantation was exhorting, admonishing and rebuking one another as well as promising in brotherly love, faithfully to watch over one another's souls. And when they added that ingredient at the Salem Plantation, they were able to pull together in a unity that they had not experienced up to that point, and they were able to not only survive but able totally overcome and take dominion over hostile circumstances that they lived in. In addition to the ability to resolve conflict horizontally, brother to brother, one of the absolutely essential ingredients that has been a stabilizing factor and really should be in every form of government from the family all the way up to our civil government is the ability to address our grievances. When even the humblest member of a congregation or the smallest child in a family feels that there has been injustice done to them in any way, or when they simply want to have their voice heard in the affairs of the family or the church or the community, they need to have a process clearly defined for redress of grieves or for having been hurt. That's also a very big element in the resolution of conflict, that leadership has to be able to be called into accountability for their actions.

*Dave: So when somebody feels slighted, they have the freedom in the congregational weekly meetings or through the course of the daily events or what?*

*Anne: In the covenant of our constitution, there is a very clearly defined process for redress of grievances. The Word of God says not to bring something against an elder except in the company of two or three witnesses. So it has to be done decently and in order because when leadership is accused of incorrect action or even insensitivity or out and out sin, it tends to undermine the vision of the entire Church or family. So it has to be done in a very respectful manner, but it is clearly outlined. We have multiple leadership in our church, so each family has access. We have a cell group structure, so each family has access to their cell group leaders who are then able to*

*take the complaint and process it all the way to the top. And ultimately the senior leadership of the Church can be called into accounting by the entire Body after it has gone through the correct appeals process. So it has been a very unifying thing. In general, all we've ever had to deal with is when people thought they were unable to be heard. When they realized the process does work, that their voices can be heard on every issue in the Church, they then become secure.*

*Barry: The cell group structure is very critical to the process.*

*Dave: I think the dynamics that are operating in this country is going to be focusing on the cell group or the open church.*

*You have a big vision. You believe that every area should be brought under the Lordship of Christ. That's not very popular today. You see the community built on an agricultural base, incorporating every dimension of life such as education, economics, politics involvement on the state and national levels.*

*Barry: The whole concept of community makes people nervous. Our concept is that we are to be the City of God. We are to be living out God's idea for how things are to be. We are not talking about being an isolationist. We are talking about being an example in the midst of our society like a city set on a hill. That makes it an alternative. It doesn't mean that we want to be different. If we are doing things God's way, we are going to be different. We need to get over being worried about that. We have become so inculturated that we tend to blend in instead of standing out as another way to live. The Word of God is very clear. We are to do things God's way.*

*Community is something that can be lived out in inner city New York as well as Marble Flat. It's not something that has to be done out on the farm. Our concept is that, as we build community, that we network with others that have a different expression of community all over the United States. We are working with a group in Portland,*

*Oregon, whose vision is to buy a large piece of land and build an apartment complex where they can minister to families. The principles are common in everything we do.*

*Anne: Micah 4:1-4 says, "In the last days it shall come about that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established in the chief of the mountain and it will be raised above the hills and the people will stream to it."*

*I would highly recommend that anyone wanting to have an understanding of the the roots in the Church in America needs to study the Puritans and the Pilgrims. For years we thought we were Pilgrims. The Pilgrim dynamic was, "Come out from My people, separate yourself." But our music ministry sent us right in the middle of the Church. And we got very concerned about the condition of the Church. And then because we had studied history extensively, we knew that the structure of the Church is very contradictory to the historical model, which is more like the mustard seed plant. Mustard is a seed that grows very small. When Jesus talked about the mustard seed, He said it grew tall and the fowls of the air lodged in its branches. He said that this was an aberration of nature. One plant only grows about 2 1/2 feet tall. Thus, we began to realize that we needed to change. We were not Pilgrims. We were more like Puritans. The desire of the Puritans was not to separate from the Church. Their desire was to go to a place that would be a model. They wanted to build a community that would be a city on the hill and inspire change.*

*We do not want to separate ourselves. We want to be a model. Community is the only way that we can see the Bible teaching. When we come to others that way, the dynamic is fantastic. Witnessing is made easy. Prosperity is possible. Covenantal blessings are part of it.*

*Dave: If you are going to make a commitment to community, you must make a commitment to time.*

*Barry: Yes, we were not raised in a generation that appreciates time.*

It is hard to change one's picture of time. But when you do, it takes the pressure off. Often we panic as Christians and want to run out and change things overnight. But that is not the Lord's way.

**Dave:** *Do you see this as a model that can be reproduced all over the country?*

**Barry:** Yes, very much.

**Anne:** We are raising up multiple ministry teams who will be able to go into any area of the world to help others do what we are doing.

**Barry:** We are not communal in any way because that is not a Biblical way. Every man's own fig tree is God's idea. We help each other but we are not communal. Everyone has his own property, and we network for the good of the whole community.

**Dave:** *It sounds like one of the best places to grow up in Christ is in community. One of the problems in the Church is that we have pushed the superstar vision in Christianity where good teachers and pastors are up on such a high pedestal that they have a long way to fall, and that there is some safety in moving from a one-fold or two-fold into a five-fold ministry such as Ephesians talks about.*

*You have structured this with four levels of leadership, including apostolic, prophetic, pastoral/teaching, and evangelistic. Tell me about your five-fold ministry concept.*

**Barry:** The five-fold ministry concept as in Ephesians 4 directly relates to the maturity of the saints. Once you begin to move into community, it becomes obvious why. The ministry of all those different giftings are the balance that God wants to bring to the community. The more we open up to all the perspectives that God puts in the Body, the clearer the picture gets. It's really neat to see it happen on a leadership way. To pull people together who have been trained to a degree so that they see things from a Biblical world view, so they are mature in problem solving and able to come up against a problem and solve it in a Biblical way. It's really exciting to see! It's

awesome. You put it all out on the table and then you get the Holy Spirit's counsel. It takes the pressure off leadership because no one has to be a superstar. It's been exciting to see the gifting taking place in our group.

**Anne:** A retired military man likened the five-fold ministry gifting to the teacher being the communications expert; the prophet, the demolitions expert; the pastor, the medic and/or cook; the evangelist, the reconnaissance expert, and the apostle, the commander who carries the map and understands the mission. The issue of open authority should very rarely come up.

A person needs to be able to make the final decision, but we have seen that balance in operation: of dignity and the mutual submission of those giftings to one another in operation. It's a tremendous experience to function in that, but it's also tremendous security for the people in the Body to know that they have the balance of those giftings in operation.

**Barry:** Something I think is really significant that God has shown us how to operate here is that there has been a lot of talk about the five-fold ministries and a lot written about the five-fold ministries in even the last 15 - 20 years. As we approached trying to implement that in our Body, God showed us clearly not to make those offices but to make them functions. Not to put a name plate on somebody's door, that they are the prophet, or they are the apostle, or they are the evangelist, but as those giftings start coming forth, those who have them, those who have prophetic gifting, their job is to function in a way that it equips the saints as in Ephesians 4. It teaches the saints how to operate in the gift of prophecy, or it teaches the saints how to teach. It teaches the saints how to formulate their vision for their family, write their vision statements. It's been a real blessing because it really helps to keep people from getting exhausted and vying for position. It becomes a service rather than an exalted position.

**Dave:** *It's a very dynamic thing that you are involved with, and I am excited! I know that you have plans for this town of Marble, which you refer to as the Holy Ghost town. [You plan that] eventually [Marble] will have a Western theme and become a conference center where people can come in for refreshing, for recreation, for training, etc. I am sure that many people who are listening to this will want to know more about your center. In our resource directory your name and address will be listed. People can write and receive a nice brochure.*

*You also have a tremendous music ministry, having been involved for eight years with Legacy, which is now Watchmen. You have several tapes that are very inspiring.*

*You believe that Marble is something of a sovereign move of God. Perhaps the frustrated pastor or the weary layman who is saying, "This sounds so wonderful that I would like to see something like this in my area." What kind of steps could they go through to see your idea duplicated in their area?*

**Anne:** God is so sovereign. The piece of property that we now have is 500 acres on the Columbia River. In the early 1900s, it was a town. So we are going to be able to restore that town without a lot of hassles with the county or going through the bureaucratic process. The original plans for the town are intact. We have been able to modify them without a lot of problems. First of all, if God commissions something, He will make provision for that vision, and that's the bottom line. We have to just know that God is God.

Secondly, there are resources available from Strategic Christian Services, Dennis Peacocke. Dennis has a network of men and ministries who work with him who are moving into the mode of becoming available to work as teams and help struggling churches or ministries. We are also training teams. We are trying to put together material as quickly as we develop concepts that we have proven to work in our little laboratory here at Marble. We are trying to get it packaged and

developed so that we can make it available and duplicated. We do have leadership teams who are able to some extent to travel and share the vision. We would welcome people coming to Marble. Obviously we have to be a little bit careful about extending that invitation too overwhelmingly simply because of our limited numbers. We spend a lot of time dealing with visitors and with correspondents. But we will be planning to do some small leadership groups where we can come together and do some brainstorming. We can share our experiences. Others can share their experiences and challenges, and we can find the heart of God on what would be the solutions to those problems. So in a nutshell, we will just do anything that we can as we develop and as we come into contact with others who have done things that do have God's anointing on them. We will do everything that we can to share with the Body of Christ, anyone who is interested. You said you would give our contact point. Just get in touch with us.

*Dave: You have also divided the land into parcels. There may be somebody who is listening who may want to go up there and check it out. Maybe God will be directing them up to that area.*

**Barry:** The land will never go up for sale on the market. We are looking for who God has for each individual parcel. There is still plenty of land that still has not been sold. I'm sure there are people out there that God still wants to come here and be a part of what we are doing. And so we encourage people to come and see and to check it out and to go by the leading of the Lord.

Before we finish with this, Dave, I want to say how much we appreciate your encouragement to us and into our lives. God has been developing these things and this vision and has been bringing together all these things that have been making it happen. You know, we spent some time together ministering together several years ago. I just want you to know how much we appreciate your encouragement and your input.

*Dave: Well, I really want to come up there and visit you as soon as I can. Do you spend most of your time primarily doing agricultural things? Do you work the land?*

**Barry:** No, I primarily work on the building and on developing the land that we are going to be selling. Not much agriculture yet, but that will be coming as more as the people get on the land. We have several families who are building this spring. I have one house that has been built and several other houses that will be started this spring. We have plenty of time. We are trying not to hurry about anything.

*Dave: So if you come up there, bring a hammer and some overalls.*

**Barry:** Bring a tent, a hammer, and you will be right in style here.

*Dave: Christian Covenant Community, the last frontier. Praise God for what He is doing at Marble Flats, and we look forward to seeing this spread like a mustard seed all over the place!*

For information:

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## Doug Dougherty — Chattanooga Resource Foundation

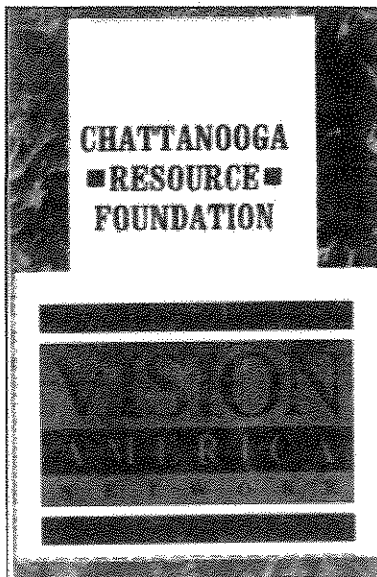
**Dave:** *We are going to discuss a working model for reconciliation and restoration of Christian impact in urban areas. Doug Dougherty is highly respected among Christian leaders as the executive director of the Chattanooga Resource Foundation, founded in 1983. He has served as the director since 1990 and has taken seriously the commitment to take a city for Christ. While there is much talk about taking the world for Christ, Doug believes we have to begin by taking it one city at a time.*

*You has said that Chattanooga is the only city over 300,000 that does not have an abortion clinic, and this is a result of something that began in 1989. Could you tell us something about that?*

**Doug:** We are very excited by what God is doing! What we are seeing is that strategic prayer of a certain type is an untapped resource for the Body of Christ. Right now in Chattanooga, the Body of Christ owns the former abortion clinic, and on May 13, 1993, we evicted the abortion business. The abortionists have to file for relicensure within the state of Tennessee, and there is some question as to whether they can ever be granted a license based upon their past performance. We have a very active pro-life community, crisis pregnancy centers, adoption services, malpractice litigation, sidewalk counseling, rescue, and such. The way this happened was, and there is general agreement among the pro-life leaders in our city that, in August of 1989 several Christians (I was one of them) started going to the abortion clinic and having communion services on Sunday morning when it was closed. The thought was that all this innocent blood had so polluted our city and given Satan a stronghold, that somehow we had to take back that land. We wanted to see the innocent blood covered by the blood of Christ. So we did that ceremoniously and prayed and prayed. We prayed for the owner of the abortion clinic, a Mrs. Crawley. Within a few months after we started praying, she got cancer. Many people tried to share the Gospel with her, but she continually

rejected it. In fact, she sued the people who tried to share the Gospel with her. She then died of cancer and gave the building to her sister. Her sister also got cancer and died a few months ago. At the same time, the wealthy property owner in Chattanooga who owned the building which the abortionists had rented for years went into bankruptcy. Thus, this building ended up in bankruptcy court.

All the original doctors had left, so all the present doctors were from out of town and did not have hospital privileges in Chattanooga.



The pro-life community found out about this.

Through attorneys, we raised \$300,000 in seven days and bought the abortion clinic and evicted the people. We are putting together the blueprints now for a National Center of Reconciliation on this spot where some 36,000 babies were killed. That kind of strategic prayer is one of the things we are really excited about!

**Dave:** *What a great testimony! How do you maintain a flexibility to the needs of the community and yet at the same time maintain accountability and a structure?*

**Doug:** There is the historical distinction between the one and the many that is solved philosophically

through the Trinity and the Incarnation. Historic Christianity is the only place where this tension is solved. Practically this has worked itself out in the midst of the incredible diversity of the Body of Christ, and yet everybody is equally gifted, equally important and unique. What we have missed out on in the Body for at least 160 years is this incredible Reformation sense of calling — each of us being called to our individual destinies in Christ. When you adopt that sort of perspective, what you find is that people are motivated differently, gifted differently, and see and respond to problems and opportunities differently. But we think this is fundamentally the way Christ is going to fulfill His Kingdom through His Body, and the way He does that is the Body's diversity being expressed in the world. This is how Jesus takes dominion. So everything we do focuses in some way or other on that. The way we maintain the structure is to focus on the Bible — inerrancy of Scripture — that it is absolute truth, and also we continually realize that we are accountable and must build accountability structures into everything that we do.

The Resource Foundation is involved in about 28 different programs. We are an entrepreneurial organization. Generally the things going on here you will not find going on in other places because we are doing things differently, and the values of diversity and oneness will be expressed in most of the programs.

**Dave:** *The Foundation is committed to dealing with big problems. Thus, you said in a recent meeting that we must begin by asking big questions, having a big theology, and having a big Bible. What are some of the strategic focus areas? You mentioned prayer and having a vision. You have a magazine that tries to network throughout the city. You have a reconciliation project that works with hundreds of churches.*

**Doug:** What we have found is that the main problem in the Body is not a lack of resources but more of the lack of vision and leaders. Good ideas with good leaders can develop

all the resources, programs, and infra-structure that are needed. The real problem is vision and leadership, and without them, you can't do much.

The Resource Foundation has four focuses: prayer, vision and leadership development, and what we call resource development. We have a prayer strategy for the city. I might add that not only did the abortion clinic close down, but last year we recorded the greatest drop in crime of any major city in America. We had a 22.1 percent drop in violent crime in the city according to the FBI. We believe this is a direct result of intercessors around the city praying, and not only praying as a result of the mailing letter, but also doing site prayer. Murders stopped in a housing project when people went in and took authority over the evil spirits there. Where there had been one murder a week, the murders stopped abruptly when these people prayed and have not returned in eighteen months.

We have a prayer program which includes a newsletter called Intercessors for Chattanooga. We also sponsor Concerts of Prayer, a strategic thing to get people out and create unity within the Body. We have prayer SWAT teams who go to sites and pray, whether it was the abortion clinic, churches, or businesses that are in trouble or whatever, and we have seen incredible response to that.

Then we have leadership development, which is probably what we are most known for, and that has several different focuses. Twice a year we take about 20 young Christian men, 25 to 45 years of age, through a four month program in which we attempt to find out their destiny, their gifts, and calling. We focus on a Biblical worldview and give them practical skills to get things done and develop the network of relationships to do that. This has been very exciting! We have just finished our sixth class, and there are 106 men out there who are serving in areas such as local government, state legislation, running banks and foundations, teaching Sunday schools in local churches, and serving as black and white pastors. It is quite remarkable

what God is doing! We also have a program for black leadership, which focuses on the black middle class male. This meets a real need in the traditional black church. Michael McReynolds in our organization works with that group, which centers on accountability and discipleship. We have just started an urban pastor's network, which focuses on young black pastors or young pastors working in urban interracial situations. We try to give them some practical tools.

Another program we have is called Vision Chattanooga. This is a quarterly news magazine that goes out to about 2400 leaders in the community, some who are Christians. The magazine takes the key issues facing the city and answers them from a Biblical perspective. It is not evangelical. We deal with issues such as wealth creation, race, aging, fatherhood, and sexuality. We have had a tremendous response to that. We have also had a program called Chattanooga Youth Network, which is an effort to empower all the people who do youth ministry in the city with world class training.

Every two years we have facilitated an interracial crusade. The first one was with Dr. E. V. Hill, and the last one was called Reconciliation 92 with Tony Evans. The neat thing that has come from those has been the relationships that have developed between black and white pastors. Right now we have a church swapping program where a Baptist congregation with a 4.3 million dollar plant is giving their plant to a white church with a 1.2 million dollar plant, who in turn is giving their church to a black inner city church that needs more room. The latter has a \$200,000 plant, and they are giving their church to another group. This came as a result of the relationships that were built during this project.

We have a project that we call Elders of the City. It is an effort in which we are trying to identify the elders of the city, bring them together, and try to come to some agreement on what God's agenda is for the city for the next several months and years. We have a public policy thing we do with an electronic

network, which tries to alert people by issue and tells them by phone when they can do something. We distribute 40,000 bulletin inserts every month to churches in the city on issues. We do seminars and bring in national leaders. We have a large feeding program, which is a church empowerment thing.

We are always asking questions such as how to develop vision, leadership, and education, and how to develop politics and leadership in the arts. We are not actually doing the developing. We try to find others who do it and get them into the leadership program. We are always trying to develop vision in the Christian community and the greater community as well through publications, meetings, and speakers such as Dennis Peacocke, Jay Grimstead, and Wellington Boone, for whom Chattanooga has become a regular stopping place. For resource development, we have developed several million dollars of funding in the last years with sister foundations for pro-life work, youth work, and inner city work.

We developed a fund that is going to provide youth pastors for black churches because, generally, black churches do not have youth pastors. Thus, resources involve money, programs, and people that we attempt to plug in.

*Dave: All of that you do in a forty hour week with how much staff?*

*Doug: There are eight people who work here, but we go out of the office for much of the support services, such as bookkeeping. We have some very creative people and board members. We use lots of volunteer leadership, and the staff is the glue that holds these people together. These create opportunity for ownership of projects.*

*Dave: How do you see your relationship with the local pastors? Are you an apostolic or prophetic ministry?*

*Doug: We really see the anointing on the Resource Foundation as apostolic. The way I mean that is, if you can give a gradation to the gifts, from the hands-on gifts to the more strategic gifts, the apostolic becomes the most strategic. It is the*

"how-do-you-do-it" gift within the Body and the anointing to make it happen. We feel we fit into this realm. When we started, we did not know that but found it out by accident. We have an unusual success of identifying problems and creating solutions that work.

Chattanooga has 665 identifiable churches, and we are networked with a couple of hundred of them with good relationships with 20 to 40 and very close relationships with 5 or 6. They are a real resource because you have to go to the churches to get things done. At some risk, I will say this, the leadership for what God is doing in Chattanooga is not coming from the clergy. It is coming from the lay people. I do not have any thoughts on this, but from observation this seems to be true.

*Dave: It is interesting that George Gallup said that the next move of God will be led more by the laity than the clergy. At least that is what most Americans think. What you are saying resonates with what other leaders are saying. In many ways the pastor has been put into an impossible situation where he is expected to do it all and be it all. What do you make of the whole cell group, meta-church, or even house church movement in recovering the covenantal relationships that seem to be missing in a lot of the traditional Body of Christ in America at least?*

**Doug:** What we need to solve the problems of America and the world, for that matter, is leadership and creativity. The Body of Christ, when allowed to be, is as creative as God Himself. What we need to develop are more clearly articulated and felt values more than structures, which become a vital part of our culture. We allow people to be what God is calling them to be and encourage, motivate, and affirm them. We provide them with training and opportunities. It is only going to happen within the context of small groups and cell groups.

I think it was Peter Wagner who said that only one percent of the growth of the Church within this century has been due to mass evangelism whereas the majority of evangelism happened at the level of the house church and other small

groups. I do not see how we can develop the leadership with creativity unless we do that. I do not see the prophetic or apostolic voice really returned or the hands-on stuff that needs to happen unless we do that. We are seeing some of that in Chattanooga, but the Resource Foundation, other than working with the leadership, is really not a part of that in any official way. We encourage it in the values that we articulate.

*Dave: I was talking with Francis Frangipane who mentioned that Chattanooga is one of the cities where the pastors have prayed and repented for the division between the black and white churches. You said that you believe the black church holds the keys to the solution of the crisis in the inner city.*

**Doug:** In one sense, the history of America morally is the history of how we have responded to racism. Some of my pro-life friends disagree with that. I do not feel we have ever resolved the issue of whether or not people are property or not. That being the case, we have this problem. How do we solve it? In the South, for instance, the white church has never repented for its role before and during the Civil War. The churches in the South are still split openly. There are two Episcopal Churches in Chattanooga, one that went with the South and the other, with the North. We have never dealt with that. Until we have, I believe there is a spiritual stronghold present. I will say this, that God is bringing that stronghold down as we speak in Chattanooga. There were three things that happened just this last weekend that give us hope that God is doing incredible things within the city as to the assimilation of white and black races within the Church itself.

From a practical point, you have to have an institution in the urban situation that can do it. The only institutions that God is going to call forth to do that are families and churches. Churches are really the places where you have to disciple dysfunctional people because families are not there. So you have to have churches that work. The question then becomes, how do you empower black churches? We

spend a lot of time on that, not so much as white people trying to help black people, but as the Body of Christ trying to address and solve the problem. How do we overcome the obstacles of getting more resources or more training or whatever is needed?

One thing we do is sponsor what we call "Vision Trips" where we send black and white pastors out of town to go see what God is doing somewhere else. In October we went to Dallas to Tony Evans' church and took a key white and a key black pastor for three days. The results have been phenomenal in terms of the interaction with what is being done in work programs and swapping pulpits. These men are even talking about sharing church camps. So there are many neat things happening like that.

*Dave: I wish what is happening in Chattanooga was happening in every major city, but what is happening there is a model for others. You are working on a book on leadership. There are leadership resource foundations in other cities, are there not?*

**Doug:** Yes, but they do not do what we are doing. What they have in common is that they go after the spiritual welfare of the city. We are much more intentional and more theologically conservative than most of them. If we can ever do a city, then we can show others how to do it. The nation is a conglomeration of cities. So, instead of being concerned about telling other people how to do it, we realize there are some big nuts to be cracked right here, and we want to figure out how to crack these by focusing our attention right here. But we do have information on how to do the leadership program, how to work with the black churches, and how to stimulate the feeding and intercessor's programs, which we would be happy to share with anyone.

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## Phil Driscoll — Hearing 'the Sound' of the Spirit

**Dave:** *Phil Driscoll's name is well known to most of our listeners, I am sure. He has recorded 14-15 albums over the last 15-20 years, albums that have touched the hearts of literally hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of listeners both in the United States and worldwide.*

*We are going to discuss and key in on a couple of his latest albums. His latest is Classic Hymns on the Word label. Part 1 and 2 was recorded with the London National Philharmonic Orchestra. His latest album that is a singing album, not an instrumental, is entitled Warriors.*

*Tonight when you ministered, I felt that there was a spirit of humility and of servanthood that pervaded the concert. Literally you came asking God what He wanted to use you for. You said that you believe that Christian music in the '90s should be trend-setting and not following the world. I believe that your concert was in that spirit.*

*I would like you to share with us now. You see a new thing happening in Christian music. You see the winds blowing in a little different way than we have seen in the '70s and the '80s.*

**Phil:** I think that music for God should have a lot of Him in it. What I have seen, at least in my own life (I can't speak for others), is that there is definitely an urging from God to, "Let's get on with the show here." In any area of life, there is the fluff, and there is the stuff that is really the basics or the core. I believe that when you start playing sounds, you have got to remember that there was no sound before God created it. There was no sound period. The difference between music and noise is mathematics and asymmetry. When God created music, He created it for a reason, and He built it in the same way He has built God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Music has three elements: melody, harmony, and rhythm. **When you start understanding that, you will understand that music is not a human force. It is a force that God**

**created. Now all music worships somebody. It is a container. It carries. It is a carrier. It carries either darkness or light. If you are going to say that your music carries light, there had better be light in it. If you are going to say that your music is God's music, then by definition of Who God is, when the music plays, God should show up.**

My point is that it is very good to have a commercial song. That is wonderful, but that is not what we should be running after only. I think that what should be the dictating criteria of what is really



great for "God's music" is how much of God it actually has and how much of it produces healing or is miraculous. I think that that is what we are going for. I am very excited about it because everybody is burned out. The whole world is burned out with music. The styles are very cyclical. We will have a certain style for a while, and then it will fade to another, but then in several years it will be back because there is sort of a running out of ideas. But with God there should be fresh stuff off the press all the time.

**Dave:** *You said something that I want to tee off from, that music either communicates the Spirit of God or the anti-Christ spirit. Is there a neutral spirit in music?*

**Phil:** I know this that music carries two vital things. It carries messages, and it carries spiritual force. You can hear on a Christian perspective. You can hear someone who can sing extremely well, but who has no anointing, and it is dead. You can hear someone who cannot sing so well, but when they open their mouth, you feel God. Now we cannot really put it down on paper that this is the way you get that or you don't get it. But it does exist. In the same way, in music that is full of darkness, there is definitely an anointing that is negative because you can see it in people who are anointed in that point of view. So if you realize that music contains words, and it contains spiritual force, then there is a positive and a negative because you are dealing in a number line situation. Then there also has got to be a "neutral." I think what the neutral is, and this is simply a theory because I am a jazz player, I grew up playing classical music, but I made a living playing jazz. I enjoy jazz music, but I also recognize—and this is sort of a heavy—the Bible says you are going to give an account for every idle deed, word, or thought. There is a point in music when it becomes idle conversation. It becomes an exploitation just to prove someone's gift. So I believe that all music does worship someone. I really believe that, and I believe that music is a communicator of power and spiritual issues. Therefore, I believe that it is negative, or it is positive. I also believe that there is some music. You know, when I play a scale, I would not say that is positive or negative. I would say that is a purpose, a method in what I am trying to do.

**Dave:** *If it is an A flat, it is not spiritual. It is still an A flat.*

**Phil:** Now, when you put somebody's breath on it, there is a difference in anointing between stringed instruments and breath instruments. One is plucked, and one is breath. Breath is where it gets heavy because breath is the God force. Dogs do not make music. Men make music. Dogs bark, and



they whine. But they are not musical geniuses.

God created man in His own image, and the Bible talks about heaven being full of music. It is a big subject.

*Dave: When we talk about trumpets, the Bible has a lot to say about them. I am sure, Phil, that you have spent countless hours going through the Scriptures, which talk about trumpets.*

*Trumpets were used to proclaim the Year of Jubilee. Trumpets were used to literally shout the victory and see the walls of Jericho come down. Trumpets are used sometimes in judgment. This is not a popular subject, but sometimes watchmen at the wall were commanded to blow the trumpet in warning for danger. Over the last twenty or thirty years, what I would call the twentieth century—American Christians primarily—we have been listening for a sound, a certain trumpet sound, and that was the "trump" that would declare that this was the end of all things—or the beginning. Yet it seems to me that the sound we are hearing right now is that we have been preoccupied with waiting for that one sound to the exclusion of not listening to the other sounds regarding what God is saying to do. Maybe they are going to proceed that. Without getting into "end times," do you believe that we have been listening for the wrong sound or that the emphasis has been wrong? Do you believe that we should be, at this point, focusing on escaping or occupying?*

*Phil: In Revelations the trumpet would signify time segments. Jesus said, "After that, I come." I think that where we are today is definitely a new segment. We are in a new era of the Church of Jesus Christ. I believe that—not to over dramatize or spiritualize it—the trumpet is a peculiar sound. It is a different sound. Corinthians talks about if you play an uncertain sound, who will go? There is definitely a certain sound beginning to be heard. People are reacting to that sound. You know what? They are from all denominations because everybody is sort of fed up with the isolationism—this denomination pitted against that denomination instead of recognizing that we are brothers and part of the Body of*

*Jesus Christ. So what I am saying is that we all should be listening for that trumpet sound. The trumpet was the best way the children of Israel had to communicate to the masses. Now we have a lot of other ways to communicate to large segments of people. That does not mean that the trumpet lost its ability to communicate. It just means that there are other sounds that are being heard.*

*Dave: I want to read from a recent issue of Crosswinds. "We live in a world literally cluttered with sounds today. Noise, distress signals, and disharmonious clamor, which emanates from a confused world system and often a confused Church."*

*Phil, what kind of sound are you making today? What is the message that reverberates within your spirit and is communicated to the souls of men? Your sound often times can be heard even before you speak. It is your vision, your place of service embodied in your flesh. Does it plant faith and hope in God's character and destiny or fear and fatalism in a collapsing world?*

*I really believe that the anointing God has given you in the area of music is to sound that sound, that clear sound that it talks about in First Corinthians 14. The Scripture says, "How can we prepare for battle without a sound, without a clear sound?" I have noticed that there is a trend throughout Christian music, a move toward a prophetic, warrior type of music that is emerging. Maybe it is signaling the end of a certain era and the beginning of something new that God is doing. If we look at the movements of God that we see through generations, there are changes, and often times music serves as that bridge. I think your music has been so popular because it crosses over all inter-generational groups, all different age groups as a result of the trumpet. While it has a jazzy and kind of a rock sound, you also, for instance with your newest album, Classic Hymns, have some excellent work in the area of very melodious, classical type of music with your trumpet. Yet in your Warrior's album, I noticed that in several of your songs, there is a transition where Jesus came as the suffering lamb, but*

*He is returning as the lion of Judea. We are going through this transition right now.*

*Phil: You know, there is a saying in the world, "Variety is the spice of life." But with God, God is so complex that for us to be told that there is only one way to worship Him or one way to praise Him would be absolutely contradictory to Who God is. God is so incredibly powerful in one instant, and in the same instant incredibly gentle. There must be music that encompasses that. But how do you do that? Your music has the right to be ballistic. It has the right to be fragile. Warriors was really God's timing. When I grew up in the Church—and I did before I rebelled—we used to sing songs like "Onward Christian Soldiers," things about battle. The music was very regimented and stiff, but the song's words were, "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the Cross of Jesus going on before."*

*I began to think about that. It is a new day, but the same message. There is a time to be gentle, but there is a time to fight. If you are afraid to fight, chances are, you will not make great inroads in your life. There comes a point in time when in everybody's existence, they have to fight. Jesus Christ was a fighter. He was gentle, but He did not win the war against darkness with gentleness. He won the war against darkness and Satan's Kingdom with the Word of God, but He did it with great strength and power.*

*What I am saying is that it is a new day, and the music that God is using will encompass every area of life. There is music that is going to touch an unbeliever. Music that when they hear it, they will see God and experience God in their life. There is music that will take a Believer who is down and cause them to stand up and say, "Wait a minute! I do not have to be down." There is that power. It is not just persuasive thinking or innuendoes. God rides in that music, and God's Spirit touches man. That is what it was designed to do. It is a spiritual communicator. That is why it is so dangerous.*

McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Pepsi-Cola never try to sell you anything without a song.

**Dave:** *You are right. Music is communicating a spirit and a worldview.*

**Phil:** We are in a battle of worldviews obviously. There is a spiritual warfare going on in the heavenlies. There is a battle going on for our mind, for our thinking—to think literally with the mind of Christ. There is a battle going on for the money and for the resources. Each one of us is involved in that and for the battle for law and government. We address these things in our program.

In the battle for music, I work with leaders like Ted Baehr and others who are trying to reclaim the media.

**Dave:** *Many Christians are beginning to cross over to non-religious music. Do you see this as a positive step in the right direction? I remember that you were talking earlier about how you believe that Christian music in the '90s should be trend setting and not a "following-after-the-world." There are many people who are very confused when they see this, and on the one hand they say, "Well, it looks as though they are compromising." However, it seems that what God is saying to the Church is that it is time to go out of the four walls into the marketplace and yet keep the message pure, to have the world's system taken out of you, but then to go back into the world's system. What is your perspective on that? Do you believe you will be doing more of that in that area?*

**Phil:** Yes, I do. It is hard to tell where somebody is unless you walk in their shoes. There are a couple of things that are important. When you look at the life of Jesus Christ when He was in the world, He got a lot of flack from His constituency or His religious peers because He did not just minister in the Church. He hung out with the sinners of the day. The religious elite said, "Hey, what are you doing hanging out here with these guys who are not what we would

count the cool people?" Jesus said, "The sick are the ones who need a doctor. If you are well, who do you need?" So I would say that we should follow that as a road map. Paul said, "I became all things for the gospel." As long as we are all things without losing the integrity of God, that is good. There is a friend of mine by the name of Bob, a pastor who has influenced me very greatly in his life. He said to me, "Phil, it is good and it is wonderful to cross over as long as you take the Cross over."

Now I have another point of view about "cross-over music." I do not believe that water runs up hill. I believe it runs downstream. To a degree, you are defying the law when you start to do music that is Christian in its content in nature. Then you turn around and try to force-feed it up the system. There is a lot of flack that is caused by that. It is similar to being a football player, and you become a Christian. Do you play Christian football?

**Dave:** *What's Christian football?*

**Phil:** That is the whole point. If you are an artist and you have the gift to play, then go ahead and play and make your music. Make sure it lines up with the Word of God. You do not have to preach John 3:16 in every song you sing, but your life does. If your life stands for Who you say you stand for, when you go to Arsenio Hall or the Tonight Show or wherever, and they say, "Why do you do this?", you will not give them some trifling answer. I say, "I do this because I want people to know that God is the center of my life. I am able to do it because of His power in me."

That is the best thing that you could ever do, and it means more than even a song. What do songs do? They are a platform for builders. They are positioners, but really when all is said and done, you have got to get on the stage. **You have got to let your light shine. I have never heard of a light bulb working hard to shine. They simply shine because they are plugged into the power.**

**Dave:** *Yes, there are different wattages of bulbs. Some people are called to be spotlights that are mega watts, and others are 60 watts. But we are just simply responsible to be plugged into that and let the light, the gifting that God has given to us shine. That is our destiny.*

*Following are albums by Phil Driscoll: Make Us One, Covenant Children, Classic Hymns: Vol. 1 and 2, Warriors.*

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## Malcolm du Plessis — Frontline Music

**Dave:** *We have now some exciting information! We have been joined by Malcolm du Plessis from Johannesburg, South Africa. He is a worship networker who has a vision to see worship be like incense offered up from the entire Body of Christ. Share with us what you see happening around the world with Christians who are learning to use the technology and the principles of networking.*

**Malcolm:** Let me tell my short South African story. God spoke sovereignly through a team of leadership in the church I was a part of, to fast and pray for the nation and gave us the exact day that a whole series of chronic violence broke out in the midst of our cities. We were a predominately white, South African church living in a white subculture, very fixed in it, open to exploring outside of it but quite unable because of the schism that is between the white South African world that I had lived in and another black world that was something totally unfathomable to me. God spoke to us to pray for the country and then led us on a path of writing worship songs that were somehow African in genre that helped me as a white South African to identify with my Africanness rather than constantly thinking of myself as a European who had lost my home somewhere and was wandering on this continent that I was living in. These songs spread rapidly around the country, and because of an openness to bring the different cultures, denominations, and streams together, all of a sudden unbelievable doors opened to me in the black community. You have to understand in our country the success of the system of apartheid was not how it suppressed black people but how it fooled the white people to enjoy their self-sufficiency and live behind their doors. Suddenly the horizons opened for me to discover and meet people from vastly different cultures who spoke totally different languages and had no similar interests and no similar experiences to me. Suddenly these doors opened to me, and I am in homes and areas I have never been in before, dangerous places I have always avoided because of fear.

Suddenly new avenues opened to me of finding people in other cultures, of wanting to see God bring reconciliation, and wanting to see around the Throne of God every tribe and every culture come together. So I gathered a group of 23 people to do a recording who had come out of different backgrounds, cities, and cultures and who spoke about seven different languages and came from totally different kinds of church backgrounds. I was the link between all these people by being a friend to them. Thus, we gathered them together and documented a whole new bride of worship songs that were



a synthesis of our various culture expressions. We named the group Friends First because it was a time when the significance of our hearts joining was electrifying. It was not a clearly defined group, but more of a mob of musicians who went on a pursuit to address the nation in praises to God. We carried the message that when the Lordship of Christ is embraced, it has to transcend the barriers between us, not only to break them down, but to build bridges so we could find each other in incredible ways.

Through a whole set of unexpected circumstances, this recording got on to our pop charts. This opened up the media, interviews, people asking why it was that they did not like Christian music but were

responding favorably to something appealing. I believe it was because each of us from our different cultures had broken out of our little worlds and suddenly discovered a whole new world of other person. This was not only another adventure, but it became extremely appealing. In that melting pot, something happened where the exaltation of Jesus suddenly became comprehensible to the ordinary people who were generally antagonistic to the gospel, the name of Jesus and Christianity. This has been five years of experience that is difficult to communicate, but through a series of events, this company of people has increasing platforms in the secular world, at major political events, pop events, and media to communicate in ways that no other team or individual has ever had a chance to do.

In fact, the title song of our initial recording project, "We See A New Africa," has become a slogan for the government and for those who are opposed to the government. Just the term, "a new Africa," is like the key for our nation. That was born in a prayer and fasting time, and now the phrase, "born in prayer," is the key phrase for every entity of government.

**Dave:** *Do you have a vision to see this expanded worldwide, and how is it related to the International Worship Alliance?*

**Malcolm:** South Africa is like a world within a country. It has had a very high profile because of the complexities of the cultural blends. In a most careful and unpretentious way, I have felt that my experience in an extremely tense environment is a model. As a white South African, I have had to face racism and division head on. I cannot avoid it. I cannot in any way excuse it. Each of us in our country have had to seriously search our hearts in terms of our attitudes toward people from another camp. This is an ongoing process, and we have had to substantially find the healing of God in extreme division in a way that the world needs. That can sound like I have a Messianic

complex, and I fight against that constantly, but I believe that somehow, our experiments, our exploration, and our journey which was called "Friends First" is an example for the rest of the world. Basically a number of people with spheres of influence came together and laid down their platforms. We found one common platform to glorify the name of Jesus and addressed the society around us. I do not want to overplay this, but we experienced a major breakthrough in our country. Doors opened to us in various parts of the country in surprising ways.

That vision died, kind of, a few years ago, and I felt that era had come to an end. But, in a recent series of events, after traveling in Asia and the U.S., I have had a growing sense that maybe something of what we discovered in the complexity of South Africa, God wants to do in an international way. All kinds of Church leaders are predicting that God wants to bring about a new sound into the earth. My suspicion is that that new sound is in an eclectic synthesis of the different cultural blends and ideas from the Euro-America, Latin, Pacific Island, and Asian cultures. Somehow, what God is wanting to do is give creative people, and hopefully skillful and humble people, an opportunity to find each other across incredible cultural barriers and find a worship expression that somehow threads all of these things together. It is going to mean work, lots of arguments, conflicts, and struggles because that process is extremely tense. When cultures and tastes collide, there is a whole combustion that happens that is invigorating but also very complexing at times.

But, it is my conviction that the new sound that God wants to bring is something that all the cultures of the world will find themselves together around the throne. The thing about heaven is that we do not dispense with our cultural heritages, but every tongue, every language, suddenly finds itself glorifying the Lamb around the Throne. We have not dispensed with our previous legacies and adopted something fresh. I expect that if the Kingdom of Heaven is to be communicated on earth in a way that is going to penetrate the observing,

antagonistic, unbelieving world, that a musical idiom that somehow merges these various influences has to be discovered. "Righteousness and praise will spring up before all nations!" This will come with the issues of justice and righteousness and God's ways, plus a very articulate glorifying of His power, which can spring up through a musical idiom that somehow strands every culture, where every entity on the earth can find its mark in that music. That kind of music will impact the secular world in a way we have not seen.

Numbers of "Pop" stars have built a studio and are flying people in from all over the world, exploring the dynamic and energy that comes from meeting together. The Church is always behind, but I feel that coming together is very significant. Americans are very independent, which I do not say in any condemning way, but God wants a fusing of the emphasis of praise and righteousness. I see the nations being put in a burning pot where they will be frustrated, challenged, and provoked. That will bring the praises of God to the center stages of the world.

*Dave: The Word of God says that families and nations pass through into eternity, so I believe you are right. We can be diverse. I think of the song, "We Are The World," and I see that as a counterfeit of what God would like to do in the Church. I can see a vision of the various nations and cultures of the world coming together to proclaim, "We Are The Church!" I am seeing the prospect of God bringing unity through highly talented, gifted, yet humble musicians and leaders coming together to put out a new sound in the earth. It would be a multicultural worship of the Lord, which allows for diversity. How do you see the Worship Alliance playing a part at this point in time?*

*Malcolm: I have to speak primarily for myself. It is my conviction that just goal orientation can lead to all kinds of corruption. There is an incredible value to relationships that can lead to fruitfulness. Standing side by side and enjoying each other's company always leads to fruitfulness. So the vision we have is the finding of each other*

across the spans of continents, cultures, and nations, the coming together of people, not necessarily through great controlling or magnificent companies with money, but simply people coming with the fascination of diversity, the unique work of God in all kinds of situations drawing people together.

In terms of the Worship Alliance, my role in it is to be one who blunders around, stumbles across fascinating people, and suggests that a couple of them meet some others and see what happens when they get together. I am helping to get the right components to come together. For example, in Asia I went to a conference with a group of Americans, speaking at a large worship conference with ten Asian countries represented, and they exclusively sang American songs. I took two days and had some very talented people who I knew from previous trips to help me write a song from scratch in the language the Indonesian and Malaysian people speak. It became the theme song of the conference; they have not written songs in their own language and from their own culture. Because I come from a nation with an inferiority complex, as they have that same strand of thinking, I was able to pick that up and help them discover the richness of their own culture. That song is now sung all over that part of the world. So I feel my assignment is to go to various parts of the world, help them identify their particular authentic musical expression, and to encourage people to not be ashamed of it. Then I bring these different expressions together and cause the world to stand up and be amazed.

My role is the relational aspect. I think we see two things working hand in hand. One, an international alliance, like two countries cooperating together in time of war. It is a coming together of people from different strands of the Church who agree to cooperate together. Two, that needs to be orchestrated, expressed, and administrated through a developing network with the technology that has already been discussed. My role is help people find each other.

What I found in my country is that

by targeting relationships, projects and fruitfulness came forth without necessarily having a goal orientation. When there are relationships, we are comfortable to hear the Word of God, and we have the freedom to do it. If you have people who are friends, you have resources to do things, whereas, if you just have a goal, it is a struggle to find the people to help you. But when you get people with resources together, and you seek God and He speaks into that context, there is no end to what can happen.

**Dave:** *We in the American Church are a bit myopic. We tend to think top/down but what God seems to be doing is bottom/up in a spontaneous way all over the world. The cell church, meta church, house church movements are seen as a challenge to the existing structure. What kind of church do you come from in South Africa? Are the believers there finding their place of service or, are they stuck in a traditional structure?*

**Malcolm:** I have been involved in a grassroots, fun type of church structure where leadership is a team concept rather than a one dynamic personality concept. In the church that I was involved in planting in 1983, a number of the people had significant translocal spheres of influence, but none of them ever do it alone as finances allow. Everything we do is in team. There is a whole new excitement about the priesthood of the believers.

Let me tell you about Black Africa. Whether it be the denominational strands, the Pentecostal or Charismatic strands, there is no such thing as some great personality who holds the whole thing together. There is no such thing as a worship leader in the churches. When we have worship leader conferences and try to get Black African leaders to attend them, it is stupid because Black churches do not have such a thing. In Black churches, whoever has a song, sings it; whoever has a word brings it; and that is the nature of the culture. Thus, in an exclusively Black church in South Africa, it could last five hours because they have a lot of people who have a contribution to bring to the whole group. It is very significant that in the church women

and children have roles to play that do not happen in the male dominated structures of society.

Our country is like a world within a country because we have every kind of culture and style, whereas our white culture is different in that we aspire toward Western standards. We are kind of third world people trapped in first world concepts, and we get a bit confused at times. But generally the concept of cell groups meeting in homes is very widespread in our country. However, what is fascinating is that the Black African church has no need for being educated or deprogrammed for the new thing to happen because it already lives that way. It is the dynamic of their culture—hospitality, warmth, openness in their homes, and freedom to drop in where you like, when you like. For example, weddings in South African Black culture are community events. There are no such things as wedding invitations. It will last the whole weekend, Friday through Sunday. So on the weekend, you just look around for a wedding, and you just join in. People you have never met before in your life can come in and eat your choice food, and you do not mind because it is the openness and hospitality that is ingrained in the culture. So in the Black culture the concept of servant leader and, therefore, the open church and the priesthood of all believers is really happening.

**Dave:** *So it is a lifestyle that happens on Sunday. Do you meet in homes, or do you have a building that you meet in?*

**Malcolm:** I come from a higher class church as we have all these strands. But, the Black community will often just meet outside under the trees. Even the concept of public praise, which is new and revolutionary in Western communities is just standard among the Blacks. You must understand that we are a third world people who are desperately aspiring toward Western standards, desperately desiring to emulate American models that we have seen.

We want to have these personalities and in fact strive for the things that Americans are now wanting to be freed from. That is one of the tensions and things you need to

understand about South Africa, that there are tremendous tensions and struggles going on in every area of life.

I think the excitements of the Gospel and the message of the Kingdom in the country of South Africa is that you have to face these tensions every day, so the life of God becomes quickened and more tangible to us.

**Dave:** *Do you see South Africa as a microcosm of the world?*

**Malcolm:** That is a difficult question. In 1985 when I became a mouthpiece to challenge the White church in South Africa to embrace its Africanness, to be comfortable in being African, suddenly the concept came that if God could bring healing in our context, then this could be shared internationally. But that can lead to all kinds of distortions and deceptions. I am leery of promoting some new kind of trend. The privilege of living in a place of conflict and tension is that the things you learn can be helpful in other places. Isaiah 49:6 has burned in me. Prophesying about Jesus, it says that it would be too small a thing for Him to just be a light to restore and bring together the nation of Israel. Instead, He was to be a light unto the Gentiles. That kind of sense in which Jesus is constantly breaking boundaries and launching us out, I feel that we need to embrace the spirit of that regardless of what context we are in. If we are in Arizona and the Lord teaches our church something and it matures and bears fruit, how selfish it would be if we just limited the impact of that to our community. We should see everything as an opportunity to infect the entire world.

If we in South Africa are experiencing healing and we are discovering the beauty of cultural mixing, then we need let that infect the whole world and yet not get a Messianic complex. There is always the danger of perceiving ourselves as nothing and then suddenly experiencing something that makes us think we are great. That swing is dangerous because there has been so much conflict, and the world looks at us and thinks, "Can anything good come out of South Africa?" One can, therefore, see the cleverness of God

taking things that are born in this mess and impact the world.

**Dave:** *That is the nature of God's intention for the Church. Here are a few points of the vision for the Worship Alliance. "One, to assure that Jesus, not worship, is the object of our worship." Would you say that worship can become a form of and lead to idolatry?*

**Malcolm:** Definitely. The restoration of worship has led to all these gatherings and conferences and events around the world. There are a bunch of people who because of their gifting, are becoming fascinated with worship. That is a deception and distortion for it is the rediscovery of the Lordship of Christ that is the absolute imperative.

**Dave:** *Another one of the points is "internationally networking and encouraging local church initiatives." Your network is to give these local works an opportunity to move upward, if that is God's purpose. Is that correct?*

**Malcolm:** Yes, very much so. There are musical and worship expressions that are so diverse and so authentic that are not being given an opportunity to spread around the world because of stylization, controlling spirits, and organizations that enjoy success and then try and put their stamp throughout the Church, which is unfortunately true about America. Because I am a third world person, I have been on the other end of American enthusiasm that rushes into the country and leaves a deposit but also leaves new clothing, eating habits, entertainment, and preferences such, that people are fascinated with it. But what God wants to promote is the beauty of the concept of sanctity of diversity. Whereas there are those who seek to push us in a mold and control us, there is a sanctity and beauty about allowing the Asians, for example, to let the praises of God arise from their culture and we in the Western world appreciating, valuing, and esteeming it highly. We want to let the beauty of what people develop arise without our having to prescribe it, which so often cuts the real life out of it.

Just because the beauty of the sanctity of diversity is being expressed in one particular location in a marvelous way, does not mean that it has to go everywhere. There are other things that do need to go out to a broader audience. There are different groups among those who write songs and lead worship. Some have known wide exposure and popularity and have come to depend on it. Others are perhaps a little irrational, wild, unruly, and immature at times but who have tasted that promotion comes from God, that even if they had ten years of desert, God can come suddenly and open new doors for them. What we are most concerned about here are those who are not dependent upon man but who are deeply committed and have tasted of the preciousness of God and His ability to open closed doors. I am just a very ordinary person, yet the Lord put me in the homes of significant people and allowed me to minister to them. This is the hand of God, not man.

So we want a company of people who are not striving, not desperate to make things happen but who know that in His time, God will honor. Graham Kendrick, who has led the March for Jesus, is a wonderful example of this. The more ordinary he has become, the more God has honored him.

**Dave:** *We are seeing the purity of worship being restored to the Church. I am sure what you are saying is resonating with many people. You want to see the worship we read of in Scripture around the Throne of God come to us on earth.*

**Malcolm:** The main facet of worship that God wants to bring us into is the fear of God. All the things we have been talking about have that goal. We know the aspects of happiness, rejoicing, leading, and freedom, and in certain aspects of the Church we have explored truth, the singing of hymns, and articulating the great foundations of the Church. There are other dimensions of the Church for intimacy, tenderness, and closeness with Jesus having been the important ones. But, the facets of respect for the awesome majesty of God I think is still something to be unleashed where the worship

encounter is more than a lot of people touching God, but where the hand of God reaches out, and we tremble at His power to exalt nations or remove them. We see that He lifts men up or removes them for seasons of their life in order to deal with them and change them.

The power of the different strands of the Church finding each other in worship is ultimately to bring us into a place of a very healthy fear of God, not by putting people on a guilt trip, or getting them to confess all kinds of things that do not need to be confessed, but a reverential awe of the majesty of Jesus. Ultimately, the Kingdom of God has to do with heaven coming to earth. In heaven we find every culture, every facet of Christianity somehow finding each other and then being in absolute awe and night and day worshipping the holiness of God.

There have been seasons precious, beautiful, lovely, but ultimately the exaltation of the majesty and the holiness of the Lord Jesus is the most crucial issue. Certain facets of the Church can say, "I love you, I love you" all day but know nothing of the rich heritage that the evangelical church has in the singing of hymns and songs that are filled with truth and vice versa. But as we find each other, I believe what is going to happen is an incredible increase of respect for the significant and gathering strength of Jesus Himself on the earth.

**Dave:** *I can almost see it as a hydrogen bomb. First there is an explosion where the elements are driven together with intense pressure and heat. God is applying intense pressure and heat in the Church. But once that explosion happens, there is the explosion that is mighty, and we have not seen anything like that yet in the Church. Perhaps that is what God has in store through worship renewal, through the Body of Christ coming together and the work of ministry being put back into the hands of the people.*

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## Gene Edwards — How to Meet

**Dave:** *Gene Edwards has a number of books that will challenge your thinking, deeply!* Tale of Three Kings, The Divine Romance, Prisoner in the Third Cell, Church Unity, Revolution: The Story of the Early Church. *Gene, you have written, "The future of the Ecclesia belongs to those who find a new way to meet together." Could you explain?*

**Gene:** No one seems to ever question why we Protestants meet the way we do. There are only four ways a Christian can meet: the Catholic way, the Eastern Orthodox way, the Plymouth Brethren way (which most people are not familiar with), and then the Protestant way. We're stuck with those four, and they were all man-made. They had nothing to do with the New Testament. You can set a date for when each and every one of them began and who invented them. And yet we drag them into 350,000 Protestant churches in America and probably around 800,000 all over the world, even in the jungles of South America and Borneo, and you will find basically the Protestant church service following the same way.

That brings up the question then, "How should we meet?" My feelings are revolutionary, unique and probably have not been ever stated before in the history of Christianity.

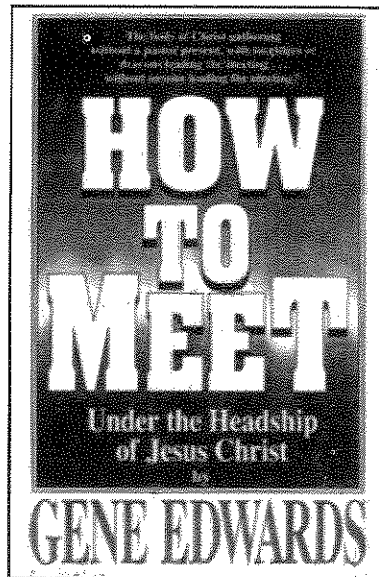
The answer is, there is no one way to meet, and there ought not to be men putting the way to meet down on us. We should discover in every locale on earth, in every culture, in every matrix, there should be an indigenous, organic way the Church expresses itself. We Protestants basically got our way of meeting from the people who came over on boats from England, and they gave us a way to meet that is artificial to us.

The British do not have a way that the British meet. I am sure that they would be more staid than we are, but what they have in Great Britain was imported to them from Geneva from John Calvin who invented the Protestant church service. So we do not have an organic expression of church meetings anywhere on the earth except where they happen spontaneously, and that is always outside the

traditional ways of meeting. We have got to come back to a First Century way of discovering for ourselves what we look like when we are organic and natural and native in our expression.

**Dave:** *When you talk about an organic way to meet, that has to be put in contrast to what we have today, which, would that be organizational?*

**Gene:** It's a ritual, a man-made ritual thought up by, well, I don't know what individual thought up the Eastern Orthodox one. That's the one I don't know. It started



around 400 A.D. All I can tell you is he was a man given to pageantry. It's a two-hour meeting. You don't get to sit down during the whole thing. The Roman Catholic Church service was invented in 500 A.D. It has not changed in one smidgen, not one word in 1,500 years. The Protestant way of meeting was invented by John Calvin around 1540 A.D., has not changed one smidgen since then.

I visited a group of Christians in Toyama, Japan, in September, 1965. These Christians had sat under someone who had told them they had a right to be Christians without pastors and without ritual. The very people who taught it followed the Plymouth Brethren way of meeting, but these folks did not know that. So

that was their only contact with the outside world. There were fifteen Christians, all Japanese. They went back home, took their notes, and they began meeting. I was the first person to ever visit them from the outside, the first Westerner, first anybody to ever see them meet. They had developed over a period of some years, probably the only Japanese expression of the Church of Jesus Christ ever to exist on this planet. Everywhere else I have ever been, the Japanese, like all the rest of us, sit on pews, face a little rostrum or pulpit, and someone preaches. That's just not Japanese. These people came in, sat down on the toe-tomi, knelt. There has never been anything like it in all the history of Japan. It was organic. They discovered it for themselves. It was 100% pure Japanese.

I walked into a meeting in Surbrook in Quebec, Canada. These people had just been meeting a short time. They had no leader, and they had developed a Quebec way of meeting, that is, they were French Canadians. They all decided to go to Africa as missionaries and it died.

I walked into a living room in Santa Barbara, California, in 1969, and watched a group of young Christians, all hippies who had never had any outside influence. They had discovered the American way to meet. It was so beautiful that I cried like a baby. It was really organic, it was natural to me, I understood it, I could smell it by instinct what it was. It was mine.

Those are the only three organic expressions of the Church I ever saw until I began to understand how to help people how to have their own way of meeting. But there is an American way to meet. There is a Japanese way to meet, and there is a French Canadian way to meet. And they don't look like one another. But the people of their own land, in their own matrix, out of their own culture understand and feel perfectly at home. I didn't feel at home in that Japanese meeting. I had no right to. I didn't feel particularly at home with the French meeting. I felt perfectly at home with the

American. That's organic, and it should be different in every locale on this earth. And God's people all have a right to find those ways to meet.

**Dave:** *It sounds like perhaps one of the common denominators in this organic meeting is the centrality of Christ as the head of the meeting.*

**Gene:** Yes, and there's no pastor in charge, and there's no ritual involved. There's one other thing. These people are all participating, it was a *spontaneous* thing. They were young, dumb and didn't know the wrong way to do it. I will always remember something Daws Trotman said to me. He said to me, "I was a brand new Christian, and I had never been taught the wrong way to do it." That stuck with me all my life. They did not know the wrong way to meet, and they discovered one for themselves, and yes, they are all highly centered on Christ, not on teachings but on actual experiences with Jesus Christ. I have learned from these people, and I have learned therefore how to help people find for themselves, not for me, but for themselves, an indigenous way to meet.

**Dave:** *Your work on the pre-Constantine era, points out that there were no building structures. This seems to indicate that the Church of Jesus Christ was the only religion ever on the face of the earth that had no special buildings, no clergy; it was born in informality.*

**Gene:** That's right.

**Dave:** *Are you saying that all the accoutrements of the modern church are things that were imported from outside of the Biblical view of the Ecclesia, these are all things that hinder us from coming into true koinonia or the true Ecclesia?*

**Gene:** It sounds good to me. A typical organic meeting of the Church will probably run two to three hours. You try running a two- to three-hour meeting on Sunday morning, and you would be bored to tears, whereas you have to pry people loose from these kinds of meetings. There is nothing that has been brought in from the outside by man. It is informal. It is informal by

nature. We could understand this a lot better if we could understand the Lord's relationship to the men who raised up the Church in Jerusalem. How did they, what was their view of a meeting?

It was sitting around in a living room with Jesus Christ. They didn't have any different idea when they started meeting in the homes in Jerusalem, and I doubt they had much different in the Temple. I'm sorry, it wasn't the Temple. It was behind the Temple in Solomon's Court. I don't think you can have an organic expression of the Church of Jesus Christ if you have leaders at the outset. Everybody wants to be the worship leader or lead in the Bible study or lead whatever. It kills. Ritualism is an absolute necessity in a situation like that.

**Dave:** *Many people, when you start talking about an organic church, get very "nervous in the service." Let me read a paragraph from your book Revolution: the Story of the Early Church. "The religious system can always handle a new movement just as long as it reaches only the man on the street. But when this new work takes away men inside the structure itself, then things happen. An attack is on its way." Gene, are you saying there is no place for leadership in the Church?*

**Gene:** No, there's no place for the discovery of *how to meet*. Let me put it in Scriptural context. Paul of Tarsus goes into a town in Galatia. He preaches the gospel. Everybody there is a heathen. A few of those heathen get saved. On an average of four months he stays in that town. When he leaves there, there are no leaders. And when he leaves there, there is no certain way to meet. They are left in a home. He comes back two years later. Wow, what a gospel that man had, that could be preached four months and walk away for two years!

I put in the newest book I have written, the challenge to every minister on this earth to walk into his church next Sunday and announce that he will minister to them for four months and he will leave at the end of four months for two years, and there can be no leaders for that period of time and that he expects to come back and see them alive, well,

growing and flourishing. I've said that's really the only test of a man's message.

Paul came back two years later. There had developed among them an organic church. Everybody says, "No, they had elders," but if you go back and look at the record, that's not true. They had no leaders. Then came the leaders. But those leaders did not take that organic expression of the Church away from those people. Paul did that throughout his career. He had no exception to that.

**Dave:** *In your book Revolution: The Story of the Early Church, you said, "We need to see apostleship restored, but if we are to have true apostles on this earth again, then one thing must come first. A staggering, unbelievable number of hours spent in the Lord's presence. We can accept no cheap substitute for apostleship."*

*In your latest book, you have said that the restoration, plurality of leadership, the restoration of the five-fold ministry is not the solution, but in Revolution you are saying that we do need apostleship. Please clarify this.*

**Gene:** I don't have a lot of use for the five-fold ministry. I really, really don't. I counted seventeen-fold ministry when I put them all together myself in Ephesians. Again we come back to the word *organic*. In the late 1800s the Charismatics said what we need is the restoration of the gifts. Well, they left out the church planters. And so they worked real hard on the gifts, but they still kept the pastors, the pews, and their pulpits. So the Charismatics really didn't do anything. Not realizing that the gifts come out of the organic soil of the people—you do not have to recover them—they just come out by nature. In other words, if you leave a group of people alone, they will begin developing all the gifts. They will come out just like a nose comes out on a baby. You don't have to restore it. It's just there, it's organic to the nature of the Church to have these gifts. You do not have to fan them. They come. And the reason we have not had church planters is that they are also organic to the life of a group of believers. But because we haven't had any kind of real experience of a Church life



and very little organic expression of the Church and very, very little experience of letting these things grow up organically, we have lost the privilege of having church planters. If we ever get back to having church planters again, they will go out, raise up churches, leave them alone, and the nose will just naturally grow on the face of the child. The gift will be there. We don't have to fan it nor cultivate it nor beg for it nor lay hands for it. It's part of the genetic nature of the girl, this beautiful girl, the bride of Christ. What we need is church planters, that is, men who trust laymen, men who know how to raise up the Church from zero, and men who will depart the city and leave God's people alone to grow as they naturally do by the direction of the Holy Spirit. And then all the gifts and everything else will come up. The Church will find her beautiful expression, and she will be magnetic, and she will draw people to Him.

Dave: *Yes, it's something of a mindset that says, "My job in life is to work myself out of a job."*

Gene: That's it, and that's a rare, rare gift. Most of us just can't do that!

Dave: *You said in the book How to Meet, if there's anything to be said to people wanting church life and would-be church planters, you get leadership too soon. In Revolution: The First Seventeen Years, you talk about how it's somewhat unrealistic to expect new converts to be able to lead a church.*

Gene: Actually what I am saying is not so much they don't have the ability to lead. I am saying young people ought not start serving the Lord in their teens. We're talking here about people called of God. The men who need a lot of training are the church planters, because they've got to give God's people an awfully lot. But I strongly believe laymen can be left alone once they have a good foundation and struggle through into a glorious discovery of the Ecclesia. But this business of taking kids 18, 19, 20, and 25 years old and putting them through a six week training course and putting them out on the streets for the next three and four years probably has the highest

burnout rate in the world. I don't think too highly of that. Theoretically we all ought to start off, probably in the simplest expression in the Church, probably meeting in somebody's home somewhere.

I have a dear friend who has raised up the organic expression of a church in Nepal. He says, "I never tell my elders (he is a church planter, planting about 300 churches in that country), I never tell them what you Westerners call an elder. I always tells them, 'Oh very serious office. You must serve God's people. You are servant. You must always serve God's people.' "

In our country, we see elders as somebody important. The concept we have in America is basically Plymouth Brethren. The elders run the Church. There is a plurality of function. They do the preaching. They make all the decisions. They come in and tell you what to do. They all sit down on the front seat and choose the songs. There's is a terrible thing! I don't find anything in the world wrong with eldership as it is understood in America or Great Britain except the elders' meetings. I don't believe there is any Scriptural grounds for that—other than that one thing about Paul meeting the Ephesians elders out on the beach somewhere because he couldn't get to them. I believe the Church should be run, especially in its formative years, by the consensus of the Body of Christ, both in brothers' meetings and sisters' meetings. This business of having elders' meetings in which everything on earth is decided is about the same as having the pastor who does the church bulletin every Sunday and meets with the board of directors and tells God's people what they are going to do all year long. An elder to me is a man who grows up organically in the Church who is mostly gifted at taking care of problems that have nothing to do with the meetings. He is a problem solver. He's taking care of adultery and the sick, meeting their needs, making sure the money goes to the most needy people; he's dealing with the psychotics and the thieves of the Church and the kleptomaniacs, just generally helping God's people to be able to

remain under the headship of Christ in the meetings. He's not there to run it, he's there to make sure nobody else runs it.

Dave: *He's kind of a troubleshooter. In Isaiah 26:9 it says, "When judgment comes, it teaches people righteousness." What you are saying here is before you are qualified to be an elder, not only do you need to organically grow up in that local church, you can't be imported in from another city and all of a sudden be planted into leadership, but you have to go through a series of crises so that what's really in you is made manifest to those around you, not what appears on the surface.*

Gene: Yes, a friend of mine in Tulsa, Oklahoma, had a wife who boiled eggs every day for her young daughter who came home from school and ate an egg. The wife put an H on the egg that was hard-boiled. One day the mother forgot to boil the eggs. So the little girl got her magic marker out and put an H on the eggs. She broke the egg open, and all it spilled all over the place. Just because you put a title on something does not make it that. A lot of men, a lot of movements have been founded on putting the title *elder* on people. But just because you carry that title does not make you an elder. Only the Holy Spirit of God in an organic situation where the people of God are left in an organic situation can determine who the elders are. There isn't any other way.

Dave: *Well, Gene Edwards, I know that your ideas are born out of experience and you have been around the block, having served decades in traditional church structure. You said that until we return to this basic primitive way to meet, we will continue to have something we refer to as the Church but that is really not attractive to most believers nor to unbelievers. You point out, looking at the early church that we have today in America, some 400,000 Protestant churches, virtually every one of them has a preacher who is preaching God's people to death.*

Gene: Yes, there is no functioning. We just sit with a thousand yard stare.

Dave: *You point out the Scripture in I*

*Corinthians 14 where Paul is talking to the Corinthians, saying, "When one of you is sharing in a meeting and somebody else gets excited, don't let the second person interrupt the first person," you said that Scripture is really almost out of context in today's religious system in America. The Ecclesia of the First Century, you say, needed that verse but we don't today. Do you think we are going to turn that corner? You've had a fairly, what can I say. . .*

**Gene:** ... a little stronger than most people. I said in the last book I wrote, "Do you really want this (and you are a traditional church)? Then this is what you must do. You must close your auditorium and take a vow that it will not be reopened for two years. And then you will rip up the slanted floor and you will build a huge living room with sofas and paintings on the wall and lamps and maybe an ottoman or two thrown around and whatever else it takes to make a living room. But for two years you can't go in it. Then you have to put your pastor in a full time job somewhere or send him off on a sabbatical, hopefully send him out to some church that has organic meetings.

Then God's people will have to have a furious four- to six-months' help from someone who will show them help from Jesus Christ. And then he must leave and not come back for another sixteen to eighteen months. When he comes back, then you will know what the Church is like, and you will be able to use that verse because you will have so many wonderful things to share. I see this happen all the time in an organic expression of the Church. I've never seen it in an traditional Church.

Until we shoot the preachers and burn down the church buildings—folks, I'm not serious—but until we don't have buildings and we don't have pastors, we will never see First Corinthians 14 again.

Pastors are addicted to ministry, and God's people are frightened silly to function in a church building. I don't know what we are going to do with the pastor. Maybe we should just pay him to do nothing. Give us a year or two to discover koinonia, to discover informality, to discover

sharing, to discover loving one another and caring for one another and let us discover one another. Have I gone too far?

**Dave:** *I don't think so, I think it will challenge people. We live in a society where we want teachers, we want more doctrine. We think if we are always learning, somehow we will come to the knowledge of the truth. It is refreshing to hear somebody prophetically call us back to the first love, this John 17 Church that demonstrates unity. Do you see a city-wide church beginning to emerge of small clusters of Ecclesia that find one another, which will demonstrate superiority to the rest of the community?*

**Gene:** I see a cloud the size of a man's hand. There are enough men out here today calling out and books are being written and people are scratching their heads and folks are rethinking and boy, there is a restlessness. You take the typical church sitting down on the corner that is not doing anything different than what it was in 1900, that church is in trouble. Now some of the great mega churches that have got all the "spit and polish" and circus to entertain people are drawing people. But the traditional church, people are scratching their heads and wishing to get out of there. They have an ability beyond what they are being allowed to produce. In twenty years, I think it's going to happen. I think there is going to be enough books out there that the tidal wave is going to happen. We are about to the time where John Huss was when he was the first to raise a voice. He prepared the way for Luther. Yes, brother, it's on the way.

**Dave:** *Give us some tips.*

**Gene:** If it is a traditional church, shut your church building down and keep your educational building for child care. Put your pastor on a three year sabbatical. Pastor, quit the ministry and sit down in the living room with the ordinary folks with slacks and shirt on and keep your mouth shut for three years.

Here's what would come out of that. Imagine thirty people, and they have no background. And they are all in a living room scene. What do

you do? For six months don't pray, don't sing. Get together once or twice a week and eat lunch or supper together until you really get to know one another. After that, work on singing together out of a song book. Write your own songs. Make sure no one leads the singing. After you have gotten informal, step one, and two, you have some songs to sing and everybody feels free to announce and nobody is leaving, number three, you might even learn to start praying spontaneously, not with affectation but just right out of the simplicity of your heart like a child. That is as far as you are going to get—step one, two and three—until someone comes and sits down in that living room and proclaims nothing to you but the glory of Jesus Christ and Him alone. If that guy has got any good sense, he will do that for a few months and then he will leave you. And out of that will grow up the community of the redeemed, the community of the believer, the Ecclesia, that glorious, beautiful thing that we have seen very little of for the last 1,700 years. In other words, the Church will emerge, out of that, and she will be beautiful. And out of that will come your elders and gifts and all such and so forth. And then maybe by the end of a couple of years, the church planter will come back and he can help you for a few weeks and take off again. And maybe that fellow you used to have as a pastor, maybe he will go sit down in another informal church in another city somewhere. And by now maybe he's running around with the church planter and he's beginning to get the hang of this. And finally perhaps that dear brother who went to seminary for four years, who got into the ritual of the church, maybe by now he can get unloosed enough and he can begin to help churches again and unloose them. When that day comes, we are going to see something.

**Dave:** *We are going to see a massive revival, aren't we?*

**Gene:** You will. I'm getting too old.

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## Dr. Tony Evans — The Urban Alternative

**Dave:** *Dr. Tony Evans is President of The Urban Alternative and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas. We are going to discuss that God is restoring Christian community. It is beginning from the bottom up, with individuals and families, and then affecting the community. Dr. Tony Evans, founder of Urban Alternatives, has a radio program on over 250 radio stations nationwide. He is also co-founder of Renaissance Productions and has authored a best selling book called, America's Only Hope. Another book dealing with reconciliation is called Are Blacks Spiritually Inferior to Whites: The Dispelling of the American Myth.*

*The last article you wrote in Urban Family discussed the need for a "heart transplant" in America and especially the cities. Could you explain?*

**Tony:** We are in a desperate need today in our Church of a change of perspective about God and ourselves, which is an internal change. What we desired to do is to change structure, systems, and political movements without being changed from the inside out, and this is backward. All the obstacles and the evil we are facing is really the result of a worldview that is held in the minds and hearts of people, and unless we infect and affect the way people are thinking or the foundations of their choices, we cannot change the systems that those choices erect. So I am saying that we must first of all change the Church within, that is, change our passion for and commitment to God and service to Him from within, so that it then flows out to the world. The problem is that people are trying to build an army to impact the world when we have not done these basic things in the Church.

**Dave:** *There is a lot of talk about the separation of Church and state, but it seems to me that the real issue that God is interested in restoring is the relationship between the Church and the home. What is your perspective on that?*

**Tony:** God has allowed such a voluminous disintegration to occur

within our family structures that the Church has come to the realization that unless it does its job of preserving the home, it will not even be able to preserve the Church because what is the church but a collection of homes. So the realization that the breakdown of our society is a reflection of the breakdown of the home has helped to awaken the Church to the need of becoming the main defender of the home. Also the Church has begun to realize the need of the home, its need for the Church as the bigger family that is necessary to support local family concerns.



**Dave:** *There is a lot of talk about the decentralizing of the Church, the plurality of leaders, and the restoration of the five-fold ministry as leaders reexamine the position of the CEO pastor as the dominant leader. At Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship are you moving toward a cell group, home based dynamic so the relational networking that is so important can facilitate?*

**Tony:** We were founded with that principle in mind. Therefore, we have always had cell groups and have operated with a small group emphasis. We recently reexamined our structure and solidified a bottom up approach. I totally believe that decentralization is the only mechanism that God has ever given His Church. In fact the mechanism

for the New Testament Church was first given to Moses from Jethro in the Old Testament model. If you expect your ministry to grow deep as it grows wide, it must grow from the bottom up and must decentralize. This means that the major job of the, "senior pastor", the Moses in the group, is to identify, train, and develop qualified leadership. One of the great tragedies in the Church is that the pastor is all things to all people, but a lot of that is his fault because he has failed to use a Biblical job description rather than a secular job description, and therefore, has not developed the right kind of leadership to explain leadership properly.

**Dave:** *There is a renewed emphasis upon the centrality of Christ and restoring the relationship with God. Are you seeing people released in their ministry and propelled out from the congregation?*

**Tony:** We have not only seen that, but we are structured toward that. For example, no one can join our church unless he/she agrees to adopt a ministry. They have to come in serving. They not only come in being a recipient of the benefits of the church but must be also responsible to the church from which they are benefiting.

We put this in the mindset of the church. Then each ministry in the church that the person identifies with has some kind of outreach into the community. Now what we do is allow flexibility so that if they gravitate toward one area rather than another, they can make that adjustment. But the point is that the Church must be a conduit for the service so the people come to church to find out how to be better equipped to do what they are sensing themselves to do in a better manner.

**Dave:** *The '70s and '80s saw the rise of the megachurch. Oak Cliff has about 3,000 members. Do you see in the '90s and beyond an emphasis moving more toward church planting and decentralizing, or do you feel there is a place in every city for a*

*megachurch? What would you say to a pastor in a small church who knows he is not gifted to ever pastor a megachurch but who can reproduce what he is doing by planting other churches?*

**Tony:** I see there is a both/and. It is not either/or. I think you will have megachurches that garrison the attention of the community in a distinctive way but also you have the smaller platoons that are equal to a couple of cells in the larger church. However, they are doing the same thing because they are equipping people to minister effectively. I do not think the two should be pitted against each other or that people should argue for one or the other. God grows things in different shapes and sizes. The issue is, are they Kingdom-minded and doing Kingdom work, and are they cooperating as equals?

**Dave:** *Tell me what God is doing in reconciliation in the circles you are working in. You are hosting some kind of conference on reconciliation of the races. Obviously just below the surface is a boiling caldron ready to explode any moment. Do you think this is the Church's golden moment?*

**Tony:** Yes, it is a ready-made scenario for the Church. The Church has failed in the past simply because we have not allowed ourselves to be reconciled. What has happened is that things have gotten so bad that we have decided that in a war you do not worry about the color or class of the man next to you as long as he is shooting in the same direction you are. We have a common enemy, and, therefore, we have to stop shooting at each other if we are going to make a difference in the world and save our own families and preserve our own heritage and history. So what the Urban Alternative does is work with pastors in major cities across racial lines to show them how they can work together as churches to reclaim their community. We have been in a number of cities and are finding them very excited about this clarion call to reconciliation because we have a common enemy, and we are on a common team. So let's find a common battle.

**Dave:** *Tell me about Renaissance Productions.*

**Tony:** Renaissance Productions developed with the idea of developing a mechanism for publishing that would address issues culturally sensitive, yet Biblically accurate. Many of the materials that were coming out were not sensitive to distinctions. So we focus on issues such as race, the role of particularly the African-American Church in the community, and how people can work together in dealing with relevant issues such as how to deal with urban youth, teens, and families. We seek the niche in the market for culturally sensitive material.

**Dave:** *You believe we need the heart of God transplanted in ourselves first and then in our families and churches. Then you have this wild idea that it will affect the whole culture.*

**Tony:** Yes, I believe it can. We can be the conduits of revival throughout our culture if that is the level we are operating in with our families, churches, and our culture. What should impact the culture is the overflow of the churches. We have been so ingrained in the Church that there has been no overflow from the Church into the society.

**Dave:** *Is it going to take the whole Body of Christ on the front lines to see the Great Commission done?*

**Tony:** To the degree that we expand our circles of cooperation, to that degree we will see the impact take place in society and the transformation of our systems that are now engaged in destroying our society because they are being influenced by a satanic frame of reference.

Christians operating in concert with the Church is America's only hope, operating through the Church to impact their society.

**Dave:** *Is the decentralization of the Black church lagging behind?*

**Tony:** Yes, because we have been so

oriented toward the pastor as the primary and often the only leader, and that must be changed. That is the thing we are working on in our ministries.

**Dave:** *Do you find Black and White pastors partnering together?*

**Tony:** Yes, more and more of that is happening around the country.

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## Bob Fitts, Sr. — Saturation Church Planting

**Dave:** *In this segment we are going to discuss a model that many people believe is the most Biblical, the most historic, and probably the most fruitful for seeing the Great Commission actually fulfilled. We are talking with Bob Fitts, author of the soon-to-be released book, Saturation Church Planting: Multiplying Congregations Through House Churches. Bob is a man who has been in ministry for thirty-five years, serving as a pastor, teacher, missionary, and evangelist. He graduated from California Baptist College in Riverside. He and his wife Joan live in Laguna Beach and have seven children, two of which are still living at home. Bob and Joan also have thirteen grandchildren.*

*Let me read a little bit of what Jim Montgomery from Dawn 2000 has to say about the work that Bob has given his hands to and the work, Saturation Church Planting. "Not everyone will be ready for radical changes that Fitts suggests, but everyone who is interested in completing the Great Commission in our times should be familiar with his material."*

*According to you, Bob, our goal is to start a church planting movement, and you explain that house churches remove many obstacles that commonly hinder the process, church planting. Jim summarizes, "If Fitts is right, it just may be that the house church movement that caused the early Church to sweep throughout the Roman world, the first century will look very much like the movement that finally finishes the Great Commission." Why don't we just open up? You believe that this movement of seeing the Church based out of the home is a "de-emphasis" on church buildings, something that God is sovereignly doing not only in the States here but internationally.*

**Bob:** I really do. I see it happening wherever I go, and it is gaining momentum. I first had the inclination about three years ago that, before the year 2000, we would see the house church movement in every country of the world flourishing and being very, very strong. I believe that is coming to pass before my eyes, and it is really exciting to see!

One of the things that I want to comment on first of all is that, as I go about discussing house churches, I am not blasting the Church as it is now, what we might call the traditional church that does have buildings and programs and so. Only about half of the population of the United States, for example, go to any church at all, and that is only infrequently. So when we come into any city with the concept of house churches, we are not coming against what God is already doing through the traditional church, but we are saying, "There is plenty of room for help. We need all the

### SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING:

Multiplying Congregations  
Through House Churches

by  
Bob Fitts Sr.

help we can get."

So if we start little house churches, that is just to come alongside of what God is doing with the traditional churches to help them.

**Dave:** *I am really glad that you made that distinction because there is always a sense of competition out there. Let me read a little from chapter one: "The explosive church growth that is now going on in China and which attended the Church in the Book of Acts had something in common. They were both a house church movement. This principle, the growth of the Church in any area, will be in direct proportion to the number of obstacles that we allow to hinder the planting of new churches." Please explain that principle for us?*

**Bob:** Within the last thirty years or so, there has emerged what we call "church growth movement," which is really just a study from a lot of different people on what makes churches grow in a very objective way. There are a lot of people who are doing that. They have discovered that there is no better way under heaven to make churches grow than to plant new churches. In other words, the small churches that are just beginning grow much, much faster than those that have been in operation for a long time. So if you have a vision beyond the walls of your church, a greater vision than just making your church grow, and you are looking at the Kingdom of God and want to see the Kingdom of God grow throughout the world, the best way to see that grow is to plant a lot of churches. If we are going to plant a lot of churches, we have to simplify our concept of what Church is because we have made it very, very complex to start a church.

I was just thinking this morning, the reason why we have so many years of requirements for pastors is because we have made it so difficult to start churches. We have made church so complicated. If we will simplify church and bring it back to what it was in the beginning, we do not have to have highly trained, technical men. We just have to have godly men, and when you look at the qualifications in the New Testament for pastors, you do not see anything about head knowledge. You only see the qualifications of the heart and the spirit.

**Dave:** *I guess we are all infected with something of the Enlightenment era in which we have "cerebralized" the gospel, and now we are coming out of that. Yet it is not to say that we cannot have Bible training. There is nothing wrong with that.*

**Bob:** That is true.

**Dave:** *But as you say, the qualifications out of Scripture for leadership seem to be based more on character rather than on knowledge. Rare is the man who has both*

operating in his life to a high level. These are the kind of leaders who can be used mightily and particularly in church planting.

Let's talk for a little bit about church planting. You have outlined seven advantages. Give us six benefits of planting a church in a home.

**Bob:** I do not have that list right here before me.

**Dave:** I do. I will read it. You say, number one, that house churches are easy to start. You do not need to buy property or to build a building. That probably is self-explanatory. You do not need a pulpit or pews or hymn books or a piano. In fact, many homes have pianos and perhaps guitars for leading worship. Number two, you say the house church is relaxed and informal. People feel a little weird about getting all dressed up and almost feeling that they are being phony when they go into a building, whereas when you go into a home, there is much more of a relaxed atmosphere.

**Bob:** People who have never gone to a church, for example, feel that they are going to do something wrong or that they may not know what to do at each juncture of the service. When they go into a house, they know how to get along in a house because they live in one. So it takes all of that starchiness out and puts us into reality rather than religion. That is what makes the house church so much more inviting to a lot of people.

**Dave:** Okay, benefit number three: house churches are evangelical tools. Let me read what Peter Wagner, who, is also on this series said. He is, by the way, considered to be one of the foremost authorities on church growth. "The best method for evangelism under heaven is church planting. There has never been a better method and never will be." He goes on to say, "Saturation church planting is now being adopted by mission leaders worldwide."

House churches, number four, you say facilitate the training of pastors and leaders. Do you think that this is the way leadership should come, being sucked up through the ranks in the house church?

**Bob:** Right. We recently were in one of the foreign countries where there is a lot of Christian activity going on, and there are a lot of great big churches. I asked one of the men, "How long does it take to become a pastor?" He said, "We have to have four years of Bible school, three years of seminary, and two years of internship."

So that is nine years before a person can become a pastor in his circumstances, whereas we feel that pastors can be raised up right in the fellowship, and they can be given just a little territory. They can be told to go around and start a house group—if you only start with two or three, and just begin to study the Bible together and pray and worship with them. Then they are under the tutelage of a seasoned pastor so that their seminary is actually a hands-on, you might say, a workshop thing where they are actually starting a church and growing as the church grows under the oversight of someone who is mature in the things of the Lord.

**Dave:** So we do not need to revise the Scripture—the Revised Version—where it says, "Where two or three thousand are gathered in His name, there He is present." It's actually two or three. Right?

**Bob:** Right.

**Dave:** Reason number five, house churches help bond relationships. You know there is just a gaping hole and a hollowness in many Christians' lives in the area of relationship and covenant and community. This is certainly an area that God wants to restore, not to become a Holy Roller Club, an exclusive club, but, on the other hand, to where there is really a depth of commitment. Is this what you are getting at here?

**Bob:** That is true. We have found it is so easy in most churches, the bigger ones especially, to just hide and receive. It is not a whole lot different from going to a church like that where you can always keep hidden than just stay home and watch church on television. In some cases it is just about the same level of interaction with the Body of Christ. So even if you do have large churches, there should also be

the small groups that are connected to it.

**Dave:** For example, the cell group and meta-church movement that is going on. Most churches are exploring that. I think that the churches that are exploring that are going to go in that direction if they are going to remain relevant in the next five to ten years.

"Number six: House churches are economical." Well, here is a thought. Stewardship. The house church will be able to channel most, almost all of its finances into ministry with only minor expenses. So really the only economics of the Kingdom of God are served very well, and in one instance almost everybody is already paying in one way or another for a building that domiciles the church. Why not just go ahead and expand that to whatever size it can accommodate, and then, if it gets to overflow, as you are saying, plant another one.

**Bob:** Right. There is a lot of difference in growth in the growth patterns of something that is looking at addition than there is in something that is looking at multiplication. So we are not recommending that you get so big, and then you split it in half. That never seems to work that well, but when you get to where you see that there is one couple or maybe two or three couples who are ready to go out and start another house church in some other community or even down the street, that is the idea—to send off missionaries to start new fellowships, new congregations from time to time. I am recommending that at least once a year. It can be done easily when you see that a church can be a very small group.

**Dave:** That really ties in with benefit number seven, how churches solve the problem of growth—simply having babies in the Church.

In chapter two you discuss the house church in the New Testament. You lay out some of the facts that Jesus worshipped in a house; Peter's house was used for a healing meeting; the first communion service was held in a house; Jesus preached to crowds in houses; Pentecost came in a house; persecution attacks house churches. Well, that is the down side risk. I

guess if house churches are going to be attacked, building churches are going to be attacked even more. Right?

**Bob:** That is true. The idea of house churches goes all the way back to the very beginning. So it is not that we are inventing something new. We are getting back to the way it started, and the way it grew into the greatest extent. It is like a flood. In the beginning there were no walls to stop the flood. There was no concrete, no bricks, no nothing because the Church they saw as people. They never saw it as buildings. We even call the building "the church" now. I used to think that was just a minor infraction, but now I see it as a very major, major problem that needs to be corrected. However, the Church, if left in its simple form, and if we understand it for what it is, we will go in every direction. We will just flow like a flood of water. But now it has slowed down to like syrup running, and sometimes not running at all because we have so highly structured it.

**Dave:** *Skipping ahead to chapter three, you discuss, "What is a church?" This is just a fundamental question. It is the "called out people." not buildings, not programs. It is people who find themselves under the umbrella of the gospel. In chapter four you discuss saturation church planting. What you just said is that the Church is spreading out like a vine. You talk about the concept of a wheel or a vine. Take a moment and explain some of the tendencies and characteristics of a wheel mentality for the Church versus the vine.*

**Bob:** The wheel, I would say, the churches that at least have a vision for cell groups or Bible study groups or growth groups—or some call it kinship groups—they see that the large group meeting together is not enough. It does not really meet the needs of individuals, and there is not enough interaction growth going on. So they reach out in the communities with these little groups, but they never call them churches. They call them other things, and they train leaders for those and are all connected into Mother Church. That is certainly better than the old concept.

I think a better concept is the vine concept where a wheel is always playing back to the center, to the hub of it, and is always connected in it. It very seldom is released out. But a vine, we see that it is like a spider plant, a very beautiful plant that hangs with little spider-like plants.

They hang down and look just like the mother plant. However, they are very much smaller. If you look closely, you will see that they have roots. Each one of those little spider plants has roots. In Latin America they call it la madre mula, which means "the bad mother". They call it "the bad mother" because it looks like the mother plant has kicked the little babies out of the nest. I call it the bad mother because she kicks the babies out but does not cut them off the umbilical cord. Each one of those little plants is attached to the mother and cannot get their roots in the ground. If that plant was put down in the ground or on the ground, each one of those little baby spider plants immediately begins to send down the roots into the ground and become reproducers or multipliers, just like the mama plant. Soon they are sending out their little umbilical cords with little spider plants on the end of them. And so that is just the difference between multiplication and addition again. If we are looking to be one great huge congregation only, there is some success that is happening in those big churches, but I believe that we need to see that those little groups that meet in homes are actually churches. The church that meets in someone's house is mentioned four times in the New Testament. So this is the way we are seeing it.

**Dave:** *A great analysis! I will remember that one, the spider plant.*

*You go on in chapter six to talk about buildings being necessary. You point out what we discuss in this series, that buildings did not exist until 250 or 258 A.D. So the Church seemed to flourish and spread the gospel widely without the cost of a building or the obstacles and that type of problem.*

*Let's talk a little bit about churches. Do you see the house church movement as something that the*

*traditional church will buy into? Can they make a commitment to transition into this without starting a pioneer church plant? You could start within a church, and the pastor and the leadership could say, "Look, we believe in this. We want to begin decentralizing the church and plant some house churches." Could it work within the traditional church?*

**Bob:** Very definitely. In fact, I am just in contact with a brother who I have known for about sixteen or seventeen years. He is very close to us here in Riverside, California. He read the little book that I wrote on saturation church planting three or four times and got all excited about it. Recently he was on vacation in Pennsylvania, where just as kind of a side thing, he started a house church. Now his brother is pastoring the house church, and it has been going for about six months or so, and it is going well. A little later on, he was in England, and there, while he was talking about house church, a group of people got interested, and now a house church is going there. More recently he was in Las Vegas. The same thing happened. So now he is starting a little school there at his church. It is Christian Center in Riverside, California, and will be starting at least one house church every three months as part of the training of these people who are taking his training at this little school. So he is making the transition, but he is continuing with the service as they have always had them. He is not making abrupt changes, but he is definitely going for that trend.

**Dave:** *Do you see that hopefully as the shape of things to come?*

**Bob:** I think so. Men who have their ear to the ground and are hearing what the Lord is doing, who are listening and sensing the move of the Spirit of God and bringing us back to the simplicity and planting new churches, not just trying to build great big ones, big buildings, will see that this is a whole lot easier. It takes a lot of pressure off the pastors once they begin to see and walk in that kind of a simple mode.

**Dave:** *It really expresses the diversity*

*and creativity within God. He sometimes uses great and large things, but often times He chooses the most humble and smallest in out of the way places to see His presence manifest.*

*You close the book out, talking about one step to unity. Obviously John 17:21 is a Scripture burning on the heart of many Christians and has been for decades—to see the Church come into a unity that would demonstrate to the world that Christianity is really the truth, not just another philosophy. You said in this chapter from Ephesians 4:12, "Until we come into the unity of the faith, that is what God has given the equipping role to do, to mature the saints." You say that this verse is simply saying that we can have spiritual unity while we are coming into doctrinal unity. I think that is profound because we tend to think in terms of either/or, but in God's perspective, we can move toward it and still spiritually be unified. Doctrinal areas seem to be the most divisive ever since the Reformation. Even all the way back to the fourth century, there has always been division that crept into the Church. That is not saying that doctrine is not important, but it is saying that doctrine is not what makes us one.*

**Bob:** That is right. The very essential teaching is very simple. Everything else is negotiable as far as walking together. We can see everything together and still walk together as brothers. The one thing that makes us brothers and sisters in the Lord is the new birth. That is coming to know Jesus Christ. If we have Jesus Christ, we are in the same family. All you have to believe is come to Jesus, not to a doctrine, but come to a Person. So when you come to Jesus and you are born again, you are born into the family of God. There is only one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. So we were born into unity, into oneness with the whole Body. My point in that whole chapter, "One Step to Unity," is that we do not have to have anything going as far as organization goes or even projects that we enter into together. We simply have to acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters in Christ if we know Jesus Christ and have been born of the Spirit. We are born into the same family. We are

brothers and sisters. We all have the same Father. We all have the same Savior. We are one loaf. We are. He does not say strive to enter into unity. He says, "Strive to maintain, to achieve it."

So maintaining unity is simply receiving every brother and sister in Christ who there is in the city that we are in, as far as that goes, in the whole world, and acknowledging that we are one in Him. When we do that, that will no doubt lead to projects and cooperation, meeting together and praying together, worshipping together, praying for one another, receiving one another. The one step to unity is to say, "I do receive, Lord, every brother and sister in Christ whether they believe the same as I do on anything else except salvation, I still receive them. I will pray for them, support them, and bless them because we are one."

**Dave:** Amen! Lord, that is our prayer. Thank you so much, Bob. People can write to you and get more information about Saturation Church Planting. You travel itinerantly so anybody who wants to get ahold of you has the means in which they can do so. I hope to see your book out there soon, circulating in the market place. Do you have any closing thoughts?

**Bob:** I just want to say, one thing that troubles people about house churches is that they do not feel we need all these little renegade groups out here. We are not saying that these churches are any more renegade than the bigger ones. Bigger churches and the smaller churches have the same challenge. That is to submit to spiritual authority wherever they find it and to acknowledge that we are one in the Body of Christ and cooperate and bless one another. So the size of the churches do not cause the problems. It is attitudes. In the little churches we are teaching the need to submit to apostolic authority, to spiritual authority, to pastoral authority everywhere they find it. I believe that is the same injunction that every church has.

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## Steve Fry — *Thy Kingdom Come*

**Dave:** *Steve Fry is a gifted writer, song writer, and performer. He is also a son of a pastor. We had Steve in our office recently discussing his album, Thy Kingdom Come. We just had a chance to dialogue for a while. He is planning to take it on the road for a while to 40 cities. Maybe your city will be one of them. I think that after you hear this interview, you are probably going to want to hear Steve Fry.*

**Steve:** We can only share Him with others to the degree that we know Him personally and intimately. I think that that is the beginning of the Kingdom understanding. I think that is the beginning of real revival. That is the beginning of anything that we would do in the planet, and that is why this song was born.

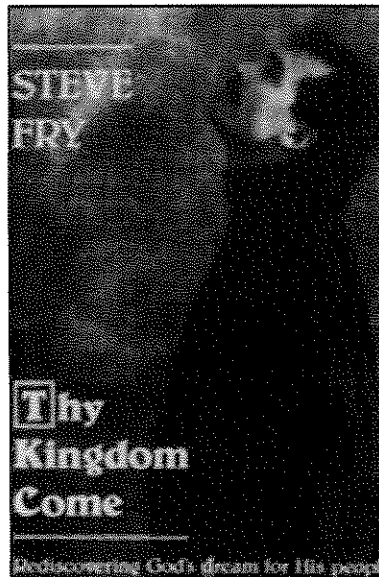
**Dave:** *When we talk about Holy Spirit coming and Yshua being with us in our midst, how is that manifest? There is an understanding growing in the people of God that His purpose throughout the earth has been one purpose, to move in the hearts of His people from Genesis 1 through Genesis 3 where He gave us a mandate and an ability to take dominion over the earth. Then from Genesis 3 to the rest of the Bible, we are in some type of a battle it seems for the reclamation of that earth. There are a lot of people who do not understand if we should really be victorious in this life or if it is something that should be relegated to something in the future. What is your perspective on that?*

**Steve:** I think that God's purpose from the very beginning [was] to have a people to whom He could model something of heaven on earth. I think that was God's great joy. You know, He made mankind and stamped them with His own image. I think God was anticipating watching men and women recreate something of God's order on the earth as they got to know God, and they would discover God. Then they would apply what they had discovered in their relationships, and God would have this great excitement of watching a model of His own character produced in the earth. I think that

is still God's Plan A. I do not think that has changed a bit.

**Dave:** *Steve, [we are looking at a copy of] your third album. I have not had a chance to hear your other two, but I am extremely impressed. You sing a song called "As in Heaven, So on Earth." Is this a pie-in-the-sky dream, or is it really possible?*

**Steve:** Oh, I really believe it is possible. I think that when you look at Scripture and you look at God, [you are] obligated to believe that what He says is true. He says that all things are possible to them



that believe, which means that God can do anything that He wants to. If He wants to demonstrate something of heaven on earth, He certainly can do that. I believe He will do it.

**Dave:** *As I have a chance to talk to pastors and leaders throughout the United States, I am sensing welling up in the spirits of God's people an understanding that God is declaring it illegal for us to consider ourselves to be a disjointed Body. He is calling pastors and leaders in a spirit of humility to begin to work together. What do you see happening in cities throughout the United States, throughout the world as you travel, as to God establishing His people on this planet at this time? What do you see happening?*

**Steve:** One of the things that I see happening is a fresh heart cry for a response in worship. I see a real trend in the music industry too. I think we can talk about that later. It would be interesting to talk about that. But I see worship as a main thing that God is saying to the Church. I see unity as something once again God is reemphasizing in His Church. I think that as the leaders gather together in one, and as they worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, that the presence of God will be so manifested in that city that it will bring down demonic strongholds and tenderize the hearts of the secular community toward the things of God.

**Dave:** *I think of the Scripture where it says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Our pastor, Tommy Barnett, often says, "That is true, but where there are no people, the vision can perish." What God is doing on the earth involves you and me being an active part of it. I am so excited that He has not left us powerless! He has given us the deposit of His power, the Holy Spirit so that we can be victorious in this hour right now.*

You see revival breaking out in the world, Steve. Often times though, revival is fought the hardest, it seems, by those in existing leadership. This seems to be unfortunately a trend in Church history that even in Jesus' day, the scribes and the pharisees fought that new entrance of God's Kingdom effecting the change on the earth. They just could not believe that the King of kings and the Lord of lords could actually change their circumstances. They had a religious system that they thought they had figured out. It is really a warning in the Church [to those of us] who think we have this Christian walk all figured out, that we need to be open and receive a fresh understanding, that His Kingdom and His Lordship is, yes, something that is present right now, but will ultimately be fulfilled in the future.

I cannot help thinking about this without thinking that this is a major area of attack. The enemy knows the power in that understanding. So he is countering it. We see divisive areas in

*the Church and a misunderstanding. What would you say to those who might misunderstand this message as one of somehow there is something that we can do to bring the Kingdom, or there is something our human efforts will be able to do to help God establish what He wants to establish?*

**Steve:** I think it has almost become a cliché to talk about the Kingdom as "already and not yet." We toss that around a lot, "the Kingdom now, yet, not yet." But it is still important for us to grasp ahold of that distinction. I believe there is something of the Kingdom that is to be modeled and demonstrated through local fellowships of believers to the secular community, so they can look at a gathering of believers and can say, "Oh, that is what God meant. That is what God meant for the planet to look like. That is the level of relationship that He has called us to. That is the security in having one another."

The "not yet" part comes to mean an understanding that it is Jesus working through His people Who will establish and consummate the Kingdom. One of the things I like to say is that when Jesus establishes His physical rule and reign on the earth, it is the physical fleshing out of already existing spiritual realities. It is not so much that Jesus comes and sets up His Kingdom. It is that Christ's coming is the capstone on the spiritual demonstration of the Kingdom already through the Body of Christ. Where I think we miss it is in exerting our efforts to bring it forth in our own strength or power. I think that in many ways, God is more into models than movements. If He has got exhibit A, He can create a movement from that. If we try to make movements happen, that is where we sully the faith. We get our flesh involved, and we try to coerce people into serving God's agenda. I think that we talk about taking dominion. John the Baptist to me is one of the greatest examples of taking dominion that I know. How did He take dominion? He took dominion by decreasing. He decreased so that Christ could increase. Christ increased, and as Christ increased, John decreased.

I think that that is something that we need to understand, that we conquer by the Cross. That has never changed. It is the humility through brokenness, through servanthood that we in effect lead the nations of the earth. I think we have got to come back and realize that it is dominion but a dominion in a decrease, not on our efforts.

**Dave:** *Do you see a new relevancy in music coming to affect Christians in our culture today? What do you see happening?*

**Steve:** You could look at it from a variety of vantage points. Let me share what I know best, and that is the trend I see as I mentioned earlier towards fresh expressions of worship. Back in the Charismatic movement of the '60s and the '70s, we saw praise really emphasized. In the last decade, from the late '70s on, a real understanding of dominion and possessing the land has come to the Church. I think that is very positive. So we see an emphasis on the army of God in militance. We have seen then an accompanying emphasis on prayer and spiritual warfare. I believe the wave of the future is seeing the Church not just as the Body of Christ and not just as the army of God, but as the Bride of Christ, which as we understand it is the most militant force in the world. The most militant force in the world is a bride defending her husband. An army fights out of the need to survive. A bride fights out of love. I think that there is going to be a fresh understanding that we do not have yet on what it means to be the Bride of Christ.

I think what accompanies that will be a resurgence of worship, a resurgence of the Holy of Holies intimacy with God. I think that the trend over the coming years in music more and more will be worship; not just praise and celebration but an encounter with God that is so deep, so intimate, so explosive that it will spontaneously generate the supernatural demonstration of God. I think that we will see [the] gathering of tens of thousands of believers in stadiums all across this nation in two- or four-day worship

gatherings, just there to worship Jesus and to see the power of God descend on a city. I believe that that is going to be one of the most significant trends in the coming years: the release in worship.

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## Dale Galloway — 20/20 Vision

**Dave:** *We are going to talk with one of the nation's leading pastors in the movement toward decentralizing the Church and focusing it through re-empowering the laymen, through what he calls TLC or tender loving care small groups. Dale Galloway is the senior pastor at New Hope Community Church who has carried this vision for twenty years. He is really a pioneer. He has seen in his community of Portland, Oregon, the church grow to over 6,000 with somewhere over five hundred small groups seen as the heart of the church. The principles for small groups have been developed and focus around leadership multiplication. He is going to share with us some of those principles now.*

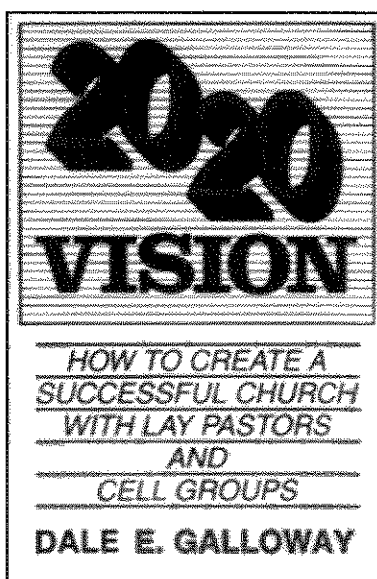
Carl George has said that in many ways New Hope Community Church represents the church of the future. Guideposts Magazine recently honored the church with its Church of the Year Award.

I know you do work, obviously, equipping leaders in your own church. You spend time on the road doing leadership small group seminars with the Charles E. Fuller Institute. We will tell people a little more about that later. In your book, which is in many ways a pioneering book written about seven years ago—I am sure considered quite radical at the time—you begin by opening up the book, talking about breaking out of the box. Do we need to break out of some boxes in the American Church?

**Dale:** Yes, we do. One of the boxes is the fact that we often think of church as being what happens on Sunday. My vision is that we will have churches where we will see ministry taking place every day of the week in all kinds of shapes and forms and ways. That is a big box. Another box that we find ourselves in is that pastors have to be there whenever ministry happens. Only the pastor can do ministry. That is very limiting. I say to pastors, "If your ministry has to be with you there, you will never go farther than you can reach. When you begin to share and partner in the ministry with other lay people, extendedness will go way far

beyond where you can reach." One of the joys of my life is that I am always discovering brand new ministries that we have in New Community Church that I did not even know we had existing. But as we have freed people into meaningful ministries through the Holy Spirit, it is marvelous what they create.

**Dave:** *The Church, most leaders would agree, is going through something of a transition right now. There is a definition of the role of the Church in the culture, and we are seeing a call to maturation as Paul*



*said in First Corinthians, "When I was a child, I thought and spoke as a child." But there comes a time in which we all have to grow up. You discuss superstar Christianity in your introduction. You say, "In this 'show me, entertain me' climate something is happening that harms both pastors and the people. It is so subtle. It is one of Satan's slickest, most deceitful ways of boxing the Church into little or no growth."*

**Dale:** I believe that is true. People have seen it all. Christianity comes alive when people take ownership. A big word for me is what I call "decentralization" where you begin to decentralize ministry down to the grass roots where everyone is involved in ministry. People are

discovering their gifts for ministry, being challenged to use those gifts and given meaningful ways to do that. Then it really begins to spread.

You build churches by building leaders, and you build ministries by building leaders. So church leadership must have a strategy today for how to develop leadership and how they are going to decentralize down to the grass roots. We do that through need-meeting ministries and also through our large and small group ministries. For example, last week we had 5,900 people, children, youth, and adults connected in some way with our small groups between Sundays.

**Dave:** *From your introduction, you said that church growth studies and Christian poll takers show that we have a big problem in America wherein people hop around from church to church. You said that unless people are brought into a small fellowship, they will leave a local church, usually within two or three years, and move on to the next place.*

**Dale:** I would have said that two or three years back, but there is a very small window right now, less than a month. If you do not connect people, you lose them very quickly. You have a side, back, and front door. Front door ministry is where they come on Sunday morning and like the preaching, singing, and Sunday school, so they come. But those people will go out the back door very quickly if you do not connect them. The best way I know to close the back door is to get people into a small group, a circle of people who they can identify with and where they can have a sense of belonging, family, sharing, caring, and working together. The side door is all the ministries through which the people come in during the week. We find that our people who are coming in during the week are already connected.

They come in via a small group or one of the need-meeting ministries we have. They are much easier to win to Christ, to disciple, and to

keep. So that connecting becomes a very big word.

**Dave:** *Jesus said, "The way the world will know that you are My disciples is through the love you have for one another." You address that in your book, The Power of Love. "How many times church people destroy the flow of positive love over little dinky things that are not worth it! Show me a church where they practice mutual edification, and I will show you a church where the power of love is in action, and people will not only flock there but they will stay there."*

**Dale:** That is true. I just came out of a staff meeting where I said to our staff that our strategy is very simple. You just have to get focused on it more and more, and that is that we want to teach our lay people that ministry is just loving people where you find them—being consistent and faithful in that and then the amazing thing happens. They want to know where you get this love. Then we tell them about Jesus, which becomes very natural and easy at that point to introduce them to this Christ Who gives us this love and Who makes the difference. So everything is love based and love driven. The best churches are built on loving relationships. That is what I love about small groups.

**Dave:** *Let's talk a little bit about the home cell system. You said, "If people do not get into some small fellowship, you will lose them."*

*How large should these groups be? If a pastor asks, "We tried it, and it did not work. Every time we released things into the homes, things got out of control. We had divisions come in, and it ended up blowing up in our face. So we are just going to have the traditional Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday night services, and that is going to be the church."*

**Dale:** One of the things I teach in my seminar is how to build a successful small group system in your church that will multiply small groups and bring unity to your Body and not division. There are some very key words I center in on in the seminar. One is requirements. People need to know

what is required of them to be a leader of a group. We tell them in our lay pastor training manual. So they sign on by committing themselves to these requirements. The second thing would be training. We have training every week for these lay pastors of small groups, and they are required to come.

Third, there is accountability. This is a big word. Very few churches have that built in. I do not mean something heavy-handed where you have to ask permission for everything you do. Not at all! We free people to minister, but accountability means that they do fill out a report sheet each week. They do come to training and live under the supervision of a pastor. We find that by requiring that kind of accountability, you weed out the people who would be lone rangers and cause you trouble later on through a rebellious split. We actually weed those people out when we get our leaders committed to training. Another big word is supervision. We actually go out every six or eight weeks and on-site supervise the group to be an encouragement to that leader. So there are many ways we build very important principles into our small group system that keeps it all flowing together as a team moving toward the common goal of reaching people for Christ.

**Dave:** *You equip the equipper, and they equip the saints for ministry. That is your 20/20 vision?*

**Dale:** That is what our seminar is about, training people to train others so that it multiplies. This vision comes from Acts 20:20, which states that they came together in the synagogue, and they met together house to house and were taught. This is also stated in Acts 5:45. By vision, we mean you have clearer vision. People will say to me, which one is the more important? The great celebration you have on Sunday or the small groups that meet during the week? I always say that they belong together, each feeding the other. New people come into the church through both. They are discipled and shepherded through both. They fit together beautifully when they are put in place together. Our

celebration is kind of like all the small groups coming together to celebrate. Small groups are where the heart-to-heart fellowship takes place and also a lot of our pastoral care. I do not know how you could care for people today in our mobile society if you do not have some sort of small group ministry.

**Dave:** *In part two of the book you discuss 24 dynamic principles for cell groups. You talk about sharing, conversational prayer, application of the Bible, not just studying it, and participation. Number 14 reads, "Don't let anyone do all the talking!" But is not that what happens on Sunday morning?*

**Dale:** Yes, but there has to be a place for the preaching of the Word. I do believe in the power of the preaching of the Word. However, after preaching for twenty years, I realize that people do not get it just because I say it. In fact, that is where the small group is so needed because they can dialogue, interact, apply it, and learn from one another. Learning goes way way up when they are in both, when they are in the large Sunday meeting and the small group.

**Dave:** *Dale, are you seeing any of the dynamics of the small group brought into the celebration service such as people being able to spontaneously participate, or is it to difficult in such a large group?*

**Dale:** They participate through the praise and worship we have. We have a time when people can come, and our lay pastors lay hands on them and pray for them. We have many things that create spiritual life and flow in the service where you have people in small groups. I think they feed each other, and both belong in the life of the Church. That is what 20/20 vision means.

**Dave:** *It sounds to me like you are committed to plurality of leaders in that you have broken leadership into different levels such as senior pastor, district pastors, assistant pastors, TLC group leaders, and lay pastors. Is that still your structure?*

**Dale:** Yes, but even with lay

pastors who are our group leaders, we have a partnership because there is a leader and an assistant leader who we call an apprentice and host with a hostess home. That apprentice becomes very important because that is the person you are training to start your next group.

A lot of churches are saying, "How do you know how many people to have in a group?" We say that eight to twelve is the best participation, and you can take care of about that many people. But the way we multiply new groups is by creating a new leader. That assistant in place is your prospect for the new group they are going to create. Every time you start a new group, you have to go out and recruit a bunch of new people to fill up the group. That is where the growth comes in. We also keep evangelism in the center of our groups.

A lot of churches or groups become ingrown because they do not keep an emphasis on bringing new people in. We watch our visit list. Last week we had 176 visitors in our small groups. We monitor that sort of thing. We keep feeding live prospects to our groups.

*Dave: Many small groups die because they become exclusive clubs. But you like to emphasize multiplication.*

**Dale:** You have to have a good Bible teacher to have a group. You are not going to have many groups because you do not have many good teachers in a typical church. So for the most part, we train facilitators—people who can teach if you put a lesson in their hand and give them training. They can go out and love people and guide them through the lesson, learning together. You can produce a lot of facilitators.

It might be helpful to talk about the kinds of groups we have. We have three basic categories or types of groups. We have nurture or TLC groups, task groups, and support or recovery groups. All our groups fall into one of these categories.

TLC groups are our normal groups

where there is Bible application, sharing, prayer, encouragement, and care for one another. They can meet anywhere—in homes, offices, or restaurants. Every church needs those kind of tracks, what I call regular groups.

The second track is what I call task groups. They are people who come together to carry out a particular task such as ushering, parking lot people, etc. We have about 30 plus task groups in the church. They come together, meet, pray for, and care for one another but then go out and perform a specific task.

The third group is our recovery groups. Many of them use the "12 Steps" and meet a particular need. They are very strong in evangelism because when you start a group geared to a particular need, people outside the church who have a particular need will come to that group. As their needs are met, they want to know Jesus and are open to be led to Christ. They, in turn, know other people who have the same needs, so it becomes an explosive evangelistic opportunity.

We have two entire districts of our church made up with a pastor, lay pastors, and small groups that all have recovery groups on about any subject you can name.

*Dave: Some churches are looking at the possibility of starting daughter churches. Is that something you have considered?*

**Dale:** That is a fascinating idea. I personally think it is a better idea to build leaders, and let leaders decide when they are going to build churches. My dad was a superintendent over a bunch of churches in Ohio. So pretty early in life I decided I wanted to be a pastor and not supervise a bunch of churches. So now I supervise a bunch of districts.

*Dave: Leave us with a few tips. I am sure that there are those listening who are saying this is all very wonderful, and we are very happy for you, Dale, and for others who have the unction and the vision to do this.*

**Dale:** Tip one is, begin small groups from the ground up. Begin by

having a model group. Begin it yourself with a goal that you will develop leaders out of that group to lead the next generation of groups. So you just keep multiplying by getting leaders out of groups who will build groups. This works in any size church. In fact, if you are in a traditional church, it is still the way to start. You do not go make some big announcement, but you begin small with a few groups, and out of that will come leaders for the next group. You just create new leaders, and you do this year after year, and pretty soon you have a tremendous multiplication factor.

The best way to bring renewal to a church that I know of is through this kind of way or system. Build groups from the ground up. We like this thought, "Do what you can with what you have where you are, and God will bless that and multiply it."

*Dave: Dale, I know you are on the road, sharing your vision quite a bit. It looks like fifteen or twenty times a year.*

**Dale:** I do 24 cities a year with Fuller Institute.

*Dave: So those leaders who may want to plug into a full one day seminar should contact Fuller Institute. It goes on for six hours. You also do a seminar three times a year based right there in your own church in Portland.*

**Dale:** Yes, I have one that starts tomorrow. We have a Church Growth Institute here tomorrow that we call the Super Bowl. We do that in the spring, the fall, and the winter—the first week in October, the first week in February, and the first week in May.

*Dave: By the way, I encourage anyone listening to get a copy of 20/20 Vision: How to Create a Successful Church with Lay Pastors and Cell Groups. It will give you some very, very good tips from a man who has walked down this road for some time. The Pacific Northwest has experienced a tremendous prayer awakening of pastors and leaders gathering together to pray for the city. You live in a city that is very pagan*

*influenced, very ungodly in many ways, and yet there just seems to be just some massive, wonderful revival type of things that are coming.*

**Dale:** Let me mention a couple of things that are happening in Portland. One is the prayer movement that Joe Aldrich has been leading in Multnomah School of the Bible, what we call Mission Portland Now. That has been going on now for three or four years and was very successful in laying the groundwork for the crusade we had with Dr. Graham. It is still going on afterwards. Out of that has come a networking in our city which is really unique. The pastors and their wives gather to continue doing events and connecting people any way we can through this city to reach the city. That is a beautiful thing that has happened, I think. It goes on yet today.

**Dave:** *Do you see it as something of a first step toward a citywide spiritual community beginning to find itself?*

**Dale:** Oh, I pray that that is true. We are one of the most unchurched states in America. So it is a wonderful movement of God. I praise God for that! It has been a joy for me to see so many people come together across all denominational lines and wanting to see the same thing happen for God to reach our city.

**Dave:** *Thank you so much for being with us. I guess that from here it is onward and upward to the outer limits of what God can do in the cell church model.*

**Dale:** I would like to say to the people listening that if you need tapes or anything here at New Hope dial 1-800-935-HOPE. We will get that hope out to you.

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## Reneé Garcia/Lang Bliss — *When the World's Asleep*

**Dave:** *In this interview we will be discussing some emerging trends in Christian music in the opening of worship to everyone for participation.*

*Reneé Garcia has had eight songs in the top ten of contemporary Christian music. She has cut two albums, Living in the Vertical and A Different World. Her song "Perfection" hit number two on the charts and number one in video.*

*Lang Bliss has served as a backup drummer for Michael W. Smith and Rick Cua. Now Lang and Reneé are moving in different directions in Christian music. They are actively involved in Belmont Church in Nashville, Tennessee.*

*We are talking about opening worship and the fact that God has put a song in the heart of every believer to sing to Him. The Church is going through a change where the priesthood of all believers is becoming more of a practical reality rather than just a theory we all agree with. You are a part of a church that is moving toward small groups and greater accountability. Are you seeing a corresponding openness for greater participation in the worship?*

**Reneé:** I am positive that in this Body and from elsewhere, I see a new shift coming. This is completely new that God has for this time period now. At Belmont there have been many changes in worship with special worship teams, but they are still trying to define just what the newness is. We are definitely in the transition period, and the changes have to do with the movement toward cell-based, home group churches.

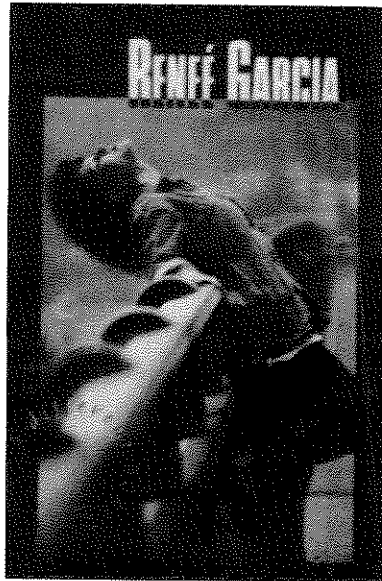
**Dave:** *Have you been involved in a cell church?*

**Lang:** Not specifically with Belmont, but we were a part of a Bible study that had members from a number of churches in Nashville. There we learned a lot about the dynamic that will exist from the things we have read and the weekend seminar that Belmont had on the cell based church. It was a very eye opening event, but it

affirmed what we had already experienced in the small group Bible study. We have not become a part of a cell group yet, but we feel we know what to expect.

**Dave:** What do you think of the concept that the moving worship time can be opened for the dynamic expression of individuals who are not led from the podium? Are you seeing some of that?

**Reneé:** Yes, the Church is definitely open to that. We go on a Saturday night, which is a little different from the traditional



Sunday morning. It is such a joy because there is an openness to let the Lord move in that service. It has been exciting to have people share their testimonies. It is a more relaxed time for people who either had a bad experience with church or who do not know anything about Church. It is open to the flow of the ordinary, everyday kind of people to share their faith and participate as opposed to someone being on stage, and everyone else being an audience. So it is exciting, and I think it will go even further than that.

**Lang:** We have been hearing prophetic songs coming out on a semi-regular basis. Some sing a Scripture, but not everyone in the congregation feels comfortable with

it. However, there are those being freed up to do that kind of thing. But at the heart of what you asked about, I believe God is going to begin to bring new songs through the musicians and the talent of people who have been in worship positions. I believe God is redefining the role of the musician in the Church and beginning to empower that ministry. Going back to the Levitical priesthood and the role that they played in the Body of believers, some of that is coming with a battle, and some is coming more easily. I believe that God is beginning to restore that priesthood and all the ramifications of what that means for leadership in worship, for evangelistic songs, songs that are not going to appear religious but will be God's messages to the world to draw the world into the Body. These songs will reveal a deeper knowledge of God's character as opposed to a general religious message. I believe it will span the gamut of what God intends to do through music.

**Dave:** *What I am hearing from some people is that there is something of a putting aside of the preplanned program for what songs are going to be sung this week and leaving an openness for prophetic songs to come forth, that God has a uniqueness that He wants to do in each service. If we give God the freedom, He will speak, although some people would have only sat quietly and not really expressed pure worship. To me this is exciting, I believe, to those who have the opportunity. In Christian music in general there seems to be changes going on.*

*You both work with Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith, who have had a growing influence in the non-religious market. Many people see a shift coming where they can see their messages, which are not necessarily preachy but are positive and bring the love and hope that the Church has to a culture collapsing around us. I know you have a vision for seeing Christian music being a beacon of hope to the world, while using the contemporary beat but keeping a message that exalts and shares the Kingdom of God. Please share about this.*

**Reneé:** What solidified this whole thing for me was my involvement with an artist who was breaking into new territory, Amy Grant. Most people only see the package at the end of the day, the record, or hear it on the radio. But being in the middle of the situation, being on tour with Amy and the people she works with, which includes secular tour services, which everyone uses, you get the opportunity to be around a lot of unbelievers. For me this is exciting! You can see the impact of your life before these people because you have won the right to be heard as a result of your accomplishments as an artist. The impact is just unbelievable. You can see people affected for the Kingdom of God and of course this is a part that the public never gets to see. This helped define for us where Lange and I are called to as musicians. We feel that our mission field is to be a light to other musicians in the secular realm. The only way to be really heard by them is to be where they are. This is part of our vision.

It seems that this is in line with what God wants to do with Christians in general, which is getting them to live out their lives in relationships, the cell based churches being in neighborhoods where people can see Christians walking their life out. This is what we desire to do in music—to walk in that area and share the love of Christ on a daily basis. It is a scary place, but that is where the Lord has us.

**Lang:** Every Christian musician has to figure out where God wants him. It comes back to crossing the gamut of all the places where God wants to put His people. Some are specifically in Body oriented ministry, but others are not. They are to be evangelistic. But it does not change the message of the centrality of Christ, our heart's desire to abide in the Lord. The enemy will fight this tooth and nail.

We believe that God is going to break some strongholds that the enemy has held believers out of for a long time. As it applies to us, we believe it will be in the pop music

industry, which has long been the turf of the enemy. What Michael and Amy are doing may be the beginnings of what God is going to do on a larger scale. It may not be real obvious. There may be some misunderstanding that comes in the Body. God is not interested in appearances, but people are, and that is going to be the rub. When people want to look at the outward and judge what is and is not of God, then they are going to miss what God has for them in form of blessings.

I have heard it said a number of times that God is not in the business of anointing talent. He is more in the business of anointing character. So we have seen lots of cleansing in the Body of Christ where men have been anointed with great talent, but the character has not been there to stand the tests that come with the authority of that position. By no means are those appointed to those positions perfect, but I think that God wants His work to stick. People who have been called to these places are going through a lot of testing and proving to receive that authority.

**Reneé:** What we are seeing in Nashville, the contemporary Christian music capital of the country, is a shaking going on. People are having to find out what God specifically wants them to do. We are also seeing a polarization. What used to be a taboo, for example, a Christian being in a club or involved in pop music, was the kiss of death on your career.

What God seems to be doing is raising up a people who are not going to be like the world or copy what the world is doing, but they are willing to go to those dark places in order to see the Lord bring light there. We are not running around with huge crowds of non-believing music industry people, but there is a hunger out there that Christian music as it has been had failed to reach. What God wants to do now is push out the envelop a little bit, and it is going to be changed. As we all know, change is hard, and we resist it. However, there is definitely a sense that God is doing something major, and we cannot begin to describe to you what

we see happening here in Nashville. But there have been more changes in the last two years in the structure of the Christian music industry that is almost mind-boggling. Yet it is exciting because God is beginning to position us to take part in the harvest.

**Dave:** You do concert tours and come into churches and special gatherings to sing, so if any people want to get ahold of you, the information is below.

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## Richard Gazowsky —*Just Add Water*

**Dave:** Woodrow Wilson once said, "If you want to make enemies, try to change something." In this interview, we are going to discuss how to see radical church growth. Richard Gazowsky, pastor of San Francisco's Voice of Pentecost Church, has not followed the traditional path. To the surprise of his congregation of more than one thousand, not to mention his neighboring churches, he announced that he was closing his church doors for 40 days in January, 1992, and early February. His reason? He desperately wanted to see revival.

You said on page 17 of your book, "The revolution is on, and though I have trouble with the word because of the anger sometimes associated with it, there is no other word that can adequately define the steps needed to bring the Gospel to the generation of the 21st century." Please comment on that.

**Rich:** I really do feel there is a radical revolution, and the revolution is, God is shaking the Church because it is a hierarchical Church. Everything is from the top down. One thing I think that Jesus promised when He left, if you look in John when Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He said, "The Holy Spirit shall lead you and guide you into all truth." The Head Motivator in the Church is the Holy Spirit, which dwells in each Believer. So the hierarchical structure of manmade structures that are within the church, the pastor, the associate pastors, the departmental heads, and etc., I believe, are clogging up the system. What I am really talking about is chaos.

Scientists have discovered in the minute subatomic level, that what they thought was chaos is really a higher form of order. In other words, they could not understand that there was just these random neutrons and protons flowing and crashing into each other. It took them 20-30 years to realize that there was a high form of order, but they cannot comprehend what the order is. I believe when the Holy Spirit takes ahold of His Church, that He is going to bring chaos upon us, and that

is what we are experiencing right now. It is a revolution. It is a chaotic situation. But it is a higher form of order as God is taking control of His own people.

**Dave:** I am sure that some people are getting a bit nervous when they hear the word chaos. But certainly truth lies in dynamic tension. Perhaps what you are saying, as you said in the book, is that we have organized the spontaneous life right out of the saints. And now there is something of a rising up of the Body of Christ saying, "We are tired of sitting around watching, being spectators." As Jim Rutz has pointed



out in his book, *The Open Church*, "Fellowshipping with the back of someone's head is definitely not edifying, and the Apostle Paul went out of his way to say, 'When you all gather, the purpose is for everybody to participate, for everybody to be edified.' " Are you beginning to see that kind of dynamic evolving in your church?

**Rich:** I have only pastored for five years. I had no other previous pastoral experience. I was in business before that so here I am coming from another view. I did not graduate from any Bible school. I did an internship at a church, part time for 14 years. So I am coming from the business world, and I hate to be so blatant about it, but I have noticed that most pastors are lazy and that they really do not want

revival. They do not want new people in the Church because they are afraid that it's going to change the culture of their church. What they are really doing is defending a culture. But they mention from the pulpit, "We want revival. We want new people to come into the Church." But really they want a narrowly defined culture to come into their building—these certain types of people, whatever culture it is. It could be in a Black church. It could be in a classical Black culture for that style of whatever, a White church, a middle class yuppie, a middle class business or senior, whatever the culture is. It is the defined culture in that church. They are after that.

And it is very difficult to win because I have noticed that church growth is like giving birth to babies. A husband and wife cannot determine what kind of baby they are going to have—a peaceful baby or one who cries all night. If parents could determine the personality of the child, wouldn't they love that? But they cannot!

**Dave:** Hitler tried it.

**Rich:** The point I am making is when you have people born again come into your church, you do not know what you are going to get. You are going to get most likely a completely different culture than you have already got in your church. And those new babies are the freshness, the life of your church, the vibrancy that you really need.

At first you are going to have to put up with diaper changing, squalling kids in the house, a little bit of chaos, just a little bit of "uncomfortableness" because they are brand new people. They are going to be a little bit different, and you have to change their diapers. The house may stink a little bit and all the other things that go along with raising new converts. So I feel that this change is happening because God is going to present to Himself a glorious Church.

I have been going through a development process myself in the

church. When I took this church I am pastoring here in San Francisco five years ago, the first thing I needed was to change the culture in ourselves and prepare our people for revival. I didn't expect to have revival. I needed to prepare these people to expect revival. That's what I developed. After a few years I realized that the people needed to be shaken. That's why I closed the church doors for forty days and said, "We're not going to have church. The whole thing this church is about is going to people and presenting the Gospel. For the next forty days, instead of having church, I am asking every member of this church to commit themselves to fourteen hours a week of going from door to door in the city of San Francisco."

During that forty days, we went to 261,900 doors. That is a lot of doors! We had 8,600 responses, positive responses to that outreach. We gained in that one outreach 365 new members who are paying tithes in the church. So the results were phenomenal!

Now we are doing it again. This is the second year. We are closing our church this summer once again for forty days. What I have found is that it has changed people's concepts, which is moving me into a new phase. I feel that any pastor who is listening to this, if you ever want to find the will of God, it's time that you quit looking at other men and start looking at your own God and say, "Father, I need help."

I put in the book *Just Add Water*, a chapter called "We Need a Blinding Flash of the Obvious." All of us pastors know how powerful prayer is, but we don't do it. We talk about, we use the word, we use the phrases, "It's time to pray. It's time to pray! We've got to pray! We've got a national call to prayer!" But you know what? We are "wimps" when it comes to the real thing.

Let me talk about myself personally. I didn't know how much a lot of prayer was or a little bit of prayer. I honestly didn't know. So as a young pastor I went to this pastor who prayed a lot. He had a reputation. He's down in Texas, I won't mention where he is because he would shoot

me for saying this. He got up very early in the morning to pray. So I went with him. I went to the darkened prayer room. He knelt down in the corner of the prayer room so I knelt down in the other corner of the prayer room. And suddenly, to be honest with you, I started falling asleep. So I got up and went over to see what the pastor was doing. When I went over there, he was snoring. I thought, "What is going on? We are both fooling ourselves."

So I said, "God give me a fresh view of prayer if I am supposed to pray a lot." You know what the Lord told me? You know why I was falling asleep when I prayed? Because I went to a darkened room. There was no fresh air, and I got into a half sleeping position, kneeling. This is a mind blower. Did you know that Jews never kneel and pray?

On my father's side, I am Jewish. Gazowsky is a Jewish name. In the Jews who I know and in speaking to a rabbi friend of mine, he said, "We never pray kneeling. Kneeling comes from paganism."

It hit me. An idol does not move. If you are going to pray to an idol, you are going to have to kneel and pray. But the original position of prayer in the Bible is walking. Adam and Eve walked and talked in the cool of the garden.

So it occurred to me, "I do not have to go through this ritual to pray to the Lord." The Lord is alive. He can walk. He can move with me. So I started going to parks where I could move about and pray and meditate. I found that my prayer time increased hours a day. I began to communicate with God and began hearing His voice for my Church. And suddenly this is what God spoke to me. I wanted to give you something fresh for the program here.

Just last week I spent special time with God. Here's what He said to me. "Every single Christian has a career and that career should be a career in Me because they are going to have to stand before the Throne in heaven and give an account of what they have done in this life. And what are you going to do when you stand before your Maker? Are you

going to get up and say, 'I was working for the gas and electric company,' or are you going to say, 'I witnessed to somebody, or I shared this gospel?'"

God said, "The key to your church is you need to develop Christian careers, people who have careers in Me."

Here's the concept that God gave me as I was looking for a flexible organizational concept for the Church. I have come up with the university church, a church that is organized exactly like a university. To give you a metaphor of how this would work, usually the church structure is like this. I will use the Sunday school as an example. They are like a cannon. The Church does all the aiming, and they shoot the Christian out of the barrel and expect them to hit. If they do not hit properly, maybe the next person will. For example, the Church decides what Sunday school class they are going to teach, which age group they are going to teach. They decide the Sunday school material, and they expect this person to buy into that ministry, that outreach, though all the major decisions have been decided by the Church structure within itself. So the person who is going to be a Sunday school teacher really has no ownership on their ministry.

Let's take the university model. The university model is more like a cruise missile. The church shoots them in the general direction of their career. And then the cruise missile or the saint takes over control. As they get closer to the target, they get dead-point accuracy. They can hit it directly on where they are. So let's use the metaphor once again of the Sunday school. People come to the church and we ask, "What is your career? What do you want to do?" They say, "I'd like to teach 14-year-olds." So they make that decision. What material do we give them? We provide David C. Cook material. We have got other material, and we have got some done by a denomination. We provide people with a vast amount of material and allow teachers ownership to choose their teaching materials. What they are going to do is their career. So they grab that

idea and run with it and say, "I own this. This is my ministry."

Another thing that I feel has been a mistake in most of our churches is—in the military it's "ready, aim, fire!" But we usually go, "Aim, aim, aim, aim, aim, aim." Here's what we need to do: "Ready, fire, aim, and then fire again." In other words, the purpose is to give people a basic training in this university that gives them a foundational understanding for a new Christian. Basic training in how to communicate, how to find yourself in God and then prepare them to move into liberal arts or a singing group or an orchestra or a street ministry or a cell ministry. We show them basically how to do it. Then we send them out there and tell them to do it. "Ready, fire . . ." Then after three to four weeks of doing it, they come back in, and now let's aim. What mistakes happen?

Now the point is that we are so afraid of mistakes, and really mistakes are our best teacher. That becomes our best launching pad for true success. If we would stop looking at failures as failures and saying, "This is a test of the emergency broadcast system." In other words this is a test project. This is not success or failure. You are just going to do a test run right now. So you can get a feel of the ministry, a feel of what you are doing. And this is the key that is going to make a structure like this work— does it bear good fruit, fruit that remains unto the Lord?

So we determine that in the first three weeks to four months of test firing. Then they come back, and we go into aiming or training with some grassroots experience.

Now what I am talking about seems radical to a lot of pastors. I'm sure they are saying, "Man, a university church! That seems radical." Let me tell you, most of the major universities—just south of me is Stanford University—are doing a change in their business structure. Stanford School of Business is sending their students out into the business world, firing them out there and giving them six months to a year in the live business world. Then they take them back to school with that live experience and take them

on to graduate courses.

*Dave: I think we can find a Biblical model of this in that Jesus sent them out two-by-two, then brought them back in and taught them more. We can certainly learn from the world's model, but we also need to carefully follow the Biblical model. I am sure some people hearing this will have some lights go on in their minds and see some new possibilities. We have to be careful we aren't like those the Bible speaks of who were learning and learning and never coming to the truth, nor doing anything.*

**Rich:** Here is a Scriptural basis for this concept. In 2 Peter 1:10 it says, "Make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you will never stumble." The Apostle Paul's job was tentmaking. But his career was missionary. Every Christian has a tentmaking job that can provide the engine for their career in God.

Another Scripture is I Corinthians 7:20. "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called." So every Christian should know his career and his call and be able to give an account to others. Thus, ask yourself, "Is there someone in the church, not a relative, who will confirm that I have a call in God, that I do something in the Church besides warm a pew on Sunday morning?" Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." And I think, David, that you will concur that there is no separation between the secular and the sacred. We are working for God even in our secular job. That is a part of our ministry and should be treated as such.

Jesus said in John 6:27, "Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." So when we understand that there is no separation between the sacred and secular, we are constantly working toward this. Jesus also said in Luke 6:13, "No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one or love the other, or he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

I believe that a large part of our Christian community is serving mammon, and they don't see that the job that God has provided is really a service to my Christian career.

Let me give you another radical example. My wife, Sandy, is a seamstress and loves to sew. She has won local and state awards for her sewing, but she has never seen her seamstress work as a career in God. But when we began to consider these truths, we began to wonder if God could receive glory from her love of sewing. Sandy then met another lady who publishes a magazine called *Sew Beautiful*. Martha Pullen is world famous for her sewing ability. She is a Christian and uses the magazine as a testimony service. The magazine is in secular stores and sewing shops across America, but she begins every article with a verse of Scripture. Suddenly my wife saw that her sewing can be a ministry. "I can turn what I thought was secular into the sacred and minister to other women by teaching them sewing and making things for people who don't have clothes." Then she remembered that there was a seamstress in the Bible, Dorcas, who left such a reputation through her work that Peter was asked to raise her from the dead.

So, I believe, therefore, that there are many people in our churches who cannot express themselves and feel frustrated because they come to church and are not recognized because of their ministry. Because in the Church you are only recognized if you are an evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Thus, I believe we need a church structure that is flexible enough to recognize the call of any person in the congregation.

*Dave: We are talking about life-style evangelism. In your book you say, "I realize that a pastor cannot guide his church by the whims of every member. But, if you will seek out the dreams and desires that God has put in your people, you will discover there is already an impetus for action. Like many corporations, some pastors have created a closed community environment, especially in churches that have third and fourth generation families." When you talk about the transition that the Church is going through, seeing Christianity as an integration of all our*

*life versus a compartmentalizing of our lives as something done at home, work, or at church, how do you see this being expressed in your congregational gatherings, or what is your view on the restoration of Christian community in the church?*

**Rich:** What I see happening is that our congregational services are becoming more loose, with more spontaneity. People during the traditional service, which is no longer traditional, talk to each other a lot. There is communication and networking going on. We use the congregational service as a networking place where we put people together. So we spend a lot of time singing songs, moving among the people, networking them together, and getting them to talk about what we are planning on doing. Thus, when it comes to the end of the service, rather than having people bow their heads for a traditional altar call, it is a networking time. Now we are going to plug into each other. To slow people down so they do not just rush out of the auditorium, coffee and doughnuts are in the lobby. They walk around and network. Thus, we have slowed the people down so that it is usually an hour and a half before everyone is gone, with me being the last one to leave. I have eleven associate pastors on the team and their job description is: "I am a conduit between the people, to plug them into each other."

Have you ever studied quantum physics? I recently read a book on the subject, and it is incredible. When you go into the sub-atomic level, which is at the microscopic level, the only reality at the quantum level is the network itself. All that can be observed is the movement of energy from one place to another. I believe this is an example of what the real Church is. It is when two or three Christians are communing with each other or uniting or networking with each other to do a project. At that point, the Church exists. When they are sitting in the pew, face forward, when the pastor is in the front talking with them, the Church is actually not in existence. At some levels when the cells die, they line up. And that is what happens in dead churches when we line people

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

up in nice neat rows. We need change, and it can be something simple. 4. For example, at the end of the service the pastor could say, "Let's stand up and talk with each other. Let's see who works in the same business. Does anyone here paint signs, etc., etc.? You guys come over in this section and talk with each other." Network them together and ask, "Is there something you could do together for God?"

Now I may be oversimplifying something, but I'm trying to show you that if any church or denomination would do something as simple as that, they would get something happening. And I'm telling you that now is the time to do something.

**Dave:** *That's right, as you said in your book, "There is a message coming from the pews and that is that Jesus Himself has put a genetic code in each believer, which will bring that believer to full maturity. Thus, the job of the leader is to coach, equip, and allow that process to happen."*

**Rich:** Do you know the shock that happened to me when our first baby was born? When the nurse put that little baby in my arms, they did not give me an "owner's manual." I thought when I was walking out of the hospital, "I don't know anything about this kid. I might kill this kid. I don't know anything about feeding. I don't know about anything." My wife and I were shocked! I mean we knew nothing about raising children, and that hospital trusted us with raising that kid. I didn't even go to Class 101 on raising children. But in the Church, we don't trust people. We don't believe that when they got saved, a genetic code was placed in them. When I began to trust the Holy Spirit to guide His church, I found out that the people in the pews are pretty intelligent. They aren't a bunch of idiots. They love to listen to the Spirit. They love to follow Jesus. They want to become like Him. There is a genetic code in each person that needs to be released. And that is what I'm saying. As the hospital trusted us with our baby, the pastor needs to trust his congregation that they do know what they are doing, and they are going to do a pretty good job.

**Dave:** *You have a newsletter in which one article is entitled, "Satan's Secret Weakness." It resonates with me. A word circulating around those concerned with restoring the Church is: 1. We need to recover, and there is time. God is restoring back to the Church that we have time, that Satan can't stand a long fight. As Ben Franklin said, "Little strokes fell great oaks." If we continue to pray and live the Christian lifestyle with regularity, we can hammer the Kingdom of Satan, and we can get the job done that Christ calls us to.*

**Rich:** Yes, we certainly can. My wife and I were "prayer walking," and suddenly a huge blanket of flies came off the ocean. The Lord spoke to me and said, "I'm going to show you a secret weakness that Satan has, and the secret is in the flies." I wasn't sure it was God or not, but the first thing I discovered was that one of the names of Satan is Belzebug, which means, "lord of the flies." I knew I was onto something, so I looked through a series of articles on flies until I came across an article from the Department of Agriculture. When they were trying to get rid of flies, they discovered that the key to getting rid of flies over an area lay in the fact that their reproductive period was over a period of forty days. Thus, if they sprayed every day for forty days, they could completely get rid of the flies in a given area. That's what the State of California did with the Med fly just last year. So when I saw that, I realized that Satan cannot endure a long fight. "He that endures to the end will be saved." The race is not to the swift, but to those who can endure. So, the key to overcoming Satan is not the greatest strength but consistency, that even the weakest Christian will pray for forty days and can conquer Satan.

There is a personal side to this story. My father was not saved, which put a lot of stress on the family. Last summer a Chinese pastor came into my office with some pressing needs, and I committed myself to praying for this pastor for forty days. So for forty days I went to the pastor's church and spent two hours each day praying for him and the church. Just after that forty days, my father became ill. We found out that he had cancer and was given four days

to live. I went to see the Chinese pastor who told me that he had had a dream the night before that he was to go and pray for my father and that he would be saved. And in my heart I'm thinking, "This is nice, but . . ." The Chinese pastor asked if he could see my father, and I said it would be fine. He went to see my father, and my father gave his life to Jesus. Dad called my mother and repented and asked her forgiveness. I mean he got real salvation and made things right. It was beautiful! I got to see my dad as a Christian for two days before he passed away, and the Lord said to me, "It was because of your consistency to pray for that Chinese pastor." Later I found out from a relative that my father had a deep, deep respect for the Chinese because of experiences in World War II. God knew the kind of person who could get through to him.

*Dave: Rich, your book is exciting! To quote Pastor Cho: "It's revolutionary, outstanding, straight from the heart of God for all Church leaders and their staff who are willing to change to reap the greatest harvest today! This is a must reading for every Christian worker."*

*Speak now to some of the critical issues as we approach the 21st century with the Church suffering from many internal problems as well as from the many cultural problems that we are experiencing.*

**Rich:** Concerning the cell church and the future, as I have dealt with cell ministry and its operation, if we are not careful, we will make the same mistakes as in the '80s. We will create a rigid structure and say that you will be a part of this because this is what the fastest growing churches have. If we are not careful, we will create another monster. That is why I am going to the university church model where we can be a little more flexible. If someone wants to get into liberal arts, they can move into that. The career teams can be a type of cell group ministry, but they do not have to meet in homes because some people do not like to have people in their homes. Some ladies do not like to have to clean their home up to have people in and such. So we need a structure that is more flexible where the Holy Spirit has total control. I

do not pretend to have all the answers. Recently when I was up on a mountain looking down at a city, I could see that the streets were all laid out in nice, neat rows. Then I looked at the mountain and saw the streams of water running down with their ragged edges, crooks, and turns, but when man gets ahold of the water, he puts it in rigid square boxes. Then the Lord spoke to me, "As the water comes down from the mountains and makes things sprout and grow, so is my Word that comes from my mouth." I thought, "God, your structures are like the streams coming down the the mountain sides. It changes. It fits the terrain. But man, when he gets a hold of it, he wants to pigeon hole it to make this rigid, square, blocky structure. We are not building stone pyramids here. We are building lives, and life does not fit in boxes. That is what I feel the answer for the future is! The church structure needs to be flexible."

*Dave: Are you beginning to see what Rutz is talking about in the book The Open Church?*

**Rich:** Yes, I now have people raising their hands and interrupting me during the sermon!

*Dave: The word sermon originally meant "dialogue."*

**Rich:** My preaching style leads to that, where I can ask people to give their comments. This is in a congregation of a thousand.

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## Carl George —Prepare Your Church for the Future

**Dave:** Carl George is the director of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth. He is a nationally recognized consultant to churches in almost a hundred denominations. He is also the director of Consulting for Growth and wrote Leading and Managing Your Church with Dr. Robert Logan. He has also written How to Break Church Growth Barriers. His next book is Preparing Your People for the Future.

Your background is sociology, and you make it your business to understand people and how to prepare for what is coming down the road. In the introduction to your book, Peter Wagner says, Prepare Your Church for the Future is a blueprint for unlimited growth by studying the dynamics of the world's meta-churches numbering into the tens of thousands.

Since the subtitle of your book is Introducing the Meta-Church, Large Enough to Celebrate, Small Enough to Care, what is a meta-church?

**Carl:** The actual title *Meta-Church* doesn't describe the church form so much as it announces the fact that the Church being done the way we have done it is an inadequate vehicle for doing what the Great Commission has ordered us to do. There is a challenge to reach a world for Jesus Christ and to care for those people. That challenge is far exceeding the capacity of our professionalized clergy and our average 100-sized churches to accomplish.

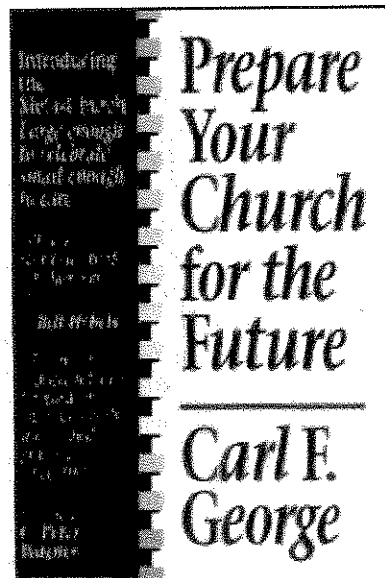
And so what we are doing is making a bold announcement that simply says, "You can't do business as usual and do all that God wants done in this world."

**Dave:** In the first section of the book, you say that we are on the threshold of opportunity.

**Carl:** Unprecedented opportunity!

**Dave:** You make four predictions. One is, we will plan for an extended future. Could you explain?

**Carl:** Many of us grew up in a time when the pessimism of the world wars dominated theological thinking. The changes in society occasioned by the industrialization after the Second World War created such a topsy-turvy world that there were many, many people over the last century who earnestly desired for a relief from their current condition to the point that eschatologies that took them out of this present evil world caused them to wait for "the rapture bus." Even though that was a misapplication of much eschatological teaching, the result is that too much focus on



the hope of Christ's return results in idleness instead of occupying until He comes. In my own background, it was one of pushing us to embrace the hope for the rapture to the point of panic so that we could not lay with legitimacy and with integrity any long term plans. And what we've tried to do now is, to say, "Back away from that preoccupation with rescue and ask yourself, 'If the present world does continue longer than we imagined it will by our eschatology, how long do we have to be responsible for? Should we be planning for our generation? Should we be planning for a century, a millennium?'" We get quite different answers as to how we should go about our work if we take a foreshortened view as opposed to a view that extends

beyond our lifetimes and the lifetimes of our children.

**Dave:** Probably most of the rank-and-file Christians still believe that we are the terminal generation.

**Carl:** Well, we are a terminal generation. We may not be THE terminal generation, but everyone of us is terminal. We have a case of life and the end of life is a transfer into Glory, and that's a metamorphosis too.

So what we are saying is that there is a need for change. The meta church announces a need for two kinds of change. One is a change in our thinking, our constructs of what God is trying to do and how He will go about doing it. And then that leads us into a change in form where we reconfigure the resources of our Church bodies so as to more forthrightly address the huge needs of a doubling population that we are in the midst of.

**Dave:** Yes. In your list of predictions, number two says, "Urban area churches will set the pace, and the United States and Canada will probably not be the pace setters of the future." Could you explain?

**Carl:** Let's talk about urban first. Even in North America less than 50 cities contain more than 50% of the population. It doesn't take but 42 cities in the U.S. right now to contain half the population of the U.S. So we have urbanized, but our urbanizations are paltry compared to what is happening in the rest of the world. In the rest of the world where industrialization is just occurring, the mechanization of farms and other technological advances are causing a burgeoning of world class cities. It is predicted that by the year 2025, we are going to have nearly 100 cities of over 5 million. More than 80% of these are going to be in the Third World, the so-called undeveloped world. These cities, since they contain the organized people, are going to be where the future emerges. So the opportunity for churches, church leadership, and God's redemption

in society, and for individuals is going to be by the sheer weight of these numbers of people in these emerging cities, it's going to demand that the urban scene be the creative focus of our work. We are talking about five or six or maybe even seven out of every eight or nine people to be born on planet Earth in some kind of urban environment.

**Dave:** *Your third prediction is that smaller churches will have part-time pastors.*

**Carl:** The economics of it are the determining of that. It's already a fact in most cases. The households of the clergy are already partially self-supported by working wives and sometimes by bi-vocational pastors. What's happening is that we are getting more and more pastors who have clerical credentials but they don't have the personal leadership skills necessary to amass a large congregation. If they work at a level that is comfortable to themselves, their productivity is going to be something on the order of 100 to 125 people per pastoral person. And that simply is not going to be enough to support a pastor with a traditional family or a one bread earner family or even with a supplement of a working spouse.

The reality is that smaller churches are engineered to require self-supported clergy, at least bi-vocationalists.

**Dave:** *Let's talk about the large churches. You consult with churches of over 500 to 1,000 and many times up to 15,000 members. In discussing how to incorporate this meta church concept, you predict that huge churches will be small enough to care. That of course is the largest complaint with the mega churches as author Jim Rutz points out in his book, "It really doesn't matter whether you are there or not" is the mentality a lot of people have, and it sort of fosters a spiritual immaturity. Do you think we are on the verge of a collapse of superstar Christianity?*

**Carl:** I wish that were true, but I don't believe it is. The failure of the large church to care, the anonymity that allows you to drop out and not be noticed and so forth,

that's not really the failure. That's the secondary failure. The large church exists by default, that is, by failure of the smaller church already. The church of 100, 200, or 300 is such an uncaring place. It's such an indifferent place. It's such an inadequate place. When people leave those churches in distress and in despair because their needs are not being met, they go to a larger church, and they have made a choice that for them works better than staying in the neglect and abuse that they were experiencing in the smaller church.

So you see, if you examine closely the patterns of growth in the larger churches in the United States with one maybe two exceptions, the larger number of people who join churches are pre-evangelized elsewhere, and they are transferring their memberships into these larger churches. More than half and often times as much as 90% of the church membership that we measure in churches above 400 in size has come there from somewhere else that they were less happy with. Maybe the large church is the least worst choice. But nevertheless it exists because of the failure of small churches to retain the people that they won to begin with. So really the accusation that the large church is a neglectful place is like saying, "Gee, my cancer is now oozing."

The whole system is traumatized by the professionalism of the caring professions. The needs of people used to be more masked by convention and by culture and by the failure of transition in society. So people held still, and they were there, and they worked out their problems. If they were part of a church system, they had a support system from their village or their family around them. The Scriptural analogy of the pastor is the shepherd with ninety nine to count and one to go look for. Sure, you could have a professional clergyman care for 100 people if you only had one lost. But that time in our society is long gone. If you have 99 people now, you probably have 25% of them at any one time in some degree of trauma. There is no way that the ministry could be accomplished by one professional

shepherd racing around. So it's an impossible model. The transitions of our time, the decay of our culture and society, and the dissolution of the family unit all have made the task of caring impossible for professional management. That's why we have got to change our method of organization. The Bible says, "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" The answer is rebuild the foundations.

**Dave:** *In part two of the book you turn a corner and begin to propose a model that you have spent a decade or more researching. You call it the meta church, meta from the Greek word for metamorphosis, to change our mind. You see the elements of this being it has to be broken down into relational, small groups. Aren't an awfully lot of churches already doing this?*

**Carl:** The meta construct doesn't allow you to get away with a methodology that you paste on and say, "Oh, isn't this nice?" The meta construct is a systemic construct. This is a little bit tough because very few of our pastors have had training in either systems theory in engineering or systems theory in ecology or systems theory in counseling. Those are fairly recent developments. So the majority of the trained clergy are not systems thinkers per se. Medical people have been trained to think in terms of systems. Family counselors in the constellation therapy mode have been trained to think in terms of systems. They don't see one component is discrete from other components. They see them related to other things. And when we come to the programmatic mindset of the majority of pastors that we deal with, the pastors have been trained to think very programmatically. Here's your sermon, the order of service, the church year, the youth ministry, the choir, some small groups. And it's very hectic. There's not very much that is organic about it. How it fits together in a Body is a mystery.

When we come to the meta church theory, the first thing we do is try to help people learn to see the Church as the system with

interrelated parts. One part affects another part. Any time we begin to operate without examining how each part feeds on and contributes to another part, we're behaving hectically as opposed to behaving systemically. We're trying to help people understand that a systems view of things helps you to understand that nothing is inconsequential. Every part of the system bears on every other part of the system. And then we have to sit about and say, "But okay, what is the primary function of this, and then how does it relate to the other functions?" Small groups are one example of that. Somebody comes along and says, "But we have small groups." Well, what we've learned is that when anybody says that, we know instantly that they are blind to most of the small groups in their church because they are going to call a Bible study held in someone's home under the ruse of small groups as the small group ministry of that church. But when we study the rest of that church, we find five to ten times that number of people engaged in small groups either as Sunday school classes or as ministry teams, outreach teams or worship production teams or whatever. In other words, classes of teams and groups that don't fit in someone's living room around the Bible, sports teams, recovery groups. What we find is that there are dozens and dozens of groups in the typical church that are actually small group potential in function that are unrecognized for what they are, social units that have a capacity for spiritual care—for emotional care and for teaching and so forth. And so what happens is that the awareness of the dynamic of the small group and its power is restricted to a small group of people who study out of a manual called "How to Have a Successful Home Cell Group." And that's an imagination of the systems of the Church that is an inadequate one.

So one of our first tasks was to redefine everything and say, "Generically, any time less than a dozen and a half sit together for any length of time, you have a small group meeting." And now what do you do with that? And what kind of an opportunity is presented? How does the life of

the people who sit there in that room together or go on that bus together or take part in that state presentation together or whatever, this group of people who meet, how does their life bear on the life of the others? How are they impacted by the work of the others? What role does the staff have in guiding, superintending, resourcing, coaching, mentoring, and modeling the leadership tasks of those groups so as to ensure a very high quality of compassion and care and truth in those various groups? What we found is that this kind of conversation we are having right now just blows the normal pastoral mind because it cuts across all sacred categories of programs.

**Dave:** *Yes, it does, although I think that many people are coming to the end of their pastoral rope, and burnout levels are probably at record highs over the last several decades as the pressures begin to mount financially and culturally and every other way.*

**Carl:** We've got to learn to simplify our view of our work so that we know what is really important, which balls we need to be juggling and who we need to be handling and sharing ministry with. That's where the theory that is behind a good construct such as the meta church theory becomes incredibly valuable because it enables you to learn from your surroundings.

**Dave:** *Let me read a little bit from chapter seven entitled "Structure Cells to Do Pastoral Care." You say here that lay people do the pastoring. The leader of the nurturing group functions as a lay pastor of a ten or so person flock. Cell leaders may be of either gender (that may take some heat from some people). Leaders may be married or single. They may bear a church title or not. The pastors could lead the cell, but if the pastor begins to inaugurate a meta church understanding of ministry, the first step often involves forming a group from a cadre of church pillars. The role of the pastor needs to shift from being the quarterback to more of a coach where he is raising up all different types of players, without always having to hold the ball himself.*

**Carl:** Yes, a pastoral leader or senior pastoral staff member sees his job as to do the ministry. Now the larger the church, the more possible that appears to them, so the easier it is to shake off. But the smaller the church, the more the pastor is constrained by a notion of role that says, "We hire you to do our ministry here, our pastoring here." But as the church grows, as it gets larger and develops more caring units, the pastor and some of the fellows of the church would do very well to be in a small group together. But the idea is not to remain in that small group forever but to learn the skills of how to manage a small group meeting so that they can spin off from there other groups that will have a caring and truth function, "speaking the truth in love," encouraging one another and creating additional leaders who are trained additionally in how to spin off other cells. There will always be a need for pastoral leaders to model effective small group participation.

But it is unrealistic to think that they will lead all the small groups. Many new church developers think that's their job. The first year or two it may very well be their job to lead four or five or six small groups. But after you have done that, four or five or six small groups, you are out of capacity. You are running fifty or sixty people in small groups. You pick up a few extra family units and you've now got 100 people. So you are a new church development now, 100. Well, you have just maxed out. That is the normal clergy level in this country, somewhere between 75 and 100 people. And if you don't learn to help your leaders develop as leaders by giving them the vehicle of the leadership of a small group, they are never able to pull the load with you.

**Dave:** *Exhibit A for a model that has demonstrated for the whole world that this is the strategy that the Church can flourish under would be Dr. Cho with Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea.*

**Carl:** Yes, but he actually is late by 50 years. The Methodists, the Wesleyan class meeting, started in the middle of the 1700s, demonstrating that if you didn't



have buildings, if you had lay readers, you could have a cell system that would contribute people to the communion rail. And then the Southern Baptist's cooperative program 50 to 75 years ago demonstrated that any time you put a Sunday teacher to work and gave him/her a class, the average Sunday school teacher would bring ten people to the worship service. Those are not new ideas.

When you ask Dr. Cho, "Who contributed most to your understanding of Christian history?", he will say, "John Wesley and Martin Luther." Luther for the notion of grace and Wesley for the concept of the cell.

*Dave: One of the things that Leonard Verduin traces is the proper meaning of the word heretic. It's really not as negative as we think. Most of what the heretics through the Dark Ages and the Reformation, believed we would probably adhere to more than the Orthodox position.*

Carl: They turned out to be antithetical people who were a syncretic personality type. They were identified as both prophet and martyr. What is a prophet and what is a martyr? A martyr is a prophet one generation earlier than the mainstream is ready to accept.

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## Jay Grimstead — Coalition on Revival

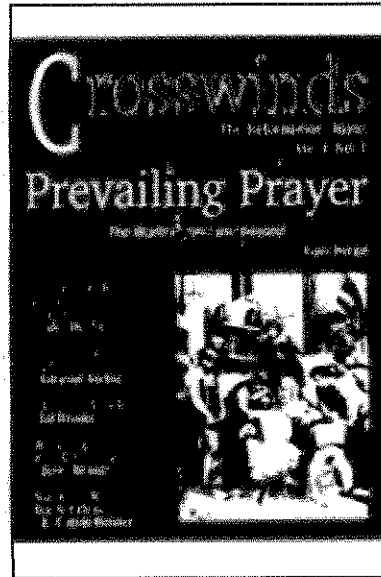
**Dave:** *We are going to be discussing some of the contrasts between the Bible-believing church as it is now in America and most parts of the world and the Church Jesus is desiring that would become salt and light and fulfill the Great Commission. Jay Grimstead has worked behind the scenes. Many may not know about his work on the Coalition on Revival and International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, but Jay is a man whose heart beats with the Spirit of God and who is committed entirely to see the Church develop a comprehensive worldview—obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants to see that the Body of Christ comes into maturity. The Coalition on Revival in 1986 signed the Manifesto for the Christian Church when 300 leaders gathered and committed themselves to the basic elements of the Christian faith and agreed not to argue over the details of eschatology.*

*In 1992 he began to publish Crosswinds Magazine, a quarterly Reformation Digest, with a broad base of contributors. Jay also works with international leaders who are committed at the theological and scholarly level to applying the Scriptures to all spheres of life.*

*I'm so excited that you are taking the phenomenal knowledge and digested wisdom which you have accumulated over the years and are putting it into some books! You are working on a book to be released in late 1993 or early 1994 entitled Contrasts. Why don't you comment on how we need to contrast the Church of today with what we see in the Bible?*

**Jay:** I am saying that we need to contrast the Church as we have it today in most Bible-believing churches, both charismatic and non-charismatic, not only with the Church intended as given to us in the New Testament, but also with the Church as we actually had it in a number of countries up until around 1830. However imperfect, our heroes of Church history created their cultures and the kind of Christianity they had. They had such a strong, Biblical Christianity going in a number of countries that most people are not

even aware of. I'm saying that it would be a great advantage if we could just get back to what we had in the 1600s and 1700s under the Pilgrims and Puritans. I'm saying that from the time of Jesus, it didn't deteriorate. Even from the time of the Dark Ages, it really didn't deteriorate always downhill. Any time sincere men and women of God gathered together to advance the Kingdom of God as they knew it on earth and have the Bible to be applied to all areas of life, they were successful in every country, as far as I can tell, wherever they



tried that except in France, which was crushed at St. Bartholomew's Day. So we have already done it to a large degree, not that we ever created a perfect society or a golden age, but we have created a far better Christianity and society already at the hands of Christians in leadership than most people are even aware of. I'm trying to get back to that and contrast the kind of Church and thinking that we have now with the kind of Church, thinking and living, that they had prior to 1830.

**Dave:** *What was it in 1830 that was the watershed issue from your viewpoint?*

**Jay:** There are a number of historical developments. As you

know, everything comes out of something in the past. By 1830, the Church had started to deteriorate, and a number of factors contributed to that: 1. the Kantian Dichotomy. Kant lived around the 1760s and officially made the secular world think that it was okay to have a divided world where the world of the visible and the world of the invisible were absolutely disconnected in so far as language and logic connecting them. We know that is false because we have an inerrant Bible from God that connects the visible and invisible world linguistically and logically. That is the connection. So Kant had been cooking his stuff up for fifty years, and by 1830, most of the universities in Europe had already accepted that. It took another one hundred years, by 1930, for the universities in America to accept that. But in general, the Kantian Dichotomy came heavily into that.

Then in 1830, the Methodist denomination, the hottest, most fundamental, and most fiery preaching denomination in the world, voted to eliminate their class meetings. This was the small house church, the small accountable groups that Wesley built into the whole Methodist movement. They eliminated that and said, "Let's just have church in a big group where it is safe, and sit and be anonymous." They didn't really say that, but they took the heart and the structure and commitment out of Methodism. From then on, that led toward it becoming one of the most liberal denominations on the earth today.

In 1825 dispensationalism was at work, which actually institutionalized antinomianism, anti-Biblical law, and pietism, where the Bible was not supposed to speak to us about how to affect society and in fact where the laws of the Old Testament and the Sermon on the Mount are eliminated as supposedly having any requirements on Christian' lives. I blame dispensationalism, although I have a number of good dispensationalist friends, and many are moderating their position and getting closer to where we believe

truth to be. However, the old Scofield Bible, institutionalizing dispensationalism caused the Bible-believing Body of Christ in America and England to be castrated, and the sword of the Word was taken, as it were, out of their hands. Then in 1802, of all things, Harvard University, the showcase intellectual institution of America was captured by the Unitarians. They took it over from the Calvinists, who stood in the tradition of the Puritan Christianity—which I'm saying we need to get back to because it was a very good Biblical Christianity. The Calvinists lost out, and Harvard began in 1802 to be liberalized, and the other institutions followed. That took about 25 years. Plus, the Industrial Revolution was going on that had been cooking for a hundred years, which took people from the farms—the local connectedness and relationships that are so vital to a viable church.

Thus the Church, not by a vote as with the Methodists, drifted downstream unknowingly. Thinking they were moving toward God, basically they bailed out of most responsibility and turned from a God-centered Christianity to a man-centered Christianity and from a real Bible worldview to a very restricted, narrow, what I called a brain-damaged worldview that can do neither the world nor the Christians much good. However, they thought they were right on, and that is the kind of Christianity we have had for the last 160 years. The last five generations of leaders and pastors, teachers and writers have breathed the smog of that brand of Christianity. So is it any wonder that we are sick from head to toe, as Isaiah 1 says. These leaders did this sincerely, thinking they were giving us the best shot, the best they knew and what they had been taught. But they did not know they were on a sandy foundation, giving us a less than Biblical, smoggy Christianity, which makes us flabby, self-centered spectators, almost incapable of serious warfare and battle in world changing.

*Dave: In essence the Christian foundation for civilization gradually,*

*over this period of time, has been in decline. And yet, God is committed to restoring it.*

**Jay:** Yes, God is. There has never been a point, nor do I think there will ever be a point, where a world or culture will get to the place where some Christians can't grab the thing and turn it around. And that is where we are now. God, by His grace, has been blowing on the Church on the planet since the 1970s. In fact the early pioneers woke up in the 1960s. And since the mid-'70s there has been an amazing awakening in pockets here and there and a moving together of converging lines. So, there is a Gideon's army, a remnant waking up, that 30 or 40 years from now when the home schooled kids, the prayer movements, the prophetic movement and political activists, and the unity movement, when all of this jells in the next 10 to 15 years, they will produce an explosive growth, not only in evangelism and personal holiness, but whole countries are going to change and come rushing into the Kingdom of God. It is going to be more than we can handle. It will be marvelous, and we will be inebriated with the joy and the possibilities, the fruitfulness, the explosive beauty, and growth of the reality that is coming to the world. It is going to be like a dam breaking. But right now we are still at the minority status where most people misunderstand this kind of talk or don't think it is Biblical. People think they might get fired if they start talking this kind of talk or believing it. So we are still in the uphill battle, but we are moving toward the breaking of the dam when there are enough of us to develop a critical mass combined with the Holy Spirit coming from above, which will bring a beautiful, bloodless revolution in the world like it has never seen.

I am preparing for the next one hundred years. I don't know when Jesus is coming. If He comes in two years, that's fine with me because I'm battle-weary and tired. Even if He comes at the year 2000 or whenever, I say it would be gross irresponsibility for the leaders of the Church institutionally to not

plan for the next one hundred years in education, missions, banking, etc.

I think we are going to be around for a long time, but I don't know that. And, I'm not saying we should believe that, but we should prepare for it because He has not told us it will end at the year 2000.

*Dave: So we need to be thinking intergenerationally to raise up torchbearers who will carry on the work and see the Gospel advance.*

**Jay:** We all need to be thinking in terms of training our grandchildren in how to be mighty warriors to carry it on.

*Dave: In your book you discuss how we have squandered many of the possibilities as a result of the "escapist, less-than-Biblical Christianity," as you refer to it, and this has resulted in a rather pessimistic and "defeatist" worldview, accommodative instead of confrontive, a bits-and-pieces thinking instead of comprehensive. I know C.O.R. is committed to trying to provide foundational documents that will help the hearty group of leaders who want to dig in and systematically discover what the Bible has to say, what orthodox, historic Christianity has held to be true. You have a worldview document of some substance that addresses seventeen areas. Is that right?*

**Jay:** Yes, law, government, economics, education, science, the arts, and so forth. A number of men have written on this, but the thing that is unique and very useful with these C.O.R. documents is two things. First, they were boiled down to bare minimum creedal from statements of affirmations and denials so that the document on law has what we consider to be 99 Biblical principles of affirmation and denials on how law is to be functioning on earth in legislators, law courts, etc. Secondly, this was not created by one man but by a consortium of the best experts we could get in the field, talking and arguing together and editing each other's materials for three years. So it is a consensus document of the whole Church that was willing to gather together and be involved. It involved about 400 leaders of the 17 different fields, plus 60 of our 112

national steering committee members. It has those characteristics that I do not think anything else has, and we offer it to the Church, grateful that God let us do it. I think for the next 50 years, it will be appreciated and increasingly used.

I just got a wonderful phone call from a doctor, Lewis Hicks in Lexington, who has started a Christian school and is one of the key leaders in that town. Most of the key things happening in that town he is connected to in one way or the other. He started a school with fifty on its staff, and his headmaster has been so impressed with the 17 documents and the Kingdom of God documents and the Manifesto that he just ordered fifty of the whole sets. He is going to take a year to instruct his teachers and staff on the Biblical worldview, based on these documents. To me, that's how it ought to be. Lewis said, "We have taken these documents as the foundation for our entire educational program." So they are going to teach the teachers first. That was music to my ears, and I think that more and more, that kind of thing is going to happen. Serious men in leadership positions of power are going to see these are foundational tools for building a foundation of anything.

Dave: *By the way, these documents by C.O.R. are really, in many ways, tear-stained, aren't they?*

Jay: They are tear-stained. There is also some blood from heated arguments, and, you're right, a lot of tear stains. It is real serious encounter work, and we distilled it in the laboratory of heavy duty debate. What came out of the other end of the sausage grinder is some real eatable sausage.

Dave: *Your book will send some shock waves through the Church, as does almost everything that C.O.R. produces. The book is divided into four parts: 1. the worldview of the King; 2. the obedience to the King, talking about Christian maturity; 3. the King's family—ingredients for Christian fellowship and the humility of the Body and covenant, which is a theme that keeps coming up that God*

*is restoring covenant community in the Church; and 4. the King attacks. The second chapter of your book is going to be pretty comprehensive. Is it targeted for the rank-and-file leader who doesn't want the heavy theological analysis but instead has down-to-earth language?*

Jay: I try to write it in down-to-earth language, but it is for leaders only, whoever is a leader. It is for pastors, heads of organizations, and hot laymen. The people in the pews who want to go make a difference in their world and their city—it would be for them.

Dave: *Contrasts is to be followed by a book that will discuss the game plan. Is that right?*

Jay: Yes, it will probably be titled *Game Plan*, how we put all this together with suggested ideas of how the whole Body of Christ can function to usher in this move of God in a systematic, corporate, connected, comprehensive, and coordinated way so large portions of the planet evidence visible, measurable, Kingdom-of-God living going on.

Dave: *What I see happening—and I want to get your opinion—is, God is bringing together the scholars who are searching out the deep truths of Scripture and history and those who are more prophetic, lovers of God, who are calling us into a deeper relationship with God. These two things, our head and our heart, need to be woven together if we are really going to see the Gospel advance. What is your view on this?*

Jay: I think you said it very well. I see God bringing all these different streams into converging lines so that we will be going down a five lane freeway in the same direction. Part of my function in the Body and my burden is to try and convince these different guys going in different streams that what they have is a partial, exciting, and very important part of the puzzle. Most of my buddies out there, I believe, falsely believe that they carry the whole ecclesia. I don't mean that they even consciously thought or proclaimed that, but the way they operate is

that people only need to buy into their thing, and the whole picture is there. I'm trying to convince them that we all carry partial pieces of the Body or represent only a part of the Body, and that we have to work together. So part of my task, to help these people see that whether you like it or not, you have got to function with that other guy and let his thing stand as at least potential truth until you have examined it thoroughly and can declare him a heretic. But most of the leadership in the Body of Christ has not quite caught the vision that each of their things is partial and that they need an interdependent relationship with all the rest of the Body. I find very few men on the planet who see and feel that, and are therefore, driving toward that. It is coming, and I know it will come, but at this point all the groups I know tend to make the false assumption without saying it or consciously driving towards this that, if they could just get more funding and more people seeing it their way, then the whole thing would be solved. Thus, we need a profound humility and a profound sense of need for all the other things going on. This is the burden of my life, to try and help these people see that we must be a Body globally and nationally and down to the regional and city areas.

Dave: *Easy to talk about—difficult to do when you have the worldview thinkers declaring the apostasy of pietism and then, on the other hand, the prophets declaring that we aren't going to solve this thing intellectually, doctrinally, or politically. So, we need a double dose of grace to see that somewhere in there is a tension that is not either/or but both/and which is the message of the Kingdom of God. When we discuss the doctrine of the Church, we see there is a fresh emphasis on Body ministry, that the five-fold ministry is wonderful, but that the whole purpose is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. But, when we see the weak, pitiful state of the Church, it seems almost impossible for God to give us time to mature to the place where we could really see the Great Commission fulfilled. And yet, don't most international leaders see that the local church should be based on relational, covenant accountability? Isn't that*

*part of what C.O.R. stands for? There is an emphasis on cell groups, house churches, meta-churches, as Carl George says, on the open church, as Jim Rutz says, where people are more involved in the leadership. Without degenerating into chaos, do you see that this is going to be an important characteristic in the future of the Church?*

**Jay:** I think it will be essential, and there is no way we can move forward for the next century without that functioning in every city. By the way, praise God for your efforts to put all this information in a tape series. This is really helping to bring these different streams together so that we are converging down the major freeway. I find that the men who are struggling with doctrinal differences, with theology, with principles and things we do and don't do are the guys who have real trouble with me when we meet and we weep together and pray and share our hearts. God is able to let an awful lot of weird doctrinal stuff be put in the background to be settled later. We find we don't have to settle a lot of weird stuff or a lot of things we don't like ahead of time IF we can get our hearts connected. What it does is provide a relationship covenant environment in which we can take the time to work out doctrinal, policy, and priority differences. So while relationships can never replace doctrine for the job doctrine and truth has to do, yet relationships are absolutely necessary for us to move toward identifying those basic doctrinal things that are non-negotiable and being able to tolerate the things that are important to us but are not non-negotiable. That is a real key, and it is happening in the house church, cell group, and meta-church—the whole open church orientation toward individual involvement at every level that is going to move us in the right direction.

**Dave:** *It seems to me the point we are converging on is the absolute Lordship of Christ over all areas of life in all people in all nations. There are many issues crying for attention—racism, discipleship, etc. But until Jesus is not*

*only seen but modeled as Lord in the local church, the other issues can't be resolved. Isn't that much of the problem, that the world looks to the Church for a model of a reasonable lifestyle that makes Jesus Lord, and so people don't want to become a part of it?*

**Jay:** Yes, we have not been the light to the world, which is the assignment Jesus gave us. We have been partial light, but our lives have not attracted people to the Lord.

**Dave:** *I think your book, Contrasts, will be a welcome message for many. I hope you listeners will plug into Jay and C.O.R. and take advantage of all they have to offer.*

**Jay:** There is one final word I'd like say. Four of the major things that each of us have thought through and engaged in are: 1. a proper understanding of the Kingdom of God; 2. the creation/redemption relationship; 3. the proper Biblical view of man; and 4. what Schaeffer would call the upper story and lower story dichotomy. Those four things have to be clearly understood before we are going to get very far down the road toward real solutions. Thanks for giving me this opportunity to participate.

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## Dudley Hall -- Out of the Comfort Zone

**Dave:** *Dudley Hall is the president of Successful Christian Living Ministries, dedicated to helping Christians grow into maturity in Christ. He is a popular conference speaker and a frequent guest on James Robison's television programs. His books include: Out of the Comfort Zone; Steps Toward Maturity; Let's Be the Church; Grace Works; and Letting God Rescue You From Empty Religion.*

*God is doing some very, very exciting things! You have said in your book, Out of the Comfort Zone, that you believe we are in the greatest transition period since the early Church. Could you explain?*

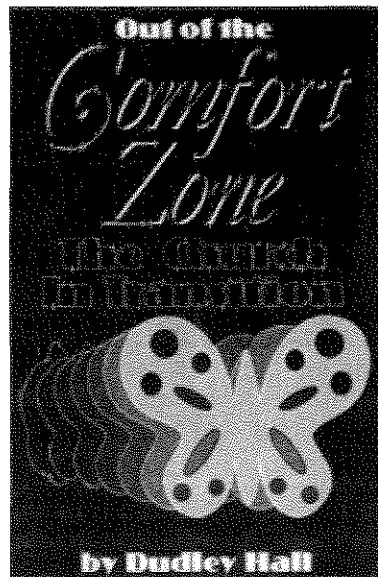
**Hall:** God has been building on a transition since the Reformation, obviously, as He has been restoring layer by layer truths that are bringing the Church back to His original intent. It seems to me in this day when the Church has gone so far into institutionalism and our society is rotting around our ears, that God is now moving again to bring the Church back to an organic base so that we operate as an organism, not as an institution.

From what I see from my limited travels in different parts of the world, I see this happening relatively fast. God doesn't always do things soon, but He does things suddenly, I'm seeing a sudden move that is bringing leaders back to a place where they really care for the sheep rather than caring for the institution so much. It's causing people to seek for truth that liberates their lives rather than just fills their heads. So I think the passage in Matthew 13 where it says, "The scribe who has become a disciple is like the good householder who reaches into his bag and pulls some things out old and some things new"—I think that is describing a transitional man. Obviously a scribe who has become a disciple of Jesus has made a transition. He's moved from an old revelation to a new revelation, a fuller revelation.

The key thing for us is to know what to save out of the old and

what to throw out, and what to save out of the new emphasis and what to throw away. My prayer and my emphasis is to try to discern that and to help others to discern that.

**Dave:** *I also love that passage because it explains the continuity that we see in the Scripture between the Old Testament and the New, between the sovereignty of God, the fact that what He is doing is entirely as you talk about in the book, Jesus is building His own Church. But on the other hand, there is the strategy that is needed as we obey Him and find our*



*place where we can fit in. Let's talk about when one pulls out of one's treasure, some things new, the existing leadership is not going to understand and probably will reject that. You have said that transition leaders are oftentimes misunderstood. Can you explain?*

**Hall:** Anytime there is a fuller revelation and it's a new emphasis, those who have bought into the old have usually a built a system around their understanding of truth or reality. And when new revelation comes in or a new illumination -- God is saying something new to a new emphasis to a generation -- it's going to cause the systems to break. No man's logical system can handle the bigness of God's revelation.

Therefore, the systems have to break. That's very uncomfortable because we in the Western hemisphere love to have our systems closed. We like to say, "This is so, therefore, this is so, therefore, this is so, and that sums it all up." And when God does something in a generation to bring a new insight, a fuller revelation, it messes up the systems, and those who are committed to institutions will fight the change. Let's face it. And yet in the Kingdom of God, repentance or adjusting to the will of God, to the new will of God, is here to stay. Somebody said it correctly, "Historical change is here to stay," and it is if you are going to live in the Kingdom.

**Dave:** *This quote is just classic out of your book. It says, "It seemed that the early Church had this motto: 'Make life beg for structure, never make structure beg for life.' " That is really classic. Many people are of course suggesting that the Church began in homes. If we trace it back prior to Constantine, we find that the Church was really a home movement, a house church movement. Some are suggesting that it should come full circle back to that and abandon this institutionalization that has happened. What is your view on this?*

**Hall:** I would agree that it's going to do that if we follow that philosophy of the early Church movement that was, "God majors on life." In Him was life. It speaks of Jesus, and that life was the light of men. Life came at Pentecost. It was because of the flow of life that they finally had to put some structure there. It was because life was flowing at such a rapid rate and people were being added to the Church that they put some deacons there. All the expressions of the life of God were there. And so the Apostles needed a little structure. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, they got some men to take care of looking after the tables. That's really, basically, the first structure that we have. What we have done now is, we keep the structure and then we try to find some life to justify the keeping of the structure. If we would go back

and say, "Let's go for life. Let's go for loving God, celebrating God, worshiping God and nurturing each other, which is, by the way the completed, fulfilled plans of God that we love God and love one another. If we went back to that simplicity, we could get rid of a lot of the unnecessary structure. Then we could add the structure as we need it to facilitate life rather than to control life or sometimes to snuff it out.

I really do see a coming back to the simplicity that frees us to celebrate in large groups and worship God in large groups but to nurture in very small groups. Therefore, I think the home is going to become the major place where that happens. In all reality, there is going to be enough religious people around to keep all the buildings busy. But the Church where the life of God is going to be flowing is going to be more interested in small groups, in homes, in restaurants, in little places where they meet in small groups and nurture. And then every once in a while or periodically, they are going to have large groups where different denominations crossing over doctrinal differences and whatever are going to get together and worship God in big groups. I believe that with those two emphases, we are going to see communities take notice of the Church. In the past the Church has just been reduced to another institution, which basically has had very little obvious impact on society.

*Dave: The heart of Jesus yearns for that, that we be that city set on a hill. Many Christians are struggling for that, but they feel so lonely and so unimportant oftentimes in the institutional church. There seems to be a heart cry for koinonia, true relational covenanting. That's where the small groups seem to be the best place to do that. Of course you have said in the book, "Almost every new thing that God does is fought the hardest by those in existing leadership."*

*You said that the pastor, the poor guy who works his heart out all week long, serving the people, preparing his message, trying to evangelize and do all of the different tasks that he sees as*

*being the function of the pastor, you said that he is an impossible role model, that if he succeeds with man, he fails with God. And if he fails with man, quite likely he is succeeding with God. What do you mean by that?*

**Hall:** We have created a monster in the average role model of the pastor. We have put upon him expectations and job descriptions that are impossible for him to do. God designed it that a person who is being disciplined would receive input from all parts of the Body. In Ephesians 4, when Jesus ascended back, He gave these gifts to men. He names the five gifts there: apostle, evangelist, prophet, pastor, teacher. It says these gifts will impact the disciples until we all come to the unity of the faith and the stature of the fullness of Christ. In other words, what he is saying is that a disciple needs the input of all of these. You are not going to be a mature disciple if you don't have input from all of these. That's why I personally have a hatred for anything that is sectarian -- if it's denominationalism, it's sectarian. Anything that keeps the Body separated so the disciple cannot receive from all parts of the Body, I think is detrimental.

**What we have done is that we have taken the pastor and tried to make him fulfill all the roles of the five-fold ministry. We have given him the job of making us disciples, making us mature, feeding us spiritually, taking care of all of our needs, administrating all the Church functions, being the CEO, being the public relations man, and all of that kind of stuff. When he can't do it, he's going to fail and get disappointed, and he will burn out.** I really am convinced that a lot of the moral failures that we are seeing among Christian leaders, some of it can be attributed to first of all their burnout. Some of them are getting out through failure. That is of concern to me. If you succeed with man, you will fail with God, what God requires of man is that we love God with our whole heart, with all our mind, soul and strength and our neighbors as ourselves and that we have a life of rest and a life of peace. I

decided a long time ago that I can't be the best teacher in the world, the best preacher in the world, but I can give them a happy man. One thing they can see is a man who is happy, that he is contented with his lot in life, that he has righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ruling in his life. I feel that if I can give them that, at least they know it is possible.

So I think a pastor who has all these expectations on him cannot do that. He's in burnout. He's under stress. He's got to produce the fastest growing church in the community. He's got to reach all these goals and whatever. And so he doesn't have the time or energy to do what God requires of him. So he fails with God. He's going to fail with man because there is no way to live up to all those expectations.

One of the hard things for spiritual leaders to do today is to come back to the Scriptures and to God Himself and ask, "What do you expect of me?" And, "If it makes everybody mad, I'm going to do it." There has to be a whole new role model defined for the spiritual leader today. Of course it's been in the Bible a long time, he said. God gave these gifts to men and they were to equip the saints. I think we are seeing a move of God back to men who say, "It's not my job to build the church. It's not my job to reach all these numerical goals. It is my job to love God and to equip the saints to do the work of ministry." I think that's very positive.

*Dave: It sounds like what you are saying is that superstar Christianity is really collapsing.*

**Hall:** It's over. It's over.

*Dave: The fat lady has sung. All you have to do is look around at the debris of ruined men's lives. The one- and two-fold ministry again is giving way to a fuller view where the restoration of the apostolic, prophetic, teaching, evangelistic and shepherding have been restored over the last century—and of course going all the way back to the first century. Do you see this coming full circle back to the first century model?*

**Hall:** I think we are even going back further than the New Testament model. I think we are going back to the original intent in God's heart. I'm not sure we ever had a full picture of a mature New Testament Church. We had a baby New Testament Church in its purity. But we never saw much of the Church in its maturity. I think God's not only going to bring us back to the New Testament model of innocence and purity in its early stages, but it's God's intention before the Second Coming of Jesus to let the Church be mature in the world so we really can be salt and light.

**Dave:** *So it's something of a virgin church that you see God bringing, something that we've not seen in its totality. That would make sense because God progressively grows things.*

**Hall:** The latter is always better than the former. But the former is always in its infantile state. In the small it is pure, and it has the ingredients of what the latter will be a magnification of.

Let me say another word about the structure that we were talking about. It dawned on me a few years ago that the more complex forms of life, the less visible the structure, the skeletal structure is. If you have a very simple form of life like a crab or oyster, the skeleton is on the outside. It's very obvious. But when you get to more complex forms of life, like us, like the human, the skeletons on the inside are very unnoticeable but very important. I think what God is trying to do is take structure leadership and put it in its proper place, which is in the invisible place. Important to keep things going but out of the superstar mentality. I see those who are going to be leaders of the Church of the future in the place of the skeleton -- necessary, important, but not the ones getting the attention. That's a natural analogy.

**Dave:** *Let me read this quote from your book, "A discerning historian once said, 'The Gospel was born in Bethlehem, christened at Calvary, became a movement in Jerusalem, became a philosophy in Greece, an*

*institution in Rome, a culture in Europe, but sadly, now, an enterprise in America.' "*

*You said in your chapter dealing with authority and power, "The Gospel that is generally preached in America will work in no other place in the world but in America (if it is working here)." Is the American version of the Gospel that watered down, so consumer oriented that it won't work any where out in the world except in America?*

**Hall:** I think so. I know that in the places I've gone [in other parts of the world] it has to be a Gospel that will work any where that deals with life. I've discovered that Americans and many Europeans are willing to settle for a Gospel that only satisfies intellectual questions. Whereas in most of the world, they need a Gospel that touches life. They need a Gospel that casts out demons, that heals the sick, that deals with what they are dealing with. We seem to be content to have a propositional Gospel, a Gospel that can be marketed and fit into our consumer oriented mentality. But most of the Church in the world doesn't really care if their numbers are increasing. They want some reality to life about how to know God; how to know righteousness, peace, joy, or the Holy Spirit; how to relate to one another, and how to solve problems. Yet we are very content to live in an individualistic mentality. We are content to go to church on Sunday and sit with hundreds or even thousands of people and never know them in order to get our intellectual minds spurred on a little bit and to salve our consciences. So it may be an overstatement, but I tend to believe that it really is true that we have created a Gospel that is not exportable. It's not wanted in many parts of the world, and why would they want it?

People used to want to come to the United States because we had a higher life style than any place else in the world. Immigrants would want to come here. I think that's the way the Kingdom of God is. If the Kingdom of God is ever portrayed properly, the lost world

will come seeking. "How do I get in here?" We've preached a Gospel that is very unattractive and we can't transport it. That's one of the reasons we've had a tough time sending missionaries out and getting churches started in the world because our Gospel was more cultural than it was Biblical.

**Dave:** *One of the subjects that you deal with in this book and in other books is spiritual maturity. You said, "It is time to quit going to church and start being the church."*

*You also said, "It's needless to gain more truth if you are not exercising it."*

*You have gone on to say, "We need to ask ourselves, 'What is our product and are we producing?'"*

*In your book you have laid out some of the stages in spiritual maturity. Obviously Apostle Paul was concerned with the Corinthian Church in chapter 13 when he said, "When I was a child, I thought and spoke as a child." But there does come a time in the life of every man and woman when he must grow up. Is this what God is saying to the Church in America: it's time to grow up?*

**Hall:** Yes, I think so. It's true in every nation, but the Church takes on some of the characteristics of the government of their land. In this country we have a welfare mentality that is pretty prevalent where we look to institutions to meet our needs. In the United States we look to Big Brother Government to feed us, to educate us, to take care of us. So there really is a "you-look-after-me" mentality. It's been adopted in the Church. We look at the Church as an institution. So people look at the Church, and they want the Church to tell them what God says, to interpret the Bible for them, and to tell them how to live. "And all in between, meet all of my needs. I'm a shopper and you must meet my consumer requests, or I'll go down the street." So we have that consumer mentality.

Here's what I think God is saying to the Church. The Church's responsibility is not to tell the people what God says. The



Church's responsibility is to encourage people that you can hear God for yourself. We make cripples out of people when we tell them, "If you will come to these meetings, we will tell you what God says."

It's not the preacher's job, the pastor's job, the evangelist's job to tell people what God says. It is our job to encourage one another to hear what God is saying, and to encourage them that they can communicate with God and have intimacy with God, and, they can hear it. It's not the Churches job to interpret the Bible for the people. We've seen centuries of that in the past where it didn't work -- when the Bible was in the hands of the priest and the people didn't get it. Part of the great Reformation was because the Bible was put back into the hands of the people. Well, even in Evangelical Christianity we have taken it out of their hands again very subtly, but we've basically taken it out and said to the people, "If you haven't been through your studies and hermeneutics and all that stuff, you cannot interpret the Bible."

Now this is not to put down the seminary training. I've been seminary trained, and I'm appreciative of it and all for it. But I'm saying that the average Christian can interpret the Scriptures for himself. It is the Church's responsibility to give those basic skills of how to interpret the Scriptures. Therefore, the average person can go to the Bible and find what God says on any basic subject that concerns them. Does God say anything about finances, my job, how to raise children or any other pertinent subject in His book?

Thirdly, it's not the Church's job to tell people how to live. The preacher is not to come up with a set of behavioral patterns for you to live up to. It is the Church's responsibility to help you discover what God has written on your heart in the new covenant and to help you then live out the values that He has put in your heart. And if a person will live by that, you will live rightly.

So instead of telling people how to

live and judging them according to an external set of standards, we are to encourage them to discover the destiny God has put in their hearts, the values He has put in their hearts, and how to live by them.

What product am I trying to produce? I'm trying to produce a man or woman who can hear God on his/her own and thereby be able to help others. They can interpret the Scriptures adequately enough to find out what God has said on a subject and they are living according to the integrity of their heart. When I produce that kind of person, I believe I have produced a person who will be salt and light in the world they live in.

*Dave: How is this fleshing itself out in your local congregation? Is your ministry birthed out of the local church?*

**Hall:** Yes, I am an elder in a local Restoration Church in Euless, Texas, and our structure is that we major on a large celebration group and small nurture groups. Much of my time is spent with men, training them to be pastors so they are able to do what I've just talked about. We never ask a person to be responsible for more than ten or twelve people because we believe that real pastoring has to take place in small groups.

*Dave: Did you make a transition to that, or was the church planted with that in mind?*

**Hall:** It was planted with the ideology and philosophy in mind but we are just now getting around to where it is working efficiently. We've majored on the small groups and the worship since we started in 1984. We've learned some things from Carl George, Ralph Neighbour, and some other wonderful people who have done some great work in these areas.

One of the things we have learned is that our small groups were too large. They were initially successful enough that we got thirty and forty people in them, and then we realized that we were really not accomplishing our goals with that many. Therefore, we broke them down into smaller groups and

intensified the training of the pastors who care for them.

*Dave: In your book you discuss what is church life. "We still have a mentality that says we are going to win our community," whereas you say that we should adjust our mentality to — "we are going to love our community." How do we demonstrate that in concrete ways to our communities? The culture crisis that we face now puts more and more pressure on the Church.*

**Hall:** I do believe that if we would quit trying to be so competitive and "win our community to our ideology position," we would spend more time simply getting to know our community and thus ultimately have a greater effect. I have found that when I go to my neighbors with the attitude that I'm going to love them, instead of winning them, they begin to trust me and want to know what is in my life. Thus, one of the first steps we could do in the Church is stop competing with the church across the street. We should realize that every legitimate church in the city has an assignment from God and therefore, we can best serve the other churches by helping them find out what their assignment is and then help them do it.

We have a church near us that has a very effective Crisis Pregnancy Center, and they are doing a very good job with it. So instead of going into competition with them, we have decided to help them in every way we can with personal funding or whatever. Our church has a great care ministry. Some other churches saw that we were doing such a good job with that, that they volunteered to help us with that ministry. This is healthy.

Let's find out what is going on and how everyone fits. In that way we can affect our community.

For more information:

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## Pete Hammond -- InterVarsity Marketplace Network

**Dave:** *We are going to discuss the Gospel impacting our culture. The opportunities for the Gospel at this point in history are phenomenal. But we need a strategy. Pete Hammond has given a lot of thought to how Christians can be salt and light in whatever area they have been called to work in. One area where Christians need to be empowered is Christians in the marketplace.*

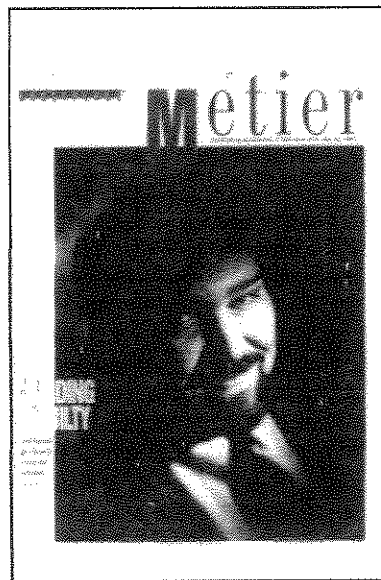
*Pete Hammond is the director of the Market Place Division of Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. He has been with them for 28 years. He has served in pastorates [and] was trained at Gordon Seminary. Pete is working on a new project which is titled, The Word in Life Study Bible. The New Testament is to be released in 1993.*

*The subject matter of this series deals with the future of the Church. When we talk about empowering the laymen in the Church, what kind of thoughts come [to] your mind?*

**Pete:** One is an embarrassing reality that I have sensed as I have traveled the country regarding a kind of subliminal view of the Bible in the pews of our churches. Most laity, no many how well intended they are or [how] serious they are with their faith, have a quiet assumption that most people in the Bible worked for a religious organization like Campus Crusade or a denominational church or something like that. If you make that assumption, it takes the Bible right out of the hands of the laity, for they have to assume that they have to become a religious professional for the Bible to become their handbook. Of course that is not true. **Seventy to eighty percent of the people in the Bible never had a religious job in their life. They worked in fishing, finance, government, jails, and armies. One of the biggest concerns I have is for the Bible to be broken open again as a handbook for faith in the streets of our culture.**

**Dave:** *Tell us a little about your work with the Inter Varsity Network. It has been said [that] the 90's are the decade of the network in which the Body of Christ is reconnecting. How does Inter Varsity fit in to that?*

**Pete:** Inter Varsity has been working in evangelism and discipleship on college campuses for fifty years, all across the United States and [in] 132 nations. The bulk of the students we work with are going to go into fairly significant positions of leadership in their cultures or businesses. That is even more true in the third world where, if you have a college education, you are automatically a national leader. We have been trying to connect with faith in whatever responsibility they have, whether it is family, community, or job. Out of the experience of the last fifty years, we in the U.S. have



recognized something that the workers in the third world knew for a long time. We are not doing a good job connecting the vitals of the faith with the jobs that will be held by our graduates. Thus, the Inter Varsity Marketplace Division is the result of ten years of research and evaluation, recommending a way to try and reconnect those things, so that our graduates are more salty and not "yukkies", as my wife calls them -- Young Upwardly Mobile Christians.

**Dave:** *I have a brochure before me written by Jim Rutz, called "Let's Stop Wasting Our Lives: The Strategic Careers Project." He has pointed out that Christians making career decisions usually do it for the wrong reasons. They get bad advise, do not*

*have a clear vision, and seem to allow the gatekeeper type of positions to slip through their fingers, and now we are kind of at the back of the bus trying to figure out what happened. When you talk about the Marketplace Division, identify strategic areas where the Church can recapture jobs. How are you working to network between the churches, pastors, business leaders, and international leaders. How extensive is this network?*

**Pete:** Pretty extensive for a small department. One of the values that we have in our operations is reconnecting the generations around the subject of faith in the workplace. We have labeled three generations. One is the 19+ generation, which are tomorrow's work force; the 29+, which are today's work force; and the 49+ generation, which is yesterday's work force. Unfortunately, when we gather on Sundays, seldom do we encourage those three generations to talk with each other about major responsibilities like family and work. So one of the things we are trying to do is play ligament within congregations between generations.

We do the same thing when we help people design seminars and conferences. Our shop has helped design 125 conferences in the last three years. One of the things we push hard for is to have all three generations there, unified around a single topic such as what does faith mean in the medical field, or what do the Scriptures say about truth if [one is] in the information field and computerization? What do the Scriptures say about holding major government responsibilities whether it be local, state, federal, or international? So a lot of what we are doing is reconnecting generations around one of the most commonly held responsibilities, the workplace, the career, and all the skills and challenges that come within them.

**Dave:** *I have heard it said that unless we build for three generations, we are not building the way the Lord builds.*

**Pete:** One of the classic lay models we work off of is a sect in England where Wilberforce and several

others brought about a change in terms of the ugliness of slavery being approved by the government as well as the Church. It only took them 45 years to undo ugly, ugly slavery within the British Empire. Interestingly enough, the group was convened by a banker named Henry Thornton who called about eight men into his living room to pray together. About 45 years later it created a country in Africa, undid slavery, started an educational newspaper, and created new laws about women and children in labor abuses in their nation. I agree with you. We need to think long term. Kingdom people are not "now" people. They are "eternal" people. When we look at major change over a major period of time, that is the kind of change that lasts.

**Dave:** *Tell me a little about your Word and Life Study Bible. This is going to be a completely new and different format, something that [will] help Christians integrate their faith into all areas of life.*

**Pete:** In 1988, when I spoke on the ministry of the laity at Lausanne '88 in Manila, I field tested a small portion of Scripture done in a format that looks and feels more like *People Magazine* or *USA Today*. We produced 5,000 copies on a study of seven texts in Ephesians and distributed them to the 5,000 delegates there. We got an amazing response as to how contemporary it was in its communication philosophy. It was not an antiquated, leather covered, India quality paper that is in danger of becoming a holy relic. It was a relevant, contemporary use of the unchanging Word of God. Out of that, Thomas Nelson signed a team of 18 people who are practitioners in various areas of society, whether in business, government, urbanization, finance, health, racism, or the ministry of the laity — a theology of work, beginning with Genesis 1.

So there are a whole variety of theme editors who put together study pieces who help us understand things like, what was the fishing industry like in Jesus' day? How was tax collecting structured when Matthew converted? Then we formatted it in[to] this very contemporary kind of next

generation study Bible.

**Dave:** *[It] sounds like a breakthrough equal to what happened [with] Luther bringing the Scriptures into the language of the people. You are taking it now from old English or many different translations and putting it into the context of our crisis of cultural authority, which we are in right now.*

**Pete:** Yes, for example, one of the most playful and challenging things we have done is creative titling. In other words, each article or chart has to have a title. We even have a weather map on the storm on the Lake of Galilee. The titling builds the bridge between the felt need or the fears of the reader and the reality of the people in Scriptures.

**Dave:** *Talk to the pastors who are trying to make heads or tails of the layman being involved in the whole cell church, meta-church movement, and the open church movement, toward the participation of the members of the congregation. Do you think the era of spectator Christianity is over?*

**Pete:** No, but I think it will diminish. There will always be a set of our culture who need to have time to evaluate the claims of the Cross; what the Word of God is; [and] Who the Holy Spirit is. They will always be seen as spectators when in reality many of them are inquiring seekers. They need the time and space to wander around in the richness of grace. So in that sense I do not want to say it will be dead. It is a space we need to create. The change we are going through regarding a much higher mobilization of the Church is illustrated in our recent book, which reveals, unfortunately, that the laity have become convinced that their job in the Kingdom of God is to pray, pay, and obey— and, the author said, mostly to pay.

I think there is some aptness in that, and the saddest side is if the laity's job is to be passive sheep, we are going to kill our pastors. The whole load begins to land on the handful of professionals usually called clergy. It is not surprising to me that the current clergy ranks are coming unglued with the load that has been dumped on them, and it is

unfair and unbiblical for them to be seen as the primary pack mules to deliver the Kingdom of God into the culture.

I like an image or a metaphor, which I read recently about two ministries in the Body of Christ. One is the ministry of identity building, and that is pastor, teacher, clergy. They help the troops, the veterans, and newcomers in the community to go deeper in their identity within the community with "who am I in Christ?" They use their preaching, Bible study skills, and counseling to constantly help us sink new taproots into our identity in Christ. Parallel to that is the ministry of vitality. That is the 99 per cent of the Church who live and work in public places in families and communities. They deliver the vitality of their identity out into the culture. That is why we call them salt and light. I think of that image a lot when I am with pastors, praying for them and hurting for them. If we mobilize the laity, it will initially feel like a threat. Ultimately, it will not only be a relief, but a human partnership.

**Dave:** *Doesn't that sound good to the pastors to be able to spread the load around and equip those who are eager to do the ministry? You want to help leaders by identifying the strategic areas and then help them get involved with mentoring programs and apprenticeships. Do you have information for pastors on how they can work with you?*

**Pete:** Oh, absolutely! One way to connect with us is to get on the mailing list. The Strategic Careers Project is based in Madison, Wisconsin for the period of '93 and '94. Call (608) 274-8075 or IVF Market Place at (608) 274-4823. One of the main methods of communication is a quarterly newsletter called *Magnificent Work*. Right now there are over 150 books on the Christian book seller's list regarding Christianity in the workplace.

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## Jim Hayford -- *Contending for the Authentic*

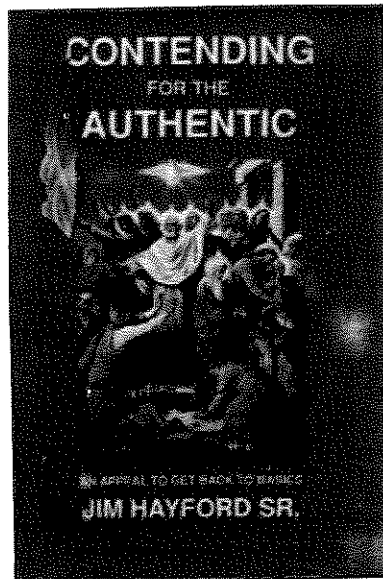
**Dave:** *Jim Hayford is a pastor who is concerned about authentic worship and preparing leaders for the small group ministry in the local church. He is the author of Contending for the Authentic. What motivated you to write the book?*

**Jim:** We've spent the last 2000 years complicating Christianity to the point that most people don't even understand what we are about. Today most churches are located on various corners and cul-de-sacs around the world, kind of chasing their tail talking to each other while the rest of the world goes to hell wondering what in the world it is we're all about! I think that if we can get back to the basic message of Jesus and the basic life-style that He taught his disciples to live, that Christianity suddenly becomes more authentic, more reproducible, more attractive to people who are bogged down in their problems and frustrations today. I don't think the answer is institutional Church. However, I'm not one for throwing away the institution. We have it; we're stuck with it. However I think we can see a lot of life breathed into it that makes it something unbelieving people can more readily understand.

**Dave:** *You have said, "The Church should be a force rather than a field." Could you explain?*

**Jim:** Yes, the premise of the book and, frankly, my life message, is that we need to get "back to the basics." The basic Church that the Bible presents is a Church not confined to a liturgy, real estate, or a set of by-laws, but it was a Church that was full of compassion for people all around it. The idea of a church being a "force rather than a field" is simply this: we need to see what we call church as being something that we're not bringing people to, but that we are taking to the people. That is, church isn't to be thought of as a corral or some kind of gathering place simply to collect people to do religious things. But the true Church of Jesus was a group of people who were constantly moving out into the market places of their lives, sharing their faith there. That is where

church needs to happen. I was turned on to this concept years ago when I listened to Richard Halverson, Chaplain to the U.S. Senate, talking to a group of seminarians about his congregation that he was pastoring in Washington, D.C. He started his talk by saying his church was not at a specific address, but that his church was delivering milk, delivering babies, practicing law, shopping for groceries, and that frankly, you couldn't put your finger on where that church was at any given time. That is the kind of church that can change a community.



**Dave:** *In Chapter 3 you talk about "bringing it all home." How?*

**Jim:** The root of the problem for authentic Christianity is the dichotomy between church dynamics and home dynamics -- never the twain shall meet. There's a certain way we act at church and another way we act at home. Is it any wonder that our children are confused and neighbors don't understand what we're about? The premise of my book and the heart of this book is to get these two things closer together. We should be acting the same way at church as at home. Home then becomes the redemptive center of our life. Not the church facility or Bible College or some kind of institution or programmatic approach to evangelism. Basically, this is

centered around three convictions.

- 1) The home and family become the central focus of our lives;
- 2) Home and family become the primary conservatory of Biblical values and;
- 3) home and family become the principal conveyor of the message of salvation.

**Dave:** *Is the ungodly separation of Church and State a result of the separation of the Church and home?*

**Jim:** You can't stop a church who understands its residence, that its place of business is the homes of America. That simply takes the Gospel into the very warp and woof, into every aspect of the community. You can stop a church by a snowstorm that's defined by an address. You can stop a church even by a government that is defined by an address. Anything can stop church from happening when it's perceived as a place rather than as a force of people, primarily in the home.

**Dave:** *You must have been misunderstood in the early stages. Is there risk involved? If so, what moved you to take the risk?*

**Jim:** What moved me to take the risk was the fact that I am personally convinced that small groups and releasing ministry into the homes was a Biblical mandate, and I simply had to obey it. But I recognize the cultural problems and the experiences that many of my brother and sister pastors have had with small groups and home groups. So I tried to analyze the problem and felt that it was essentially a relational problem. The problem was pastors were not developing the kind of intimacy with leaders of small groups in order for them to be rightly related. They were just kind of releasing ministry without any accountability. Small groups wonderfully serve the church and wonderfully complement the pastoral responsibilities if the principal leader takes the time to develop meaningful and accountable relationships with all the people that he is releasing to lead these groups. I spent time with leaders. The leaders were spending their time with the people.

**Dave:** *So you were multiplying and releasing leaders rather than adding to the leadership. Would you lay out the five characteristics that you look for in leadership, particularly in the home groups?*

**Jim:** It seems to me that when we look at the Scriptures which say that we are to "Lay hands on no man suddenly," that we need to understand that the Scriptures are telling us that there are men and women out there that have a lot of ministry in them and who ministry is going to be misdirected and can be counter productive unless Ephesians 4 leadership of the Church takes the time to build a meaningful relationship with these people. It has to be long enough and intimate enough that you understand the character of that person. There are some basic guidelines, and you're looking for people who have a servant's spirit, that are not politically motivated, that have integrity, who are not afraid of not only handling power but handling accountability in their relationships. The book spends quite a bit of time on how to recognize the qualities that are needed in leadership.

**Dave:** *Obviously our whole culture is seeing the fruit of individualism and independence. The Church needs to respond with community and interdependence. Do you think that's really only possible when small groups are going to be the heart of the Church rather than just another program?*

**Jim:** Well, I certainly think that the whole process of bringing a church into small groups is going to encourage the final death of this caricature of the maverick individual who, while being very acceptable and popular in our American culture, is not the true Christian person. Christianity isn't supposed to be lived out in a vacuum. Christianity is meant to be lived out in relationship. Relationship, when it's truly mature, is not just where people are talking at each other, but they are really caring about each other and making themselves vulnerable to one another. I don't see Christianity as private. I see it as very personal. It finds maximum effect when we live it out in process with a group of people.

**Dave:** *You talk about the privilege of praise in chapter five.*

**Jim:** There is no doubt in my mind that the principle reason God created all of us was to praise Him. There is no higher degree of personal fulfillment in human experience than the privilege of praising God. I think that praise is a way of life, but I do think that there are these high moments and times of praise when we join together as congregations and worship the Lord. We can achieve a high degree of freedom and spontaneity in corporate praise without getting crazy about it. I've always been one contending for authentic, free praise but being sure that we obey the Biblical mandate that all things would be done decently and in order. We do this so people do not become so caught up in their own ecstasy that they become insensitive to worshipers around them who perhaps are at a different point in their understanding of the whole thing. And so, I think, as spiritual leaders we have a great responsibility to bring people into high praise, but that it be something that is done with decorum and sensitivity that not only blesses the Lord, but blesses everybody participating in the service. I share in the book concisely what I believe are the principles that release praise in the congregation, whether it is large or small, but at the same time, not give people license just to do their own thing and call it worship.

**Dave:** *In the chapter dealing with discipleship you write of how the Body of Christ tends toward extremes. The pendulum swings from one extreme to another. Is it impossible to have equilibrium? Jesus gave us a short list of absolutes to obey.*

**Jim:** It is all part of this idea of "let's keep things simple!" We get so complicated on discipleship and other issues that people just get dizzy. So I kind of stuck my neck out and distilled the entire public ministry of Jesus into six mandates. If we could just spend the rest of our lives doing those six things, we'd see a lot of fruit and feel really good about ourselves.

**Dave:** *Church planting is such a hot topic. We are to fulfill the Great*

*Commission by the year 2000. Should we be seeing churches planting other churches in every city in the world?*

**Jim:** Absolutely. I think the way God wants His Church to grow is by healthy churches begetting healthy baby churches. Years ago the Holy Spirit scathed me with the insight about everything I was doing when I felt the Lord say to me, "Anything healthy is reproductive." It is certainly true in the human experience and I believe equally so in the Kingdom of God. If there are pastors listening to me today who consider their churches healthy churches, I say, "Reproduce it!" It is the true test of health, whether that church can reproduce itself in kind.

**Dave:** *You conclude the book with the story of the inn. You're a man who looks for Jesus in humble places. Share a bit on that allegory.*

**Jim:** I spent many of my 27 years in ministry serving among the affluent. I found that interesting since in my heart of hearts it has been a desire to see the Gospel preached and modeled to the masses of people, and I've always found myself frustrated in the midst of an "affluent ghetto." It is in the midst of that where I brought forth the message "No Room in the Inn" of the the first Christmas.

We need to make room in the inns of our lives for the unwanted, the different, and disenfranchised. I'm glad that message is in the book, and it has a whole lot to do with the character of my ministry today in Santa Barbara. I serve a community that has everything from the homeless to the elite and everything in between. I'm having a wonderful time these days making room in the inns of my life. This book is a dream come true. It encapsulates the first 25 years of my ministry, and I hope it will help others.

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## Tom Houston -- Lausanne Committee

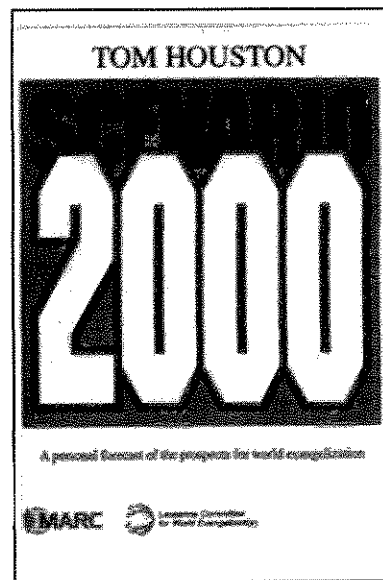
**Dave:** *We are discussing here what God is doing on the international scene. Who better to talk with than Tom Houston, the International Director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, located in Oxford, England. Tom has been in ministry for many years, serving as a pastor in Scotland, Kenya, and presently at the City Church in London. He has been director of the Bible Society, World Vision, and now with the Lausanne Committee. What framework do you see the Church in at this point in history?*

**Tom:** The Kingdom of Israel was coming to an end, and the people of God were going to be part of a bigger empire or series of empires. So at that point in Isaiah 8 the prophet was told by God to get his remnant together, a small company of disciples who were grouped around Isaiah, his wife, and family. Isaiah's remnant had a text of what he had been given by God. Then by their life models, the truths that were being forgotten in society as the whole prophesy in Isaiah indicates, kept interacting with this written text and became the community that continued to communicate the truth in difficult circumstances. From my historical perspective that was what gave rise to the synagogues in the exile, and they retained them when they came back to their home land. It was out of the synagogue that the local church grew in the New Testament Palestine, and it was out of the households that the Church grew in the Greco-Roman world. Basically, this has been the essential model for health for the Church all the way through. There will be different ways of doing it, but always you get the fact that the small community, living out the Life, gathered around the text, communicating to and with each other the truth that God wants to infect the whole society. Basically, this is my whole framework.

**Dave:** *Yes, you have the church scattered in the homes as a functioning community, and you have the church gathered in celebration weekly.*

**Tom:** Yes, but the story I will tell is

the story of the Messianic Crystal Church in Ethiopia over the last ten years. They were just 5,000 in membership when the government starting clamping down on them. At that time they had been meeting and doing church the usual way. But after that, they had to learn a different way to do church because they could never have more than seven people meeting at one time. They got themselves a map of the city and planned points at which they would meet, almost mirroring the local political committees. They have grown from five thousand to fifty thousand in ten years.



But the story of having to do church a different way in the small group is what is exciting to me! The video is available through the Eastern Mennonite Church.

**Dave:** *There seems to be something of a fresh move in Christianity where we are seeing the empowerment of the laity and the emphasis upon small group, house church type of meetings. What do you make of this? Is this just a fad, or is it something God has designed to help spread the Gospel around the world?*

**Tom:** I think David that it is something that is very much a part of God's plan, and the remarkable growth that has taken place over the last 25 to 30 years is so

distinctive that it has to be noticed. The growth has not come in massive campaigns, although these have taken place also. The growth has come through small bodies of Believers being faithful to witness and become the Church wherever they are by witnessing in whatever cultures God has placed them. I think that the fact that so much of that growth has come through the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement where the emphasis has been on the development of the gifts in the Body of Christ is not insignificant. It means that you get leaders raised up who are straight out of the context and not spoiled by being withdrawn from the context and being sent back into it from a theological college that distances itself from the people.

I believe it is that multiplication of the cells principle that has led to such phenomenal growth.

**Dave:** *As you scan over the world picture, Africa is in tremendous turmoil. Asia, you say, looks hopeful but is not without ominous signs as well. The church growth in China has been phenomenal, estimated now to be 63 million Believers. Latin America is experiencing explosive growth. Do you believe that we can reach the unreached people groups by the year 2000?*

**Tom:** The A.D. 2000 and Beyond movement is a child of Lausanne and launched itself in Manila in 1989. It has a life of its own and an organization of its own, but it is a picture of the whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world. It is more program oriented than the Lausanne Committee has ever been. Once we become a program, we become part of the problem rather than the answer. So we are delighted with the A.D. 2000 movement and the attempt to plant a church in every people and have everyone hear the Gospel by the end of the decade.

Looking out on the world, the principle I enunciated earlier is seen in many of these places you mentioned around the world.

In China the underground Church is exploding in a remarkable fashion. It is done by itinerant evangelists planting churches in very hostile environments. I am told that many of these evangelists are between the ages of 16 and 22, and that 60 or 70 percent of them are women. They have intensive training on the field, and they go out with very little of this world's goods to support them. They witness to Christ and put together Believers, teaching them in the truth and how to relate to one another with no support from government or society. They are growing in a phenomenal fashion. It is really the cohesion of the Body of Christ, with each member ministering to each other and having an impact because of the quality of their life on the world around them. This is why the Church has grown so remarkably.

The Chinese society has so few answers to the problems they face, especially through the Cultural Revolution. The Believers, as people of prayer, could pray about healing when there were no other facilities for healing, or they could stand beside people with psychological problems. This became an example of the life of God among the people. It has been infectious.

The same is true in other hostile situations. If you take Ethiopia, Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile-Mariam came to power in 1974. In 1982, he began to clamp down on some of the churches. One of them was the one established by the Mennonites from the United States, called the Messianic Christos Church. They had been doing church in the usual ways, but then the leaders were arrested, the churches were closed, and they were left out to dry. But a map of the city fell into their hands, and they decided to almost counterfeit the plan that the political party had by establishing small cells in the different parts of the city. They could not sing loudly because they would be discovered. The rule was that they would only meet with seven at a time in any given place. The people had to be prepared by studying the passage of Scripture beforehand and had their contributions ready. They had to learn a new way of doing church.

But, with the pressure of the hostile government over them, within ten years the five thousand had grown to fifty thousand. When the dictator was expelled and they were able to come together, everyone was absolutely astounded at the rate of growth.

But always it is this group of people modeling the life of Christ in community as well as individually that is seeing the growth. One can repeat this story in so many different parts of the world -- in Nepal, Latin America, Africa, etc.

*Dave: I think of Isaiah 26:9 that says when judgment comes, it teaches people righteousness. What would you say to the Church in America where we have an institutional, privatized, spectator, consumerism type of faith? Do we need a dose of trouble?*

**Tom:** We are probably going to get it whether we say we need it or not. I think the Church has to be the Church. I was interested in your referral to Isaiah. There are so many sermons preached on Isaiah's call in the sixth chapter. "I saw the Lord high and lifted up . . ." But they all stop at verse 8 and do not realize that God told them to go and give the message. Yet Isaiah was told that he would not be listened to. This was difficult, and the prophet asked how long it would be like that. God said, "Until the cities are ruined and the houses are empty and uninhabited, etc." Because he was going into such a ferocious situation, he had to have a message that was going to enable him and those around him to survive when everything around him was "breaking loose." I think the modern Church in the West, whether it is the former Marxist Eastern Europe or the capitalist Western Europe, is going to have to let the Church be the Church and let the situation get back to where a group of people embody in their lives and articulate in their speech the principles that are there in the written Word of God, or we will not make headway. Even if we get onto television and use the media extensively, if this is not backed up by living cells that potentially demonstrate the truth, with every member having a responsibility and discharging it, we are not going to

make much impact in the West either.

*Dave: In Jim Rutz's book, he and Gene Edwards took a fairly strong ax to some of the roots of the Church [where] Constantine merged the Church with the state and the Reformers tried to restore the priesthood of the Believers. [The Reformers accomplished a great deal] theologically, but practically it has not happened. This may cause some people concern. As you look at history, [did you find that] a remnant has always remained faithful to this covenant community, which functioned in the early Church but was hardly visible throughout history?*

**Tom:** I am not sure the real history is precisely as you just said or as Jim says. There is a way in which the Gospel gets inculturated in every period as one succeeds to another. The problem is when the Church becomes captive to the culture. I would have expected that when Constantine came [along], something had to happen on the scale on which it did. The problem was that the Church became captive to the culture, and, thus, it was not adaptable and in fact contradictory as history moved on. So we need a way of looking at things, [which] allows us to become bigger when the opportunity is there to become bigger but never lose the essence when we gain size. I believe what happened in the Medieval Church, what came with the benefits of Constantine's patronage [was that] they got the size but lost the essence. In the United States you still have about 40 percent of the population in church or synagogue once a week, and that is a tremendous section of the society. It is what you do within that that will count. In Europe the attendance at church is very much less, probably ten percent in Britain and less than that on the continent. But the essence of a Body of Believers modeling and articulating the truth in the context, whether they are the big lot or the small lot, is what is important. Dr. Cho has the largest church in the world, but he has broken it down into small groups that never grow beyond sixteen. So he has grown both bigger and smaller at the same time. I think it is the combination of these things at all

times, so the essence is always preserved.

**Dave:** *Wise counsel. Do you see the Holy Spirit beginning a move in England? I have heard that the house church movement is strong there. Within the traditional church structure are you beginning to implement some of the decentralization and the deprofessionalization of the ministry and see laymen beginning to [understand] that ministry is something they can take part in and not just watch?*

**Tom:** Oh I think that is undoubtedly true, but it is oversimplified to say that it is all happening there. London is a good example of what is happening. I left London in 1983 to live in Southern California for six years. There was a church in London called Kensington Temple, which had about six hundred people attending. It now has five thousand. That is megachurch for London, and there is nothing else quite like it. They have one hundred nationalities in that church, and a large portion of them are really hurting in terms of being unemployed and at the lower end of society. When I asked the pastor what the secret of it was, he gave me three things. First of all he said, "We had a run in on the whole matter of spiritual warfare. We had a conflict with some witches and wizards and fought the battle with them and won, with some of them getting converted." Thus, they really moved the battle into that area. Second, they found a way to handle the different ethnic nationalities that were in the area. So they are all together in celebration, but they have their own way of supporting each other in small groups. Third is the ministry of Win Louis who was the pastor at that time. No one in 1983 could have predicted the impact that they would have at that time.

Along with that, about five or six miles east of there has grown up the Ichthus Fellowship, which does not have the big congregation at all, but is multiplying cells. Now in some cases these are just groups of people under what you refer to as houses churches, but in other cases it is old traditional churches where new

people have come in and worked with the people there. New vitality has come into the old structures. Another place in London where this is happening is Holy Trinity Bromton, an Anglican church with a very large attendance. They are doing plants in other Anglican churches where the congregation is run down and ready to die. They send out a team of people to work in that situation with new principles manifesting the life of the Body and the participation of every member. That is growing also.

In addition to these, in the Baptist denomination there are also many signs of renewal. We are not setting the town on fire, nor are the numbers up to where they are affecting society at all, but it is certainly a better picture than it was ten or twenty years ago. So the Believers are on a roll, but still there are not as many churches growing as are declining, and that is a key number. We will only make an impact on society when the number of growing churches is more than the number declining. **We still have a very strong, clammy hand of traditionalism throttling the spiritual life out of many of our churches.**

**Dave:** *Obviously there is a relationship between our theology and our ecclesiology, the relationship to your world view, that is, how you perceive where God is taking the Church in history and how this affects our plans for the future.*

**Tom:** To me a world view is what you believe without thinking. Everybody has one, and our world view is formed basically from the family. When our families are in disorder, then the world view that comes out can be highly individualistic and personalized. It does not fit people for a world where we are all meant to be necessary for each other and have good relationships. So I believe that the main thing that needs to happen is for an alternative world view to be modeled in the families that are able to stay as Christian families, but also, in the churches as the family of God. Thus, the people, as in Isaiah's day, have a model of a different world view operating, not

just being articulated in the life of the Church. I believe that is where the tie-up is. A man named Emanuel Todd wrote a book called, *The Explanation of Ideology*, in which he points out that ideology is formed in the gut, and it is formed in the experience of family life. If we want to capture the potential of doing something about the world view in the world, we have to work at that early level where our youngest children are coming through and learning a different way of living than the way it goes on in church and family.

**Dave:** *Since Isaiah seems to be a vital part of this interview, I noticed in Isaiah 40 when God desires to comfort His people, He says, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough shall be made smooth." God is committed to bringing the Body of Christ to maturity into a place of humility to serve this generation. You mentioned something earlier about Isaiah 8. Why don't you close with that?*

**Tom:** It says there, "You, My disciples, are to guard and preserve the messages that God has given me. The Lord has hidden Himself from my people, but I trust Him and place my hope in Him. Here I am with the children whom the Lord has given me. The Lord Almighty whose throne is in Mount Zion sent us as living messages to the people of Isaiah." Just before that, God had said, "Do not join in with the schemes of the people, and do not be afraid of the things they fear. Remember that I, the Lord, Almighty am holy. I am the One you must fear, and because of my holiness, I am like a stone that people stumble over, a trap that will catch the people of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and many will stumble and fall and be crushed and be caught in a trap. But you are to answer them. Listen to what the Lord is teaching. Do not listen to the mediums. They will do no good." For more information:

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## Garland Hunt -- New Generation Ministries

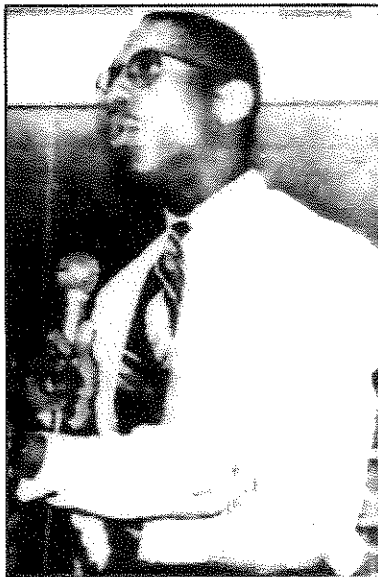
*Dave: Garland Hunt is the National Director for New Generation Ministries. It is exciting to see what God is doing, preparing His Church for a glorious time of impacting our society and becoming the family of God! When I think of New Generation Ministries, I think of a reconciliation ministry, which is so important at this time when our whole society seems to be fragmenting and disintegrating.*

*Garland graduated from Howard University and is an attorney and a member of the Georgia Bar Association. Since 1985, he has worked with Wellington Boone, helping to direct New Generation Ministry, a campus ministry on 50 campuses, mostly on the East Coast, discipling young African American men. They have a vision to see the Gospel impact the culture and to really begin to see the races brought together in our cities. Garland is also the associate pastor at Manna Christian Fellowship. He recently returned from a trip to South Africa and is involved in church planting.*

*We in America think that everything going on in the world is pretty much focused around us. I would imagine, if you take a trip to South Africa, your perspective will change.*

**Garland:** That's right! There is so much going on around the world today. I was in South Africa on my second trip to get a sense of what was going on [there]. Since our ministry is centered around reconciliation, I was asked to go and speak in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and several townships. I had a chance to talk with the youth [there who] are called the lost generation, ages 5 to 25. Because they do not have the presence of a father in the home and the mother is often working, these children are basically undisciplined and have not learned family structures. Also, they do not have the foundation of the Word of God in their lives. As a result of this, they

are very angry and violent. On the other hand, the country is divided into Afrikaans and English speaking, between the various Black tribes and colored, and they define people strictly by race. [Blacks are Afrikaans while colored people are Pakistanians, Indians, or Asians.] But when you look into and examine their hearts right now, they are desperate for the reality of the Word of God to apply to their situation. Thus, we were there to show them how the Bible can bring healing and reconciliation among the races. It has to do with



servanthood, repentance, and forgiveness. That is why we believe it has to start in the Church. There is a remnant in all the various denominations, especially among the Charismatics, who are waking up now and beginning to ask, "What have we done? Where have we gone wrong and sinned against God? What can we do to be a model for this nation and even the world for racial reconciliation?"

*Dave: You mentioned servanthood. This brings to mind when I was talking with Malcolm duPlessis from South Africa who works with Frontline Music and co-ordinates multi-culture, international worship. He was telling me that one*

*real plus for South Africa is that the Christians [there] have a deep sense of servanthood, and although it comes from the years of the Blacks working as literal servants, nevertheless God is using that attitude. Another thing he mentioned is that there is a special anointing on the church services because there is open participation in the worship. Having a worship leader is foreign to them. Everyone comes prepared to share with a song, a word, etc., which is more like a joyous family gathering instead of the traditional church service. Did you experience some of that?*

**Garland:** Yes, that is especially true in the townships and where there are strong tribal churches. This shows that there are areas where we as Americans think we are running ahead, but we are not. For example, areas such as hospitality or their deep appreciation for the Word of God, which overflow in their expressions could be compared to the appreciation we see being expressed by those in the Scriptures who were healed. There are expressions of appreciation and servanthood in the country that break the color barrier. Thus, we challenged those who have been oppressed and [who have] suffered through economics and racial barriers not to lose this sense of servanthood as they seek to pursue a change of circumstance.

The whole nation of South Africa has a greater focus of Christianity, than America, and what we challenged, both black and white, [was] to not throw "the baby out with the bathwater". The foundations of the Scriptures have to be the foundations for the nation that is being rebuilt because right now every philosophy you can imagine is trying to influence the future of South Africa. Thus, there needs to be a strong emphasis upon the Bible. That is the challenge, and it is a great time and hour for that nation.

**Dave:** *Before we leave South Africa, do you think it represents sort of a microcosm of the world that presents a message, which we need to be hearing here in the States?*

**Garland:** Very definitely. When I think of the recent revolt or rebellion in Los Angeles and the cases around the country dealing with what some police officers did, everyone is concerned about racial issues. But in this country the racial issues are more hidden, not as open and obvious as they are in South Africa. Because of that, the Church [in America] has not been forced to come to grips with the issues. In South Africa, the Church has to deal with it, or it might as well resign from being a church. Unless the Church becomes politically and socially relevant, the people will not even be open to the Gospel. Thus, the Church has to be open to see what sin we have committed in this country. To that degree, the Church in South Africa is much further ahead than we are as far as acknowledging sin and dealing with it.

**Dave:** *God has a plan, but it has to begin in humility. I know [that] in some cities in our nation, black and white leaders are gathering together, and, particularly, white leaders are falling on their faces, asking [for] forgiveness for some of the things that have gone on in the past. What are some areas of hope? Do you see reconciliation being led by the Church? It seems that the Church lost out in the 60's and allowed the secularists to lead in this area. Do you see a great opportunity for the Church to lead in the 90's and beyond and bring racial healing in our cities?*

**Garland:** Yes, and I believe it is tied in to acknowledging and recognizing what has taken place up until now. If I could go back beyond even the 60's, the fact is that some of the major denominations in our nation have their roots in the prejudices and racism that existed in slavery. Even when you go back to the founding of the nation, many of the founders ignored or defended slavery

and, because of the Church, at that point did not feel it was an issue. It was going to be addressed as a full theological stand. Thus, over the years the same spirit of prejudice and racism has been multiplied and increased within the Church itself.

As an example, the Assembly of God is a Church that has blessed the whole world. Its foundations were at Azusa Street with people like Seymore and Mason, who was the founder of the Church of God in Christ, primarily a Black denomination. [However], many Whites were tied in with the work of God at Azusa and were anointed and had hands laid on by Mason. They broke the color barrier. People of all races found themselves on their faces before the Living God, and many of us today are as a result of what happened there. But because of the pressure of the day, the racial divisions and all, when we came back into society, we moved back into our alienated places.

So you had the Assemblies of God going one way and the Church of God in Christ another way. The same happened with other denominations. Richard Allen started with the Methodist Church but had to start the AME, [the African Methodist Episcopal Church]. Thus, in the 90's, we have to look back and ask, "Where have we fallen short?" We have sinned as a people. I am talking about the Church and how if we are going to affect society, we have to recognize and deal with our sin. It is not that the heathen in the world have sinned, but we have contributed as a denomination or people and must say to God that we are sorry. That is the beginning point of reconciliation.

**Dave:** *And it is beginning to happen. It is something that is welling up in the hearts of many Believers. The Gospel is color blind, and we need to throw off the traditions of men, which have bogged us down. Take a moment and tell us about New Generation Ministries?*

**Garland:** In Second Corinthians,

verses 14 through 21, it speaks of how God has given us a ministry of reconciliation as well as the word of reconciliation. It shows how Christ Jesus reconciled us to the Father and that in that reconciliation, we have all been reconciled and given the ministry of reconciliation. That means there is a level of death that must come to our own agenda, even death to our own race, culture, and background so that we want Christ first. In Him there is no Jew, Greek, or barbarian, no slave or free man, but [Christ] is first. The reality of that has to be targeted. Although the Apostle Paul was a Hebrew and understood Hebrew traditions, he found [that] he was anointed and was one who targeted the Gentiles.

We feel that God has given us the grace to preach to all, but especially to target the black community because there needs to be a revival and [a] stirring so the heart can be a heart [of] peace and reconciliation. [Thus], on the college campuses, you will find tomorrow's leaders. Even the leaders of [the] Church are going to come right out of these college campuses.

We have found that black colleges [and] many universities founded during the days of Reconstruction, such as Norfolk State or Morehouse, [were] historic black schools to educate black preachers, teachers, and educators. Plus there are the other institutions such as the University of Virginia, Princeton University, Yale, and others where we have targeted the black students to bring them to a real relationship with Christ, which says to them you have to die to race.

Our message is very challenging, for we are challenging them on the thing they have been the most proud about. If you come to Christ, it is with a cause, and the cause is literally to give your life and all you have to Him because He gave His all to you.

We are training these leaders, and they are fired up to affect their generation. We are not giving them

a watered down Gospel, so they are not watered down leaders. We have leadership training conferences where they have three weeks of intensive training in things like a Biblical Worldview and understanding what the Bible has to say about law and government, politics, economics, and education. Also, we challenge them in their own spiritual commitment to God. Then we are sending them out into their areas of influence. Many are pastors and teachers. Others will establish businesses or be going into communities to run for political offices. We want them to be able to train others who will be able to live their lives based on the foundation of the Word of Truth.

**Dave:** *When we come into the Kingdom of God, we lay down our ethnicity and become a new ethnic group. That is not to say that we all have to blend together and look like cookie-cut patterns. We can keep our uniqueness, but we really are a new ethnos. Thus, the only message that will bring reconciliation is one that applies God's truth to all areas of life.*

**Garland:** Yes, and it reminds me of the Scripture taken out of First Peter 2:9. "We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and peculiar people who should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into the marvelous light, who in times past were not a people but are now the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy, but who have now obtained mercy." The ethnos in the Scriptures talked about the heathen. When you break ethnos down, it means nations or the people outside those people called to be the people of God, the children of Israel. But when we come into Christ, we become one people because we literally have one Father. Acts 17:26 says, "And has made of one blood, all nations of men who dwell on the face of the earth and has determined the time before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." So you can see us as clearly one blood in Him. But we have to target these guys to wake

them out of their stupor and let them know that neither the black blood nor the white blood nor their own culture is going to save them. Only Christ Jesus is their deliverance.

**Dave:** *At the very bottom of society is the rebuilding of individuals and families. The African American family has been downtrodden and has had a hard time seeing itself as being victorious. That is one reason the Gospel has spread through the black community, because it gives people hope for the future. I think what God is trying to say is, "Look, that hope does not have to be delayed into the future." We, as the Body of Christ, can begin to experience something of Christian community, lifestyle, and of everyone being involved in ministry. I know you are committed to church planting. Why don't you tell us what you see as you look down the road at the future of the Church? Do you see men, as we subtitled the series, as "lions in the pews" ? Do you see men who have been vegetating in the pews because they felt like they did not have any training? Do you see that changing for the better?*

**Garland:** It has to change if the Church is going to affect the world. We have to stop this top-down mentality. As Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, "I would rather teach you as if you are spiritual, but you are really carnal and babes." He goes on [to say], "Apollos watered, I watered, but God gave the increase." Then Paul points out that every man will receive his reward according to his own labor, and we are laborers together. Literally that is what is happening. We are God's husbandry to bring forth the fulfillment of God's destiny. Each one of us has a personal destiny. God calls us to stir up those gifts, to prophesy over people and their lives, and to recognize their gifts and release those people into their ministry.

Therefore, one of the things we see is that we need to launch out in church planting. One of the major problems we have with our megachurch

mentality is that [we think that] one big church is sufficient for a whole city, but in reality that could be 15 churches, not to mention breaking that down into cell groups. So we have established leadership teams on the campuses and fellowship groups in the dorms of pray and fellowship, and then we have larger meetings on the campuses. We are also planting churches in the same areas such as Charlotte and Williamsburg, Virginia, and Raleigh, North Carolina. All this is done with the goal of developing them and sending them out to minister in their gifts. To do this, we have to break the mentality that restricts ministry within the four walls of the church. That is why our ministry is on the campus, raising up groups right on the campus.

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## Frank Kaleb Jansen -- Target Earth Strategy

**Dave:** *In this segment we are going to discuss some emerging trends. It is important these days to have "the big picture." The Apostle Paul said, "We see through a glass darkly now." Thus, we need to hear from our brethren who have traveled the world, who have spent time in other countries, who can put what is going on in America into some kind of perspective. Frank Caleb Jansen, is just a man who can do that. He was a naval officer and is a Norwegian. He is a successful businessman trained in economics and marketing and has been involved with television and publishing in Norway. Here in the States in Colorado Springs, he directs several ministries. One is Adopt-a-People, Clearinghouse which serves 80 missionary organizations. He is the president of Bibles for All. He is the author of the important book, Target Earth, which was commissioned by Youth With a Mission. He has served the Church in a tremendous way to give leaders a helicopter view over the entire battlefield, the whole globe to see exactly where we are in this point of history. Frank also leads a ministry Passports to the World, helping children and helping plug in people in the West with needy families and individuals throughout the world.*

*Frank, recently you conducted a consultation in Colorado Springs with hundreds of leaders, discussing the state of the Church. You came up with some fifteen major trends that you see emerging at this point of the 1990's, moving into the 21st century. Give us an overview of changing trends in the Church. Tell us what your perspective is on the Reformation in the modern Church.*

**Frank:** I don't know how far we have come into this Reformation, this rediscovering the Word of God. It certainly is emerging. For a period of years, the Church has had an inferiority complex. In a way, modern man has thought that science was the truth. The Church has bent down. We have said that science and the Church are like ships passing in the night. We live with this kind of schizophrenic view that, "Yes, the Bible was true

regarding my salvation but, regarding everything else in society, the Bible has nothing to say because we lost all the battles with science, starting with the Renaissance and with Galileo." And finally we ended up at the end of the 20th century with some theologians who say, "God is dead." So I see an emerging of a new worldview, and in that worldview it is the rediscovery of the Bible as being the truth.

**Dave:** *You talk about the global demographics. If we could go out into a space craft and look down at the planet, you see demographics*



*changing from North to South. You see growth in Muslims and Hindus. You said the population is going to zoom up to 9 billion by the first part of the 21st century.*

**Frank:** You can look at one generation ahead, and when you look at global demographics -- just the time most of us have been living from the 50's to the year 2020 -- you will see a change. In the 50's there was one person living in the North on the industrialized world for every two persons in the South. By the end of this period, actually if you are in my generation, there will be one living in the North for every six or close to seven living in the South. Of course that is a major change because the South is a poor part of the world. So we will see about two and a half

to three billion poor people. That means people who don't know what they will eat tomorrow. Of course in these parts of the world, we are talking about major blocs of Muslims and Hindus. So it would be a tremendous growth of at least nominal or biological Muslims and biological Hindus. It hasn't happened before in world history, and it will not happen again. It's kind of this S curve of rising demographics. That's kind of the mother of all the problems or possibilities.

**Dave:** *While many people feel that we are coming into a time of great tribulation here in America, others are looking to the Church -- as our civil government begins to collapse in its ability to fund all this. There are going to be tremendous opportunities for this great mass of people and opportunities for the Gospel, but we have to seize that moment, don't we?*

**Frank:** Oh yes, when you go back and listen to Jesus, He says He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. Of course He has set the captives free. When you look into Church history, the Gospel has never been promoted by the wealthy and the rich. It is in the times of tribulation and poverty. Every mission or evangelistic, revival movement that I know about emerged through the poor. It is no blessing to be poor. I'm not lifting up the poor as some kind of sanctified group of people because it is a terrible tragedy to not know what you are going to eat tomorrow. But it is a great opening for the Gospel.

And when you talk about 2 1/2 to 3 billion poor, we have to learn how to communicate with the poor. The way I view it is that our Western wealth, whether we think it is poor or not or heavily in debt here in America, the Gospel will be propagated. It will be brought by poor people to poor people because wealth is such a noisy thing to be around. Wealth, when it comes to poor places, is so misunderstood. The best of intentions from our Western missionaries, for instance, can be misunderstood when we are there and have everything. Our things

distort the message that we have.

So I believe we will see a growth of the Church by poor people taking the Gospel to poor people. Of course it is hard for an American or a Norwegian like I am to walk barefoot and live in Calcutta in a city and so on. I don't think we can handle that. But we have to find our role in the future world missionary organization.

*Dave: It appears that there is something of a re-awakening, a Renaissance in the Church of the cultural implications of Christ's present rule and that we are to bring and demonstrate His Kingdom on earth in very tangible ways. And one of those ways you point out with your background in economics is obviously through the better stewarding of the resources that we have. You said, "A changing worldview will be one of the trends from anthropocentric, geocentric, God-centered." Are you saying that we are going to move away from an anthropocentric, (man-centered)?*

**Frank:** Definitely so. The secular humanistic worldview has already collapsed. Most Christians are not aware of it, so they still battle secular humanism. While it has a fatal wound, it has been killed by the development of the 20th century where almost everything that we had hoped for as a human race rose with great pride. It really started in the Renaissance, where man became the center of all things and God was moved to the parifary. And that moved to [the idea that] science would solve all problems and that man, through science, would create paradise on earth. When one thinks about it, with all the wars and collapses, it is definitely clear to everyone that paradise on earth will not take place ever. So to me, my worldview changed in the vocation in which I was at that time, the 5th of October, 1957. It happened kind of overnight. I was then in the military, sitting watch over Russian submarines out in the North Atlantic. Suddenly we heard this "beep, beep, beep" from the first Sputnik. Mind you, that was a shock for us in the military! We realized that somebody had moved into space, and whoever could conquer space could conquer the whole earth.

It changed rapidly.

But at first that little Sputnik didn't do anything but say, "Beep beep!" It didn't photograph or do anything. But that opened up the whole area of seeing the world from outside. The borderless world, a different kind of view on the world itself. As you know, the space industry has developed. We had discovered that we are alone in the big universe of 17 million, billion stars without the possibility of life. So we are the only one globe, so to say, in the whole vast, empty room that has life. Of course, that has been the main little course.

You think about an avalanche, a snow avalanche. It starts moving with a snowflake here and there and two and three and ten and a hundred and thousands. Then the whole avalanche comes down. It starts with a small thing. The changing of the worldview that has taken place in the last years started in October 5, 1957. Of course you can go back before that and see what leads up to it. But that is when it was first visible to me. This has created a geocentric trend so that in the New Age movements and other movements man has become very centered on saving the earth. The earth must be saved. The earth is the living being. New Age religion has promoted the earth to a goddess. And that is the spiritual battle of our time because when the anthropocentric worldview is collapsing and has collapsed, then the devil will create a new lie, which is as Paul writes in Romans 1, "Exchanging the truth with the lie and we are starting to worship the creature instead of the Creator."

Of course, worshipping man was wrong and worshipping another part of the created, the earth, is equally wrong. It is an equal lie. This changing of worldview, when it takes place in history, takes place in a very short time, mainly in one generation, and then it is put in concrete and prevails for hundreds of years. So we live in a very crucial time. My question is, "Will the Church be able to conquer this spiritual battle and come out victoriously and place a worldview that is God-sent, God-honoring, a Biblical worldview?" That is the

greatest of all challenges all the last 700 years to the Church. The way we solve this in our generation will have an impact for at least 200 years.

*Dave: When we talk about the changing role of the Church, many people are talking about spectator Christianity, the artificial division of clergy and laity where we put one man on a pedestal like a superstar. Humanism, is collapsing within the Church. You are working on developing a wholistic approach to the Christian community there in Colorado Springs, a Target Earth University. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your observation in the Western Church? What is going to replace the focus on superstar Christianity? What do you see coming to replace that?*

**Frank:** In the last 150 years or so, the Church was concentrating very heavily on the coming event of the return of Christ. To be sanctified and holy meant to be separate from the world. We gave away our influence in education and politics and business and you name it. Our way of life we just gave over because to be a true Christian meant to be focusing on Christ's imminent return. Don't get dirt on your hands by working. And of course that has led to the things we have see in South Central Los Angeles and to the disintegration of our inner cities and the anti-Christian education, so to say, going from primary school all the way through college. Christian influence is not there as salt and light in the arenas of life that shape the way we think and mold our minds. I believe that the one thing we will see happening in our time is that the Church will understand the great mistake to abandon the arenas of life. I believe the Church will be back there. It will be churches without walls to society so to say, where we go in to every arena of life, not to take over and rule, but to be salt and light.

You know, in a totally darkened room if you take a candle, it changes the atmosphere of the room immediately. And even a few grains of salt in a glass of water change the taste of the water. I am not talking about being a majority rule. I don't believe we will ever be that. But if

we, as Bible believing Christians, will take the persecution of this to stand on the truths in the arenas of life that totally mold the thinking of society, we can influence, and we can change society and see laws based on Biblical principles. After all, the reason why Jesus came to this earth, when I ask people, "Why did Jesus come," they get bewildered and say, "Well, He came to save me."

In the most critical moment in Jesus' life there before Pilate, when it was a matter of life and death, He said, "For this reason I was born. For this reason I came into the world to bear witness about the truth." If we recapture that reason for Jesus' coming, to bring truth. Fortunately He also brought grace. So truth really kills without grace. As Christians we have to stand up and believe that the Bible is the truth for every arena of life. And when we really discover that, that is when the Reformation will come. So that is what we are really trying to do with this school that we are trying to build here called *Target Earth*.

We are trying to establish a Biblical worldview on every arena of life, not only from an academic point, but we want to live it out and create communities, not a cult commune, but a community totally open to the entire earth that can be duplicated all over the place. We will go into all things. Unfortunately as Christians in so many arenas of life, we need to do some research.

Right now, when we look upon the world, New Agers are doing this research on how to live on the land, how to solve inner city problems. We have been sidelined in this. So we have a lot to do.

**Dave:** *I think of Caleb of the Old Testament who went in to spy out the land and came back and said, "We can take these folks. We can do it because God is on our side."*

*You mentioned in your 15 Trends, no. 11, that there are changes in the populace movement, at the grassroots level with no political profit or visionary in sight. You give examples of Poland and Eastern Europe and China, etc. Isn't what is needed right now a vision to be put*

*forth from the leadership that we can recapture the areas we have lost, that we can begin to see the Scripture applied to all areas of life, and we can begin to prepare the next generation for a much more intensive and well-rounded approach to the faith?*

**Frank:** Yes, that is true. There is a danger related to it of course because when these changes take place, it is like a spring flood, and everything is destroyed. Right now, during the last years, there has been no political leadership. The people themselves have taken the rights in their own hands and said, "We want democracies."

*We only had thirteen democracies at the turn of the century, then some more [later]. But after World War II, we were back to thirteen. Slowly it developed into thirty democracies during the 70's, and suddenly it doubled until in the 80's we had sixty. Now, in the 90's, fifty percent of the world lives in a democracy. In science they call something like this "reaching critical mass." When this happens, it takes on a life of its own. Therefore, we don't have a movement driven by leadership today. Every ethnic group is getting its independence so that now we have 219 states in the world. Mid-century it was sixty-five. This national movement has no leader. Therefore, the world will look for a leader because people look for leaders. So it could emerge as a despot, anti-Christ. But also it is a great opportunity for the Church to stand up and be a leader of this development.*

Each of these 15 trends I am talking about has a disaster built into it or a great opportunity for the Church. I personally like to focus on the opportunities.

**Dave:** *I think people want to hear that. Deuteronomy 18, says, "Here are the blessings if you do all these things." Why don't you speak to the deep need in our culture for relationships and covenant community and the part that you envision those could play as we move into the 21st century?*

**Frank:** Oh yes, we have developed societies built upon compartments

and specialties. The computer man does not know what the artist is doing or the artist, the medical person. They may all speak English, but they put different meanings to the words they use. This is tragic! I believe we have to think wholistically, that we integrate things because we must see how all elements of life interact and interrelate. When one member of the Body suffers, we all suffer. American society was founded on one central idea, the Bible as one unifying thought. But, when that is taken away and society is compartmentalized, then it breaks down, and we begin to fight one another.

We have been praying that the Lord would bring more laborers into the field, not more pastors, but laborers from all parts of the Body of Christ. For example, the pastor can use the media to get his message out, but he can't speak to the journalists or media people. It takes a Christian in the media to speak to the other media people. The same goes for banking, business, or any area of life.

I believe that we will see the laity arising to play an important role in the Church. This will not replace the role of the pastor but will be doing other things. The pastor will still have his role, but there are many people in the congregation who know how to minister in many other areas of life that [the pastor] cannot. This will release the power of the Lord in all those who want to serve the Lord.

**Dave:** *Release is a key word. You talk about change happening at a greater speed than any politician or planner has anticipated. You see an onslaught against all the sanctity of life issues focused around the family.*

*The limits of basic resources will demand new rules as the basis of use. You say that two percent of what is known today will be known in the year 2010, that is, that knowledge is going to increase so quickly, it will be hard to keep up.*

**Frank:** In some arenas of life, knowledge doubles every two years. Others, every three years. So you can understand that if you have your Ph.D. now, it will be worth only 2% in 2010 if you do not keep up. This is

due to the computers and the media. Advances are coming that will enable you to have your own private satellite channel as you now have your private phone line, which will give you access to every library in the world with whatever you want to know at your finger tips. This will mean an increasing gap between those who have access to knowledge and those who do not. This tremendous growth of knowledge, some will read as a sign of the last days, and this is true, compared to what our grandfathers knew.

*Dave: I am reminded that knowledge is important, but wisdom is what God is most interested in, applying knowledge to the world around us. I want to take the few minutes we have left and devote it to women. You say that women will come to power in the world as well as in the Church. Should the Church lead the way in this?*

**Frank:** Here I have to be very careful. As a friend of mine likes to say, "I hope when I die, they will say I was a good man. But if they can't say that, I hope they will say I was a man." When you look out into the average congregation, 65% are women. A very caring part of the Church, especially in prayer, are women. But now more and more, women live on average ten years longer than men so there will be more of them in the Church. Of those over sixty years of age, there will be two women for every man. And of course, they will inherit their husbands' assets. Thus, they will be the wealthy part of our society and will let their voice be heard. They came up through the '60s and '70s, and they will demand power. They have power because of their numbers and wealth. So what will that do to the Church? I see that they will demand more leadership, and pastors who want to stay in business will have to bend to that. Whether it is Biblical or not, I will not speak to that. So in the industrial world, I see a great role for women, and they will naturally cater to their needs. But there is a different trend in places like China where baby girls are killed because they cost too much. I predict that the next vice-president in the U.S.A. will be a woman, and four years later a woman will be president.

With the coming of the information age, the strength of man is no longer as important, and women are faster on key boards and can compete with men in vocal things.

*Dave: Some ominous trends you see, besides the health and medical crisis, are the debt, energy, and water crises and an emerging famine in many parts of the world. You believe this is a call to the Church to mobilize and prepare. What is your call to the Church for the next generation?*

**Frank:** The main challenge before the Church is ethical. Africa for example is a big black hole where half the population is infected with AIDS, but AIDS is not the worst thing. Because of the collapse of the economy, all other dread diseases are breaking out. And the West is turning away from Africa. We cannot raise money for a pigmy ministry there. People do not want to hear about it. Soon Africa will be quarantined. So will the Church go along with the world and just forget about 700 million Africans? Or are we willing to go against the world and go with the poor? If you are far away from the poor, you are really far away from Jesus.

I hope that the Church will see this greatest of all opportunities throughout history to be with the poor and the downtrodden, the growing 7 billion people in the poor part of the world, that we will spend the money there.

Unfortunately, now we are spending 95% of the money on 6% of the world's population here at home. I see this as a real threat to the real Church morale because Jesus will be among those poor and downtrodden, and I hope we will be there also.

*Dave: Many people are critical of the way the Western world approaches Western missions, especially as it relates to buildings and all the billions we have put into the buildings.*

**Frank:** I sigh because I have gone to megachurches and have been greatly blessed. However, I have also seen individuals who have built great buildings around themselves. What will happen when such leaders fall or fail? In the 80's, we had 300,000

evangelical churches, most with less than 100 members.

If the trend goes on with the megachurch, we will lose half of those churches, but the main church will not have grown. It will just transfer members. This is not church growth. I think that when God is through with His discipleship, we will end up with many small churches that do the real work of God in the neighborhoods. We will end up with mostly small churches, which is contrary to the trends. But we will also have some big churches that make entertainment. The latter is not what I look upon as true Christianity. I pray that we will rediscover our role in our neighborhood so we will end up with small fellowships.

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## Doug Jarrard and Lynn Reddick—The 'Open' Cell Church

**Dave:** *Two pastor/leaders in the Atlanta area are coming from differing backgrounds and yet are converging on a similar interest of seeing the Church arise to find their place of ministry.*

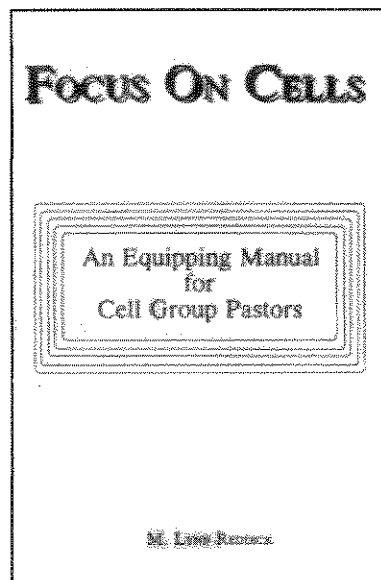
*Lynn Reddick is a Southern Baptist pastor who has been ministering for 30 some years. He has been in the Atlanta area since 1985 with In Focus Ministry. Over that period of time, Lynn has seen In Focus Ministry begin a process of multiplication and planting sister or daughter churches in the Atlanta area. He has a resource entitled Focus on Cells: An Equipping Manual for Cell Group Pastors.*

*Doug Jarrard is from Vision Christian Center and Campus, an interdenominational Full gospel Church, located in Lawrenceville, outside of the Atlanta area. Doug has been in ministry 16 years and has a vision of providing a training for both lay leaders and those who want to move into full-time ministry. He has a campus as well as the church itself and serves as the senior pastor as well as the president of the university.*

*The reason I wanted you both together is that I know some exciting things have spawned in your relationship together. Lynn, over the last few years you have been going through a process of discovery and re-orienting the paradigm of the Church to focus around cell groups. Dr. Ralph Neighbour's work has been of tremendous influence. You have this resource in which you discuss how to go back into boot camp and see cell church leadership raised up.*

*Doug's perspective has been more focusing around the emphasis that Jim Rutz brings to the open church, of seeing this time of celebration on Sunday morning be something that is open for participation fully by all the people in the Church. So you two are now beginning to work together. Tell us about how you are able to cross-pollinate and see the cell group and the open celebration time on Sunday converging. The two are working hand-in-glove.*

**Doug:** *I'll tell you what excites me in a brief statement. I watched Lynn do his seminar on cell group structure and cell group training. I saw, and I am kind of assuming that he realized the same thing, that much of what had been going on in cell groups that he had been experiencing was a small version of an open church within his own cell group structure. It was really neat for me to see it in his eyes and in his voice and in fact even in his curriculum. He's supplemented some of the open church philosophy to say, "We can wed the two." It's hard to say where one stops and where one starts when*



*you look at it from our perspective because they just seem to be so tightly integrated.*

**Lynn:** *Some of our cell group models are open church group models without any structure. Then when we come together for a Sunday celebration, we have a period of time when that truly is open church. So we see that the cell and open church models really do integrate.*

**Dave:** *You discuss in this book that the cell church makes some major divergences, as Ralph Neighbour outlines in his book, Where Do We Go From Here? From seeing the Church primarily in buildings to seeing it in homes; seeing small intimate groups rather than larger impersonal groups; seeing daily*

*fellowship rather than a weekly fellowship. These are some of the kinds of things that represent not just another program the Church adds but something that is seeing the heart of the Church based in the home, rather than seeing the heart of the Church based in a building once a week. How did you, Lynn, come to this discovery that you were, after "umpteen" years of ministry, not really following the model that Jesus set up? A lot of people talk about the early Church model of revivals that have gone on throughout the last few hundred years, but you point out the five-fold ministry that Jesus explained in Luke 4:18 was really the proper model.*

**Lynn:** *I had pastored two mega-churches in my first 23 years of ministry. I just knew that was not where the action was. People were not being equipped. I hate the word lay people, but the people in the congregation were not being equipped and released. They kept looking to the staff to do it. The staff was burning out right and left. The average Southern Baptist youth pastor stays at a church eleven months. The average pastor stays about 18 months. So in 1985 I left the traditional church in Augusta and started the first in-focus church. I began to get on this thing of the cell model. I knew there had to be a better way than what I had been doing for 23 years. And so it drove me to look across the country at what was working. I knew of very few cell churches in 1985. And I finally connected with Dr. John Herston in Texas and spent a week with him. I said, "This is it!" I took that and over the years have modified the Cho/Herston model. Actually my model is a good bit different from Ralph Neighbour's. In fact, he often uses mine as another way to do it. There are a couple or three ways to do cell groups and probably a hundred ways not to do them. So we just discovered over the years some ways that work. As we began to train people to lead cell groups in homes and equip them and release them, all of a sudden we realized the ministry of Jesus is happening through the lives of people in the congregation. And then we would*



bring our cell groups together for Sunday morning celebration. God had been doing so much during the week in the cell groups when we came together on Sunday morning, we had something to celebrate! That was the difference. The focus was upon the daily activities of the cell members in the individual cell, and they built family and a sense of being together. It made all the difference in the world!

*Dave: In your resource entitled Focus on Cells, you say that for the first 200 or 300 years, the basic unit of the church was seen as the small house or cell. Probably house or cell would be interchangeable. When you think of a cell, you think of it being part of a whole body, but it is connected to all the other cells. There's not an independence that we see one church on one street corner and another on another. We can't see any connectedness between those churches or between the people in what they do for the other six days. So there's that disconnection not only between people but also between churches.*

*Doug, your perspective when you birthed Vision Christian Center, you obviously began with a vision. The Scripture says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Pastor Tommy Barnett goes on to say, "Where there are no people, the vision perishes." Maybe this is the problem we are facing, that the people, by and large, in American Christianity feel like outsiders looking in at ministry rather than seeing what the Bible has to say, that every man ought to be involved in ministry. It appears to me from your Vision Christian University that you believe everybody who has the desire should be given the equipment so they can go out and do the ministry for themselves.*

*Doug: In answering that, can I take a couple of steps back and make you aware of something? A lot of us have forgotten. We read a lot and hear a lot about the megachurch. We hear about the meta-church, which is the church that's in a transitional change. We hear about the cell church. But there's another church that's out there. It's called the Pauline church. That's kind of the name I have coined. It's with*

reference to Apostle Paul's conversion. Briefly, he was on the road doing his thing, and all of a sudden God intervened into his life. God said, "Paul, I'm going to turn you upside down and inside out and make you into a new thing. I want you to do this My way." It came upon him from a direct providence of the Lord.

There are a lot of churches out there that have been introduced to these principles over the last ten or fifteen years, even going back to the late '70s, almost twenty years ago. These churches were birthed almost as a direct will of the Lord through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Men and women rose up around the country where they didn't have the confines of the organized church to tell them, "You cannot do this." All they had was this knowledge that this was right and this was true and "I'm supposed to be ministering this way" in their heart. So they stepped out. They are scattered throughout the country. These Pauline churches have been actively involved in open church where the people are not the spectators but participators. Also in cell group, which is maybe not called that, it's just called equipping the people to trust the Holy Spirit and then individually step out, that's how I came into this thing.

I had been raised in fundamental Christianity. But back in the early days of my ministry, I had such an awesome personal conversion, such a transitional zeal on my life, that everything, a tree, a fire hydrant, a dog, as long as it was in the path, it needed to hear about the gospel. But I found a strange thing. Most of the churches around wouldn't come and spit on me if I caught on fire because I didn't come through their traditions.

I didn't come through their programs. So it was really hard. I was forced to go into a home. I submitted myself to Godly men, I sought them out because I didn't want to become a Lone Ranger. But I was forced to go home. I'm going back to the mid-'70s. It was in that home environment that I really saw the nurturing. It got rooted in me, and I saw the nurturing had almost a co-equal ability to empower a believer as well as the dynamics of the Word. There was real hand-in-hand between that

nurturing spirit that was in the home. And that's how I came in, and I started in the home. I converted the home into a church. Then it just kind of spawned from there. Through the years I have kept in touch with the kind of ministries that grew up this way. They are still reproducing themselves in the same cycle. They still have this nurturing concept within the Body, this same empowering in the Body. Not too many of them have made the mistake of becoming the superstar. We know the tragedy that happens there because now we've become an icon on the pulpit, and our job is to undergird the sheep and to lift them up and gird them up instead of dominating and controlling their lives. But I just wanted to say that, as well as the organized church, which many men have come out of, whatever denomination it might be, as well as the megachurch and the meta-church, there are in the world what I call Pauline churches that have been actively doing cell group and open church principles for many, many years. It's sort of like a man who all of a sudden kicks over a rock and finds gold, and he almost feels like that nugget just fell out of the sky ten minutes ago. But really it's been there all along. That's what I want you to know about the Pauline church. There has been a segment that has been here. I know the reason why. The Bible tells us that there is no private interpretation of Scripture or basically no new thing. There are rediscovered truths. And so these segments of these churches scattered around the world have been actually doing these things, sort of like a living witness to what the Holy Spirit is doing now to break down these walls and to change and to cause these meta churches to come alive even today. I'm really excited because it's like I'm pinching myself and saying, "Oh God, all these years You were really right all along." It's really an exciting time!

*Dave: Doug, tell us about the dynamics of your gatherings several times a week. Tell us what a typical celebration would be like, although I know none of them are typical. How do you give place for flexibility and for participation in a somewhat structured service?*

Doug: Yes, there is a structure. There is a format. I believe in what Jim said. I believe in order, but order not for the sake of having order, but in the sense of direction. We do have a big Sunday morning celebration service where the emphasis is on praise and worship with the full expectation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flourish and to operate. We encourage the people at that time that they are the living stones, not cemetery markers. And so when the Body comes together and the Cornerstone is there, He expects the living stones to act like they are alive. So we encourage them. They might have a little five-minute teaching segment that some are assigned. They are fully expected to come with a sharing or with a testimony. They are fully expected and permitted to bring forth a word from the Lord. If they know that there is a need in the Body and they have been praying over a brother or a sister who has a need, they know they have the liberty right then to go to them in the sanctuary and say, "You know the Lord has laid something on my heart. I'm getting four or five people together, and we're going to come over, and clean your house and fix your car" or whatever it might be. So what we are seeing is, because the people have the liberty to be a living church during this celebration time, they feel that it's not out of order. They know that it's not out of order to be able to lift their hands and their arms and clap their hands and cry and weep before the Lord or laugh before the Lord, however the Spirit would move them for worship. They also know it can go farther than that. We've seen people just stand up and say, "I'm hurting, and I don't know where to turn. I don't know what to do." And then somebody will get up and walk all across the sanctuary to embrace them and say, "I know. I've been there. You're not alone."

It's an awesome thing to see when you set the Church free in letting them know that they are not approved by pleasing the pastor, but they are approved simply by the fact that Jesus Christ has accepted them into the family of God. Once you have removed the stigma that they have to please the pastor to be accepted by God, once you get that

out of the way, the life of God really clicks in in them. On a Sunday evening we have it more personalized. We still have a form of the celebration, but it's more emphasis on the teachers who are in the Body who get periods of time to teach and more emphasis and instruction on the gifts of the Spirit for example or ministering gifts or service gifts, and then letting them basically run the show. It's a time where I can kind of sit back and watch the Body just be the Body. Really it's the time that I get ministered to just by seeing the people do all these different things that I used to think I had to do every time I stood on the pulpit.

Maybe some people will say it sounds irreverent, but it's fun going to church! I heard a preacher ask one time, "Does God enjoy being in your presence?" I wonder, when He looks at us, and we're so sober and straight faced, bored, "tight-lipped," insecure, afraid, and unresponsive. Does He enjoy being with us? Do we give Him a good time?

Lynn: There's a joy over us.

Doug: Yes, He wants more out of us. Then here's where Lynn comes in because this is definitely not a conventional service. You get to "speak your peace" any time you come in. You get to have an input. You get to feel that you are important and that you are needed. I have done away with the competitive service of trying to reproduce service three times a week. Boy, we had a great one Sunday morning! We had better have another one Sunday night! We'll do the same thing Wednesday night! I just kind of have thrown that out the window. In fact, I have replaced my mid-week service with a big love feast at the building, a family communion service, and then a time of just fellowship and sharing. I'm doing the cell group thing in reverse. I talked to Lynn about this. **Many churches start in a cell group, get a sense of liberty, and communication, and freedom, and really witness the presence of the Lord through the operation of the Spirit as well as the ministry gifts. Then it transcends from the cell group into a congregational gathering. Well, I'm doing it just the**

opposite. We have a church that has an open celebration and then a Body Life service flowing together that is spreading off to the home church thing. So it's sort of like in reverse, but they are leaving the gatherings here, going into the homes with more excitement. They reproduce what they do here only on a smaller scale, like Lynn taught me with ten to twelve people. It's exciting! It's absolutely exciting! For those who are listening, I've witnessed a church go from just a handful to over 200 in a matter of months. We're expecting this to continue. Who knows how far the Lord is going to take it? I'm having to increase my staff and get my lay people trained just so they can keep up with the people who are being set free.

Dave: *Lynn, why don't you tell us a little bit about your cell meetings, how you are dealing with raising up leadership? Whenever a church makes a shift to begin to see that they've got a whole church full of ministers rather than a few polished, paid professionals whose job it is to run the whole thing, there immediately comes a problem of: "How do I find people who are mature and equipped and Biblically qualified to lead as we go through a process of multiplication rather than simply an addition, which is the typical way of adding to the Church?"*

Lynn: What we attempt to do is about twice a year have what we call "Boot Camp." The manual that you keep referring to is about a three-and-a-half hour part of an eight hour time. We used to do a Friday night, Saturday morning. We cast the vision. We deal about an hour with our church's faith and order—what we believe—and church government. We used to spend about two and a half hours dealing with each of the five areas of Jesus' ministry—evangelism, counseling, deliverance, healing, and social ministry—so that leaders are grounded in knowing how to lead someone to Jesus; how to be a good counselor or listener; how to deal in deliverance; how to deal with healing, whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual; and then some aspects of social ministry. We also spend an hour of the weekend in

"Boot Camp" dealing with what I call the "Spiritual Power Gifts," the nine primary power gifts. There's about twenty-seven, but we deal with nine power gifts because we believe that what makes a cell group effective particularly is when the gifts of the Holy Spirit are released, as Doug has just said.

So we spend an hour dealing with that and then three and a half hours dealing with this equipping manual that you referred to called *Focus on Cells*. So we have a "Boot Camp" for leaders and assistant leaders twice a year. We lead our focus groups, our cell groups with couples generally, a husband and wife. And it doesn't matter, if the wife is particularly gifted as a discussion leader, we let her do that. The man doesn't always have to be the discussion leader or coordinator.

*Dave: I notice in your manual you say, "God is not afraid to use women in leadership, and neither should we." This is an area where some people take exception, but as long as there is a togetherness of them being together as husband and wife, and in cases where they are not, I guess you suggest that as long as they are in submission to another cell pastor that women can be used in ministry. I think this is a liberating word to the Church today.*

**Lynn:** Most churches that try to keep women in their places are dying today. Churches that are releasing women in ministry are growing. For instance at Paul Cho's church, I've heard him say personally that 80-85% of his cell leaders are women—47,000 of the 50,000. And two thirds of his six hundred associate pastors are women. By the way, Dale Galloway has about five hundred cells, and 60-70% of his cell leaders are women. Dr. Cho says that of the cell house churches in China, 99% are led by women.

We are not afraid to release women into ministry as long as they are covered, and we see that they are, that they are under authority, that they are being properly supported and not out there spiritually vulnerable by themselves. So each cell group then is led usually by a husband and wife team, and then the assistant leaders are usually another husband and wife team. Or it could

be two singles, whatever combination. Of course, my good friend Ralph Neighbour has an excellent approach on that in that assistant leaders are constantly receiving on-the-job training to later be leaders. So we run through "Boot Camp." They are being trained on a weekly basis by their leaders. And then the staff meet with our cell group leaders and assistants at least once a month, sometimes twice a month, for an hour to pour our lives further into our people. Plus every five cell group has an area pastor over them, and this area pastor is doing weekly on-the-job training with his leaders or assistant leaders.

*Dave: I notice in your book, you actually point out that there are several different types of focus groups for the home, for the marketplace, and the Church—support groups. Are those actually separate ones that people can figure out where they fit in best?*

**Lynn:** In South Atlanta, as in the country, we have men and women working such crazy shifts—second and third shifts. Being a part of a home group that meets at night is impossible for a lot of our people. Thus, we have marketplace groups that meet at lunch during the day so that some of these people can be a part of those. We primarily use marketplace focus groups through our lunch hour to reach "churched" people or traditional denominational people who are tired of, I call it, "Sundaying" the school and training the union and "brothering" the hood." They know it has got to be something more. And so they come to these marketplace focus groups to get a vision for open church and cell ministry. We've seen people just turned on when they see that. Of course we have some support groups of recovering alcoholics, battered women, and other kinds of things led by people who are overcomers themselves. They meet to give support to each other.

**Doug:** Lynn, did I ever tell you about how I handled that problem in a meta-church format? We had a service that met once a week, and it was from midnight until almost two or three in the morning. We called it

"The Happy Hour" because night shift workers were getting off work and going to the bars, and the Christians couldn't go to church on weekends. So we called it "The Happy Hour." We advertised it in the paper. We gave them food to eat, sodas, and coffee. They started coming to the church at midnight. We had just a regular cell group there at the church, and there was teaching, personal ministering, and edifying and nurturing. It was really neat to see the church open its door in the night to minister to people who worked second shifts.

**Lynn:** Dave, one of the other main ways we also train our cell group leaders is that we have a Focus Training Institute, like a college. We have a quarter system so our leaders and would-be leaders sign up for an eight week course, mostly on Sunday night. We do a lot of intensive discipling and training in this Focus Training Institute.

*Dave: What do you do about children in the home groups? There seems to be different opinions—bring them along or don't bring them along.*

**Lynn:** In most of our cell groups the children are a part of the group. The first fifteen minutes of singing, the children are a part of that. Then while the adults discuss the Word briefly for fifteen minutes and when they pray together, the children are usually out in another part of the house the next thirty minutes dealing with issues that may face them. They may be looking at a Christian video or playing Bible games or doing something that meets their needs. Then we all come back together for a time of fellowship and refreshments. We found through the years, that really works better.

**Doug:** I agree with you, Lynn. I think the kids should be with you there.

**Lynn:** In fact we found that when the kids see mom and dad first gathering in a cell group and worshipping together and singing, they often will ask, "Why don't we ever pray at our house like we pray at Focus Group?" We have seen a lot of our families start family altars because of it.

*Dave: The Church is coming back*

home, gentlemen. You both are on the edge there, leading Jesus' flock. The key, I think, is seeing the centrality of Christ, the Lordship of Christ, should be the center of every meeting, whether it is two or three or two or three thousand. Jesus said in essence, "When you gather in My name for the purpose of exalting Me and seeking My face, then I am going to be in your midst and am going to do miraculous, glorious, wonderful things." Now, what I was really encouraged about was the two of you working together in the area. There's a lot of talk about the Lord restoring what some people refer to as the citywide church, the citywide spiritual community. Many people have a vision for the big, but ignore the small. In other words it has to happen in the small before it can get bigger. But once you begin to demonstrate a model to the world of how the Church can function as a Body in the local Church, do you see the next natural thing of churches beginning to network together? If so, what do you see is the future in the Atlanta area or in your local area of pastors and leaders beginning to move together to see something of a cohesive strategy on how to win an entire city to Christ? Have you spent any time thinking about that, or are you seeing it naturally happen as the Church comes back to basics and gets its house in order?

**Doug:** I have a couple of thoughts on that, not just thoughts, but I have had some experience in that. There are a couple of outstanding factors that, as much as we wish wouldn't be there, they're going to be there, that's going to prohibit this in the immediate future. I know that both Carl George and Ralph Neighbour are almost prophetic in their predictions towards the future of North American churches of 25 to maybe 50 thousand appearing at metropolitan areas. I can see that probability. But, David, we've got some tremendous hurdles to get over to accomplish that. I think that the unity that is coming is sort of similar to the underground Church in China. One of the biggest and most successful and dynamic churches is that Church, but it is almost invisible.

Going on here, there are ministries coming together, and it's like they are being wooed and drawn by the

Holy Spirit because it's not coming from a governmental format. It just seems to be unfolding and happening with the hearts of men and women. They are kind of drawing together, and they are spending time together. They are developing relationships, not as competitors, but as people. Ministers, male and female alike, pastors, teachers, elders, people working in prophetic gifts, missionaries, evangelists, whatever, are starting to relate as people with needs. The thing that they are discovering and that they are vocalizing is that they need to be nurtured. I want to add this at this time, David, and this is one of the biggest obstacles that is going to be in the way of having these big metropolitan churches at that time. Lynn gave the statistics of women used in cell group structure. I believe I know why the Lord has called them to have such a prolific, such a strong position in that. God has gifted the woman to have this nurturing spirit. When I think of memories of home, I think of how Mom made the home. I have memories of how Mom nurtured the home, how she labored over the meals at holidays; and how she always did special little things to make the environment right. When we take the Church into the home, I believe God wants that nurturing spirit, not the overbearing spirit that is transmitted by a lot of megachurches. God wants that nurturing spirit so that He can one-on-one or one-on-two or one-on-three in that intimate atmosphere and nurture that believer. Then they can really discover the love of and the acceptance of the Father. Now I can't think of anybody who doesn't know how to do that any better than a mother.

So it's easy to understand, but it's awesome at the same time. God is raising up women all over the world, birthed and called by the Holy Spirit because they are nurturers.

The word *wisdom* is described as *she*. We know that Mom possesses wisdom and great emotions, and sometimes Dad's logic is almost frightening. So this is going to be an obstacle. Some of the organized churches are still straining at the role of women in ministry. They still are choking on that. They are still

legalistic about Paul's teachings, and they haven't come to a fuller understanding that Paul was dealing with social issues, not necessarily religious laws. Because of that, there is opposition still to women's roles. So until this thing is purged out, is burned out, and men can get over their insecurities and realize that the Church needs nurturing, we don't need a Mother Goddess, but we need nurturing. If men can learn how to nurture, then more men will take the leadership roles in these intimate type cell groups and home meetings. But I think God is right on in using the women as He is using them in the cell groups because we need nurturing. We need loving and acceptance so desperately. Lynn, you and I see that when these ministers come together.

Lynn: Sure, sure.

**Doug:** So those are my feelings on it, David. It's going to be possible, but we've got a long way to go in getting the organized church to accept the role of women in ministry.

Lynn: If these cell groups are nurturing groups and discipling groups rather than Bible study groups, it doesn't matter if women are facilitators. In fact Carl George, in his book *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, says, "My point is not to argue the issue of women's liberation. Rather I speak in favor of the advancement of the Great Commission. If a church focuses its groups as teach-in ministries, some people will have a problem with men sitting under women. But if these groups are to encourage spiritual life, that is, if they are nurturing groups, the gender of the person facilitating the meetings or leading the groups won't matter." And that's the whole point. We do teaching at other times, but our cell groups are nurturing. We have not even spoken to the issue of evangelism.

We say our cell groups are supposed to have two focuses: evangelism and nurturing. We don't even emphasize nurturing any more. We've been doing these things about nine years. I have been doing small groups for about twenty-five years. But the reason we quit emphasizing nurturing is because women nurture without

even asking them to nurture. So what we are doing is focusing on evangelism through our cell groups. We are doing that simply by encouraging our focus groups, our cell groups, that meet from house to house, not in the same house each week. When these groups move around their neighborhoods from house to house, it allows a person to invite an unchurched neighbor into their home for an hour to an hour and a half.

Seventy-three per cent of the people in Atlanta are unchurched, and I think that that is pretty much a nationwide statistic. So that's how we evangelize. We find that we don't have to have people with bow ties that flash, "Jesus saves." All we want to do is get an unchurched person into a cell group, and they will be so "loved upon" and cared for, they'll be drawn into the Kingdom pretty naturally. We say, "I can't get to love you until I get to know you, and I can't get to know you until we spend time together." Cell groups are opportunities to spend time in order to get to know, in order to love.

**Doug:** That's almost word for word with a slight twist of what I am trying to teach this church here. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. You know, this might sound silly. I sure don't mean it to be boasting. It's the best way I can describe it. We do not have revivals at Vision Christian Center. I find no need for that.

**Lynn:** I had one nine years ago.

**Doug:** Yes, the word revival itself speaks to waking up something that is dead. If you have a church that is open, where the people are set free right on down to the youth—Brother, in last night's Body Life Service, I had a twelve-year-old girl give her first prophetic utterance, scared to death with the fear of the Lord, but just a few little baby words. And I encouraged her to nurture that and trust the Lord. It was just so enlightening to her and comforting to her. The point I'm trying to make is, when you open your church, and you let them know that they are important, that they are loved, that they are needed and that they

are valuable and really precious, and they are the focus, not the programs, they are what you are trying to build, not the pastor's personal ministry. They are what it's all about. Then the church evangelizes itself. So I don't have to worry about evangelism, and I don't have to worry about revival. Brother, I have been set free. I have been liberated because the church is alive by the people being set free, being able to be used from the least of their gifts to the greatest of their gifts—without fear of being rebuked or corrected or put in some sort of submissive order. It's wonderful! These are the greatest days in my ministry life!

**Lynn:** I agree with that.

**Dave:** *Gentlemen, I would like for you both to give a closing comment. We appreciate so much what God is doing. The ekklesia is arising, and it is arising in an atmosphere where the leadership releases people to do and be who they were created to be and to help nurture that. I hear that word coming up over and over again. It's a very organic thing that God has all the equipment necessary. All we have to do is get out of the way and let Him do it.*

**Lynn:** Dave, the Holy Spirit is being poured out. In thirty some years of ministry, I have never seen the Holy Spirit—I've never known Him as I have known Him in the last year. Secondly, I've never seen Him move upon people like I've seen Him move upon people in the last year! And I am very expectant that, as we continue to gathering people together in homes from house to house and on Sundays for public celebrations to talk about and to give witness to what God has been doing in homes during the week, I'm expectant that in this Second Reformation, we won't miss it. As Ralph Neighbour keeps urging us, "Please don't miss the Second Reformation." Man, we're not going to miss it! We're going to be right in the middle of it because the Lord is choosing to put fire in our midst and in our hearts to see unchurched people brought into the Kingdom and empty our immobilized Christians, setting them on fire by the Person and power of the Holy Spirit!

**Doug:** Sheep produce sheep. Lynn hit it right between the eyes. The Holy Spirit Himself, this is birthed of Him. This is His idea. This is His heartbeat. Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will speak nothing of Himself, but will testify of Me."

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## Leonard Jones —Come Dwell Here

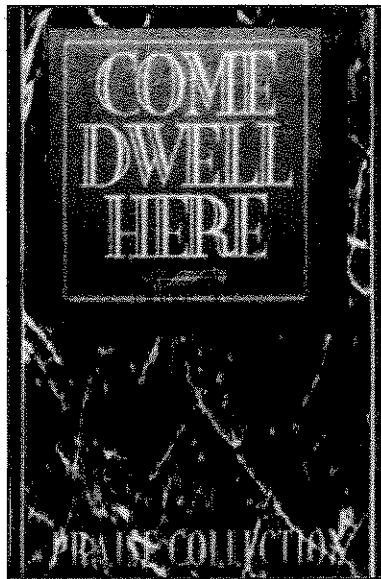
**Dave:** *In this segment we are going to discuss emerging trends in worship, in praise and in thanksgiving. Leonard Jones has, for the last several years, been worship leader at Morningstar Ministries, working together with Rick Joyner and a growing team of prophetic and apostolic ministries that are impacting the face of the earth with a dynamic, present revelation of what God has to say to the Church today. He has several tapes that he has published. The most recent one is Come Dwell Here. We are going to listen to a little bit of the music, and talk about some of the emerging trends that we see in Christian music and in worship and praise. It was A.W. Tozer who said, "Worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church." Believers deep within their hearts have a desire, and really the ultimate service that we Christians have is to worship our God. Yet there are some obstacles to that, not the least of which is our mind and our structures and the way that we function as a Church. So God is giving new direction in that. Leonard's background is that of a song writer, a guitarist, keyboardist, and a studio musician. He's worked with some of the big ministries, including PTL. He has also done scores for musicals.*

*When we talk about creating a thirst for involvement in worship, as a worship leader, why don't we start with asking, "How do you begin to draw people into worship rather than just being a spectator and watching somebody else worship?"*

**Leonard:** Basically what I try to do is put tools in the people's hands to worship the Lord. My tools are songs. If you put bad tools into people's hands, they are not going to be able to "enter in." If they have the right songs, songs that touch their hearts, then they can believe in what they are saying. Then they can take that and turn it towards the Lord and worship Him. If it's a song that they can't relate with, then

they might have a problem entering in. So my first step is to try to pick the exact right songs that the people can use as tools to worship the Lord.

**Dave:** *Let's begin with the worship music that you have written, "The Veil Has Been Rent." That is a vivid picture of the fact that each one of us has access to the throne of God. And yet sometimes we stand there not feeling qualified. Why don't you tell us something of the message that God has given you through that song, "The Veil Has Been Rent"?*



**Leonard:** That song basically came as I was reading the Bible one day. I noticed that, not only was the veil that was in the Temple rent, but Jesus' own body was rent and His body was called the veil in the book of Hebrews. It was rent, so that we could pass through, using that blood to come to the throne.

I had the opportunity last year to be in Sweden at a church, and there was a Jewish man there speaking about the holocaust. He wasn't born again. It really offended him that I said that we have access to the very throne of God through the veil which is Jesus' own body that was rent. One thing that is interesting to me—and the Scripture was very

clear about it—was that the veil was rent from the top to the bottom. That's what the first line is, that the veil has been rent from the top to the bottom, which means that God did it, that man has no way to come to God except through the veil, which is Jesus.

**Dave:** *That's what God is doing to us, He's "renting" things these days from the top down, and there are changes going on. The leadership is beginning to see themselves more as servants rather than superstars. When we come together on Sunday morning, the Bible in First Corinthians 14 says these are the kinds of things that should happen. "One should come with a psalm, a hymn, a spiritual song, a teaching." We see kind of a Body functioning where the different members are each participating. Is this something of the experience that you have there at Morningstar where you gather on Sunday? Is it open to the participation by the entire Body?*

**Leonard:** Certainly everybody participates. Since I'm using a PA system, it's a little hard for the audience to compete volume wise. So I always try to leave space open for someone if he or she has a spiritual psalm or something. Recently in October or November, we had a conference here in Charlotte. One Saturday morning during the worship, the people were just not "entering in." I mean, they were not "entering in" vibrantly. A lady took the song I wrote, "Come Dwell Here," and just started singing it after we had stopped singing. She sang with her whole heart, and the whole atmosphere broke loose. I couldn't have done that. I couldn't break the people loose, but someone in the congregation did that. It wasn't out of order whatsoever. I believe sometimes that can get a little dysfunctional for a large meeting to have someone blurt out like that, but in this situation it was just right. We knew her, and she

knew us. It broke the thing loose. That's the only song we did the whole morning. The rest of the time, we just sang in the Spirit and just worshipped the Lord.

*Dave: I guess what I'm getting at is that there is a difference between a participant, somebody who is actually coming with something to share and is given opportunity to do that and a spectator who basically comes not having any anticipation of affecting the outcome of what is going to happen. That seems to be where a lot of the Church is stuck right now. There are very, very talented musicians such as yourself, and then there are the average folks who just barely make it through singing the songs without their voice giving out or cracking. And yet God seems to be just as pleased with something that comes from our hearts in pure form of worship that is organic rather than a planned program. So somewhere there is an equilibrium. What we are trying to explore are those areas where we can help release people to really begin to enter into worship rather than just go through the motions.*

*We live in a time where the people of God are rather weary from religious activities. In fact, on your album, Come Dwell Here, you have a song entitled "Enter My Rest." I think that's a theme that we Christians need to keep on the top of our mind, that we are involved in a warfare, but it's a warfare where we are seated in His rest. Why don't you tell us about the song "Enter My Rest" and what prompted you to write that one?*

*Leonard: Actually, I didn't write that one. My first endeavor was to sing it. What happened was that we were singing in the Spirit at the church, and that just came out. I just started singing it. So I can't really say that I wrote it. I heard it while I was singing it for the first time. I just happen to remember it, where a lot of times when we get a spiritual song in a service like that, it will get real involved, and I will forget what the chords were or the words, but*

this was so simple, and the Lord just kept repeating that. I was able to remember. So I just decided to record it.

*Dave: It's a beautiful song. Earlier I was discussing with Robert Webber his book, Worship Is a Verb. We were talking about how there seems to be a converging. In Matthew 18 Jesus said that the Kingdom or the place where God inhabits, be it in heaven or here on earth, involves some things old and some things new. There seems to be a recovery of hymns and of very old worship music that is being recycled and given new beats. But still the message is eternal. There's something of a liturgical, historical thing that is kind of blending together with the more contemporary, charismatic type of praise and worship. Do you see some of that out there as you look onto the music scene at this time?*

*Leonard: I don't get around too much to other places to hear what people are doing. So I don't know what is going on in other places.*

*We do a lot of hymns, a lot of Martin Luther, like "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "It Is Well With My Soul," and "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy," a Methodist hymn. We do a whole bunch of hymns, but we make them with a more modern sound and usually with more modern chord changes than what they used to do back in the former times. We keep the melody and the words the same. We just change a few of the chords.*

*Dave: Looking down the road, you are working on some new projects that blend various musical forms together. I think you mentioned contemporary along with some classical. Is there a title coming up on that?*

*Leonard: Right now we have just called it the Psalms Project because it is all out of the Psalms. What I have been doing is taking the Psalms and writing the music for a full Psalm. If it was Psalm 23, finish out the Psalm, not just take a piece of it*

and write a song from one piece of it. Each song is a complete Psalm, like Psalm 63, Psalm 121, Psalm 23, and Psalm 19. So we have got about six of them done right now. Basically it's kind of like Beethoven getting crossed with Petra.

*Dave: Contemporary Christian music is something that is controversial in some segments of the Church. Some people don't believe that it really ministers because it tends to focus on a beat that people consider ungodly. These views are held in earnest. As you look down the road at contemporary Christian music, do you see the focus being around more worship and praise type of music, or more Christians moving into the mainstream with songs that cross over into the pop charts and that type of thing?*

*Leonard: I'm not really that closely involved in what other people are doing to know really what the trends are. That puts me at a disadvantage in some ways, but it also puts me at an advantage where I don't have to follow the flock at what everybody else is doing. I really try to hear what the Lord wants me to do. I wouldn't mind knowing what everybody else is doing, but I'm kind of isolated right now.*

*Dave: There's a preoccupation with entertainment that has been indicative of the last twenty or thirty years. Thus, Christian music has been growing in popularity. However, there's an upside to that, and there's a downside. I think what you are doing is probably very, very good, which is listening to what God is doing. Why don't you leave us with a closing thought as you reflect on where you see the Church going? The Church is facing some very turbulent times. We need to individually move into worship in our own lives.*

*Tell us about the songs that you write. Are you producing song books and other materials in order to have a wider sphere of circulation? In other words, are you producing song books and sheet music, etc., so that*

worship music can be made available on a large scale, both nationally and to the entire world?

**Leonard:** Just in the last year we have gotten into music publishing at Morningstar. We have only put out one tape. We put out another tape for vocalists to strengthen their voices. It's a vocal exercise like a music lesson on tape. We have also done a lot of demos. So we haven't really done anything as far as publishing the actual score yet. We will probably do that on the next album. We plan to have the next album out before October, 1993.

**Dave:** *Is that a Psalms album?*

**Leonard:** No, our next is a praise album. The Psalms album will probably not be finished until 1994. That's a lot more involved. It's got a lot of orchestration in it. When you hear the music, you will understand that it is very difficult.

**Dave:** *Do you have any closing thoughts as we look down the road to the future of the Church? We are seeing the people of God equipped to find their place of ministry. That's the theme of this. The Church is recovering a worship that includes the arts and all areas. For instance, there is a renaissance in multi-media. Are you moving into that area of drama and dance as well as incorporating it into worship?*

**Leonard:** We haven't as yet. Our church is very new, maybe only about a year and a half old. We have two hundred people, and a lot of those are in and out. So we don't really know who is with us and who is not as of yet. So we have just been working on the music so far. I recently asked Rick if I could go to a praise conference. He knew the person who was putting it on. Rick said, "You know, it's a really good form of worship, but it's kind of gotten stale, and the people haven't moved on."

What I see really coming is worship

leaders, churches themselves basically "feeling out" what God wants them to do. Each congregation is different.

You can't be singing songs about tearing the gates down when your gates are getting torn down at that particular time. There are songs that minister to you to each church differently at different times.

What I see, at least in our church, Rick just wanted me to hear from the Lord myself and learn while I wanted to go to a conference and get "a sure thing." I wanted to go and find out, "This works. That will really work." What the Lord through Rick told me was basically, "You need to hear God for yourself. If you make some mistakes, Rick doesn't expect the worship to have people busting the doors down every night. He expects sometimes to have off nights and also some incredible nights." We've had some off nights and some incredible nights.

I'm learning to hear from the Lord what He wants us to do. I listen to a lot of the praise music that comes out. Most of it sounds pretty much the same to me, so I have a hard time incorporating that. I like to incorporate things that really touch us and what we are doing and where we are going. What I tend to have to do a lot of times is write all the songs or have people in the congregation write them ourselves because a lot of what is out there just is not really hitting what we are doing.

**Dave:** *That's a good point. We all tend to look for patterns for success in whatever area God has called us to. Certainly there is nothing wrong with cross-pollinating with what God is doing, but I think the key is to hear what He is saying to you and for your own circumstance and then respond to that, not take what some refer to as "a second hand revelation."*

**Leonard:** It's essential for us to be able to hear God in these times because we are going to be really cut

off from the world basically. We need to hear what God is saying.

**Dave:** *Thank you so much, Leonard. We look forward to staying in touch with you. Be on the lookout, listeners, for the new album. Stay in touch with Morningstar. The address is included here. If you want to get Come Dwell Here or the previous tape, Coming Back, you can get that through Morningstar.*

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## Rick Joyner — *The Harvest*

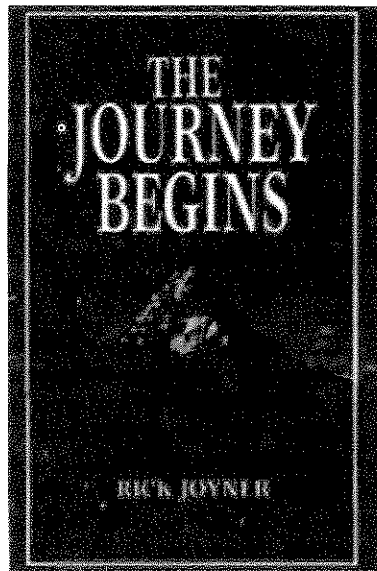
**Dave:** Rick Joyner is the author of several books and heads up Morningstar Ministries. His book, *The Harvest* was published in 1987.

*The world was coming apart at the seams. We then had the Stock Market collapse and much of the Church was in deep confusion at that hour. At that time The Harvest came across my desk, and I will tell you, it was like a breath of fresh air. It was like a cold, long drink of water as Rick prophetically gave the entire Body of Christ a word of hope and a word of inspiration.*

*Recently you were speaking at a leadership conference here in Phoenix about the importance of intimacy in our relationship with Christ. As you interface with leaders, it seems to me that there is something of a convergence going on in the Body of Christ right now. There is a willingness to work together on the essential elements. A lot of the leaders, the worldview thinker types, seem to be connecting with the prophetic. There seems to be a synthesis going on that is really very, very exciting and dynamic. The title of your latest book, *The Journey Begins*, is part two in a seven part series. You believe that we're not at the end of the journey. This isn't the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning.*

**Rick:** I believe we're at the threshold of the beginning of a new age, which precipitates the end of one age. I believe that there is a transition, a major transition going on and therefore a need for the discernment of the times in preparation for the times. I believe that this is going to come from a combination, the synthesis of the thinker types, the prophetic types. I believe that as we see in the Book of Acts when the prophets and teachers learned to worship the Lord together that apostolic authority was birthed and sent out the ministries of Paul and Barnabas and Silas and the others. I believe we have come to that time again where we are on the threshold. I believe in preparation for the end of the age. I believe that the ministry that started the Church Age is going to be

the ministry that closes it out. I'm looking for restoration of true, apostolic authority of a true Biblical stature to be restored to the Church in this hour, to conclude the equipping of the Church for this hour. This ministry was given along with the others listed in Ephesians 4 and is essential for this hour. But I believe it is going to take a combination of a synthesis between the prophetic types and the teacher types. When we learn to worship the Lord together, those who are so different from one another, I believe it's going to give birth to a whole new level of authority within the



Church, which is absolutely essential for us to accomplish our mandate for this hour.

**Dave:** In First Corinthians 13 Paul was talking to a Church that was moving into some confusing areas. He rebuked them and said, "When I was a child, I thought and spoke as a child, but there came a point where I had to grow up." It seems to me that every time I pick up a Morningstar Journal or your book, I hear the cry of the Lord saying, "Come unto Me, child. Know Me intimately, and grow into the full stature that I have prepared for you." As we look at the Church today, as you have stated, the Church is somewhat worn out. The Church is full of sin. We've had too much hype. We've had too much plastic, fantastic Hollywood,

*patterning the Church after the world. But then the world does nothing more than manifest in the flesh what the Church is manifesting in the Spirit. You believe that we have got to build a habitation for God, and the Church right now is going through this upheaval of moving away from focusing on the building and seeing the priesthood of the believers become a practical reality. That's really the topic of this series.*

*What do you see as you look out and travel and speak to leaders as well as followers? Is this something burning in the hearts of a growing number in the Church, or is this something that really is the shape of things to come?*

**Rick:** I wish I could say that I see it just burning within the hearts of the Church right now. I think in some places it is. I think we are in the Laodicean Church Age. The main problem of that is the lukewarmness. We think we have everything, but we really don't. We are in desperate need. There is a lukewarmness because we really think we have so much. We do not realize our true desperate state. But I believe one of the reasons for this lukewarmness is that the Church is weird. She is worn out. She is tired and sick of projects, worn out from all the hype and manipulation and everything else. She just wants the Lord. But I believe one of the positive signs I'm seeing is that the Church is beginning to wake up to her desperate need. I think if we would try to build the Church, that would attract the Lord rather than focusing on something that will just attract the people. I believe we would have far more people than we could ever deal with.

I've been in multitudes and multitudes of meetings in my life, but I've only been in a handful that I considered a true visitation of God—three, maybe four, that I would say where God really showed up in His manifest presence. Now I would say I've been in many, many that were anointed, and there was blessing, and sometimes miracles and great things happening. But I'm

talking about where the presence of the Lord comes. I believe there are many things that the Lord will bless that He will not inhabit. I think we've been content often to be satisfied with that which God blesses rather than just being utterly committed to seeking that which He will dwell in, that which He will manifest His presence in. That's the whole purpose of the Church. The Church is not for the world. The world was created. Man was created for God's pleasure. I believe He is beginning to ignite in some, and it doesn't take but a few to create a breakthrough. But I do see in some that passion starting to burn, what I call the heart of David who say, "Look, we will never rest. We will never find our rest until God has a place to rest, until He has a place of habitation." And I do see some starting to awaken today.

There are many who have built large churches. You can get ten thousand people together, but it would not be a church, not really. What good is a most glorious temple if God is not in it? If God is in it, it's not the temple which gets your attention regardless of how glorious it is. I believe one reason why we may be giving so much attention to the Church is because God is not in it. If He were in it, He would be getting the attention.

We've worshipped the creature instead of the Blessed Creator. The Church is a creature. It is created for His pleasure. I believe we've got to return to our first love. We've got to return to worshipping the Lord instead of the things of the Lord, instead of the house of the Lord. We've even worshipped worship. We'll worship anything almost but the Lord. But I think there is a turning. There is a turning in some, saying, "Look, I've built large churches. I've gotten a lot of people together. I've gotten them motivated. But something still hasn't satisfied. There has got to be more to the Lord and to what He's doing than what we are now experiencing." I think that is starting to awaken.

One of the places where it is awakening to the greatest degree is in some of the old State churches in Europe, who are starting to

experience an extraordinary move of God simply because they woke up to the fact of how dead they were. They became desperate with the desperation of Hannah, who became so desperate for a son she was willing if she received that son, to give him back to the Lord. I've seen many who are coming to that same desperation. "I've got to have God! We've got to do whatever it takes! We have absolutely got to have Him!" And all it takes is a few who get contagious, who start drawing near to the Lord. And if we draw near to the Him, He will draw near to us. There is nothing in this world more contagious than the people who are near to God, who have His presence. And that's what Moses said. He said, "Lord, if Your presence doesn't go with us, don't send us up from this place. Lord, if Your presence doesn't go with us, how will we be distinguished from all the other nations on the face of the earth?"

Be honest. Right now, I think we need to take an honest analysis. "How can our churches be distinguished from any other group gathering in society or anything else on the face of the earth?" Can it be distinguished? Do people come into our meetings and sense the presence of God? I believe that when we start taking an honest look at this, we may start to have this same kind of desperation that will cause us to seek Him so as to find. One thing that a brother said to me one time was, "Every one of us is as close to the Lord as we want to be." I think that is a truth. How close do we want to be? Are we willing to do what it takes to draw near to Him, to seek Him, and to build something that will attract the Lord?

I'm speaking of the manifest presence of the Lord. Of course, we all have this presence to a degree. His Holy Spirit dwells within us. But there is something else to the manifest presence of the Lord that I believe we are generally, sadly lacking in the Church. I think Francis Frangipane said one time, "The only thing the Church is lacking is God. We've got everything else but Him." But I am looking, and I think I am starting to see some awaken to this and say, "Look! Forget everything else! I'm

going after the Lord!" And that's what Peter did. Remember after the resurrection when they all decided to go fishing? Remember the Lord appeared on the bank, and He said, "Cast your nets on the other side." And they cast their nets, and they got a net full of fish. So what did Peter say? He said, "To heck with these fish! That's the Lord!" Peter was going to go and be with the Lord. So we see Peter up there going to be with the Lord. And after just a few minutes, he goes down and by himself pulls in that whole net of fish that all the other disciples had been struggling with. I think just a few minutes in the presence of the Lord would empower us to do far more than we have been struggling with for so long and so hard. We have got to have God if we are going to accomplish His purposes in this hour.

*Dave: That's right! We've got to come to the end of our proverbial rope. Rick, there are a number of exciting things that God is restoring to the Church! I think in the beginning of about the '70s and the '80s, the prophetic area was beginning to receive more credibility, more public awareness. The restoration of the role of the prophet and the apostle is a controversial area to some. I guess some people designate the apostolic ministry as more the missionary. They don't want to call them "apostles" now because there were only so many in the New Testament times. But the whole purpose of the ministry, whether you want to call it five-fold ministry, or as Gene Edwards calls it, the seventeen-fold ministry including all the other giftings that are given to the Body. The purpose is to see the Body of Christ restored.*

*Do you think that's really where the next move of God is? We focus a lot on the equippers, but God is supplying the equippers for the purpose of restoring the Body of Christ. I know you have said, "As the world looks into the Church, oftentimes what they see would be equivalent to tuning into a football game and watching the whole team stay in a huddle for three hours." I mean, that would be pretty ridiculous. You would feel like there is nothing, no reason to watch, that nothing was happening there. And*

yet when the world looks in at the Church, that's what is happening. Isn't the next movement of God going to require the entire Body of Christ, at least a much greater number than we have, finding their place of ministry and moving out and being mobilized? That's going to take kind of a paradigm shift from the leadership, isn't it?

**Rick:** Any sustained move of God requires the equipping of the Saints to do the work of the ministry. If we don't equip the Saints to do it, what we are doing in essence is producing seedless fruit, fruit that cannot reproduce itself. And I think this has been a tragedy. This is the reason why most movements stop moving. They don't keep up. They stop moving. Then they turn around, and they start persecuting the next move of God. We've had this time after time. But until we equip the Saints to carry on, there's no movement that can be sustained. But how do we do that? I think most of the time we want to equip those people who are the most like us. I think that's something that has to be addressed. Leaders tend to gather around themselves. They are full of pressures from all sides. Anyone who is in leadership is being hit from all sides. I really have empathy for them. So we tend to want to gather around us those who are "yes men" and who will support us and build us up and encourage us. We don't want troubles from those around us. We want them to support us. But I don't think that those types of people tend to be the kind who can carry the movement on or any further. The Lord chose the one to take over the ministry for Elijah—I don't think Elijah even liked him. "Who is this guy wanting twice what I've got?" I think Elijah was offended by Elisha's arrogance or whatever. I think Elisha pushed Elijah to greater heights, for one thing. I think we need those [kinds of pushers] behind us who are wanting to go beyond us. And I think we also really need to be those [kinds of pushers], if we really are committed to the move of God and not just ourselves, not just our own selfish ministries. We really are committed to God moving, God accomplishing His purposes. We're going to be looking to equip those who we can give everything we've got to, and

they will take it further, and we will rejoice in them. That's what I think John the Baptist, one of the great types of spiritual ministry did. In fact he spent his whole life preparing the way for the Lord. That was the focus of his life and ministry, pointing to the Lord and then being willing to decrease as the Lord increased. To me that is just one of the greatest, most perfect types of true spiritual ministry. I think that if we are going to see a sustained movement, the Saints have got to be equipped, and then they have got to be released.

Jesus is the greatest example of how ministry is equipped and imparted. I see Him creating an atmosphere where these guys could make mistakes, they could be corrected but not condemned. They learned. They lived close to Him. They were intimate with Him. If we really are going to equip the people, we've got to get close to the people and intimate with them. We've got to let them see us in our real condition. There are a lot of leaders who are afraid to get close to their associates, because they feel like they will lose authority over them. But if we lose authority or respect of our people because we get close to them, we don't really have the goods any way.

We have got to be intimate with people. We've got to get close with them. We've got to impart ourselves, not just our theology or our teaching or our vision. It's got to go beyond that. We've got to impart everything that God has given to us and then stir them to go further with it. I think Solomon is an example of what happens with some. You know, Solomon fell because he only had his father's vision. And once he had completed that which his father had given him, he didn't have a vision of his own. So he stumbled. David gave everything he could to Solomon, but I don't think he really stirred Solomon to go beyond this—"You do something even greater for the Lord than building this temple." I think we've got to have both aspects. Let's give 'em, equip 'em with everything that we can to do that. And then let's stir them to go even further and have their own visions to go beyond that.

**Dave:** Yes, that's really the heart of a servant, and it only comes by spending time with the Lord Who was the ultimate Servant. There's a lot of talk of Christians occupying new territory, but until we allow Him to occupy us, it's very difficult to really see that externalized. There are so many areas that I would like to talk to you about. You said that we must not overstep our spiritual jurisdiction, or we don't have any authority. This is something we all need to learn, that God gives us a certain track to run on, and if we get outside that, we don't have authority. We are in somebody else's area, and oftentimes that needs to be pruned back.

On this area of empowering the people of God for ministry, Christian community, relationship, this seems to be a deep need. What I always hear from you and through your ministry is that relationship first begins with that relationship with the Lord. What do you make of the re-emphasis on cell group, small group, meta-church, etc., where we are looking for relationships with one another, which is also important? Do you see that there is a priority there, or is this destined to become the "pop theology" for the next few years? What do you think?

**Rick:** Both of the above. The cell group thing is something that God really is doing. He really is behind it. I don't believe we can see the believers equipped, the Saints equipped without the cell groups. I believe it's where relationships are established, where the Body is assembled. When Paul said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," he was not talking about meetings. He was talking to us about being joined together as a unit, being assembled together. I was born into a house church movement back in the early '70s. I grew up with that. It was the only thing I ever knew. I've always believed that it just couldn't happen any other way. I was in a church where everyone who came into it, within a very short time, knew their calling. They knew their ministry. A place was provided for them to start functioning in that. You couldn't tear people away from that group. If you just have a pile of stones, anyone can come and take all

the stones they want and steal them, but once they are built into a temple and joined together, you can't pry them loose, or it's very difficult to pry them loose. We have to be built together and joined together. I believe it has to happen, these small cell groups. It's something God really is doing. There's a whole lot more to be said about it and a whole lot more to be understood about it. There will be some extremes in it and some retreats from the extremes. You're going to have all the problems that come any time there is a new movement in the Body of Christ. But I do believe it's something He's initiating. I think God is really in it. It's utterly essential.

Also, another major front, almost a two-pronged front that I consider as just as essential, is the coming realization of the city church concept. This is not an attempt to tear down the denominational structures, the structures of the different movements or relationships.

But I think if we are going to be joined to the Body of Christ, we've got to be joined to the congregation across the street or across town. We've got to start functioning together. We need those different congregations. Right now there is so much unnecessary duplication. We may have three churches on our block or three congregations, one of them really anointed to provide a Christian school, but all three of them trying to do it because they are competing with one another rather than cooperating. Two of them do not have the anointing. It drains the entire church. It drains the anointing, it drains the attention of the leadership and everyone else, so they are out of their sphere of authority. Thus, they fail miserably, or they just run on such a low level of anointing and true effectiveness in this. If there were cooperation in joining local groups together. Let those who have the anointing do one thing, and let the others focus their energy and anointing on that which they called to do. I believe we are going to see a massive advance within the Body of Christ. So I see the advancement coming from both of these fronts, both the small groups and then the

### Opening Day in the House of God

realization of how we fit together in the big picture in the larger group.

**Dave:** *So it's not either/or but both/and. Whenever I think of Rick Joyner, I think of the Jeremiah definition of a prophet. He that roots up and pulls up and breaks down but then he who plants and cultivates. So if you are going to read Rick's books, you need to realize that they are something of "an equal opportunity offender." Wouldn't you say that? They step on everybody's toes a little bit.*

**Rick:** Well, not intentionally, but I guess they do.

**Dave:** *Let me read from his latest book, The Journey Begins. "Sadly, one of the greatest obstacles to understanding and believing the Christian faith has been the Church. The Church was not an organization but a living organism, not an institution but a constitution. The apostolic vision was God living in people, not in bricks."*

*Your resources have had a meteoric rise over the last five or six years. The reason is that they focus around the centrality of Christ. They draw people in rather than focusing in on any individual. I remember when Francis in the beginning doing conferences wouldn't even put a photo in there. He didn't want to be identified as to who he was. This is really the characteristic of the next generation of leadership that God is raising up; that the focus is entirely on the Lord and what He is doing. Then the Body of Christ will then move together in much more unity. We talk about reopening the Church and seeing the Lord given His proper place in it. What are some tips that you would give to pastors and leaders, who are weary and on the edge, maybe frustrated with what they see or who are hurting right now? What could you say that would minister hope and encouragement to them that they may be in desperate need?*

**Rick:** I think that the number one reason for burnout in the ministry is the tendency to take the people's yoke instead of the Lord's yoke. When the people came to make Jesus King, He fled to the mountains because if the people make you King,

who's going to rule? I don't believe any of us can bear those burdens. I don't believe any of us can carry those yokes without burning out sooner or later. The Lord's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. I think we must turn our focus upon that which God has called us to do. As I understand it, Jesus never responded to human need. He only responded to what He saw the Father doing. That doesn't mean He wasn't touched by human need. He certainly had compassion to human need, but He did not respond to it. He only did what He saw the Father doing. I think we too must return to that and also believe. You know, it was on the road to Emmaus, it was when they saw Jesus break the bread that their eyes were open. I don't believe our eyes are going to be open, the eyes of our hearts are really going to be open until we start to see Jesus as the One Who breaks the bread. When we are not receiving just from our favorite author, our favorite televangelist, our teacher, or even through our pastor, but when we really start to focus on what Jesus is saying to us, when we really start hearing His voice regardless of who it comes through, to me that is the time when we see Him as the One Who breaks our bread. That's when our eyes will be opened.

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## Nate and Joanne Krupp — God's Simple Plan for His Church

**Dave:** In the next segment we are going to discuss some very interesting topics with Nate and Joanne Krupp. One of the things that I think is clear at this particular point is that God's plan for His Church is very comprehensive, and yet it is very simple. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is easy enough that a child can understand it, and yet it confounds the wise. Nate and Joanne have carried a vision to see God's Church established, to see the Bride of Christ released and restored, and for you, listener, to help find your place in God's plan.

Let me tell you a little bit about Nate. He grew up in Fostoria, Ohio. He was converted to Christ back in 1957. He was discipled by the Navigators and was an officer in the U.S. Naval Civil Engineer Corp.

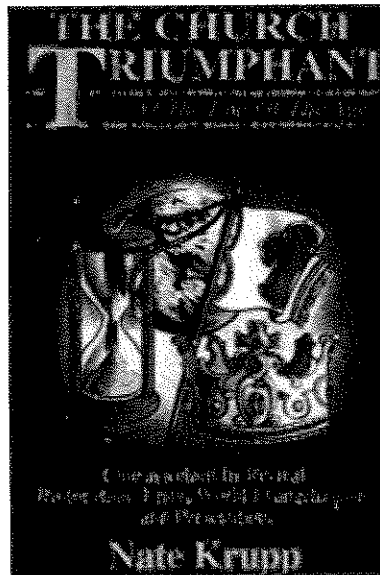
In 1977-1981 he was associated with Youth With a Mission in Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington. He pastored a church from 1981-1983 in Salem, Oregon, and since 1986, he and Joanne have been serving the Church at large. Nate has been calling the Church to prayer and radical change. Joanne has been writing a book about God's plan for women, which we are going to discuss a little bit later.

Nate has a number of resources, including a new newsletter, discussing the house church movement. He has a booklet entitled *New Wineskins*. He has some Bible study resources, *New Life in Christ* and his newest work, which we are discussing here, *God's Simple Plan for His Church*. God is transforming the world through the Church, and you have talked in the past about the Church being in transition, that the Church is going through something of a metamorphosis. Maybe we are coming out of a period of focusing on individuals and moving toward a focus on the entire Body of Christ. We are maturing, as it says in *First Corinthians 13*. We are learning how to listen to God's voice and not focus so much on man's voice. We are seeing a change in leadership from focusing on the gifts to seeing the character. Leadership, Biblically,

is always defined by way of character, not just gifting. God is restoring the Body of Christ through the five-fold ministry.

We want to talk about this. I know you deal with it in your book. You discuss some of the critical issues. Why don't we just begin with a very simple question that almost seems rhetorical, but from your viewpoint, Nate, what is a church? Is it a building, the people, or what?

**Nate:** I see eight very critical issues on this whole subject of the Church. One of them is, what is the Church?



Intellectually we all say, "The Church isn't the building. It's the people." And yet practically our focus is still so much on that building. We call it the Church. We say, "We're going to go to church." So much of the focus is on that building. And of course, Biblically, I think we all know that ekklesia is "the called out ones," the people of God. We are the Church, nothing more or nothing less. We are the Church.

**Dave:** You have devoted a whole chapter to discussing the ekklesia, those "called out ones." Part of the problem is that we always tend to look to delegating our responsibility to somebody else. For instance, we delegate the education of the children to the teachers, government

to the politicians, and health to the doctors. There seems to be something of a coming back to taking responsibility. In the Church the problem has been we've delegated the spirituality to the pastors. Do you see the focus coming back on the Lordship and centrality of Christ? You have asked in your book, "Who is to be in charge of the Church, Jesus or man?" This is a question that is a dynamic tension because there is a place for leadership and yet anything with more than one head is a monster.

**Nate:** That is what I see as the second critical issue. Who's going to be in charge of the Church? I know we all say that Jesus is to be in charge of His Church, but in practical terms we so often thwart that. When we do gather as the Church, which for most Christians is still in a building, do we gather to seek the Lord and allow Him to lead and follow His agenda or do we go there to follow along some agenda that some man has prescribed?

Conversely, I know in many of the house church gatherings, like the group we are part of here in the state of Oregon, when we gather on Sunday mornings in one of our homes, I know there is no agenda. There is no human leader. We come together to seek the Lord, and we believe that wherever two or three are gathered, He's right there with us and that He wants to lead us. And by His Holy Spirit He does. Three hours later we look back and we see, "Oh, that's what God was saying to us today!"

He uses many, many members of the Body to bring forth what He has for us in that particular time of gathering. We can see the leadership of Jesus. And we do not see the agenda of some man. So is man going to continue to build his little Kingdoms, or are we going to really in practical terms allow Jesus to lead His Church?

**Dave:** That's a question that we need to think about because much of what we see in the world is based upon man's programs. And your suggestion is that God is not pleased with that?

**Nate:** Yes, and of course along with that is the whole "clergy/laity" thing. We've been taught that there are two classes of Christians. I don't find those words in the Bible at all. The Scripture is very clear. When God's people come together, ministry should flow through anybody and many. Paul's clearest teaching on the Church is First Corinthians 12-14, summarized in 14:26. "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you come together, let each one of you have a song, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, and interpretation. Let everything be done for edification." Also, in Ephesians 4, Paul talks about the Body building itself up in love by that which every joint supplies.

For three centuries God's people gathered in ordinary places such as their homes to worship Him and to minister to one another and to function as a Body. Then with Constantine the buildings went up; the whole clergy/laity thing developed; the platform/pew arrangement was set; and for 1,700 years God's people have been an audience instead of a Body. Jesus wants us to come together and function as a many-gifted, many-membered Body.

**Dave:** Yes, let me read from chapter six, "The Church Gathered." You say, "Why gather? So why is the Church to come together or gather or assemble? Acts 13:2 tells that the Church gathered to minister to the Lord. Hebrews 10 says we are there to stimulate one another to love and good works, to encourage one another. So there we have two main purposes for which the Church gathers, to minister to Him and to minister to one another. No where do the Scriptures talk about gathering together to 'have church' or to 'have a service.'" You then list about twenty things that should be happening, which include teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, sharing possessions with one another, sharing a meal together, local elders being appointed, fasting, discussions, singing, receiving a revelation, offerings being received, reading the Scripture, and exhortation. The reader may be thinking, "We do some of that. Can't we do some of it in our homes during the week in Bible study and

then give the main platform to the preacher on Sunday morning?"

**Nate:** That is what is happening today, and it's an encouraging sign as far as the home meetings are concerned. I would just take it a step further. A million people around the world go to an eternity without Jesus Christ every week. I'm convinced that one of the reasons is because our money is going into bricks, instead of getting the gospel out. The majority of our money goes into our buildings. Jesus never said one word about buildings. There is not one word in the entire New Testament about buildings. When they first started going up in the third and fourth century, it was primarily Constantine's idea, not even the Christians'. So I just have to say that I don't think God ever had these buildings in mind. We have them, so, fine. Let's use them. But I'm sure not in favor of putting up any more. When revival comes, there will be millions of people swept into the Kingdom in a very short time. Where are we going to disciple those people? Where are they going to gather? Are we going to stop the revival and have another building program for five years and put up hundreds of thousands of more buildings and spend billions of dollars of more money? Or are we just going to go back to the simplicity of the plan that we see in the New Testament? And then of course it has to do with the whole spontaneous expansion of the Church, too. I believe what the Lord had in mind was just something that would so naturally grow and multiply and divide and expand from home to home and from neighborhood to neighborhood and from village to village and from city to city and from country to country until the whole world was reached for Christ. We have just put these great obstacles in the way of the very things that we really know God wants us to do. We have made it so complicated.

**Dave:** God has a plan to deal with that, and we'll talk about that a little bit more later. Chapter nine says, "Everyone is a minister." Of course, from First Corinthians it says, "Brethren, when you assemble, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an

interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." I think there is a growing awareness throughout the world that there is no way we can see global evangelism with the existing clergy/laity structure. There just simply isn't enough time. Even if there was enough time, there isn't enough manpower to pump out ministers, as Jim Montgomery points out, to plant somewhere between six and seven million churches in the next ten years to reach the world. So it's going to have to come through mobilized, equipped, lay-led ministry, and you are suggesting that the house church is one of the better ways to equip that and develop Christian community. That has implication for women. Women for a long time have been kind of the second fiddle in Church. They have been limited in what they can do. There's a whole backlash of that in the world's system, called the feminist movement.

You and Joanne carry a vision to see God's purposes accomplished with the whole Body of Christ, including men and women. Why don't you share a little bit of your view of God's plan, His original plan going back to Genesis and the plan of restoration of the role of women in the Church?

**Nate:** I defer to my dear wife on this, Dave. She's the expert, although I fully agree with every conclusion she's come to in her new book.

**Joanne:** You're becoming an expert, honey, because the Lord has led you to do more study on the subject yourself.

**Dave:** Joanne, I know that you have spent -- I'm going to guess— years and years, maybe a decade or more, working on your latest book entitled In the Wake of Enmity: God's Plan for Women, Truth vs. Tradition. I was reading through it last night, and I was somewhat surprised at some of the research you have done tracing all the way back to Genesis this concept that the curse is the result of women. Do you consider this excess baggage that we have been carrying around in the Church?

**Joanne:** That would be one way to put it, I think. It's a misinterpretation

of Genesis 3:16 that has been carried ever since the Garden of Eden that it was God's plan and God's edict that because of the Fall, man was to rule woman. That's not the correct interpretation of that at all, if you go back to the original Greek and do word studies and confer with those who know the language much better than I—I don't know it at all. I've had to rely a great deal on other scholars and lexicons, etc., etc. But if I could just backtrack a little bit, Dave, you made reference to the women's liberation movement. I think what Satan wanted to accomplish through the women's liberation movement, he's done a very good job at accomplishing, in that it has further polarized the Body of Christ against women because they are so turned off at the movement. I am with them in that. I am not a feminist! I don't want to be associated with that movement in any way, shape or form! Nothing that the feminist movement did or is doing challenged me to study the Word of God. It had nothing to do with it whatever. My study and insatiable desire to ferret out the truth from God's Word stemmed purely from a personal experience, a couple of different church situations that Nate and I were in, about twenty years apart from each other. In one we were very much in agreement that women were not to have anything to do with the teaching or even discussing the Word of God that much. Nate was right there with it, and I was right there with it. But in the ensuing years, God had worked in Nate's heart to open his eyes to the truth that God does want to use women in ministry and had totally changed his understanding. He had totally released me to anything God called me to do or to be or to go in service for Him. And yet he still held to that the husband was head of the wife. So we still had to work through that. But twenty years later we came into another church situation where it was very obvious—we hadn't been there very long until it was very obvious that women were not supposed to say a word once "the meeting" part began. And so my reaction was, "Oh, God! Not again! What do I do with this now? How do I respond to this?" Very sovereignly the Lord dropped a book into our home, and Nate started

reading it. The Lord said, "You're not the one who is supposed to read that." Joanne is supposed to read that. So he passed it on to me. And that is what God used to place within me this insatiable desire to ferret out this whole subject. So I don't want anybody to in any way feel that I am identifying with the feminist movement. A century ago it had a very pure definition, but today the feminist movement stands for the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, lesbianism, and all of that garbage. I want nothing to do with it, and yet, there is a truth that goes clear back to the Garden of Eden. And we dare not let Satan's counterfeit, which I believe the movement has been, keep us from what God's true, pure plan was. I'm sure you have discovered, it doesn't matter what movement is going today that's of God and straight from the Word of God, Satan will raise his ugly head and erect some kind of a counterfeit such as the ecumenical movement of a few years ago. Well, that's Satan's counterfeit to the true unity and flowing together of God's people across denominational lines.

**Dave:** *It comes to mind, the environmental movement, which is a counterfeit of Christians being stewards of the earth, the New World Order movement being a counterfeit of God's intention to basically establish the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of God, this is a movement to try to establish the sovereignty of man over everything. So yes, I'm with you there.*

*I love what you say here that the term "Biblical feminist" is really in the category of an oxymoron because of, again, the word feminist has come to mean the radical, wild-eyed woman who wants to take back something and fight for her rights when Biblically we know that we are servants, and in humility we need to not be so much fighting for our rights but fulfilling our responsibility before Christ and our other brothers and sisters in the Body.*

**Joanne:** Amen! Amen! And to go back to the Garden, if you clearly study Genesis 1 and 2, you can see that God gave the word to both Adam and Eve to rule the earth and

the animals, etc., etc. There's not one word that would indicate that either one was to be over the other before the Fall. And then of course we have Genesis 3:16, where God is just saying, "You just might as well know that as a result of the Fall, man will rule you." It's rather amusing to me. It would seem to me that something I saw in the Word of God that was a result of Satan's attack on mankind, as I drew closer to the Lord and wanted to please the Lord, I would do everything in my power to defeat what Satan's purposes were. And yet I get a bit amused as I see how hard men and women strive to perpetuate that which was so clearly the result of Satan's activity in the world. And then to say that the Cross of Jesus Christ is not able to restore relationally what was destroyed at the Garden, I find very sad because it sells the Cross of Jesus Christ short.

**Dave:** *So you are suggesting in your premise or paradigm shift here that the original plan that God had in mind when He created man and woman was for unity, mutual support, and submission, not subjugation of one over the other. And through careful footnoting and a tremendous bibliography, you are suggesting that, from the time of Jesus' conception, there began a restoration of that original plan that God had for man and wife to be co-laborers, and there is a growing body of both scholars and Christian leaders who are rethinking that. Is that your position?*

**Joanne:** That's right. That's right. And even in the Old Testament there are some interesting things you can study that show how God was preparing a people and even beginning to turn some of the mores and unwritten laws of the people, both pagan and the Hebrew people, to prepare a people into which Jesus could be born to then re-establish, to fulfill His purpose in His death on the Cross and restoring all things.

And of course, when you move into the New Testament, and poor Paul takes the brunt of being the bad guy for perpetuating this teaching that is supposed to keep women in a state of subjugation. And Paul is blamed for saying things that he just plain didn't say. It's just been really

interesting as I have done this study. I've been a bit appalled at the liberty that some of the translators have taken to make the Scriptures say what they want them to say.

For instance, just as an example, let's take Phoebe. In describing Phoebe, she's described as a servant. Where men, be it Apollos or Paul or some of those strong male leaders, where that same word is used describing their ministry, it is translated as "ministry." In a number of instances, it is ministry. The NAS and NIV in one or two cases do use the word "servant." But the word in Greek really means servant. I don't have any problem with that. If they want to describe Phoebe as a servant, that's fine. But then let's describe the men as servants, too, because that's really what God is after, for us all to be servants in the Kingdom. It's just interesting how the traditional teaching of the subjugation of women, I believe, has been by interpretation brought to the Scriptures, not found in it.

*Dave: You're suggesting maybe some of the origin lies in Talmudic mysticism rather than Biblical reality.*

Joanne: Well, there's no question about it, especially in First Corinthians 14 where Paul is talking about women being silent in the Church just as the law says. There is no law whatsoever in the Bible that says that. Who knew the law better than Paul? Besides that, he was doing everything he could to break the new believers away from the bondage of the law. He's certainly not going to hold them to a law. That does Paul a great disfavor.

*Dave: Was Paul dealing with a particular cultural problem in the Corinthian Church that should only be applied there, not broadly down the corridors of history?*

Joanne: I believe that Paul was really kind of getting on, scolding the Corinthians. They had written him a letter, and he was really responding to that letter. Over and over again through First Corinthians he will say, "Now concerning gifts, now concerning things sacrificed to idols." He's answering their questions. It's almost like he's

answering and responding to a statement they made in their letter when they are saying, "Women should keep silent in the Church, for this is what the law said." In the very next verse in essence Paul asks, "Who do you think you are? Did the Word of God come to you first?" He's cutting down a bondage that the Corinthians are wanting him to support, that they are wanting to put women under because that is part of their oral or Talmudic law, but it certainly is not Biblical law. And so to say that Paul is upholding an Old Testament law by his making this statement is unfair to him. He knew the law better than that.

Nate: I might interject here, Dave, that these conclusions that the Lord has brought Joanne to over the last five or six years—and has brought me to—we are really awed at how many others the Lord has brought the same conclusions. We are running across a new book about every month that is saying the same thing. I could name many Christian leaders who in the last five or six years have changed their views and come to this very same conclusion. We just ran across a tremendous book coming out of Massachusetts, and last week we found another book that's been out since 1985 that we didn't even know about. It's by a professor at Wheaton College. We just see this whole restoration of women as one of the things that God is doing in this hour.

Joanne: Many of these works are very detailed, very scholarly, just tremendous books with tremendous resources. But unless you really have the time and the desire to delve into the subject as deeply as the Lord has led me to do, it is too much. The Lord, I feel, has led me to put together a book that has some exegesis in it because people are not interested in my opinion. They basically do want to know what the Word of God says, but without quite as much detail, as deeply a scholarly approach as some of these others do, which are so necessary of course to support what I am saying in the book. I know that out there, there are just many, many women, as well as men, who are becoming really frustrated. Many women have been deeply wounded because they have had such a burden from

the Lord for ministry, and yet they have been thwarted by spiritual leaders who have refused to allow them to be all that God has gifted them to be. So God is in the process of really doing something exciting as it relates to women, in this whole process of the restoration of the Church to God's original plan! But those kinds of things don't come easily. They don't come without a fight.

*Dave: No, that's probably true.*

*Jesus said the traditions of man would be one of the few things that could limit the power of God. I'm sure that some of our orthodox brothers in the faith are getting nervous as we are touching on this issue.*

*I want to move now into the subject of leadership. In your book you have a chapter that deals with women in leadership, women teaching. This seems to be a point of demarcation where many people are willing to bend a little bit, on women's involvement, acknowledging that God throughout history has used women in a mighty way. Probably it would have been much mightier had man-made traditions not been put on them. We started talking about teaching and leading and this type of thing. You are probably going to step on a lot of ecclesiological toes. Why don't you tell us your view on that and the Biblical basis for it?*

Joanne: Most people refer to First Timothy 2 when they bring up the subject of women not teaching or having authority over a man. Once again, most Biblical scholars adhere to a certain set, and there are variations in this set, but certain rules of interpretation. And you cannot accurately interpret the Word of God without taking these into consideration, one of which is the historical setting to which something is written. We can't overlook that when we get into Paul's writing. And so it's important to understand who he's writing to there in Timothy. It's my understanding that they had a mess there in Ephesus where Timothy was trying to bring some order out of chaos because they had what was known as syncretism, which is a combination of Christianity and pagan doctrine and all kinds of mix-



ups trying to flow together in the Body of Christ.

*Dave: Probably similar to what we call New Age today, where any way you want to find God is okay.*

**Joanne:** Yes, and I even think New Age was part of the problem there in Ephesus because of some of the things that were being taught as it related to women. That's a deep subject.

At any rate, Paul was having to address a group of women who had come to know the Lord, who had become a part of the group of believers out of the pagan worship, the worship of Diana where there were the temple prostitutes and so much lewdness and promiscuity that was a part of their worship. At the same time, Gnosticism was beginning to rise and was being quite hotly debated. Gnosticism included free sex. There were all kinds of very false things going on and being taught, among which were some women who were taking a leadership role and teaching things that shouldn't have been taught, that had nothing to do with Christianity. So Paul was having to address all these. If you just go down verse by verse, he just addresses everything that they were trying to teach and knocks it down. For instance, First Timothy 2:5 says, "But there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Now the Gnostics had taught that woman was not the one deceived, that woman had willfully taken from the fruit of the Garden and, therefore, had entered into a higher knowledge and in so doing had become the channel through whom God had manifested Himself. And so Paul is saying, "There is one God, one Mediator. It's the man Christ Jesus. It was not the woman. It was the man Christ Jesus that is the Mediator, the Channel through Whom God flowed."

Then it gets down to the verse that is the most often quoted, verse 12, "But I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." It's just very interesting that there is a word there, and it's the word *authentain*. The verse should read, "I do not allow women to *authentain*. That is an ancient word, the definition of

which was entirely different from how modern translations use it. At the time when Paul was writing this, the word meant some form of committing murder that had been a part of the worship of Diana. Sometimes it involved a pantomime of murder. There were times when it was actually carried out, all of which was the putting down of man, the murdering of man. Another connotation to it was sort of a promiscuous type of teaching where a woman as she was teaching would offer her services after the teaching time was over. It was just all ensconced in a very promiscuous sort of a definition and setting. And Paul was just simply saying, "That's not going to be allowed in the Body of Christ. That's just not something that should be part of your Christian worship." And then further on in that chapter at some point, he encourages these women to sit down in quietness and in submission to be taught truth. That's all Paul was saying. He was trying to get some order out of chaos there where women who had not been taught, who had no business teaching in the Church were doing just that. And Paul is just trying to set things straight. Until these women can learn truth, they shouldn't be teaching at all.

**Nate:** I think the other thing I'd like to say, Dave, is that those who hold the traditional view of a limited role for women usually base it on First Corinthians 14 and First Timothy 2, both passages of which are very difficult to understand. And you can't build doctrine on passages like that. Conversely, the general overview of the entire New Testament makes no distinction between male and female. Acts 2 says the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon both. All the passages that talk about the gifts of the Spirit operating, the Body functioning, our walking with Jesus, our having His image, and on and on, most of the New Testament makes no distinction between male and female. And I think another passage that is quite clear is Ephesians 2 about one new man. The Lord wanted to do away with all of these classifications of Jew and Gentile and also Galatians 3, economic status and the whole male/female thing. What Jesus had in mind was a new community.

Ephesians 2 says, "one new man," a whole new entity where we would function as equals as directed by the Holy Spirit under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in unity and humility and mutual submission with one another, not just men and women, but all of us together in the Body of Christ. And of course it fits in with what Jesus said to His disciples. He said, "In the world you have hierarchies and chains of command, but not in My Kingdom. In My Kingdom you serve one another." In essence He is saying, "You walk in mutual submission to each another." So First Corinthians 14 and First Timothy 2, as some would interpret them, go contrary to the whole rest of the body of the New Testament.

*Dave: There's a clue in the New Testament that says, "Christ is coming back for the Bride of Christ." And so while there is a recurring theme of Paul and the other writers referring to the Body of Christ in masculine terms, the Bride of Christ indicates that we need to be seen as a whole unit. I'm thinking as we are talking, if we don't listen to God's voice in mercy, we listen in judgment. In many ways things that are falling upon our culture, including the feminist movement, are reaction to and a judgment from God for things we have overlooked, for mistakes that we have made. I just encourage anyone listening to get ahold of this book, In the Wake of Enmity. Go through it. As Trina Kerr has said, "The grace with which Joanne has written this and received criticism is an example of true humility." Trina Kerr goes on to say that she believes this book is long overdue. By the way, that's the wife of Graham Kerr, the Galloping Gourmet.*

*You ended up, Joanne, talking about what our response should be. The bottom line is, we spend a lot of time arguing over details. Oftentimes if the enemy can't possess something, he perverts it. You said that he counterfeits it. The bottom line of this book is not to further divide the Body of Christ on an issue that is certainly destined to be bandied around for the next twenty years, but rather to try to bring some healing. Why don't you explain what you feel the response should be.*

**Joanne:** Number one in anything

that we try to teach or any truth that the Lord gives us, if we don't walk it out in humility, we are going to destroy what God is trying to do in that issue, whatever it is. So the bottom line is humility. And I believe that as God does reveal truth to us, no matter what area it is in, we are obligated to the Father to walk in that truth. But it must be done with extreme humility. It cannot be done with pride. It cannot be done with an attitude of, "I'm out to change the world and make everybody see this exactly as I see it." Nevertheless we need to begin to walk in whatever truth God has given us, that He has made real to our spirit, in real humility. And for many of us, that will involve beginning with repentance and releasing bitterness. Perhaps we've taken that on because spiritual leaders, particularly us women, have kept us in bondage. We need to release them and forgive them. Give that all back to the Lord. I believe it involves repentance on the part of men and women because there are still many women who adhere very strongly to this traditional teaching. I believe it is going to involve individual repentance as well as corporate repentance for the woundings that have been placed upon women for centuries and around the world, as well as to repent before the Body of Christ for the giftings that they have been deprived of, that God wanted to minister to the Body through women, that they have not been able to receive from them. So repentance and humility would be the two words that I believe are key to walking this out.

*Dave: You know it's interesting to me that this emphasis comes at the same time that God is emphasizing the plurality of leadership. And if we look at the Bible, certainly we see women apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and, in some cases, teachers.*

*Nate, you have talked about the fact that there is a shift from "onemanship," from one-man pastors to plurality of leaders and elders. Why don't you lay out some of your views on that as we wind this up on God's plan for His Church?*

*Nate: The pattern all through the New Testament whenever Paul*

planted a church or whenever he taught on this subject was always a group of leaders called elders who again walked in unity and humility and mutual submission with one another, which would not allow for the one-man kingdom-building that we have seen happening in our generation in church life here in America. That would never have come about had we had the kind of leadership structure that I believe the New Testament so clearly teaches. An example in Acts 14:23 is Paul on his first missionary journey, appointing leadership in his first churches that he founded. It says he appointed elders—plural—in every church—singular. He didn't bring in men from Jerusalem. He didn't appoint a single leader. He appointed a group of leaders who he called elders who were the older, more spiritually mature within the group. It's our understanding that elders could even have been females. You just find this teamwork, Paul and his team of apostolic associates. You find teamwork all through the New Testament. So again, today, God is getting us back to being in tandem with others and working together in teams instead of all this one man kind of stuff. You know, today we can't even talk about the Church without talking of the one-man leader who we call the pastor. I don't see that anywhere in Scripture. Pastor or shepherd is simply a function. There are those of us who may function apostolically, which means we are always starting new things. There are those of us who may function evangelistically, which means we are always leading people to Christ. There are those of us who may function as shepherds, which means we always have got our arm around some Christian listening to their problems. There are those of us who function as teachers, which means we always talk in terms of one, two, three. These are functions. They are not positions.

I could even get into the whole subject of ordination. I don't believe that whole practice is Biblical. Certainly Paul appointed. The King James says ordained. But the accurate translation is appointed. Paul simply recognized those whom God had His hand on, and He appointed them as leaders. And this

whole practice of ordination where now you are ordained, now you are "Reverend," now you are the Church leader, has no Biblical basis whatsoever. It's contrary to what Jesus is after. Jesus is after people who will walk in humility and brokenness with one another. He is not after some kingpin. That's the whole Nicolaitan thing mentioned in Revelation 2:3. It's that one person being in control of others. It's that Nicolaitan spirit which Jesus said He hates. It's anti-Christ. So we've just got to repent of so much stuff and get back to the simplicity and humility and mutuality and naturalness and spontaneity of the early Church. And when we do, when we repent of all this stuff we have picked up through the centuries, and we just get back to that simple little band of people who are in love with Jesus and in love with one another walking together in humility that Jesus was after, then we will see the Church rise up as a beautiful Bride, and then we will see the Great Commission fulfilled. We will see the Church having an impact on society, but not before. And I know some think that the words I have spoken here have been pretty strong words, but it is so clear in Scripture.

*Dave: There are many different elements and strategies that are emerging, the cell church movement, the house church movement, the meta-church, the opening up of the weekly gatherings for more participation such as The Open Church discusses. Do you see them moving toward a point of convergence around the Lordship of Christ and the priesthood of all believers? Can you see an emerging unity in the Church even though right now it seems here and there just in pockets? You have a hopeful view, don't you?*

*Nate: Well, yes. I believe there is going to be a beautiful Bride for Christ to come back to. I believe that there are days of persecution ahead. I am grateful for all that God is doing. It does find many different expressions. God always takes His people from where they are to where He wants them to be. He does that step by step. My book has been written not so much for those who want to take the next step, but I've tried to lay out what I believe is the*

end result that the Lord has been after all these centuries. So you just have to take the Church where it is and then read what I've written. Or of course, more effectively, just read the New Testament. How we get from where we are to where God wants us, only He can orchestrate that, which He is doing. You know, He said, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." He is building His Church. He's pouring out new wine. He's raising up new wineskins, and there is going to be a beautiful Bride for Jesus when He comes back.

**Dave:** *You know we talk about building across time, obviously what comes to mind is the next generation. It's interesting the movement toward decentralizing and meeting in homes is sort of paralleling a movement on educating children at home with the home school movement at about the same time. That is sovereign. It could have happened a hundred years ago, but it is just happening now simultaneously. When divine truth begins to settle like dew on the prairie, you have to acknowledge that it is God and say that it just is not one man's plan. You discuss in your book the responsibility of children versus youth workers. Why don't you speak to that?*

**Nate:** Let me say first that many home schooling people are now moving into home business and also into home church. I believe in the next couple of years we are going to see tens of thousands of home schooling people get the light and be led by the Lord to move right into the home church thing too. It's already beginning to happen, but I believe the great avalanche of it is in the next year or two ahead.

**Dave:** *It's interesting that even technology seems to be pushing things back to where you can do almost everything from your home that you used to have to go into an office for.*

**Nate:** That's right. And with regard to the item you mentioned, Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." There are many other passages in Proverbs and in the New Testament that also

include women. So it's husband and wife, father and mother together. The responsibility of seeing our kids rise up to be servants for Christ belongs to us as parents. It doesn't belong to some youth worker or some Sunday school teacher that we've had a tendency to pass it off to. And then if things don't go right, we fire the youth worker and bring in somebody else. Our homes should be the center of Christian education. The evenings as families should be spent studying the Bible together, praying together, worshipping the Lord, discussing the things of God.

I have another book I've written called *New Testament Survey*, which covers the whole New Testament verse by verse. We know home school people who are using that to disciple, to get right into the New Testament and study it verse by verse with their kids. One of the families in our home church is doing that right now. They are taking it as a family. They are going through *New Testament Survey* and studying the New Testament verse by verse as a family. That's the kind of thing we need to be doing. And Scripture memory. I remember when our kids were small. As a family we would have family worship together every day, and part of that was memorizing Scripture. Our kids are grown now and have their own families. They still know those verses. So we have got to again just get back to the simplicity of the Word of God.

**Dave:** *The bottom line of it is getting back to the Great Commission, which was a re-commissioning from the Genesis Commission, and that is to take dominion over the earth, to see the Church disciple the nations. It begins in the home, and it affects the local church, and then it begins to affect the local community. Really the bottom line is to raise up a multiplication factor that can see the Church reach into the corners of the world with a true expression of the Body of Christ, not some counterfeit type of a plastic, fantastic thing, which much of the world looks at and maybe rightly so stands in judgment of right now. You believe the house church model is probably the best for seeing church multiplication and seeing the Great Commission fulfilled?*

**Nate:** Well, I think it's the simplest, and of course it's the only thing that works in some places like China. If the Church in fact is going to go through tribulation, persecution, suffering, and hard times, which I believe the Scriptures teach (and many others do, too), then before it's all over, whether we like to or not, we all are going to be gathering more spontaneously in our homes or wherever we can. We will not have the luxury of these big, comfortable buildings. I would like to tag on to your last statement, which I thoroughly agree with. We've "Westernized" the Church. We have "IBM-ed" it. We've "General Motors-ed" it. The Church looks more like General Motors and IBM than it does the Book of Acts. And so we have got to get back to just that simple koinonia that Jesus was after, living our lives together, loving one another, sharing our lives with each other, walking together, and being servants of one another. You know, Jesus said, "By this the whole world will know that you are My disciples." Not by the buildings, not by all these big programs we devise. He said, "When the world sees you loving one another and serving and laying your lives down for one another, then they will know that you are different and that you are My followers."

**Dave:** *Amen! Nate and Joanne, thanks so much for your work, and your new books that are out. We will include your address so our listeners can delve into the resources that you have put together.*

**Nate:** Thank you for your serving the Body of Christ as you do, Dave.

**Joanne:** Yes, Dave. Thank you.

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## Franklin Littell — *The Free Church*

**Dave:** *There is an old saying, "Those who don't learn from history are destined to repeat it." In the next segment we are going to be talking to a man who has learned from history and maybe has a word to say to us as we touch on the corners of the 21st century, about church history, about some of the things in the Church, which have been structured more according to the traditions of man than according to Scriptures. I'm talking about retired Temple University historian and author, Dr. Franklin Littell. I have a copy of The Open Church in my hands, subtitled How to Bring Back the Exciting Life of the First Century Church.*

*Let me read a paragraph from that book and get your response on it. It says, "A formalized Christianity in a ceremonial setting was invented during and immediately after the age of Constantine. It did not grow out of a slow, natural progression to a more mature Church, but out of a sudden captivity to a half-converted, neo-pagan worldview. The institutionalization of the Church was not a step up, but a step off the precipice into the chasm of slavery to unbiblical traditions. We are still in that chasm seventeen hundred years later. Your church may be as orthodox as sunshine in July, but the chances are that 50-90% of its practices are hand-me-downs from Constantine."*

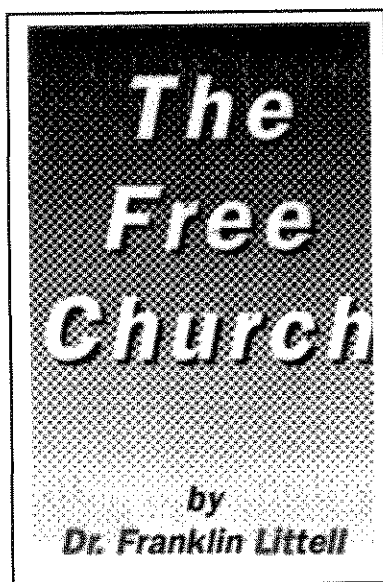
*Small wonder that the Temple University historian calls Constantine, "That great whale that broke the net."*

*Franklin, in your writings discussing the Anabaptist view of the Church, the free Church, you have a deep-felt philosophy and belief that the Scripture teaches that the Body of Christ is much more organic than perhaps what we have seen evolve or devolve over the last seventeen hundred years from Constantine. Why don't you explain your statement there that you believe that Constantine was the whale that broke the net?*

**Franklin:** *The net of course was the gathering in. When "the gathering in" yielded to an inclusiveness,*

*which no longer involved "the scattering" and "the gathering" but simply an amalgamation of heathen populations with something called Christianity in a very vague way, that's what that metaphor means.*

*My conviction when I wrote that, before and after, has been that the introduction of Roman administrative law and procedures and of Greek syllogistic theological propositions on the doctrinal front were equal disasters. One of them killed the life of the Spirit, and the other killed the initiative of the laity, of the whole people.*



**Dave:** *Let's take a step back now. For the first several hundred years, the Church seemed to be preached at almost every outpost throughout the Roman empire. They didn't have mortgages. They didn't have committees. They didn't have softball team practices. Really, they were flourishing in hard times. It was really a grassroots mutual assistance type of Body of Christ that we saw. What do you see is the secret to seeing that presence of the Living God functioning in their hearts that perhaps was lost when the Church merged with the State under Constantine?*

**Franklin:** *It's quite clear that during the first generations, that is with decreasing momentum up to 325 in the common era, Christianity was*

*transmitted by believers, by individuals who might be lay or might be evangelists sometimes, and by bishops or elders who were sent in to keep a kind of a general supervisory attitude as to what was being done in various churches so that not too many strange doctrines crept in, and the power of the Spirit was at work. It wasn't a machine run by a bunch of professional bureaucrats, which it then became when the model was the Constantinian model. Constantine himself functioned as an emperor who controlled the generals of his army, controlled the tax collecting, controlled whatever instruction was given and whatever academies he allowed to flourish or to even function, and controlled the churches. He also controlled the bishops, he controlled the metropolitans, and he controlled the senates. This model carried on for centuries until there arose again in vigor on the continent, first century people were put to death who bore this testimony. The following century, some of them survived, most of them by coming to America, and then in England, too, there arose a restitution of the true churches—people who went back to the New Testament model and considered the Constantinian model a betrayal of the whole faith.*

**Dave:** *Now, seventeen hundred years later, archaeologists are beginning to turn up things that indicate that the Church flourished when it was centered in the home, when it focused around plurality of leadership, and so there are those who are "popping up" here and there saying, "For some reason, we've gone way off the track and need to go back to that model."*

*You've traveled, and in fact you are sometimes referred to as the last Methodist itinerant in your sixty years of ministry. You have worked internationally with a lay-led ministry in Germany as well as other parts of the world. Do you think this is really the shape of things to come, as we see that in American culture we are so isolated? If we look at the effects of the Constantinian merging of Church and State, we see that everything has been professionalized and privatized. We see*

*institutionalization, spectator faith—all these things that leave the Church—in the words of George Barna—"... in a very, very sad condition, not having an impact in the surrounding culture." People are dropping out of church all over the place because they are tired of just sitting around, as Jim Rutz says, "... fellowshiping with the back of someone's head for their whole life." Do you think the answer is moving back to an early church model?*

**Franklin:** I would like to say two things at this juncture. One of them is that when the colonial State churches were disestablished beginning with Virginia in 1784 or 1786 and when the first amendment became part of the Constitution and then Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts followed with disestablishment and the great revivals were started, they started from a walk-out. The people walked out of the State churches, and the great revivals then took the gospel to the people. During the 19th century, Christianity in America had an astonishing vigor and growth. **Then we have learned in the 20th century that legal establishment isn't the only danger, which is corruptive of the Word and the life of faith. Social establishment can also be corrupted where it becomes impossible to tell whether you are in a good meeting of a church board or a school board or a rotary or any other service organization.**

Rufus Jones, the great Quaker teacher, wrote a little book on the remnant in which he said one time, "Our churches have gotten to be like Robinson Crusoe's goat pasture. The fences are so low, and the fields are so wide, that the goats inside are as wild as the goats outside." I think that's a pretty good description of the way in which our American churches suffer—even though they are free churches, even though legally, constitutionally they have the blessing of our Founding Fathers' understanding that real religion is voluntary—and that free exercise, rather than State-dictated religion, is the way we ought to go if we have any regard for the New Testament church. You can also go wrong just on social establishment, on common, ordinary assimilation, so to speak. That's where we are. People feel it.

My denomination has lost over a million members in the last ten years. The Presbyterians have lost over a million members. You can just tick off what used to be called (rather arrogantly in my opinion) the mainline Protestant denominations. And the Catholics are in the same fix, except that they count demographic statistics, so they don't have the same pain that Methodists and Episcopalians and Disciples of Christ do when they start counting.

But there we are. The social establishment is a dangerous thing, "the gathering up." First, the scattering of the Word and then "the gathering up" of the people who are grasped and who are moved is the alternation which we need. And at this time we are simply wide open. The Methodists until 1906, when the General Conference changed the rule, had class meetings. You couldn't become a member of a local church without six months of weekly training in "the class," training in the Bible, training in theology, training in church history—so that you knew what you were getting into. Today I read in the newspapers about churches where they have evangelistic meetings, and they take people in "on the spot." If they can even pronounce your name, you can become a member. That's just as dangerous as the Constantinian pattern, the way it developed in Europe.

**Dave:** *Kind of an "easy -believism," so to speak.*

**Franklin:** Well, it's "cheap grace," as Deitrich Bonhoeffer called it, and it leads to the perils of cheap grace when you have something like the Nazi Third Reich develop in a nation that was as educated, as Christianized, as technically advanced as any people on the face of the earth. That's what cheap grace produces.

**Dave:** *So if I were to summarize, I guess I would be accurate to say that you believe the early Church model should be normative rather than viewed as something antiquated and not possible today.*

**Franklin:** Well, I not only believe it, but I think it can be shown. The rise of modern missions and the outreach

of Christianity to the peoples of Asia and Africa and the distant places, the islands of the sea, has been out of the faith and the giving and the personal testimony of primarily lay people, for that matter, and certainly overwhelmingly from the free churches.

**Dave:** *Do you have anything good at all to say about Constantine? There seems to be some evidence historically that Constantine was a brave and sincere Christian even though the evidence shows that his motivations were mixed and certainly mixed in with a lot of paganism. Do you hold any affectionate feelings, or is he kind of the Anti-Christ incarnate?*

**Franklin:** I would never use that language, certainly about a dead man. He's gone before a Higher Judge than you and me. It's necessary to understand that there are true myths and false myths, concepts, if you wish. Constantinism is a concept or, technically speaking by religionists, it's a myth. It's a myth to say that there is an unbroken papal sequence from St. Peter to the present day. The historians and scholars have demolished that myth a hundred times over. It is a concept or a myth to say that the early church had a genius and a strength which our promiscuous membership churches today don't have. But it's a true myth. All you have to do is look around and see the evidence. We are taught by the book of history as well as by the Book of Books. The Book of Books tells us what kind of people Christians are when they are serious, and the book of history tells us what happens when they apostatize and when they relax or, as the prophets called it, "go whoring after strange gods."

**Dave:** *After Constantine, we fell into the Dark Ages, and we saw the crusades where the Church picked up the sword and went after conquests in the name of Christ, something which you point out in The Free Church was carried forward in the Nazi slaughters of the Jewish people. Let's now touch on Luther. Luther was a Reformer. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all carried the idea that they could somehow restore the Scripture to its proper role. Do you think that the Reformers had the*

*right idea, but they just stopped too soon, or what?*

**Franklin:** Our Free Church Fathers usually called them "half-way men." That is the way they conceptualized it or the metaphor which they used. They were "half-way men." They "saw the light," and then they lost their nerve. I don't think that's the way to see it. I would say that Zwingli, Luther and Bucer and the others never broke from the medieval view of "the good society," which was that the religious leadership and the political leadership in tandem would articulate and enforce the laws and the customs which made a good society. I think they were wrong. The people who saw correctly at that time were the people who regarded so-called Christian Europe as missionary territory, too, the forerunners of the Mennonites, the Leufer, and the forerunners of the Hutterites. You may not believe it today because the Hooderites have those little self-contained colonies out in the Western plains of the U.S.A. and Canada. In the 16th century, the Hutterites were the leading missionary communities in Europe. They sent missionaries all over Europe out of their colonies.

So these were the people who saw that the early Church is the model, that Christians need to be Christianized, that infant baptism has grave problems. I am a Methodist and my children were baptised, and I was too. But there are problems there. The whole rite of confirmation was reintroduced by Martin Bucer, the greater reformer in Strasbourg in 1543. He took it to England with him when he went into exile, and it got into the second prayer book of the Anglicans. It was supposed to be, in fact, it was stated to be an answer to adult baptism because the Baptists said, the Leufer, "If you don't baptise adults, then at least have some rite of the Church where adults make a concrete profession of faith, an awareness, a witting profession of faith." That's how confirmation got into the Anglican Church and later into Lutheranism and so on. It was an answer to believer's baptism. Now I'm not arguing for believer's baptism necessarily, but I am saying that believer's baptism is a far better

thing than to simply accept routinely through social custom or through laws that require it, the baptism of children. Karl Barth, after all those years, finally came to the conviction that infant baptism was wrong. He wrote it. And that was the issue. It wasn't infant baptism per se or adult baptism per se. It's the whole issue of whether the Christians are a gathered community of witting, committed, consecrated, knowledgeable adults, or whether they are simply a motley assembly of sheep who happen to be baptized into Christianity instead of being born into Hinduism some place else.

**Dave:** *So Luther and Calvin tried to restore the centrality of the Scripture, but as far as restoring the lay ministry, they really fell short. In fact, I think it was Luther who said when looking for laymen who could lead something of a restoration in that area, "I cannot find them."*

**Franklin:** You never will find them as long as you have that kind of a setup.

**Dave:** *Let's talk a little bit about Wittenberg. The concept of the pastor as the central CEO of Christendom in the Protestant Church, really, was, "not quite a Catholic priest."*

**Franklin:** It's the Roman administrative model. It's what the Roman Empire developed, which was then taken over by the Bishop of Rome and then later when Christendom broke up in the 16th century in two sectors, they still carried on. The State churches still carried on that model of administration.

**Dave:** *On the philosophical side after the early Church Fathers, like Origen and Augustine, etc., they plunged us toward a fragmented dualism. Some call it a neo-Platonic dualism. Do you have anything to say about the French leaders regarding the impact these men had, moving us toward the architecture and philosophy of seeing the division between the spirit and the soul—the dualism that is with us today? How do you see that impacting the Church today?*

**Franklin:** Greek philosophy has

been corruptive at many points of Christian theology and Christian doctrinal teaching. This is much too quick and much too simple. It's the kind of thing you need to talk about in the graduate seminar or study at length, but the fatal edge, so to speak, is evident when you consider the Hebrew Scriptures, which the early church called "the Scriptures." They meant the Hebrew Scriptures. When the New Testament talks about the Scriptures, that's the Hebrew Scriptures. That is the true and sound background to the Christian Torah or way of life. Torah usually gets translated as law, which then puts us into the dichotomy between law and grace and so forth. That's not it. Torah is "the way of life," which some Christians interpret legalistically and some Christians understand as a gift of the grace of God and also the gifts of the Spirit.

I think it's important to say our background is, as Paul put it again and again, and as the early Church certainly believed, the Covenant which was given to Abraham is *shem*, which means, "We worship the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob," and our history is grafted into the history of the Jewish people, and that's that. The idea that the Gentiles very readily developed of course. I mean, why the Jews for heaven's sake? As one of the Nazi pamphleteers—and I have the pamphlet here in my study along with a bunch of others that I collected after the war—he wrote, "Why does the German man of the 20th century need Hebrew folklore and fable? We have our own Teutonic folklore and fable."

Sure, the heathen always talk that way. That has been the temptation of the intellectuals as well as the common folk. One of my colleagues, who is now teaching up at McGill, a Catholic Jesuit, in fact, said, "It's been the misery of Christian theology that it has been developed in the school of philosophy rather than being trained in history in the school of social sciences." That's one way of putting the same point, but if you deal with the Hebrew component, if you deal with the Hebrew Scriptures, you are back in history. Deitrich Bonhoeffer, the Christian martyr, put it very well.

He said, "The Hebrew Bible is the specific, the corrective tool." The tendency of the Christians is to get lost in Docetism, which means division between the Spirit and the body, between the ideal world and the world in which we find ourselves, between the history which is to come and the present history of the past history. It's a continuum. We are here. We are where God has put us.

**Our responsibilities are today's responsibilities, and the Christians need to be brought back into history. They'll never be brought back into history as long as they depend on propositions and abstractions and speculative syllogisms developed out of seminars and Greek philosophy.**

*Dave: We live in a time where there is really a battle to see a Biblical worldview, as many people refer to it, where we see and filter all the information we have through a Biblical grid work influencing the Church. As one friend said, "We have saved spirits but Babylonian brains."*

*Let's close out on some positive notes. You've been out there on the highways and byways. Do you see encouraging hope that the Church is moving toward a restoration of Christian covenant community where the Body of Christ sees itself as a committed family not bound together by law, but bound together by the working of God's Spirit in our life and where we see ourselves as much more knit together spiritually rather than held together with doctrines? Do you see a day on the horizon where the Body of Christ begins to move into maturity and unity prior to the Lord's return?*

**Franklin:** I would like to say two things. First, when I was young, I used to think if only everybody would agree with this, in ten years you would have a solution. Today, I have learned, having lived through 1939 in Germany and being in the military government in Germany in 1949 with some vivid contrasts, that you don't speculate. You have to take your position—win, lose, or draw. If you know something is true, you plant and the Lord giveth the increase. That's the first point. So I want to say that whether anybody agrees with me or not, so to speak, I certainly intend to

continue preaching that the Constantinian pattern is a dead end, and the sooner we get away from it toward the early Church model, the better. Now the question as to whether there are signs of renewal is a difficult question because, by the very nature of it, it begins anonymously. Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, put this very well when he spoke about "anonymous Christians." Who knows where the mustard seed is working? As soon as you can say, "Lo here and lo there," you may be making a mistake. It's easy enough to see when somebody builds a cathedral. It's easy enough to see when the Cardinal or Archbishop of Philadelphia marches in in full uniform of a medieval Church prince to threaten the city council, which he did recently. But to say where is the work of the Spirit? Where are the house churches? Where are the people meeting in prayer? Where are the Christian cell groups? Where is renewal going on? I don't think that's where we need to begin.

Where we need to reach out whenever we find somebody who is engaged in this, in prayer and fraternal or collegial relationship, that's clear enough, and I see some really wonderful developments in some places where I know the pastors or I know the lay people to indicate that there are folks who are simply turning away from socially established religion and reading their Bibles and praying and moving in a living direction. How much time we have, no man knows. But that's the way I see the truth regardless of whether it is tomorrow morning or 2050.

*Dave: So we need to be thinking long term and planting seeds and letting the Lord cause the increase, thinking more of raising up the next generation.*

**Franklin:** I think it was Jeremiah who said that if he knew the Lord was going to wrap it up tomorrow, he would go out and plant a tree. That's what I mean.

*Dave: I know you have a number of books that you have written. Some more recent books are: Religious Liberty in the Crossfire, available through Ecumenical Press, and The*

*Crucifixion of the Jews, available through Mercer Press. Some of your older works on the Anabaptist view of the Church, The Free Church and From State Church to Pluralism, are no longer in print. They would be available, I guess, in certain seminary libraries. Oftentimes those books are quoted. Do you have a closing comment, Franklin?*

**Franklin:** I think that in the American society—there's one thing that Americans might forget and one particularly if they are looking toward their own condition and what we need to do about it—and that is that America is a place where the Jewish community has prospered mightily also under religious liberty. I was reading not too long ago a Jewish historian who said that the **plight of the Jewish people did not become inhuman until the 4th century with the rise of the Christian empire.** In other words, anti-semitism is not simply a prejudice or something. It took demonic form when laws were enacted and decrees issued, which defamed and taught contempt of the Jews.

Now that reached its high point when six million were murdered in the heart of Christendom by so-called Christians. So I regard it as a theological issue and a matter of faith, not just a question of human decency, that we need to remember that those regimes in Czarist Russia, and in Nazi Germany, and in 13th century medieval Christendom with Pope Innocent the Third and his successors, who persecuted so-called heretics—in other words, dissenting Christians—also persecuted Jews. I think that in the providence of God, a vital Jewish community has its place. It's not an accident, and I think that we in this blessed society where we have religious liberty and have the responsibilities to make it work as a political system have a responsibility to think not just about our own condition and how we can move ahead in a more faithful way, but we also ought to have an eye on our neighbors, especially our Jewish neighbors. For more information:

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## Tom Mohn — Bread of Life — Open Worship

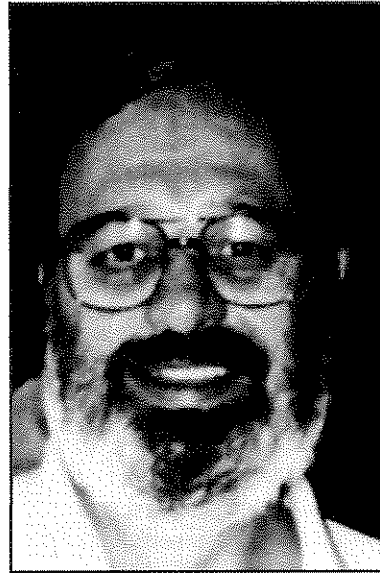
**Dave:** *If worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church, as Tozer said, Bread of Life Ministries is the lost and found department where evangelicals might go to find it. Tom Mohn is the pastor/ elder/ leader of Bread of Life Ministries, a small ministry in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He and his members learned to meet in open format in homes, and then they switched to a gym-like room and started their meetings on Sundays in 1990. Tom is a former Methodist minister, an announcer for Oral Roberts, and, in the words of Jim Rutz, a true gentleman.*

*You have stated that coming from your background, you had to start from square one to learn openness and unlearn closedness. Could you explain?*

**Tom:** That is a good way to put it. I think it was Oswald Chambers who said that he felt that most of Christian learning was to unlearn what we thought was the Christian way, or words to that effect. I feel that is so. We came into this thing thinking that somehow the professionals are supposed to lead us. I am not at all convinced that the professionals have been that well schooled themselves on how to lead in openness. They were really taught in ways that kept correctness or some sort of unnecessary control over the people of God. Depending on the character of the professional or religious heritage, that control was to a greater or lesser degree. But for us, since many have come out of Charismatic experiences in denominations, there seems to be a desire to share more. So we began to search for a way to allow the Body to function under the control of the Holy Spirit. As in the words of I John, "You have no need for any man to teach you because His anointing abides with you." I do not think that meant there were not to be pastors and leaders, but what it meant was that they were to be more guides than to have everything that the Church has. True leadership is more like a spiritual traffic cop. You are there to keep the flow running smoothly of what God wants for all the members.

**Dave:** *Kind of a coach?*

**Tom:** Yes, coach or a guide or a traffic cop. But it is to encourage the people in the knowledge that they, not just leadership, have what the Church needs. For example, we are very heavy into home schooling, and one of the things we learned is that parents have to overcome the idea that only the experts can educate the children. But when one looks around, one has to conclude that the experts in education have not done a very good job. To convince the parent that God has given them by virtue of being the parent, grace and mercy to educate their children is sometimes a whole new realm to these people.



The same is true for the Christian faith and meeting together in open fellowship and communion. In them is everything God needs for the church, just as in the parent is everything needed to educate their children.

**Dave:** *Yes, probably one of the most significant moves in Christianity is the move toward home education. I am a big supporter of it. There is a lot of talk about the problem with the separation of Church and State, but perhaps a greater problem is the separation of the Church from the home.*

**Tom:** I absolutely agree. I read recently that because of the industrial revolution, man left his three primary responsibilities, which are the home, the school, and

the Church. These responsibilities were given over to females. Bless the Lord, the females took the responsibilities, but we as men have resigned the most basic roles. Our society resists the basic study needed to discern this and the fact that there was such a strong Biblical base to our Constitution and society.

**Dave:** *Our secular community has taken the opportunity to separate God from everything because of the lack of clarity in the thinking of the Christians. Let's talk about what led your group to be a participatory group when, from your pastoral background, you were trained to be more program oriented and pastoral directed. Rutz says in his book that Bread of Life floundered in its early years to overcome a variety of problems, and you tell of sitting in meetings and biting your lip during 15 or 20 minutes of dead silence in which you refused to stand up and fill that dead air time.*

**Tom:** I had been programmed that God forbid there should be that kind of silence in the Church. However, we felt that we had to let people learn to bear their responsibilities and privilege. Those two words go together—to be a member of fellowship that comes believing that God can use even them and not just look constantly to leadership. I did not want to be a song leader who always had to come up with a song to keep things going. Thus, we had long periods of quiet. I had to tell the people that, while I had things to share, the more I did it, the more I was going to rob them of the privilege of knowing God in community and fellowship. We lost a lot of people during that time. They got upset and said that I was being too idealistic. But those who stayed did so because they found that God could share through them to help someone else. It took many years to break down all the barriers and patterns we had.

I think everyone can relate to this. Have you been to a meeting where people were talking, laughing, and chatting until someone says, "Okay, it's time to call the meeting to order!"



It's like all fellowship stops just when the meeting for worship begins.

And then when you give the benediction, "Amen! We'll see you next week," all the fellowship starts again. We said, "That is wrong." There should be that same kind of openness and clarity between us that ought not to stop but should be encouraged by the Spirit of God and one another right into the meetings. As people share their everyday problems, victories, or defeats, and needs in their lives, and as they begin to pray for one another, they discover what meeting is meant to be. Just as in the educational areas, where they found that the professionals are doing a shoddy job, so in the religious realm they had sold out to the religious professionals, only to get a shoddy job once again. We had to really fight to not fill in the blanks. I would say in our meetings, "I am not going to sing a song just to break the ice here. I want you to search your heart, and see if God would have something for you to share with us." Slowly but surely people began to believe me. I think that was the biggest barrier. Here is a minister who really wanted to know what he's hearing from God. It seemed that the people were saying, "I don't believe that." But when I kept saying, "Yes, I do. Yes, I do!" I think it took.

We were in the homes 15 to 18 years, but it took 5 or 6 years to believe that I really wanted them to. It was because they would then think, "What will the pastor do then?" They did not want to usurp my role. I felt my role was to encourage them to fulfill their call, to do the work of the ministry.

*Dave: We are talking about high-risk leadership. If God does not move, something may not happen. For 1,700 years the emphasis has been on the pastor who keeps things moving and sees that people are informed, taught, and led. However, some leaders have felt that relationships were more important, along with the Lordship of Christ. They wanted Him to move in the meetings. It seemed very risky, but, "I don't think that would work in my situation because I have hundreds or maybe thousands of people so that is too radical for me. Isn't there something easier?"*

**Tom:** The issue for me boiled down to "how big is your God?" If it all depended on me as a pastor and my abilities, I would have given up. I think it was seeing the greatness of God. A Georgia poet, Sidney Lainer, wrote a poem about the marsh hen, how "she builds her nest on the watery sod. I will build my life on the greatness of God." Or as J.B. Phillips wrote years ago, "our God is just too small." I don't think we really expect Him to meet us in worship.

On one of your tapes you talk about the Reformation and the priesthood of all believers. I think it is one thing to tell the people of our churches that they are priests, but another to then take away all the things that would validate their priesthood. I encourage husbands and fathers to take care of communion in their homes, to baptize their children, and to be involved in their family's wedding ceremonies. In other words, things that we would usually assign to the priesthood belong to all of us. So when we have an outdoor baptismal service, the fathers will be there baptizing their sons and daughters or wives. Or single mothers will come into the pool with us and baptize their children. You cannot say you believe in the priesthood of all the believers and take away the things that a priest does. Thus, when you encourage people in the priesthood, you really begin to see them function. Our job is to encourage them to do the work of the ministry if we really mean it. So regardless of whether you are pastor of a small church or a pastor of a large church, if the goal is to fulfill Ephesians 4:10-11, you want to see them function as priests.

*Dave: Largely what has happened is that the traditions of men have castrated the men in the churches, and it seems to me that you are giving men the opportunity to recapture the role of men, not just in the Church but in their business and all areas of life. Would you paint a picture of what goes on in a typical Sunday meeting at Bread of Life? As it is related in Rutz's book, it seems to be very spontaneous, with people sharing songs and messages and having times of quiet. You also said that your meetings can go for two to three hours.*

**Tom:** We begin by having worship together. Our instrumentalists get together and start to play and sing. This brings the people together. On the other hand, there have been times I have gotten up and read some Scripture, or someone else felt led to lead in prayer. But we usually start with music for 15 or 20 minutes. Then someone will come to one of the microphones to read a Scripture or pray or suggest another song, which may hold worship for another half hour. Sometimes I will preach, and other times I don't say a thing. People have learned by now that they are wanted and are to come forward and share a need, pray, exhort, or give a revelation. It is I Corinthians 14:26 in action, and some mornings I have had to act as a traffic cop, asking one to wait while another shares, to just keep the flow. Yesterday, we had three short sermons. We had intercessory prayer for a man whose wife was walking away from the Lord willingly, and the whole congregation interceded for her. It was a very emotional time, but you could sense the Spirit of God brooding over this woman. Another woman shared how her sin had caused difficulty in her marriage and family, for though she was forgiven, the repercussions of the sin were going on, and she had to learn how to face that. There was more teaching and exhortation and then a time of prayer. Then someone wanted to sing again one of the songs we had sung earlier. Because we are concerned about the message in Malachi that refers to God turning the hearts of the fathers to their children, I stood up and read all four chapters of the book. We sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit, and another brother got up and began to teach and share from the book of Malachi for another ten minutes. Still another brother shared. The sharing in our group is about 60 percent men and about 40 percent women. Years ago if you had 5 percent men, it was considered good. I believe this has come about because of the restoration of the true priesthood of all believers. I have seen men in a swimming pool baptizing their children and absolutely ecstatic over what is going on with them when they realize that it is their privilege and responsibility and blessing to lead their family in their homes. This encourages men to share.

Another thing, yesterday a man got up who had been working on his job as a home improvement expert and related how a Christian working with him had done a very sloppy job. He asked himself, "How can this guy call himself a Christian to do such a job and then go and charge the guy full price? I just don't think it is right." So the man spoke to his fellow worker and disassociated himself from him. He then shared for about five minutes about how he feels his work is a testimony to his faith in God. It was a beautiful time.

Last week I asked about ten of the young girls from ages 8 to 10 to come up because when we pray for the children of the church, we need to put faces on them. So we prayed for these girls, and this led to praying for other children and even the babies. Finally others prayed for the single men and women not to worship either marriage or their singleness. Spontaneous prayer broke out all over the place. We have prophetic utterances in the true charismatic sense. We have had tongues and interpretations, but we have never had them get out of order, because people will share openly if they feel something is out of order.

*Dave: That's exciting! It appears that, as you have yielded your agenda to the Holy Spirit, as Jim Rutz says in his book, "The Holy Spirit weaves together a rainbow of varied hearts and broken lives into an integrated pattern that only He can see."*

**Tom:** When I read that in the first draft, I thought, "My goodness, he has never even met me or been in a service, but he heard that tape and said it perfectly."

*Dave: This stands in such contrast with the program-based design where we see the membership week by week atrophied with paralysis in the Body of Christ because we tend to look to the super-spiritual, superstar leader to do it all or delegate other functions to the staff. I also see that you are standing against the spirit of this world that fosters a spirit of independence, whereas you encourage an interdependence on one another, which is very Biblical. And while the world is rushing toward ethnic*

*divisions, you see the Body of Christ creating a new ethos, a true family of God.*

**Tom:** Another thing we have found is that people who visit us from all races and from out of town feel free to stand up and share. I think it is because they see so many other men. I am not trying to emphasize men to the exclusion of women, but men have been so excluded from real church worship and fellowship that when they see lots of men responding, people from the outside feel secure. They sense that, "if I share, and even if I am wrong, they are not going to rip me to shreds. They will just say, 'Well, we may not see it that way.'" We will not stop someone unless it is outlandishly not beneficial to the Body of Christ. On Sunday, a man got up and said, "I think that God wants to open our eyes to see the greatness and goodness of God. Do we have any oil here?" Well, we meet in a school, but I found some corn oil, and five or six men had lines of people coming by them for over an hour to have their eyes anointed with oil. The man prayed in simple faith, "God, open our eyes to see your greatness, goodness, and desire to make us one people." The following week a number of people stood up and shared how God had opened their eyes during the last week. It was a magnificent thing!

In worship we have found that the music and words must focus on the greatness of God, not on "my needs" or "my need to be blessed." There has to be a lifting of the people to focus on God, regardless of what or how they feel, without making it syrupy or sentimental. God is worthy of all worship and praise, even—and especially—in the midst of all our problems. He is God, and is to be worshipped and adored. We have attempted to make our worship centered upon Him, not "I love you God because you blessed me."

We have gone back and culled out a lot of words and lyrics, especially in some of the modern things we sing, because we sing a lot of choruses. We have made sure we do not demean the Fatherhood of God. We do not try to be politically correct in the way we worship God. This lifts people up to get a proper vantage point of their problems and concerns.

**Dave:** I sense that many people will say that this sounds wonderful. But, "We do these kinds of things in small groups during the week. When we come together Sunday mornings, we think it is important to hear the Word and maintain a certain schedule." Intimacy, sharing, and the flowing of the Spirit are delegated to home meetings. What could you say to them?

**Tom:** I understand these questions because we have home meetings literally every day of the week—mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and I do a lot of teachings. I have two special times where I do teaching. On Sunday morning there is a lot of teaching of the Word of God. What is marvelous is that it is not just me now. There are Sundays where I have gotten up and preached for an hour, if I really felt exercised in God to do that. But oftentimes we have thought that dissemination of Biblical information was true anointed preaching, and it may not have been. When we come together this way, the times of fellowship are rich in the Word of God. We have many men who now stand up and say, "I was reading in the Word of God this week, and I saw this." Thus, I think it has enriched and created great hunger in our brothers and sisters to hear their fellow brothers and sisters getting things out of the Word of God. This encourages them to dig into the Word for themselves. Therefore, I think we have more Biblical teaching than we had before when it was just me. Now we have it coming all the time, especially in the small groups where you can do some things more intimately.

*Dave: Let's talk about reproduction. Healthy things reproduce. What are your dreams for growth in Bread of Life?*

**Tom:** Bread of Life was small enough for years to meet in homes. We are up to about 180 to 200 now, and we have found that, as people have learned to supernaturally fellowship in the Lord in small groups and on Sunday mornings, their confidence grows to talk and live their Christian life out in the world. Thus, evangelism is not as much a program as it is a way of life. These people are living out the Christian gospel and finding that people are hungry to know Jesus as

Lord and Master. We find a lot of evangelism taking place, but it is not a program. As I have heard it said over the years, "The Christian faith is not taught but caught," and I think that is true. As Bob Mumford used to say, "You can preach measles, but if it's mumps they got, it's mumps they will get!" I think he is right. As these people share their lives in the workplace, we have people being born again almost every week and coming into our fellowship.

We do not feel that exclusivity we once thought we were supposed to. That kind of ungodly, unholy arrogance that we are on the cutting edge of what God is doing and if only God were doing what we are doing, everything would be all right. God somehow deals with that arrogance in open meetings, so that people are not put off by us. We love them in the workplace. Therefore, I think we are able to facilitate our testimony in a much more natural way with supernatural life and power.

*Dave: It sounds like discipleship is going on 24 hours a day in homes, out in the marketplace, and on Sunday when you come together.*

**Tom:** We had a young man who felt that he should call on the apartment buildings. We said, "That's fine. You go, and do that." He did and came back a week or so later and asked, "How come no one is going with me?" We said, "Brother, no one said anything to anyone else because you said God had called you to go. So go." Often we think that if God speaks to us about doing something, everyone else should do the same thing. We say, "No! If God calls others to stand alongside of you in that work, fine. We do not impose a program that is supposed to fit all people."

*Dave: As we live in an ever-increasingly hostile environment for Christians, what do you see for the future of the Church?*

**Tom:** I think the most glorious days the Church has ever known are still ahead of us. I am so excited! From a human standpoint and because I see mainline denominations giving themselves over to political correctness and allowing polls to determine their moral values instead of the Word of God, I could get very

discouraged. But when I get into the hearts of people and share with them about the absolute truths of the Word of God, people get excited about that. I think the darkness out there is going to make the light shine brighter and brighter. Although I see a cleavage taking place between light and darkness, I am reminded that you cannot see the stars until it gets dark. I think God is giving us an opportunity to be seen, to be the city sitting on the hill. If we will take the time now to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and create within us godly fellowship that is free from division and competition, comparison, jealousy, toughness, and pride, the fleshly things that Paul writes about in Corinthians, we will begin to say, "What an opportunity to let our light shine!" Then we will see that the best days are ahead.

I have often thanked God for the privilege of being alive today. Whether Jesus returns or tarries, there is an urgency that the Spirit of God is pouring out on the Church. And I must admit to this one thing, if you get the men, you will not have trouble getting the women or the children. God wants us to be fishers of men, and for that to happen, our men must truly be convinced that they are important before God and in the Church. To do that, we must reclaim their godly masculinity. That is what we see happening. If that happens, I see evangelism exploding exponentially. I think we could see the greatest revival the world has ever known. But I think it will get a little darker first. Don't worry about the darkness. It is there to make the light shine more clearly. So I am extremely excited about the future in which we will see much less competition and much more worship of the Father, fellowship in the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit—and the world is going to know and hear. Having tried everything else, before the end comes, they will have an opportunity to come to Christ.

*Dave: And the open church concept is one that encourages men to capture this kind of thing in their churches and homes.*

**Tom:** Many years ago I was at a meeting where some young Christian

men asked me, "What do you think are the greatest needs to produce Christian leadership—godly men and women?" An unusual presence of God was in that meeting, and I answered in this way, "There are several things every man or woman of God needs to experience. One, a personal betrayal that they come through. Second, some success and finding out that success is a hoax. Third, failure and finding out that it also is a hoax." However, I feel that one of the greatest gifts God gives a man or woman is a solid dose of deception where he/she realizes he/she can be deceived apart from the mercy and grace of God. And that is what brings humility to receive grace and openness to God and others.

This is often lacking in many of our brothers and sisters today. I know it was lacking in me. When I found myself involved in a deceptive movement that you could almost call a cult, and having been so committed to it and then finding how wrong I was, that left in me a Jacob's limp, and I will limp the rest of my life. But I can limp graciously and full of gratitude because I am not so sure I can never be deceived again. This keeps one humble before the grace and mystery of God. I think there needs to be more of that brokenness among Christian leaders.

*Dave: I agree. I think it was Bob Mumford who said he never trusted a man until he had a limp. I believe we are at Isaiah 26:9 that says, "When judgment comes, it teaches people righteousness." And that judgment is a providential separation of truth and error, of fantasy and reality, and God will apply as much pressure on each of us as we need individually and corporately to sort those things out. It is for the purpose again that He may teach us righteousness.*

**Tom:** He is going to do what He has chosen. The Word of God is plain that whatever God is going to do, He is going to do through the Church. He is choosing not to do it sovereignly but through the Church. And He does not ask us for our opinions.

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## Jim Montgomery — DAWN 2000

**Dave:** *Jim Montgomery is the founder and president of Dawn Ministries. He and his wife, Lynn, have served with Overseas Crusades for 27 years in Asia. Jim has authored four other books and edited Growth Magazine for nine years. It was during his 13 years in the Philippines that he developed the DAWN Strategy.*

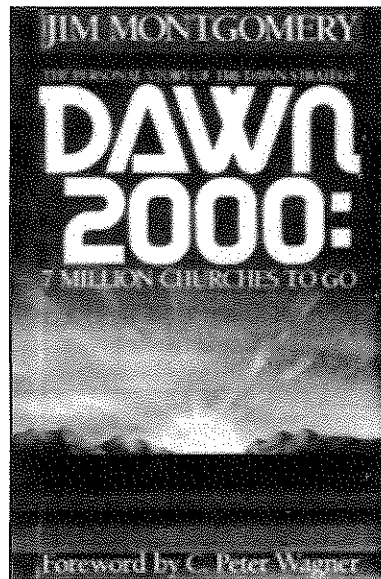
*When we talk about DAWN, it stands for Discipling a Whole Nation. Would you share with us an overview of your vision?*

**Jim:** As a teenager growing up in an evangelical church, it dawned on me that if the gospel was good for those of us in the Church who came to know the Lord, it must be good for everyone in the world. So as a teenager I felt called of God to be involved in world evangelization. Thus, I have literally spent my praying, studying, and working life, trying to figure out what it meant to make disciples of all nations, which is the command that the Lord gave to us. I have been looking at everything in the world that has been going on evangelistically and trying to figure out how we can best put it into a simple, yet dynamic strategy that can mobilize the entire Body of Christ in the whole world to work powerfully and directly toward completing the Great Commission in our time. If the Lord gave that command, then He expected somebody to think about it and do something about it, and even as a teenager I felt that calling from the Lord.

**Dave:** *Let me read a little of what Peter Wagner has to say about DAWN 2000. "I've often been quoted as affirming that I believe DAWN 2000 to be the most effective delivery system in existence today for allowing church growth principles to be applied to the grassroots." He goes on to say, "There are over 700 plans devised for global evangelization, usually within one generation. But most of*

*these plans have fizzled." Why do you think that is?*

**Jim:** There are a whole lot of reasons, but what people who are strategic thinkers and think on a worldwide level say to me is that the DAWN approach is a "systems" approach. In other words, in business you have people who are designers, salesman, managers, fund raisers, and people who do the manufacturing. Each person is effective in their given area, but there are a few who see the whole system and how it fits together. So



many of the strategies that have been developed only took one slice of the pie and did not put the whole system together. I believe the Lord has given us a strategy that puts all the pieces together and makes it function as a system, helping the Body of Christ perceive itself as a Body and then truly function as a Body. This is one of the reasons the Lord has given us this strategy at this time.

**Dave:** *When we talk about strategy, we are talking about someone who thinks from the goal backwards to where we are now. Strategic thinking is really the other side of the coin of God's sovereignty, isn't it?*

**Jim:** Yes, I think that is true. Most of us think that our church or denomination or organization is so big and that it ought to be a little bigger. We really ought to start with the Great Commission's command to make disciples of whole nations. All right, here is a nation. How do you work back from the parameters of the whole nation to where we are, and then from there to how do we work most directly to disciple a nation?

**Dave:** *In working for Overseas Crusades, you served under Luis Palau. At a recent meeting in Phoenix he said that everywhere he goes, he is asked, "How do you characterize the American Church?" The single word that he feels characterizes the American Church is confusion. Have you heard him say that?*

**Jim:** I would tend to agree. We have incredible resources in the evangelical church in America, and yet we are like that pitiful, helpless giant. We are not able to put together what will lead us most directly into a powerful move of the Spirit in our country or around the world.

**Dave:** *In the first part of your book you discussed some of the realities that occurred to you as you were formulating in the early stages of DAWN. One of them is that we have seen tremendous increased costs in sending career missionaries, and traditional Western missionaries are excluded from 65 percent of the countries in the world—probably 80 percent by the end of the century. This has prompted you to come up with a whole different type of strategy of raising up indigenous congregations, with the goal of having one missionary for each four hundred to a thousand people. Is that accurate?*

**Jim:** Yes, I believe this is what God wants us to do. After I came to that conclusion after years of searching,

trying, and failing at various evangelistic methods and strategies, I came across several passages in the Old Testament that all say something to the effect that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. It shall happen. What is the glory of the Lord? The glory and knowledge of the Lord resides in His people. So to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord suggests to me that we need a cell of believers to incarnate Jesus Christ in every small group of people on the earth. In every village and neighborhood, in every tribal group and every language group and nation. This is the way we work with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies of filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

*Dave: You said in the book that you believe we have some blind spots in the West. We are ever learning, but it seems that we are not doing. You mention that by having megachurches and very small churches, we give a false impression.*

*Jim: We did a fairly thorough study of churches in my home town of San Jose, California. We have huge megachurches, a 24-hour-a-day Christian TV station, and a number of Christian radio stations. The impression that Christians have is that there is a church on every corner and that everything is available to us. But the reality is that in our home town in Christian America only 8.5 per cent of the one million population could be found in any kind of Protestant Church on Sunday morning. And in fact if every Protestant Church was filled on Sunday morning, only 12.5 percent of the population could get into those churches. So the presence of a few megachurches is exciting, but in reality when you take the entire population and compare that with how many true believers are actually meeting in congregations, you find that the number is quite small. And in most other places in the world there are even smaller percentages.*

We have tended to export our viewpoint of what the Church is all about. The church is a big building with a huge parking lot with a fulltime, paid staff of senior pastor and other staff members who have all had college training. But we will never fill the earth with cells of believers if we think that is what church is. Unfortunately, we have communicated these same ideas around the world. I remember talking with a friend of mine in Zimbabwe when I was there a couple of years ago. There was this big church with hundreds of members. They met under a tree. Someone said, "With all these people why do you meet under a tree?" the man from Zimbabwe replied, "You don't understand. It's a very nice tree." Here was a man who was not seminary-trained, but was leading scores and scores of people to the Lord and the Church was flourishing. We have to come back to the New Testament reality of what a church is and what a pastor is. A pastor from Paul's viewpoint was a man who had recently come to know the Lord. He was a mature man and a leader in his own right but simply gifted by God to be the leader of a house church. And this is what we have to come back to if we are going to see the Church of Jesus Christ multiply around the world.

*Dave: Yes, and it is very interesting how God is putting this quilt together. You could end up with the conclusion that we are going to need about seven more million churches or assemblies or gatherings of believers. How did you come up with that number?*

*Jim: I went to all the reference books I could find and took the estimated number of believers in the world and divided that by 120 as a good number for the average-sized group. I took David Barrett's books and tried to determine the actual number of Christians in each country. Then through a variety of statistical methods, we came to that number. It's only an approximation. It could be five million or nine million—we aren't stuck on the number. But the*

idea is for everyone to catch the idea and the goal of seeing Jesus Christ come alive in the midst of groups all around the world.

*Dave: What immediately comes to mind is that we are going to need seven million elder/leader, pastor/teacher types to help guide these groups. It doesn't seem like the seminary system could even begin to pump that many people out in the next seven years. So are you suggesting a whole movement of laity rising up as the only solution to this leadership problem?*

*Jim: Absolutely! And by "only solution," I don't mean that churches as they exist now need to disappear. That's not the case at all. But for a great proliferation of churches, this is what must happen.*

When the great Bamboo Curtain came down in China in 1949 with maybe a half million believers, we thought maybe the Church had disappeared. But now the government itself has declared that there are at least 63 million believers Protestant in China. That means there is probably about 100 million, and most of them meet in house churches with lay people who are gifted by the Spirit to serve as pastors. So if you figure maybe 30 people per house, we are talking about three million house churches. And this is happening around the world. In many countries where I can't name them because it could bring reprisals against the believers, there is a tremendous house church movement. Even this past year, a DAWN Congress was held in England, where the Church had been declining by 8 per cent each and every year. They set a goal to plant 20,000 new churches in England, but there is already a large house church movement going on in that country, and that is what is going to rechurch England. We are beginning to see here and there little droplets here in America that God is saying this to people. We need another 150,000 such churches in the United States right now. To actually make that happen, there is going to have

to be a great multiplication of house churches, many of which become what we consider to be a standard church with a building and pastor. But many will not be that way.

**Dave:** *Overseas, are you finding the traditional church seeing the house church as something of a competitor, or are they embracing them?*

**Jim:** I think there is a tremendous embracing of it. However, in any given country you have a great variety of Christian traditions. A lot of them are associated with Western missions, while others are in new denominations that I call "second generation mission societies." They have come to know the Lord through a Western mission society, and then they begin to feel that God could do a better work in their culture if they did it differently. So in almost every nation we work in, we find these second generation missions cropping up, and many times they are growing much more rapidly than the others. There are a great variety of churches, denominations, and missions out there. It is difficult to make a blanket statement. But there are those who are truly growing most rapidly. Yes, there is a great house meeting movement, whether it is centered on Bible study or it is an intentional planting of house churches. I believe it is being more and more accepted.

**Dave:** *In part two of the book you share why DAWN is working. Could you share some of the reasons?*

**Jim:** When you get right down to the bottom line, basically I think it is working because this is what God wants to happen in these times. I don't say that because I came up with the strategy. I believe this is what God revealed to us. Whenever we talk about DAWN to top leaders around the world, inevitably we hear them say, "This is exactly what God has put on our hearts and what we need right now." When the book first came out, a young black African leader in Zimbabwe read the book and said the next morning,

"You dirty guy, you keep me awake all night. This is exactly what God laid on my heart when I was a boy living in a village in a grass shack, herding sheep out on the hills." The Church is alive and well in almost every nation of the world. There are national leaders who can be mobilized to take a look at their whole country and see it filled with congregations. In the book I go through twelve basic principles that are God-given for anything that is going to work, including businesses. We take a comprehensive look, which is what the New Testament talks about in discipling ALL nations. We are not thinking small. We are taking a systematic look, for which the Old Testament model would be the Book of Joshua. "Every place where you place your foot is yours." So we go about systematically reaching a whole nation.

As Peter Wagner says, "The best evangelistic method under heaven is the planting of churches." As we go about filling a country with cell groups of believers, it is a systematic, powerful method which puts Jesus Christ right at the center of it, because we are talking about making Him incarnate. We are not talking about some flashy methodology developed by some slick workers in the West. It is based on information, what we call the Nehemiah Principle. He was happy in his comfortable world until he learned what the real situation was in his home town, and that broke his heart. So one of the keys to the DAWN strategy is to do careful research on the Church that is there and the context in which it finds itself. We must find out what God the Spirit is already doing. Then we are able to find out what He would like to do in the years ahead. Only then can we give a prophetic message. This is what God is doing, and this is what He would like to happen based on the research that we have done: twelve principles that are along those lines, which are put in a system that makes it a very powerful one.

**Dave:** *You mention that there are pitfalls when you rely on research instead of the Spirit of God. First, it could lead to prideful and sinful purposes. Second, it could be misinterpreted. Third, there could be an over-reliance on it. So what you are talking about is the need for a balance, where we are given the mind of Christ to analyze the information in this information age. But, we should not rely just on that. There is the sovereignty and movement of Spirit that has to be put together with it. This is what I hear from leaders all over. There are many models now being promoted. The meta-church, the house church, the open church, and the cell group. Do you see them merging?*

**Jim:** I believe the the convergence is what we call saturation church planting. That is simply to fill a community, a county, and a nation with churches so that there are evangelical churches available, both physically and culturally to every person in that nation. So it takes all kind of churches. City churches will be different than rural churches. Pentecostal churches will be different from Baptist churches. There is a great need for millions of house churches around the world. But there is also the need for the megachurches that can put up a large building and be the center for Christianity in a region.

I believe God wants all of these things. We are not talking about a standardized church that looks the same everywhere. We are talking about using all kinds of methods to plant them to proliferate all over the world.

**Dave:** *For people who are reading this, how can they get involved with this? They can get your book, but do you have other types of resources to implement the DAWN program?*

**Jim:** This is one of our problems. If you go to a church and talk about setting up a thatched roof church with a cow dung floor and a missionary to serve it for ten years

out in the jungle, you get their interest. But the concept of building seven million churches and mobilizing the whole Church is difficult for many Christians in America to envision.

We do put out a quarterly magazine that tells what is going on around the world through the DAWN program. We put out a monthly sheet of just two pages of quick snapshots of what is going on. But we also have a prayer partner's letter for people who are called to do intercession, and we give out names of specific people and projects around the world. Certainly there is always a need for finances for our very small handful of missionaries to communicate this vision in nations all over the world. The projects that develop in nations are totally free of money from the U.S.A. or that we would provide for them. They are run by nationals themselves, and we don't have money to get the projects going. However, we would be happy to send money directly to some struggling project such as a country like Malawi, one of the poorest nations in the world. They are very zealous to get going, but their resources are so limited. We are happy to put people on mailing lists and get them praying and involved financially.

*Dave: Many people are looking at the reform going on in the American Church. They want to bring it more in line with a Biblical ecclesiology where clergy/laity divisions are laid aside and the priesthood of believers is taken seriously.*

*Jim Rutz in his book, The Open Church, mentions that there are many plans to evangelize the world, but most of them put the converts into a closed format Church, and this perpetuates the same old problems of the believers not being equipped for individual ministry. Do you think there has to be some kind of reformation regarding the structure of the current Church?*

**Jim:** Oh yes, a great reformation. A

major shift. When I was studying at Wheaton College, I took a whole course that focused on Ephesians 4, "Equipping the saints for the work of ministry." I had already been thinking of the Great Commission, and all of sudden it dawned on me that we will never have enough fulltime, seminary-trained pastors and missionaries to reach the world. But suppose all the Saints in the world were truly equipped by gifted men whom God gives to the Church to minister. I think it would be truly incredible. I think of Abram when God was going to destroy Sodom, and he pled with God. If there were just ten righteous people, would God save the most wicked city-state in the world? And God said He would. So imagine that there are 500 million believers in the world made righteous by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. What would happen if that army of believers were equipped and truly put to work? The completion of the Great Commission would be a piece of cake.

So we have to come back to the basics. It is not enough for believers to come and sit and be entertained on Sunday. Do you realize that most believers in the United States have more Bible knowledge than the 50,000 pastors in South America? We have the resources. We have the knowledge. We have to put our people to work participating in the work of God, and house churches are one of the key ways of putting lay people to work and the most productive way to reach out to the unsaved.

*Dave: You launched this a couple of years ago. Are you on track with your goals?*

**Jim:** We actually started in 1985, and we are way ahead of what we could have anticipated. I started by myself in a bedroom while my wife continued to work with Overseas Crusades. And from whatever platform I had, I determined to share the vision. God has given us a staff of sharp, highly trained, high energy young men who are

communicating the vision around the world. So we are way ahead of anything I could have envisioned for this point in time.

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## Dr. Ralph Neighbour —Where Do We Go From Here?

**Dave:** Dr. Ralph Neighbour is a man with a number of degrees. He has served in Singapore and has studied the model of Dr. Yonggi Cho in Korea and was literally overwhelmed with the potential of the approach. He returned in 1977 to the church in Houston, where he began to experiment with pure evangelism cell groups which would fit into the American culture.

Through his repeated trips to Korea, and four years of testing in Houston, Ralph, in 1980, refined the "share group" concept. In the next 18 months the church more than doubled, reaching 1,375 members.

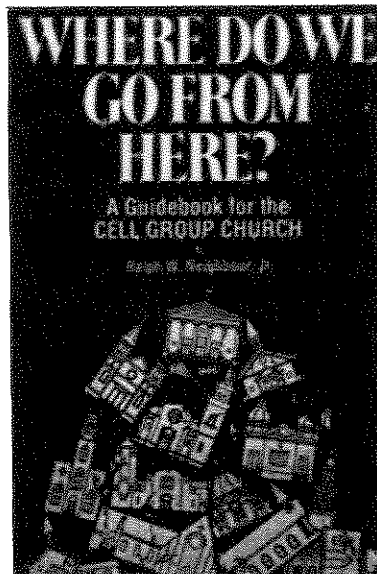
In the last five years, his work has been with Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore. The church now numbers 5,000 members. The goal is 2,500 new conversions in the balance of this year. He also heads up Touch Outreach, which has a number of different resources. The primary resource is his 463-page book entitled, *Where Do We Go From Here?*

The Church is going through a transition now. Most everyone can see a new spirit blowing through the Church, but many people are confused about what it all means. Your book is designed to give people some direction. I guess I might ask you, "Where do we go from here?"

**Ralph:** Where we go from here is we abandon some old wineskins and move into some new wineskins. In our church at the present time, we are recreating the Book of Acts in that daily the Lord is adding to the church those who are being saved. Our receptionist has a *Book of Life* on her desk, and all day long people are phoning in and giving her the names and addresses of people who have come to know the Lord. We have a board behind her desk with the numbers constantly changing all day long, showing the number of people who are being harvested by the members. It is pretty exciting to be a member of a cell group church!

**Dave:** Over the last 15 years, led by the Charismatic movement, there has been more of an emphasis of meeting in homes and establishing the intimate fellowship that can be seen in the New Testament, but somehow your perspective on this is that it is not necessarily the complete step that is called for. Is that right?

**Ralph:** The Charismatic movement particularly in the United States has become more of a navel-gazing cell group structure, than a ministry structure. I think the major shift is



to understand that the gifts of the Spirit are not to be privately enjoyed either by the individual or by a small group, but are the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to reach out and touch unreached people with the power of the Kingdom of God. Yes, our cell groups are set up on a rapidly multiplying structure.

**Dave:** In chapter two of your book, *The Road Block, the PBD Church, [The Program-Based Design]*, why do you believe that [PBD] is the basic flaw in the Church's life style in America?

**Ralph:** The term program-based design was developed by

denominational structures 20 years ago and is commonly known among religious leaders. It is a violation of the New Testament. Jesus said in Matthew 16, "I am the rock, and on this rock I will build my ekklesia, my called out people." The program-based design starts with the proper foundation, Jesus Christ, but instead of building people, they build programs. And the programs become a catch-all on top of the foundation of Christ. Then they dump the called-out people into the programs. So the people are never really equipped unless they are needed to make the programs work. A cell group church does not begin with a program. It begins with the foundation Jesus Christ and each individual who is to be equipped for the work of ministry. It has no programs, and it shies away from buildings because ministry is not done by people in buildings but by equipped Saints within the structure of the world they live in. So it is a completely different understanding of the ecclesiology of the Church than the traditional church in America understands.

**Dave:** As we look at the model of what is going on in many other parts of the world, it seems that the gospel is advancing much more rapidly, and while there are still people being added to the Church here in America, leaders are open for change. There is a saying that the new movements of God are fought against the hardest by the existing leadership. You said when you left this country, you were disappointed and frustrated with the lack of response to the cell group movement. Do you see some positive change now? Will the leaders embrace this rather radical restructuring of the Church?

**Ralph:** In America the Christian community divides into two parts: those who have years invested in the existing program-based design structure, and these can understandably be expected to



protect their turf. There are millions of dollars invested in pastors' salaries and in all the publishing of materials that are used by churches. The second part, the cell group movement, does away with just virtually everything. To make this shift is not a slight revision but a radical switch from a church-oriented, pastor-directed, laity-supported conception of the Church to a committed group of people who are equipped by the leadership of the Church for their ministries. There is a lot to be lost by those who have spent a lifetime climbing the ladder of success within religious life. The real switch is happening among very self-sufficient men who don't get their significance from their performance, who are pastoring large churches—and there are a bunch of those around the country right now, guys who are saying, "Look, I can lead my congregation of 3,000 people in a different direction, and I'm not afraid to follow God. But the great preponderance of the shift is taking place among younger pastors, 32-year-old guys who with their wives on Monday morning look at each other and say, "We are just not going to spend the rest of our lives living this nonsense." And they pick up their phones and ask, "Where do we go from here?" They are calling right now at such a rate that we have three lines busy all day long and can't take all the calls.

But the major shift is coming from those who do not yet have deep commitments and turf to protect within the existing PBD structures.

**Dave:** One of the things about the Kingdom of God is that it brings everybody back to square one. A lot of leaders don't really want to do that, and yet those who do it often times become those leaders who move on in the next step that God is directing in the Church. You say in your book lovingly that you believe many pastors are victims of this system. Explain what you mean.

**Ralph:** I'm thinking of a young man who stood in the moonlight in Texas

twenty years ago as I explained the journey I was about to take in cell group life. He said, "I can't afford to do that. I've got a wife and two kids." I think there are a lot of men who believe that if they are God's servant, God has an obligation to care for their needs. And they have a secondary source of security, which is their professional profession. They are unable to step out by faith and say, "God called me to do this. He's got a problem. He's got to support me." Men who are willing to have a vision and to live by faith always find the Master is adequate for them. But there are so many ties that we have in little prison cells that we make for ourselves. "I can't leave the denomination because my retirement fund is there, or I don't think I could match the salary that I am making if I struck out on something that is brand new."

These kinds of personal fears cripple a man's faith and lock him into structures where he's not happy. But he does not have the courage to move out.

**Dave:** Your book is a book for this hour of history right now. Chapter seven discusses putting cells in the Kingdom. We believe that Christians should develop an integrated and comprehensive Biblical worldview and then begin to challenge some of the traditions of men which have worked their way into our thinking over the last hundred, thousands of years, in some cases. You have said here that Satan launched each of his Kingdoms by using plans to understand the reason for their existence and what the world around them signified. Explain your perspective on why it is critical that we have a Biblical worldview and why you believe these worldviews are clashing.

**Ralph:** The first thing is to recognize that Satan offered the Kingdoms of this world and all their splendor to Jesus Who refused them. The trick of Satan is to put everyone of us in a little prison cell called culture. That culture may be

a denominational structure, a Buddhist structure, or a structure that has to do with language and food. But in all of this world, every one of Satan's Kingdoms are built around the premise that my significance depends upon my performance and the people who pat me on the head and tell me that I have worth. In my fear of being rejected by people and not being significant, I live in his prisons. The Kingdom of God is a completely different thing. It is not of this world, and my significance in God's Kingdom does not have anything to do with how I perform but who I am. In the Kingdom of God we begin with the premise that we are all clay vessels but we are containers for the wonderful presence of the Godhead. Christ dwells in me and in Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. So I become the person He flows through to minister His power to others.

Jesus told the disciples to go from place to place and heal the sick and raise the dead and cleanse the leper and to declare that the Kingdom of God had come near. The significance of the life of the Christian is not what he accomplishes but Who he has dwelling within him Who causes him to be the advance messenger of the Kingdom of God. And in that, there is freedom.

**Dave:** As we look around at the structures that are out there right now, there seems to be a gaping need for relationship in the local church. As author James Rutz says, "Most people spend the majority of their lives fellowshipping with the back of someone's head." This is not very edifying, and so there is this great need out there. The traditional churches form little groups so everybody gets their special needs met. But you believe that the cell group is really the only hope to establish the kind of community that is going to be needed for what lies in the future for the Church?

**Ralph:** I definitely believe that, but when we say cell group, we have to isolate what we are talking about.

The typical listener, when I say cell group, thinks Bible study group. I am violently opposed to Bible study groups! I think they are Satan's way of insulating you from me and me from you in a small room. I can't see you, and you can't see me, because the Bible hides us from each other. The Word of God is very clear. There is a place for Bible teaching and Bible study, and it is under the leadership of those who are gifted to teach the Word of God. But once I have come under the authority of the Scripture by the one who can put deepest knowledge into words, then it is time for me to exercise the spiritual gifts that God wants in His Body. And that means that I look at you, and you look at me, and there is nothing between us. **The purpose of that cell group meeting is for me to edify or build up you (and for you to edify or build up me) by my being the agent of grace to you as spiritual gifts flow from Christ through me into you.**

Now the evangelical has got his daily quiet time. He gets it direct from God. But the New Testament Church received the Word of God through the agent of the brother or sister in the cell. And learning how to meet together as the Body of Christ to edify one another without having a crutch or an insulation of Bible study or a prayer list or materials that deal with the topic—the agenda has got to be us. We are the Body of Christ. He is in our midst, and He wishes to build me up through you and you up through me. It's a radical change, and it changes the whole concept of spiritual gifts and their use because Scripture says every one of us is to be accountable to build up one another with a psalm, a hymn, a tongue, an interpretation, whatever God gives me for you. I become the agent of His grace to your life.

**Dave:** *Are you suggesting that this would replace a weekly gathering of celebration, or would be in addition to?*

**Ralph:** No, we have 5,000 people every Sunday in celebration. But in our cell group ministry there are only

two things the Christian is committed to attend. One is the weekly celebration, which is two hours long, an hour of praise and an hour of intense Bible teaching. And the second event is the weekly meeting of his cell group. That cell group is a life style. They are a family. They don't just meet once a week. And the rest of their life together is built upon ministry to each other and ministry to unreached people.

**Dave:** *Evangelism—to be quite honest with you, we are involved in an internationally known church for evangelism, Phoenix First Assembly. We do pageants that reach out to the city twice a year that bring in any where from 70,000 to 100,000 people. These are dynamic presentations at Christmas and Easter. Pastor Tommy Barnett really has a heart for evangelism, and yet what you seem to be saying is that evangelism, if it is based out of a cell group, has more impact. Please explain what you mean.*

**Ralph:** We do both. I call evangelism by big meetings, what you are describing, the celestial funnel form. You get everybody in to see a big show, and you present the Gospel to them and get them converted, and then you slide them down the funnel into cell groups. The world wide statistic on that is that you get only 30% of them involved in cell group life because that wasn't the contract they bought when they signed their name. We do some of that, but we don't do it like you do it.

We do it as a harvest point at high tide in cell group life. But to quickly illustrate, in cell group evangelism, each member of a cell may have two to four people who he is cultivating who are unbelievers. And there is a preliminary small group meeting which we call the share group that is specifically designed to interact believers and unbelievers based upon the needs of unbelievers rather than the needs of the Christians.

The next step is evangelistic harvest in the cells. This Good Friday we will have several hundred cells

across Singapore holding a three- or four-hour activity in their homes, built around the Crucifixion of Christ. It is entitled, "Let's Have a Good Friday." It includes food, fellowship, all kinds of ice breakers and mixers, and a drama in the living group done by the cell group of the death of Christ, with the invitation given in the cell group, counseling instructions, everything. So when a person accepts Christ, he doesn't have to go to church. He received the Lord in the church which was the cell group meeting in the home. And so we seek to use the cell itself as the point of harvest whenever possible.

**Dave:** *One of the key battlefields we have right now is reaching the people in our cities and reaching the tangible needs of those people. If we look at the ministry of Jesus Christ, He did not spend the majority of His time in the Temple. He spent it out in the marketplace. I want to ask, as we look ahead down the road five and ten years, we are facing a number of troubling things with regard to economic problems, geo-politically, and even legally with persecution. Do you see the cell group as being a partial solution to the Church decentralizing and having an impact on its city, plus not being a target for the State to come after?*

**Ralph:** I don't know about that last point. I have just been with a man in Asia who has developed a cell group church in a non-Christian country. The government is after him "lock, stock, and barrel" because he has become a political power even though he never dabbles in politics, because he controls tens of thousands of people and what he says impacts them. So I think there are inevitable problems when the cell group church becomes a powerful group. But I do believe that in America today there is a major breakdown of trust in institutions, whether it's government or whether it's Church. Even the lodges, when I was a kid, were "big deals," and they are just falling apart at the seams, losing members right and left.

At the same time, I interviewed a professor at New York University who had done an extensive study of the cultural shifts in America. He shocked me when he told me he had located ten thousand different small group structures, not small groups, but structures of small groups that have sprung up all over the nation, built around everything from people interested in computers or literature or to family problems, to abortion. It just goes on and on. We have become a small group structured society. People are no longer interested as much in getting dressed up and going to an auditorium as they are in getting together and having coffee and talking things over in homes. I think the Church in America is recognizing that their only hope and their only future is going to be becoming a part of the cultural shift.

**Dave:** *The fundamental trend or the megatrend is happening from the bottom up.*

**Ralph:** That is correct. And the paradigm shift for the pastor is to quit being the man who can decide exactly what he wants to preach about and get up as Ray Stedman said with the attitude, "Let no dog bark while Sir Oracle speaketh."

He's got to get in touch with the needs of his congregation who are the ministers, and he must equip them for ministry with every message he brings rather than just telling them words of inspiration. Cell group preaching is radically different than traditional church preaching. In Singapore when I stand up and address 4,000 to 5,000 people on a Sunday, I know a very high percentage of them are going to walk out of there and go straight into personal ministry activities. It is a shift in the way you preach.

**Dave:** *There are probably pastors and leaders listening to this who are open to change. You have developed a whole chapter on transitioning to a people-based church rather than a program-based design. You said that you believe it is obvious right now*

*that a Second Reformation has begun, but before we go into anything new, we should go into our "listening room" and discern from the Lord and really hear what He has to say on how He wants us to go about doing it. What tips would you give to those leaders who want to go in this direction, but don't really understand how to make the transition?*

**Ralph:** First of all, prayer is at the heart of it all and the capacity to learn to hear from God rather than just speak to God. That is critical. A second thing is to recognize that in the Book of Acts, no man ever planted a church until he had first experienced a church being planted. That is true of the Apostle Paul, who spent three to four years in his internship with Barnabas in Antioch before he went out. The thing I always say is, "You can't do something you have never experienced." And so there has to be an equipping time, a preparation time. That means getting in touch with the movement and people in it, and either on a short term or long term basis, receiving adequate training. Those who have graduated from seminary are next to worthless when it comes to developing a cell group church. Nothing they have been taught will help them. For that reason, **we have just opened up the world's first training base for those who want to establish cell churches in Singapore. We had 67 in training in our first class.**

I think it's also important to have a goal, to have a vision and to know you are so God-called to perform that vision that you will stick when the going gets tough, because it will. Your friends will not understand and will turn away from you.

**Dave:** *There is a price to pay.*

**Ralph:** There is.

**Dave:** *Some of the resources that you have developed over the years so that people don't have to re-create the wheel would be very valuable [to share with our listeners]. You do*

*have a number of conferences planned throughout the U.S. Tell us about the seminar.*

**Ralph:** This year we are doing very basic introductory things. Next year we will add another level for guys who are actually in this. At this point, the people who are coming are calves looking at a new gate. We are trying to tell them about a world they have never experienced. Next year we will be able to add to it.

**Dave:** *That's to get a copy of Where Do We Go From Here? or any of the audio or video materials. You have a facilitator's kit. Is that a "do-it-yourself" kit?*

**Ralph:** We've got a lot of different materials and our guys would be glad to answer any questions about it. They are all designed for the cell group church. They have very little value for the program-based design structure.

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## Don Nori — *Secrets of the Most Holy Place*

**Dave:** *Don Nori is a prophetic writer, the senior pastor of a vibrant fellowship in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. He is also the founder of Destiny Image and the Discerning Times prophetic newspaper.*

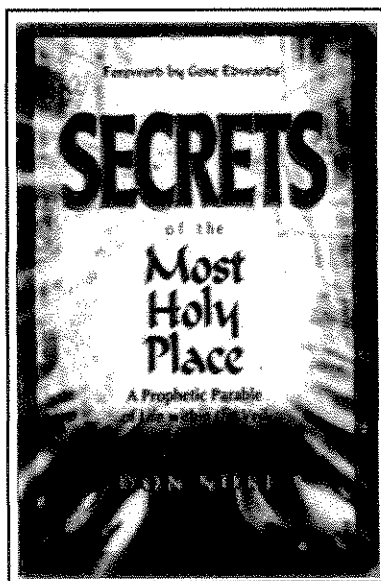
*Don, what does the discovery of the "Secrets of the Most Holy Place" do for a believer?*

**Don:** That which God has changed in me will someday shine for the whole world to see. That is the importance of a changed life. That's why life within the veil demands a change. It demands a lifestyle where Jesus Christ is allowed to flow forth. Life within the veil means a life that is real. It's not a life of doctrine. It's not a life of theology. It is a life of life. It's where His life truly flows forth from us, and we are who we say we are. And we live who we say we are. We conduct ourselves in the fashion that displays His glory, displays His love to the earth. It convinces the world that Jesus is Lord.

**Dave:** *Amen! You believe that the world right now is craving reality, but not only the world but even in the Church there is a hunger that has reached famine proportions and that they are waiting to see and hear the gospel of life, the gospel of His Kingdom. Reality is the only hope, you said, that the condemned world and the bankrupt church has. Could you explain?*

**Don:** The world has tried everything that is possible to be tried. They don't need us to give them the same old thing they have been used to. The easy, external things they have already tried. They've tried the drugs. They've tried the alcohol. They've tried sex. They've tried wealth. All this has failed. And those are the obvious things, but they have also tried philosophy, Eastern religions, meditation, and mysticism. They've tried all the mental things, and none of that has worked. So the Church doesn't need to give them a new brand of that which is external. When the Church glows with the reality of life, the world will flood to it. The prophet Micah says that

the nations will stream to this light. It's far from today where evangelists and preachers spend their time begging and doing whatever they can to gain a few converts and try to gain a little bit of attention. But we are talking about an arena of reality where the nations stream to this light. That's a reality that is beyond what the Church has experienced and what the Church has to offer, that is part of the upheaval we're going to see. He who shines with the true love of Jesus is going to shine far differently than the legalist. He's going to shine far differently from the mere



theologian who is devoid of light and life and who simply has a religion based upon fact and principle with no reality and principle involved. The world doesn't need that. The world has had that. What the world is craving is true light and true life. That only comes from the living, dynamic Person of the Lord Jesus Who wants to live His life through us.

**Dave:** *In chapter nine of your book, Secrets of the Most Holy Place, you discuss our inheritance in Christ. This is one of my favorite chapters. You began by asking, "How long do you suppose you would be satisfied to be engaged to be married, but never actually married?" That's a rather strange question, isn't it?*

*Nevertheless, the Lord clearly is requiring an answer to this most unusual query. Your thoughts go back to your own engagement. The anticipation—the thrill of soon-to-be-married to the one you love so desperately. But the question, "How long?" The Lord interrupts your thoughts. Would that excitement remain if the wedding day were never known and worse never arrived? In this chapter you try to point out in an allegory fashion that God wants His Church to move into His inheritance today. Could you explain one of the allegories in more detail, Don?*

**Don:** Well, I think I would like to start by saying that this issue of our inheritance is probably one of the most controversial because our inheritance demands such an immediate and current response in our generation. If indeed the new covenant does involve an inheritance for this life, then the Church has missed probably 95% of the work of the new covenant. And herein is the controversy. I can't imagine in my heart grown adults satisfied with receiving an inheritance after they die.

Think of it, David. You have a long lost uncle. An attorney comes to you and says, "David Bradshaw, your long lost uncle has left you an inheritance of ten million dollars." David [replies], "Praise, God! My ship has come in!" The attorney then says, "I will leave you a down payment of that inheritance. Here is five hundred thousand dollars. This is to guarantee you that the rest of the inheritance will come." But then week passes week, and month passes month. Pretty soon your five hundred thousand dollars is gone, and you are wondering where the others are. Finally you get a telegram from the attorney telling you, "You know what, David? There's one thing I forgot to tell you—the date that you would receive your inheritance. But I'm sending you this memo to let you know that you will receive the rest of your inheritance the day after you die."

Now, what good will that do you?

Not much. And yet we as Christians are satisfied to be filled with the Holy Spirit and get the down payment of our inheritance, but we are satisfied with receiving the rest of our inheritance after we die. I don't believe that. That is not the principle of inheritance throughout history and certainly not the principle of Biblical inheritance.

What God has promised you and me is for us in the here and now, of course, is the down payment of the in-filling of the Holy Spirit. David, do you know anybody who seems to be growing weary over the years, growing very tired? I do. I have talked to many, many people. And it is simply because the down payment is being used, and more power and more strength are needed in order to face the days that are directly ahead of us. What we have received was never intended to see us through this life alone, but there is much more yet for us to draw on, much more yet for us to experience in order to be victorious and be the convincing splendor of the earth that God intends us to be.

This issue is being able to step into Christ, step into the Most Holy Place, where in Him we live and move and have our being.

**Dave:** *And you point out the forces and powers of the last days can only be confronted by that which is within the veil.*

**Don:** That's true. What we have experienced to date with the in-filling of the Holy Spirit has been important and essential, and we have needed that to live the life we have lived. As we are seeing brothers and sisters in Christ who have loved God with all their hearts falling, we can turn a cold shoulder to them and say, "Well, they just can't stand. They just had sin left in their heart." But that's a very cold and certainly un-Christ like attitude for those of us who have fallen. Rather let us seek the Lord to find the additional strength and power so that we can withstand the days that are directly ahead of us because the demonic forces and powers certainly have increased and certainly are becoming stronger as we approach the close of the age.

Certainly the Christian's only hope is to step within the veil to the realm of all God, all Spirit, to the realm of all Him instead of the realm of the reality of flesh and spirit.

**Dave:** *"You're stunned! You are afraid! You cannot believe what is happening before you, but it is true! This drama really is taking place in earth, in heaven, in God. He is a rock. He is a solid rock, and He will not budge. He simply will not move. You watch transfixed. You do not understand. To be sure, you are not even certain that you want to be witnessing this."*

*Don, in your chapter discussing the sovereignty of God, [you say], "One of the secrets of the Most Holy Place, you hear your lips forming words of worship. YOU alone are God. Sometimes God will not be moved. Quickly you begin to comprehend His sovereignty. To co-labor with Him means you enter His labor. He does not enter yours. You begin to pray according to His will and His intentions."*

*Many people as they are moving on with God find themselves in a situation that they simply do not understand why God won't move, why our prayers won't move the hand of God. In this chapter you beautifully deal with that issue. Could you share a little bit, your heart in this chapter from Secrets of the Most Holy Place?*

**Don:** Somewhere along the line Christians have gotten the idea that the Lord is a butler or a servant who at our beck and call will come and give us anything we want. If we just put a few words together and put a few Scriptures together correctly and say them long enough and loud enough with enough faith, God will have to move. But God is God, and He doesn't have to do anything He doesn't want to do. He is not moved by our carnal, childish activities. He is not moved by our demands and commands. It's much like a child who throws a temper tantrum when he can't get an ice cream cone, or he falls to the floor and says he is going to hold his breath until you give in. Of course we all know that's absurd. But none the less that's how we often find ourselves acting before God. The

place of real rest and the place of real security in Him comes when we realize that we are in the palm of His hand, and like David we say, ". . . in the shadow of His wings, we will sing for joy." He is God. The things that come our way are the things that He allows to come our way. To be sure we can pray according to His will as we know His will. But when God won't move, we must with an open heart and genuine love for Him say, "God, whether you move or whether you don't move, whether you give me what I want or whether you don't give me what I want, You are still God, and I still love you. I still care, and I will still serve you in spite of this apparent contradiction or in spite of the fact that for some reason You won't answer. I will submit my will to Your will. You don't owe me an explanation. I only owe you repentance for trying to change your mind and twist you into doing something that I wanted You to do." By Your grace we say, "I joyfully embrace Your will."

Sometimes those times are times of great grief. But when you give yourself to Him, you find that grief fading away because you know that He is God, and when He says, "No," it's the best for us. It's maturing. It's growing up like First Corinthians 13 says. It's growing from childhood to adulthood, from seeing in a mirror darkly to see Him face to face, from seeing the partial to seeing the complete. When we grow up, we allow Him to be God and seek to enter into His will and purposes.

**Dave:** *Chapter eleven gives a flavor of the kind of insight, wisdom, and simply a reflection of the heart of the Lord that this book taps into. "You see, there's no place, there's no use, and no need for a formula within the veil of the Most Holy Place. There are no carnal concoctions of a feeble humanity to force God to do or be anything at all. He is God, and He is moved by only one thing, genuine love. He's touched beyond measure and moved beyond imagination by a heart that has fallen desperately in love with Him. From your vantage point of relationship with Him, you see that a deeper relationship is possible with the Lord. From your posture of humble worship, you see that He's*

determined to resolve to be real with you. Yes, even to be comfortable in His presence. He knows you. He knows the good, the bad, and the things that you try to hide. You only get nervous around Him because you don't know that He knows, but He does. So, yes, you can be comfortable in His presence. His concern is with your heart. When your heart is after God, your heart will bring you to purity. He is appalled by externals. Just because you are forgiven does not mean that He is not pained. You see Him, and you are becoming like Him. You are no longer merely content to have your sins forgiven. You are horrified at the total futile arguments that divide."

As we discuss the relationship that God designs for His people, we see that the Kingdom of God is a matter of the heart and that literally His laws are written on our hearts. Why don't you share a little bit of the importance, and really, this is the heart of the whole book—developing our whole relationship with God.

Don: David, everywhere I go, I often bring up the statement, "It is not how you act in church that determines your Christianity, but how you act at home determines the level of life that is within you." And more importantly, how you act when you are alone with no one to watch, not even your family. This determines the depth of your relationship. This determines the depth of the power you have with the Father because the Kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed. You can fool men, but you will never fool Him. You cannot clothe yourself with signs. Miracles can't cover you up. Ministry doesn't cover you. Big churches and big names can't protect you. Only Jesus can cover us. Only Jesus when we're filled from within and filled with Him is that which gives us that inner strength and fortitude in life to be who He wants us to be and to be those shining examples. But it's true.

The Kingdom of God is never eating and drinking. It's never that which covers the outside. His Kingdom is a matter of heart. It always has been a matter of heart. It's that which proceeds from within that determines who we are. And His

Kingdom comes to me as I allow Him to etch His laws upon my heart. You know, we always pray, "God, your Kingdom come." We're concerned about His Kingdom coming to Africa. We are concerned about His Kingdom coming now to the former Soviet Union, to countries like Latvia and Russia, but how about the Kingdom of God coming to you and me? How about the Kingdom coming and taking up residence within me and changing me from my innermost being? Through my obedience more than my desire, His Kingdom has come and has been established in me. The externally enforced laws can keep me out of trouble, but they will never, ever bring me into a heart love obedience to Him.

Dave: "Oh, that the salvation of the Lord would come out of Zion! The intercessory prayer grows more intense as you see from His view. Oh that the fullness of the new covenant would be manifested through God's people! You have been content with the partial for so long. You've been content with your minimal experience for so many years that you have adapted quite well to its utter deficiency. Your doctrines have changed to accommodate it. You have forced many wonderful new covenant provisions into the indefinable dimension called the Millennium, but that is all changed now. From His view, life apart from the fullness of the new covenant provision is not possible. We desperately need all that Jesus has purchased for you."

"To win—and God does want you to win by the way—there must be a total fulfillment of the covenant deep within your heart. He is going to be bearing the salvation of the Lord, a dimension beyond the veil, an experience of the third day. A relationship that will transcend both gifts and abilities." Salvation of the Lord.

Don, share your perspective on that. God wants to call us out of Egypt but into Canaan. Right?

Don: That's really true. The salvation of the Lord is much more than praying a prayer of repentance and then hanging on until the end. The Scripture says that Jesus is the door, and when we open the door, we

begin our journey and the salvation of the Lord. Most Christians will live their entire lives experiencing only the very, very beginning of the salvation of the Lord. But as we have discussed throughout this time together, God's heart is to bring to fulfillment immortal humanity, the fullness of the new covenant, the full expression of why Jesus died and to bring to the fullness of His light, the glory of the Kingdom of God.

Dave: Chapter thirteen, entitled, "The Secret of the Church," reads, "You have never seen a storm such as this one in all your life! The blackened night is periodically splattered with light as lightning streaks from one part of the sky to another. Angry, rolling thunderheads batter the earth with torrents of water. Hail and sleet can be seen shimmering through the darkness with each flash of light. The guttural sound of thunder seems almost to shake your soul as it growls across the landscape. Nature seems to know it must submit to such thunderous scowls. The trees bow and bend low before the piercing wind and relentless rain. On and on it goes.

"You desperately scan the horizon; there is no sign of the storm's ending. In the midst of this angry barrage of nature's fury, men can be seen frantically attempting to erect some sort of structure, some sort of protection from the storm. With each flash of light, you begin to notice that there are hundreds, maybe thousands of people huddled together around these buildings.

"Families stand together, some entwined in blankets and others holding tiny children inside their drenched coats. No one moves. You see only blank stares as they watch the men labor hopelessly against the storm."

Don, you see this as a prophetic vision of the Church. Why don't you share and complete this picture for our listeners of why the Church is in many ways building in the midst of the storm?

Don: I think first of all that I have to let [our listeners] in on the secret as to what happens a little later in the chapter. The secret is in my

prophetic insight that we haven't really seen the Church yet. Each one of these groups of men are frantically building their own thing. They are not talking to each other. They are not fellowshiping with each other. They are not checking one another's plans. They are not praying for one another. In fact, while some have their backs turned, groups are tearing down each other's walls. In the midst of the storm, sometimes it's not visible. You can't see clearly that some are tearing down other's walls. But that's what's happening. We haven't seen the Church yet, David. I know that's a difficult statement, but this is one of the upheavals that we must face in this hour. We have been building according to the shadow, according to the mystical pattern that we see in the Scripture. But we have not been building according to the Light.

I want you to know something. Jesus said, "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." I don't believe that the Church that Jesus is building is a Church that devours itself. I don't believe that the Church that Jesus is building is a Church where sin can rule and reign, and leaders can lord it over their flocks and where adultery can be winked at. The Church that Jesus is building is not a Church that discards its wounded soldiers. It's not a place where you measure up or you're not permitted to stay there.

The Church that Jesus is building has nothing to do with ego. It has nothing to do with society's status. It has nothing to do with wealth. The Church that Jesus is building, I call "the virgin Church." In this last day, the end of the last days, we are going to see the emergence of the virgin Church, the Church that Jesus is building, a Church that is going to be without spot or wrinkle. It's not for the Millennium, my brother. It's for the here and for the now. The Church where Isaiah 35 says, "No lion may walk on it." This Church is the highway of holiness. It's not for the fool, but it's for the redeemed. It's a place of hope, a place of safety, a place of covering, a place of protection. The Church that Jesus is building is a Church that gathers. It does not scatter. It's a Church that encourages, not a Church that accuses and separates.

The Church that Jesus is building is vastly different than the religious system, even the Charismatic religious system that we see being constructed around us. This is the Church, but the gates of hell do not have a prayer to stand against because it is a Church that is built by Jesus Himself.

**Dave:** Chapter fourteen is entitled "Secrets of the Most Holy Place." Here are some thoughts from that chapter: "What is the secret of the veil? Without question, the most elusive, even the most frustrating part of this journey is the veil. It stands with little explanation and precious few clues as to its place and function in the Lord's eternal plan. So you enquire of the Lord as you are seated with Him on the seat of mercy. Together with the Lord Jesus you can look through the veil."

Don, share with us some of the "Secrets of the Veil."

**Don:** The secret hidden in the veil is the secret of our brokenness. It's the secret of our inflated, broken ego. The secret of the veil is the secret that Jesus wants to turn our hearts into the holiest place of all where He is Lord, where He rules and reigns, where He covers, where He leads. From the holiest place of all, our hearts, where He ministers with love and compassion, where He ministers with intimidation without fear, without legalism, where His love and His life flourish. It's a place where ego is torn because we have to understand that His way is better. The torn veil is us, torn from within, broken so that He can shine through. It's a place of total surrender. It's a place of absolute dependence and relying upon Him. It's a place where you need no answers. You need only Him.

**Dave:** "As you approach the veil of the Most Holy Place, your heart begins to beat wildly for Him. You know that only He can deliver you from yourself. Only He can change you from deep within. You cannot change yourself. You cannot make yourself obey or submit. In an instant you see the crimson spots on the floor, and immediately you recognize that those spots are drops of His precious blood. Suddenly a thought pierces your mind. With jolting pain it echoes deep within your spirit. You

fall to your knees, longing and lovingly touching a drop of His blood ever so tenderly with the tips of your fingers. He had to die. Shaking with reality, you say, 'Jesus had to die. He had to give up His role for His Father's role. He had to give up His destiny even though it would cost Him His life.' Deep in your heart, you now know that if you really want the depth of relationship, it's going to cost you your life as well. Still on your knees, you bow down, low with tears of utter repentance—be the Lord of my life! I repent of such horrible selfishness as displays of fleshly ranting. I repent of ruling my own life and resisting Your destiny for me. Never let me usurp Your authority, but may You always teach me how to act and how to react in every circumstance. Your heart is broken in sorrow, as heavy sobs pour from your heart—be Lord. Rule and reign. Take over the throne of my life, oh Lord."

"But you know now what has happened. He has become, not just the Savior of your outer court, not just your healer and restorer of the Holy Place. He has broken through the veil of your flesh, and your own will has become the Lord's. He has passed through the veil of your will and has taken your seat upon the throne of your heart."

As we conclude in the final two chapters, you discuss the secret of love. I am reading now from your book: "You have discovered now the power of your own will, the power of His own flesh. It is almost inconceivable, but it is true. The power of your own driving will is greater than the power of the laws of God. His laws cannot subdue your flesh. His laws cannot keep you in check. So here you fall desperately in love with Him. His love compels you. His love controls you. His love causes you to walk away from the flesh."

Is it true, Don, [that] the only thing that gives us the ability, the power to overcome sin in our life is our love for Him?

**Don:** That's absolutely true, and it's not just our love for Him, but it's experiencing His love for us. I don't just mean a doctrinal love or a

theological love, but a real tangible sense of His love for us. Man has never responded to law. Man has not even been created to respond to law. Man was created by God to respond to God Who is love. So it stands to reason, that love is the main motivator in all society, in all of life. When you can fall in love, you have found the reason to do anything that needs to be done to maintain that love. You have found the reason to shed anything that will separate you from that love. Where law has a connotation of separation and judgment, love draws us to the Father. Love draws us to Himself. And because of that love, those things that separate us from Him become anathema, and there are things that we don't toy with any more or even experiment with any more because we know how seriously they separate us from Him. We push them away from us. We run from them like we run from an angry bear, and we say, "I am not going to be subject to these things any more because I am in love with Him." There is nothing stronger, nothing more powerful than a man's life for the love of God.

**Dave:** *In Acts 19:21 it says, "Speaking of Christ Whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of His Holy prophets since the world began."*

*In the concluding chapter, you discuss "The Secret of His Appearing." You believe that the burden of the Second Coming of Christ rests upon each generation corporately, and, I guess, individually upon each believer to fulfill that which holds Christ from His appearing. Could you explain?*

**Don:** It goes a little deeper than that. I believe each generation is responsible for the coming of the Lord to that generation. My parents' generation and your parents' generation had a destiny beyond them. There was something that the Father wanted to reveal to that generation. So they were responsible for His appearing to that generation. As the torch of His presence has passed to our generation, there is that which is in the Father's heart to be revealed or unveiled to us.

There is an appearing of Himself to our generation. You and I are responsible for His appearing to our generation. When we take the torch of His presence and pass it to our children, they then become responsible for God's plan and purpose for that generation. So each generation there is an appearing of the Lord. Certainly that doesn't take away from the Second Coming. Certainly it doesn't take away from His splitting the sky and His coming forth with all the power and the glory of eternity. But what it does do is, it restores responsibility to each generation. We just don't have time to sit by and say, "Jesus will come some time, and we are just waiting for it to happen." No, there is destiny upon each generation, and He wants to appear to each generation. Just as important to each generation, there is the secret of His appearing to you and me. First John says, "When we see Him, we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is."

Only those theologians who are afraid of His appearing push that Scripture into the Millennium bucket. The Scriptures that we can't explain we throw into the Millennium bucket. A bucket of Scriptures isn't going to happen some time out there into the future. Really, what we are demanding, we are demanding an obedience and level of faith of the next generation that we are unwilling to embrace for ourselves. Each generation is responsible for His appearing.

**More importantly, I am responsible for His appearing in me. Would that the Church would be preoccupied with His appearing to them more than they are preoccupied with His appearing in the world. For truly when He appears in me, we will see His return.**

**Dave:** *Amen! We've been talking with Don Nori. We've been systematically moving through his important book, Secrets of the Most Holy Place. As we began, Psalm 25:14 says, "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him. And He will make known His covenant."*

*This book is really intended to help reveal simply powerful secrets of the new covenant and that they are ours*

*within the veil where He rules as Lord and King in His manifest presence. If you are willing to step beyond the walls of traditionalism, even Charismatic traditionalism, you will find yourself stepping into the deeper realm of His presence and more excellent fellowship with Christ.*

*Don, what is the next step to move into the Holy of Holies?*

**Don:** The next step is to respond to the burning that is on their heart. When someone reads a book like this or hears a talk like this, as we have been talking, the Holy Spirit will witness to them, and their hearts will begin to burn within them, much like the disciples said when they met Jesus on the Road to Emmaus. They didn't understand what He was saying. They didn't know Who He was, and yet their hearts burned within them. And in the same way, this is our Road to Emmaus.

**The Church is on its way to a new dimension. The Church is on its way to the Most Holy Place, the place of His fullness. Respond to that burning. Give into it. Meditate upon it. Say, "Yes, Lord, I want whatever You want for me. Lord, my heart burns for You. My heart yearns for You. Let me enter in. Let me experience all that You have. I receive what you have by the blood of Jesus and because of Your grace." And in doing that, you begin to respond to that burning which is intended to make you hungry and go deeper into His purposes.**

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## Greg Ogden —The New Reformation

**Dave:** *Greg's new book, The New Reformation, is subtitled, Returning the Ministry to the People of God. This book was written in 1990 and was published by Zondervan.*

*Greg is the senior pastor of Saratoga Federated Church in Saratoga, California. He previously pastored in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles. Greg has a B.A. in sociology from U.C.L.A. and a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary.*

*You say in the foreword of your book, "One of the hallmarks of the Reformation is the teaching of the priesthood of all believers. Yet the important implication of this teaching has been largely neglected by the spiritual descendants of Luther and Calvin, namely that all believers are ministers."*

*In the beginning of the introduction to the book, you say, "The Reformation left a lot of unfinished business." Please explain.*

**Greg:** The idea of the priesthood of all believers certainly has been understood by most in one aspect, in that we all can relate directly to Christ, and we do not need a human intermediary. The second aspect of that, which has to do with our being priests, one to another and seeing ourselves as minister/priests, has largely been ignored. If you were asking the average person in the congregation, "What does it mean to be a minister/priest, or can you even say that you are that," most people would have very little understanding of what it is all about.

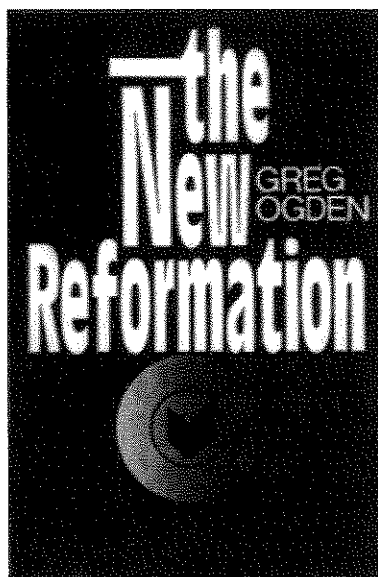
Certainly they would not associate that with themselves. Being channels through whom God works to perform ministry is what it means to be a priest. It has not yet fully—or even close to fully—been maximized in the Church today.

**Dave:** *So you are looking for a new Reformation.*

**Greg:** Absolutely! The entire transformation of the identity and mindset of the average person in the pew on Sunday morning! I see this as

an identity change issue, and people who are coming to our churches tend to see themselves as spectators, consumers, and receivers, as someone else's ministry versus being ministers themselves. And that will take an entirely new vantage point from which to see ourselves.

**Dave:** *Let me read from your chapter entitled "Unfinished Business." You point out that the Holy Spirit inspires and illuminates the written Word and that we need to have both the dynamic of the Holy Spirit anointing as well as the obvious written Word. You say,*



*"Non-rational occurrences such as dreams, visions, healings, and direct inward impulses were suspect and the seed-bed for false doctrine. In recent years we have experienced a paradigm shift. The rationalist approach was not wrong. It was merely incomplete."*

*Share the model that you put forth, a framework of how God illuminates through both the Spirit and the Word, and through the Body as well.*

**Greg:** What I was trying to say is that we have reduced our understanding of the Christian faith to mental concepts. If you just get your thinking right, then somehow that will translate to right behavior. What I am trying to say

is, "Yes, there is truth in that, but it is not the whole truth." The Holy Spirit is not only That which translates content through Scripture, but He is One Who empowers us directly by experience. It is the starving for experience of the Spirit and its empowerment that I see so much in our congregations. So it is a combination of the rational work of the Spirit through truth as well as the directed immediate work of the Spirit through our lives and through our churches.

It seems to me that this is what we have been experiencing today and is the kind of experience that is necessary for the paradigm shift to take place in the Church. **If people are going to see themselves as ministers, they must be empowered to be able to do so.** So the fact that all of us can be directly connected, empowered, and impacted by the Spirit's work -- and it is not just a few pastors who have that privilege—then when that experience is open to us all, there is that chance of change of our understanding of who we are.

**Dave:** *Let's be honest though. We have this vision of seeing the priesthood of all believers, and yet you and I know—and on page 20 you discuss it --"If the pastor is the star on center stage, what roles are left for God's people?" How are you dealing with that in your church?*

**Greg:** On a number of levels. I see essentially three strategies that we are putting in place. First and foremost is the whole issue of breaking the congregation down into smaller units, particularly in the small group structure, which are lay led groups of three to twelve. People come together to minister to one another as they are gathered around the Word so that the gifts that each one brings are released in the context of that small group. There is care for one another provided to one another. There is prayer for one another during difficult times in their lives. It is not necessary for a pastor or professional leader to be involved in that process as long as we are providing the training for those group leaders. Thus, the groups

themselves have the ability to reach out and multiply and incorporate new people in them as they try to lead others to Christ. So small group strategy is absolutely essential as the basic building block to help others discover that they are ministers.

A second strategy is the whole consciousness that we are trying to develop through teaching and practice throughout the congregation—that each person is gifted and called to ministry. When the Holy Spirit came into our lives, He brought with Him gifts, ministry abilities that empower us to be able to build and serve others. Thus, we have put into place a three-step strategy to help people discover that there are gifts and what each person's gifts are. We also must teach people how they can find a proper place to use their gifts in the Body through follow up counseling as well as placement in ministry, both within and outside of the Church. I am not talking about ministry which is simply something that is done within the Church.

Finally, we have a discipling strategy wherein people in intense and accountable relationships of three people meet together over a long period of time (approximately a year of journeying together). They go through the essentials of the faith and incorporate disciplines within their lives so that they can feed themselves with the Word of God and prayer. We provide the foundation doctrinally to understand what the faith is all about so people can move out in ministry. It is built around the context of highly accountable, shared relationships. Each person learns in this context how to disciple others. So it has a multiplying effect of increasing a network outward of people who learn to be disciplined and who then disciple others deeply in the faith.

**Dave:** *There are many born again Christians who are fed up with the institutional church. You make an argument in your book that the Church needs organization and, thus, is an institution, but that it must not be allowed to become institutionalized. You give an example of four life support systems. Would you explain those?*

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

**Greg:** Within the human body, there is order within the organism. You have the life support structure of the skeleton, the nervous, blood, and digestive systems. All are necessary for order within the life of the organism. The skeleton system is the frame for the organs. The nervous system is the message center from the head to activate all the parts (which could be the prophets in the Church). The circulatory system distributes the nourishment of the food to the body, and the digestive system takes in new food and replenishes the old. There are comparative to the Church, which needs order within the organism.

**Dave:** *Let's look at the institutionalism of Roman Catholicism, which the Reformation attacked, trying to change. You mention that the stratified positions of status and honor were the seedbed for corruption during the Middle Ages. The Church was wedded to a theology that said that Christ had delegated to the Church the right to dispense grace. As author Leonard Verduin put it, "Essentially what happened was that ordained ministers were installed with a special reproductive system where they were the only ones who could birth people into the Church." This still hangs with us today. Perhaps your view of the ordination process would be helpful here since you question some of the traditional concepts about the process of ordination.*

**Greg:** I think that the average person in a Church views ordination as a "rite of passage" into a holy realm. In ordination comes this sort of mystical setting apart by a group of people who are now able to do something that the rest of the folks are not able to do, or to obtain a level of status and holiness that others cannot.

I found myself in a conversation recently with a young man who was preparing to go to seminary and was questioning whether he was called to ministry or not. In other words, should he go through the process or not? In the midst of the discussion, I blurted out, much to my surprise, "Ordination is evil!" Then I caught myself and asked, "Where did that

come from?" What I have come to realize is that ordination has a very debilitating effect upon the Body. As long as it means that a certain few people have a set-apart status that is above and beyond what others can obtain, it will cause some to think, "I can't get there. Therefore, I am less than those who are pastors, missionaries, etc." So it has had a very crippling impact on the mindset of the average person because it means automatically, "I cannot." I think we have to rethink the whole meaning of ordination. All of us are called to ministry, not just a few. Thus, we have to think about how to commission different members of the Body who have gifts for ministry to their full time ministry as well.

**Dave:** *I think that is true. Paul Stevens says that the whole Church is clergy and laity. The traditions of men have created this division. Let's talk about the role of the pastor as the equipper of the Saints and your concept of team ministry.*

**Greg:** I think there is an absolute necessity for changes in the role of the pastor. If you start with the fundamental starting point that the Church is first and foremost a Body, that every part of the Body is necessary, and that no one part of the Body is more important than any other part of the Body, then this forces some changes on our understanding of the "set-apart" role of the pastor.

The pastor is a necessary element as all other parts, but we have to look at his role in the Body—to help the rest of the Body know their part. This is what Paul talks about in Ephesians 4, where he says that pastors/teachers are to equip the Saints for the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ. This is much quoted, but we tend to fall back into the old patterns of dependency, which means that the pastor does it, and I take what the pastor does for me.

I am urging a different model here, of Elton Trueblood's image, the pastor as "coach." I think we need a more helpful, modern image for the pastor today because we need to transform that role into one of empowering others for ministry.

The idea of "coach" says that a player/coach has a role on the team to help others discover their talents and find their part on the team. It also says that there is one team, not two or more teams, not a clergy team and a laity team, or two different playing fields on which they play. The coach has a dignifying role of helping others discover their ministry, so the coach's glory is not to point attention to himself but to the gifts and talents of his team members. Thus, the team wins when everyone knows and plays well their part.

**Dave:** *Using that analogy, how would you facilitate that with a plurality of leadership?*

**Greg:** It is a more demanding role of leadership for someone who is pastor, the head of staff. One style is to be the quarterback who calls the plays and tells the players what to do and be very dictatorial about it. That to me is a violation of the New Testament model of servant leadership. So we have some concentric circles of consensus building.

We have a staff of eight, and we all contribute to the direction we are going, but we do it in a consensus building style. I present a basic vision and direction, of small groups being the basic building blocks for the life of the Church, (and the small group leader being the most valued role in our congregation), then we build a consensus of strategy with everybody contributing to that. That is a part of our staff meetings and elder teams—working together. We have a group I call our strategic elders, of which I am a part, who meet on a weekly basis to focus on the direction we are going, and we pray together. I am a part of that, I contribute to it, but I am one part of it. I do not dictate the agenda. Elders meeting every week is probably a radical idea for most Churches, but it is all a part of the team and consensus building process. Then we move out into the congregation with a mission statement in which we try to build a consciousness throughout the entire congregation of the direction we are going so people can have a sense of the common vision that they are a part of.

**Dave:** *Let me read a footnote from a book by Ernest Cline, A Christian Lifestyle in a Modern World. "The traditional roles of clergy and laity must be reversed. The laity become the troops in the front lines, and the clergy with the gathered Church, help support them. Until this revolution occurs, the Protestant concept of the priesthood of believers remains vague and unrealized." What kind of obstacles did you face as you moved toward this shift in your ministry?*

**Greg:** The church I am currently serving has been around since the early part of the century, so we are like the ocean liner that makes changes very slowly. We are not fully there yet in terms of the mindset of the congregation, and I am thankful for that because that is where most churches are. If I had a new situation, which I could have started with MY concept, then the traditional church could say that you really can not say anything to me because you do not understand our situation. We have faced the common expectations that, "as pastors, you are to take care of us." We have faced times of crisis and difficulty. To make the move from pastor-centered to congregational care/ministry will take some time, probably an entire generation. **We have moved from one pastor being seen as responsible for the "care" of the congregation to perhaps a hundred people who are responsible as leaders and members of teams to deliver one kind of care or other to various members of the Church.**

**Dave:** *It took us 1700 years to get out of step, so we are not going to turn it around overnight. What are your thoughts about reproducing this model and raising up missions to go out not only in the Bay area but other parts of the world?*

**Greg:** We see ourselves as a traditional evangelical congregation. Thus, we are a model for those of a similar tradition who want to move from a traditional, pastoral based ministry to a Body centered one with members being self-enunciating in terms of their ministries. We are looking ahead to perhaps three years from now as being able to bring people in to look

at us and see us as a model they can follow. I think the elements of our model are excitingly coming together. The whole structure of small group ministry that is reproducible, we are calling an interlaced model of ministry. It interlaces throughout the entire fabric of our congregational life as a style and way we do ministry. We have a discipling model which is reproducible, the triad model of discipleship. Our whole strategy of gifts and call is going to be a reproducible, three-steps of content, follow-up, and placement model.

**Dave:** *Do you have any opportunities for people to share in celebration time, as Jim Rutz talks about in his book The Open Church, or does it all happen in the small groups?*

**Greg:** We are in the process of creating an alternative worship experience, which would provide just that. There is a strong, exciting movement in our congregation to want to have a more open worship experience where we can sing without some limitations, or where people can stand and share what is happening in their lives or seek prayer for a specific concern. God's spirit is clearly moving us in that direction. We already have what we call "town meetings" where people can express their dreams for direction in ministry. We do these quarterly.

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## Dennis Peacocke — Divine Strategy

**Dave:** *Listen carefully, listener, as we discuss with Strategic Christian Services President, Dennis Peacocke, some of the trends we see emerging in the Church. For those of you unfamiliar with Dennis, all I can say is, "You need to become familiar with him!" Dennis has carried a vision to see the Body of Christ functioning as it should be, both internally and externally in the culture. He has developed over the last ten or fifteen years some incredible audio resources dealing with everything from economics to how to rebuild the culture—how to rebuild an entire nation. So I do not think anyone would accuse you, Dennis, of small thinking!*

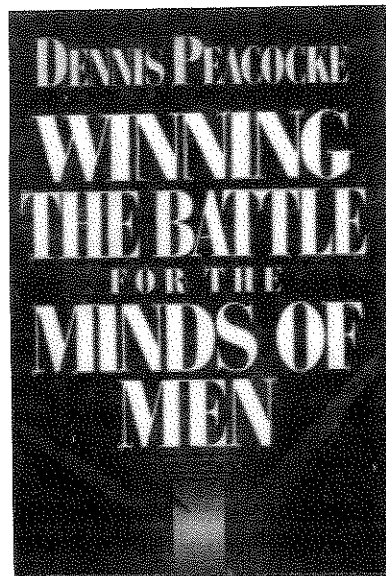
*You have been around the pike on transitional changes in the Church before. You have seen movements come and go, so perhaps you would like to begin with cautions as we discuss the "new things" God is doing in the Church. There is the concept that, when God does something new, a new wineskin is needed, and the old one must go. Do you have any cautions on that?*

**Dennis:** Yes, but first of all, let me say how much I appreciate what you are doing in this series and the diversity of input from various ministers and leaders who bring with it a balanced perspective.

Jesus talks in Matthew 13 about the Kingdom of God being like the man who, discovering it, brings forth out of his treasures some things old and some things new. I call this "the cantilever principle." The way God builds is, He builds new things tied into old things! In that sense, the New Testament is an extension of the continuity that began in the Old Testament. They are not separated. They are absolutely tied together. The New is a revealing of and fulfilling of that which God committed Himself to, humanly speaking, in the Old Testament. That being the way God operates, obviously our goal as Christians is to

pattern ourselves after God to think the way He thinks and to build and operate the way He operates. We are to make very sure that, as we move into new things, we do not do so in such a way as to fall prey to one of two traps. One, that thinking what we are doing is new and appeared out of nowhere, which is very faulty thinking. And secondly, not to really hold to the balance of what the old things gave us, that we do not want to reject but simply fulfill and move on.

**Dave:** *As we look through the*



*corridors of history, there is a renewed passion to recover something of the purity of the early Church. When Jesus established the Church, there was something new, but then in the 4th century we see what some say was a collapse into a political church. Then came a thousand years of primarily what we know of as the Catholic Church. Later the reformers appeared with their vision for sola scriptura and the priesthood of the believers, which many feel did not go far enough.*

*In the last two hundred years there have been waves of revivals. Those in the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement see theirs as a third wave*

*of God restoring things. You have said that, "what we see in the 20th century does not qualify as a true revival because it has not affected the culture around it." In your recent leadership conference, How to Win the Sustainable War," you spoke of the importance of having an "internal alignment." How do you apply that to the Church body (gathered) as well as the church body individually?*

**Dennis:** That is a profound question and full of some complex issues. Let me begin by reminding our listeners/readers that the New Testament was built on the Old Testament Scriptures. Many believers fail to remember that when Paul was admonishing the Church to study the Scriptures, he was referring to the Old Testament because there was no New Testament. There was no canon for several hundred years. Thus, a lot of people miss what I consider to be a tremendously significant point, which illustrates what we were saying a moment ago. Even though the New Testament is obviously new and is a fulfillment of the prophecies of the old and an extension of the old, even in the midst of the newness, the New Testament Church was built on the Old Testament Scriptures because that is what Christians properly construed to be Scripture.

Now, I am not saying that they did not read Paul's epistles along with Peter and John's, but there was an ongoing dispute among many of the churches as to whether or not those letters from those men qualified in any way with the same weight as the Old Testament. That is an important point because it illustrates the tension that God has always had between whatever He is doing with man and recognizing what has gone on before—that God is the steward of that history even in the midst of the new things that are being birthed. The new things must align themselves in a continuity, in a

continuum of consistent action and principle with the things that God has always been doing with His people. I cannot over-emphasize that enough, especially in the Church of the 20th and 21st century. And I do not want to get into this too deeply, but we are living in a century which is characterized by existential thought, the long and short of which means that we have no roots, no past, and that we have to develop our own authenticity separated from what was and was not in relationship to what will be. And that permeates the culture because what is the philosophy of the 20th and 21st century is existentialism. What we in the Church must not do is fall prey to a theological existentialism as it were, where we are ignorant or oblivious to the continuity of and the contribution that other men and women of God have made over the many centuries and what we can learn from them as we build upon their shoulders and their experiences as we move out into what is new for us. Paul in Ephesians 4 talks about the role of the five-fold ministry to keep the ship from rocking from side to side as the crew is running from one side to the other side, chasing new doctrines.

I will conclude my answer by saying what my burden is. The maturity of Church leaders is men who are concerned that the helm be kept steady even though the ship is moving ahead. The helm must be kept steady even though the ship is moving into new waters. **And the way we keep that helm steady is by keeping a perspective and a continuity with that which has gone before us upon which we are building as we move into new territory.**

*Dave: A strategist is someone who thinks from the back forward. You can see a bride that is without spot or wrinkle, so you work backward from that. Is that right?*

**Dennis:** Yes, and because God dwells outside of time, He is the Alpha and the Omega. He sees the beginning and the end. As leaders, living in

such an incredibly unsteady and crumbling world, we must maintain a sense of steadfastness. I think one of the things the world is going to eventually find in the Church that is going to be most attractive is its stability. While all other institutions are faltering and failing and collapsing as they war with one another, I believe one of the earmarks of the Church in the 21st century is going to be its stability. People and cultures that are falling apart are going to need steady ships, steady direction.

Strategy takes into mind, how do we chart new waters while holding on to the continuity of God's overall purposes? Because God is not doing anything new, all He is doing is revealing in an ever fuller sense that which He has always been committed to do. And you can find this all through Scripture, from Genesis 1 to Revelation, which is the continuity of what God's plan is.

A strategist is concerned that we stay within the confines of the overall project of what God is about and then try to discern what time period you are in, relative to that strategy, so that your work and what you are doing is consistent with what God wants to do at a particular point in history. And prophetic strategy is dealing with God's larger plot, His time-keeping, if you will, not so much with the return of Jesus, but discerning where we are in terms of God's building so that our building efforts of our generation fit into the overall plan as to what God is about.

*Dave: If you have not heard Dennis' tape series on "The Lord of The Harvest," I encourage you to get it. In it he discusses at length the concept of God's seasons and discerning where you are in God's season.*

*Dennis, you travel the country a lot with Strategic Strategic Services presenting a vision to help cities identify the "eldership in the gates." Some cities are moving ahead, first establishing prayer unity. In your newsletter, The*

*Rebuilder, you say that leaders in the '90s are going to be coming and going, rising and falling as we witness a "changing of the guard." Do you feel the introduction of the cell-based and home-based ministries is just another option, or is this the shape of things to come?*

**Dennis:** It is the shape of things to come because while the Church is prophetic and deals with shaping and changing history as it shapes and changes cultures and nations, the Church at the end of the day is made up of individuals. In order for individuals to collectively change anything, they have to be grounded in truth, in intimacy, in incorporeity, and linked with one another.

The recent re-emphasis on small groups—and it is not new—is a re-emphasis, going all the way back to Wesley and the Moravians, who were based on small groups. So we have not discovered anything new. We have just found an old truth that is enjoying a resurgence. **Intimacy is required for anyone to grow, and intimacy cannot take place effectively in the whole congregation.** It needs to take place in a smaller group of people who can get to know you, and you get to know them. Out of that, we share and meet one another's needs in Christ for accountability, for intimacy, for studying the Word, for sharing and applying the Word in our lives. I applaud what is going on in terms of challenging our view of the Church as a Sunday morning meeting. The Sunday morning meeting is a celebration and a proclaiming of the Word and experiencing one another in a larger group. But there are major facets of what is needed to bring us to maturity, which can only be found in smaller groups. Again, as I conclude this answer, I would remind us that in recent history, going back to the Moravians—which goes back to the 1500 to 1700s in their roots—and we could go all the way back in the Monastic orders in the Catholic Church, all of which were small groups, so cases in point, *we have not discovered anything new.* The Holy Spirit is taking an old truth and

breathing new life into it.

**Dave:** *Somehow we have fallen into a "spectatorism," even with 1,900 years of experience under our belts that has paralyzed much of the Church. Do you see the need for "deprofessionalizing" ministry so that every person can find his or her place in ministry?*

**Dennis:** Absolutely!

**Dave:** *You have discussed the question of authority. Some are questioning the ordination process because it creates two classes of people. Do we see this in the Bible?*

**Dennis:** We do, but we shouldn't. Your question is, "What does the Bible teach in terms of 'ought to be' and not what is?" What ought to be is a nation of kings and priests where everyone is functioning in their God-given destiny and their God-given place, and everyone is involved in ministry. My contention on that one is that, the problem is not with commissioning and the laying on of hands because that is a Biblical truth that you cannot do away with. The larger problem, in my point of view, is in our theology of the Kingdom. When the Church sees itself as limiting its activities to man's personal morality, that is, sexual morality, what he eats, drinks, smokes, or does not, and coming to church on Sunday morning or a mid-week service and thinking of that as the Church. That is the larger problem. That is the core of why we are not seeing the priesthood of the believer. Not because there are structural problems in the Church, in terms of wineskins or that we do not have small groups. **The problem is much more profound in my opinion. It is a theological problem that we have not seen nor preached the Kingdom of God, which by the way, is the only Gospel that we were authorized to preach. Once you see the Kingdom of God, that is, God's will and way being accomplished in every dimension of life, then we release the saints into their ministries and do away with the laity/clergy**

distinction because once you see the Kingdom, if I am called to be a secretary or a plumber and that really is my calling, then it is my responsibility to do that work as unto the Lord and to bring the wisdom of God and the Scriptures of God to bear in that endeavor. Not just in terms of my sexual morality but, for example, if I am a secretary, how does God want me to serve in such a way that I glorify Him? How do I take the people in the office around me and relate to them in such a way so that I begin to draw out from them their ministries and their design and their destiny? In other words, in everything that I touch, my goal is to bring God's order and God's life into that situation. Now that is a theological problem, not a church structure problem. So let's not try and fix the structure, which is not really foundational. The structure is a secondary problem. The primary problem is what we believe about the Gospel, therefore, what we believe about how we ought to be acting in the world. When we address that problem, the question of wineskins and restructuring the wineskins then becomes a real issue. I am concerned, David, that we will go about fixing the wrong problem, that we will change the wineskins and go into small groups looking at that as a "fix-it" response and not change the wine. Don't get me wrong. Structural changes need to be done, but we must keep in mind what the foundational problem is. Jesus emphasized that it is the wine that forces the change in the wineskin, not the wineskin that forces the change in the wine.

**Dave:** *A very important perspective. I know you have a deep concern to see the Church recover a Biblical worldview. We hear a lot about the separation of the Church and State, but you have a concern for the separation of the family from the Church and how we need to begin with the person and the family to rebuild the church.*

**Dennis:** First, let me point out that the separation of the Church and State is not something that the

English political theorists discovered. God established it back in the Old Testament. One of the things that Saul was judged for was when he tried to administer priestly duties. The role of the king and the priest were clearly and distinctly separated in the Old Testament. God is the author of the separation of the institution of the State from the Church. That is not modern political theory.

Relative to the other issue, we believe that change comes from the inside out and the bottom up. The world teaches that change comes from the outside in and the top down. **Jesus teaches that the way He is "architecting" the universe is that change comes from inside out and bottom up, which means that I am not going to change anybody until I myself am regenerated and have made the kinds of changes in me that need to be modeled and understood before I am going to change anybody or anything around me very much.**

The family unit is the basic building block of human interrelationships. It is where we as children learned how to successfully or unsuccessfully relate to other people. It is where our parents began to either discipline and train us not to be selfish and self-centered but to be concerned about the other person and how to love them. All these things begin in our homes, which is why the socialization process of the family unit is the target both of the devil and God. The biggest war going on right now is probably in the home in terms of the breakdown of male/female relationships and parent/child relationships. The whole socialization process takes place there. Unresolved family problems end up in prisons. Our prisons are filled with men and women whose parents failed them in terms of equipping them for life. Therefore, although we are concerned about such things as the Constitution, taxes, and national affairs, our focus knows and understands that the individual and family unit is the basic building block where any change has to take

place that will affect the Church. I want to say again, to just deal with changing Church structure is dealing with the secondary issue. It is a vital secondary issue, and I believe in it, but it has to be kept in its perspective. I need to be changed before the structure around me is all that important. Now the structure around me can reinforce change, or it can inhibit change. The first and primary issue is me as an individual—my heart, my attitude, my efforts, my morality. As we move into a period of tremendous structure change, because we are going to have structural change in America and the corporate world, in the middle of all that, I am pushing for remembering that fundamental change takes place in an individual, then in a family unit and radiates out from that into the Church and into the business world, political world, and culture.

*Dave: You believe that we are going to need a whole army that traverses denominational barriers and that to bring this unity, you believe the Lord may bring a formidable enemy in our way to help us see the need to work together.*

**Dennis:** The Scriptures show us that God's people do a whole lot better in obeying God under adversity than in peace and prosperity. I wish it were not true, but reality shows that we are more spiritual on an empty gas tank than a full one. The Scripture is very clear about what the Church is supposed to be and do and all that we are supposed to be about. It is very obvious that we are not doing it. We are selfish and self-centered. We don't love the lost. We are not interested in the Kingdom. We are just interested in going to heaven. God's remedy for this is pressure. I believe that divisiveness—a lot of screwy stuff and political maneuvering that goes on in the Body of Christ—is going to be dealt with in a very severe way by the consequences of the judgment that is coming against both the Church and the culture for our sin. That judgment is going to force us together. It is going to force us to learn how to love

each other and to settle and sort through theological issues that are not primary or basic truths. It will put into perspective the issues where we differ because frankly I do not think some of these issues will be resolved until we are in the presence of the Lord. Pressure is going to focus us and force us to be something for one another that will be a light to the world. Reader, you are alive in a time period when the Heavenly Father is really going to turn the heat up, and what I see as I literally travel the world is that God is really putting pressure on all of us as believers to squeeze out from us the immaturity and the impurities that keep us from bonding together. I know that a metal has to be heated to the point that the impurities come out. You cannot bond metals that have impurities. The only way you can bond them is when they are reduced to their essential nature. That is what I see the Holy Spirit doing with the Church and to us as individuals, which is to continue to apply more and more heat and more and more pressure so we are being prepared by having our impurities removed, to begin bonding with each other in a way that is going to provoke the world and reveal Jesus Christ in His Church.

*Dave: I know you work within the existing Church structure and also with Barry and Anne Byrd and their new concept of a Christian community, which is not to be confused with communal living or "retreatism." At your last conference you shared a very powerful illustration dealing with the fact that truth is intention. You said we need to be careful that if we smite the shepherd, we will scatter the sheep, and that we need to take a caretaker's approach to what God is doing in the Church. Share the illustration of the tricep, of how truth is kept in balance. Ern Baxter said that truth does not come through a spigot, but via rain, or as Jim Rutz would say, "as dew settling on the prairie."*

**Dennis:** One of the criticisms of God's Word is that it contradicts

itself. If you are reading the Scripture from a purely logical point of view, throughout Scripture you will find what appears to be contradictions.

For example, a classic one is in Philippians 2:12-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This puts a focus on my personal responsibility. But then the next verse says, "For it is God who works within you to do His good pleasure." This puts the focus not on me but on the sovereignty of God. So, you say, "God, make up your mind which it is. I who am being held accountable, am I initiating work and response, or is it totally your sovereignty, and I'm just along for the ride?"

Another example would be, "He that provides not for his own is worse than an unbeliever." But then the Scripture turns right around and in Luke 14 Jesus says, "If you don't hate father and mother, brother and sister, and forsake them all, you cannot be my disciple."

"Now, God, will you make up your mind? Which one is it?" God's answer is a resounding, "BOTH!" Truth in Scripture is not either/or but both/and. It is like a teeter-totter that has weight on both ends, which applies to us, relative to where we now are. In other words, if I were an evangelist and was irresponsible out on the road, not caring about my family, I would expect the Holy Spirit to administer the end of the teeter-totter that is dealing with my need for providing for my own. If I don't, I am worse than an unbeliever, and I have deserted the faith. On the other hand, if I were an evangelist who did not want to travel because of the sacrifice it would make on my family, if I was unwilling to forgo comforts or give up my relationship with my kids and my wife periodically for the sake of the Gospel, then the Holy Spirit would minister to me out of Luke 14 and admonish me to forsake father, mother, wife, sister, and children, and my life also. Once you understand that truth, it is not only

liberating, but the Scripture becomes all the more magnificent because you see how it truly is a living document. It is a body of truth that applies to us at whatever spectrum we are. **Whether we are too loose or too tight, too strong or too weak, too full of self-generating works or too passive and just waiting on the sovereignty of God, the Scripture is a living, dynamic fulcrum as it were, that sits right in the middle of a teeter-totter and balances both sides of the teeter-totter, depending on where you are.** That concept has been one of the most helpful things that I have come to understand.

*Dave: Let's close with a word to those senior leaders out there who are weary, who are battle-torn and bleeding in the trenches. You see that we need to enter into the rest of God and that the senior leaders need to primarily see themselves as responsible to the other officers rather than the soldiers.*

Dennis: God grant me wisdom to do that. The senior officer's first responsibility is to the officer corps, not to the army. If you lose your leaders, you have lost the sheep. One of the things I have seen with the pastors I have worked with over the years (and I have pastored a local church myself) is the tremendous pressure on us to try and meet the needs of the sheep. But let's look at what Jesus did. He first met the needs of the disciplēs, knowing that if He met His officers corps' needs, they would meet the needs of the people. **I encourage you who are leaders, therefore, to remember that your first priority, after your family, is to your officer corps.** If you will continue to focus on your officer corps, you will be able to multiply and care for your sheep. If you do not, you will be on a treadmill. You will never be able to fulfill the needs of the sheep or be able to reproduce enough officers to really grow; the net effect of that is that, if you do grow, more and more responsibility comes back on you instead of being dispersed to other leaders.

The second thing I would say is that **we need to get off the time trip and the tyranny of time that, if we do not hurry up and get everything in order, we are going to somehow fail to serve the Lord.** My family and I took a three month sabbatical last year to get totally off of ministry and off alone. It was a wonderful experience because it strengthened my perspective about the long run. If the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered. I urge you, my brother and my sister, look to your own needs somewhat. If you are smashed or wiped out emotionally, or if you feel you are running on empty or that you are continually running with the needle in the red zone, you are not serving God or pleasing Him because He cares about you as a person. And He cares about you as a leader. I would urge and admonish you to stop and get out from underneath the time pressure, that somehow we are in some kind of a hurry-up offense, and we have got to get everything done and everything in place and everyone equipped right away or else the anti-Christ will arise or the world is going to come to an end or whatever you may think. That kind of thinking is a tyranny that is burning leaders out around the world.

**I believe that God gave me a Word a number of years ago, and I preach it everywhere I go. It is this: "Tell my people they have time to obey me." If I do not have time to be a human being and I do not have time to be a lover of Jesus nor time to let the needle be in the black zone instead of the red all the time, something is wrong with me as a human being.** I want to encourage you to fight through the internal and external pressure that is trying to demand you produce fruit, grapes, and harvest regardless of the season you may be in or regardless of whatever season your church may be in, because that is tyranny! You need to get out of it! God wants to deliver us out of it! Thus, in John 21, we will be like Jesus who wanted to share a meal with His disciples instead of holding another meeting. God enable us to be as concerned for fixing a breakfast for

our disciples as we are for preparing another sermon.

*Dave: The world is going to come to the Church, and we are going to have enough within us to give them what they need.*

Dennis: Let me say how much I appreciate you. I sincerely mean it. I think that the ability He has given you and the favor He has given you with large segments of the Body of Christ and leaders is going to be mightily used and increased in its profundity, the way it changes us, because you are connecting people and allowing a genuine transfer of life to occur. I encourage you in what you are doing.

*Dave: Thank the Lord! Tell us what you have coming up for the Body. The Freedom Series is in print now?*

Dennis: Yes. *The Freedom Series*, for you who do not know about it, contains a lot of teaching on Biblical economics and principles of management. I carry a deep burden for seeing Christian professionals out there in the marketplace changing the world. People are in the world ten times longer than they are in the Church. If we want to change people, we have to change the way they show up at work. I also have a book that, Lord willing, will be released in the fall called, *Almighty God and Sons*. It deals with how to change the world in the marketplace. Another book I am working on is *The War Between Two Seeds*, which traces the Genesis 3:15 prophecy, the war between Jesus Christ, His Church, and the anti-Christ all the way through Revelation. This book shows how that affects us. I also have a number of other tapes series available.

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## John Perkins — *The Urban Family*

**Dave:** *The restoration of Christian community and the empowerment of the whole people of God is the subject of this discussion. It is said that the gospel is colorblind. We wish that were true of our American culture, but we tend to think in terms of a white church or a black church. Yet the truth of the gospel is that there is only one Church. John Perkins heads up the John Perkins Foundation, which is publishing a new magazine that just celebrated its first anniversary. It is titled Urban Family: the Magazine for Hope and Progress. I want to encourage everyone to add this to your list of periodicals.*

*John is the author of two books, one of which, Let Justice Roll Down, is his own personal story. Senator Mark Hatfield of the state of Oregon has said, "Most of us have never known any of the ruthless poverty, vile hatred, or raw violence and hard injustice that was inflicted on John Perkins as a black person in Mississippi. There are few who I know whose lives have responded to such overwhelming indignities with such a witness of miraculous compassion, vision, and hope."*

*You were born in Hebron, Mississippi, in 1930. Your book is committed to a three-fold strategy of Biblical evangelism, social action, and community development. Can you share some of the vision that caused you to launch the Perkins Foundation and the ministries that have developed from this?*

**John:** I was converted here in Pasadena in 1957. Three years later I moved back to Mississippi, and after living in the little town of Mendenhall, that is when I began to see the Church as it existed in the communities in the South. In both black and white congregations, what was really happening was not really relevant to human development. They had taken this precious gospel—the love of God, which is supposed to reconcile people to God

and to each other across racial, culture, and social/economic barriers and by which the world would know we are Christians by the love we have for each other—and put it into our race and culture in a way that the gospel had lost its power. What we then had was a form of godliness that denied the power of God. We had a strong religion, but it lacked the power to reconcile. **That's when I began to see that I had to preach a gospel that was strongly to my culture and race, that would reconcile people and then empower the poor to take control of their**



lives. That's when I began what I call today the "holistic approach," which has led to Christian community development. I was able to see that Christian community development and indigent development was the best way to work for justice. I also began to see that justice was God's motivation for redemption, and again, the American Church had made justice a social issue, "something we'd do if we got around to it." But it was not the cause or motivation for our redemption. So that began the pilgrimage I've been on for the last 30 years.

**Dave:** *I'll read a little bit from Let Justice Roll Down. This is taken from*

*Amos 5:23, "Take away from me the noise of your songs. To the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream."*

*As you look at the black Church in America, you wrote, "We see a history of 200 years of slavery, followed by two or three generations of economic exploitation, political oppression, racial discrimination, and educational desperation, which created in black people a feeling of inferiority, instability, and dependency." This is the crisis we are facing in the 1990s in the inner city areas, which could erupt in violence at any time. What kinds of things do you think the Church can do to bring reconciliation to these deep, deep wounds? Certainly repentance should be a part of it in the white church. But beyond that, the leadership must come up with some strategies. What kind of strategies are working?*

**John:** The first step for the Church is to believe the gospel and to also understand it. I think what we have created is a dichotomized gospel, which we call the gospel, but that gospel is lacking the reconciling message. **We have organized reconciliation out**—as far as reconciliation toward our fellow man—in terms of race and culture. **And we have taken on a homogeneous gospel that allows the Church to grow without reconciliation.** So, that is at the heart of the issue.

The American Church doesn't understand that reconciliation is the purpose of the gospel. Apostle Paul used words like, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." He was talking about the salvation that saves people from sin, that saves them presently and in the future, but he was also talking about the power to break down the racial barriers. What you see here now is the form of

a racist, bigot Jew, a religious bigot who has been changed by the power of the gospel and has now been called to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. And he said, "I'm not ashamed as a Jew to be carrying this gospel to Romans and Gentiles, because it is the power of God that can break down the walls that separated the Jews and the Gentiles in the temple." So the issue of reconciliation was at the heart of the world mission.

A friend of mine who just wrote a book with my son, Spencer, talks about the gospel that we took to Korea. We rejoice that Korea is almost a Christian nation, and we use that as a model, but the Koreans hate the Japanese! We have exported a sort of American idea of the gospel that can spread over a nation but never deal really with the racial issues in a society. So the first thing we have to do is believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation; that the gospel is the love of God demonstrated; and that the pressure is on us, as God's people, to demonstrate that. The next thing is to create community again. We have to create the parish, for the Church in the New Testament is a Church in a place. It's a parish, a community. What we have done today is create a community church of massive bigness, and now people are frantically trying to find ways to break the Church down in terms of community so it can witness to the families.

**The greatest problem we have in all the communities is the breakdown of the family. This is multiplied massively in the urban communities.** Thus, we have to find ways to bring families together, and the best way is in the neighborhood and community where they live. Those are the major thrusts that have to take place in and through the Church. The Church must restructure itself seriously, and it has to do more than create family nurture groups, because that still can be an extension of our individualism where we are being ministered to instead of seeing it as coming out of our calling to

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

minister. It is very clear in the Scriptures where the whole idea of coming together and being taught is for the strengthening of the Church, for the unifying of the Body, so we can do the work of the ministry. It is from the work of the ministry that we are supposed to get our strength, but we have reversed that and made teaching and nurture the main work. So, we are doing teaching and nurture without people doing the work of reconciliation.

**Dave:** *It sounds like your word to the Church is to grow up.*

**John:** Yes, and that growing up has to do with our involvement in ministry—with the sense of obedience. We have moved Christianministry to being inspiration centered on ME, on SELF. However, our inspiration ought to come out of our obedience in doing the will of God. It is as though the Protestant Church has overreacted to Catholicism, making a spiritual Church by faith and inspiration, a reaction to the Catholics saying that we are working to gain our salvation. However, we don't work to gain salvation. We work out of obedience to the free salvation that is given. **So the American Church, whether they are white or black, has a serious obedience problem.**

**Dave:** *Are you saying that the lawlessness in the streets are in many ways a physical manifestation of the lawlessness within the Church and in our hearts?*

**John:** Yes. Five or ten years ago we were glorifying the growth of the Church. But the growth of the Church has had little to do with stemming the moral and immoral tides in our society. So the Church can grow without being effective, because we have a message that does not require the evidence of our growth in good works—good creative, healthy works within the community that rescue the perishing and care about their concerns.

Now, having said all that, there are some great signs of hope taking place

within our nation and world.

**Dave:** *That is the issue right now. The whole prophetic call in Jeremiah is to root out, pluck up, and tear down the false things, but then it is to plant and rebuild as well. I hear and see this message in your new publication, Urban Family. In the last issue you highlighted 25 heroes. In your preface you said, "If you had one person in this neighborhood," a reporter asked a young boy, "who you would like to be like when you grew up, who would it be?" The child thought for a moment and replied, "Nobody!"* "This is a sad, sad commentary and a testimony, you said, to the bitter-sweet victories of the civil rights movement. Can you explain?"

**John:** Yes, the motto we have had for the ghettos is that we "get a piece of the pie" and that piece helps us get out of the ghettos. The ghettos have been our home. So the blacks who have been able to get the education and the financial enfranchisement have used that as a means to remove themselves from the ghetto. But, the majority of our folks are trapped there. What you then have are families with very broken young men who are violent and in prison with no positive environment there, because the educated people have left the ghetto.

Now what our black psychologists and sociologists have said is that the young folks need role models. So, we send them Magic Johnson, Mike Tyson, and Marion Berry. We send these immoral role models who did not have the integrity or the character to create the kind of leader that is necessary or to stem the violence. **If we are going to send role models, they need to be able to build the character and integrity of the people.** But those role models failed the community, and so we need to raise up within those communities creative role models. This means a restructuring of the Church. You go the black community, and mostly you hear black leaders speaking for the black

community. But many of those leaders themselves no longer live in the black community even though the Church is there. They live in suburbia somewhere and come back on Sunday morning to do church. They have their parking lots fenced in and guards to protect their cars from the people in the community whom they have escaped from during the week. So the whole need is for the churches to become local parishes that truly meet the communities' needs.

**Dave:** *Your word to inner city leaders is to stay there and be right in the middle of the action. Is this the only way the people in the inner cities will respond to the message—to see a lifestyle every day?*

**John:** I don't want to put up any standard for the gospel to work. I don't want to say this is the only way. But, I believe it is a creative way. The 3 R's of re-development are: 1. Relocation—moving back into the community; 2. Reconciliation; and 3. Redistribution. We are talking about empowering the people to have some control of their lives. I believe this is a good strategy and a way we can be effective to revitalize our communities. Yet, I don't want to say this is the only way, because God can do it the way He pleases.

**Dave:** *I understand you are involved with conferences that deal with healing the heart of America?*

**John:** Yes, I put a lot of my time doing that, three weekends a month. We go to neighborhoods and communities in various cities to put on these workshops and conferences. They have to be organized—black, whites, and whatever other ethnic groups that are in that city. We try to bring them together and show them how to work together.

**Dave:** *The Church in the '90s is in a transition. God is certainly not pleased with what He sees in America. We need to recover a holistic world view that sees the*

*gospel impacting all areas of life and a focus on character in leadership, not on superstardom. In the local church itself, do you see the clergy /laity dichotomy giving way to an understanding that all people are called into ministry, not just a select few?*

**John:** We are seeing that movement beginning, and God is honoring it where there is more of a team concept. This is going to be the wave of the future. I think the wonderful Catholic Church is going to be forced into that, because of the lack of priests to go into the ministry. I think the Protestant Churches are beginning to see the same thing. And this is a good sign.

**Dave:** *I know the black church has had more of an emphasis on relationships, whereas we white folks have been more cerebral. Do you see the cell group movement as something that can help the black church raise up leadership?*

**John:** We haven't got there yet in the black congregation, for they are still a pastor-driven institution. It is still a charismatic personality driven church. I hope to live to see that change, and it will be a wonderful thing when it does come, but we are not quite there yet. White congregations are further ahead in this, and the black leadership can still stop anything from happening. But it is difficult for them to make things happen. We have created a reactionary behavior. **So it is going to be very critical that black pastors adopt this new leadership style.**

**Dave:** *What ideas do you have, John, for white pastors to lead in the reconciliation of the Church? Could they adopt a sister black church in the inner city or what?*

**John:** I really think that is the move. I think the white churches should find a pastor in the inner city and build a relationship, not an adoption, because that says that the adopter is more powerful than the person they are adopting. But, I do

feel that there needs to be a relationship, a collaboration, and sense of quality that we need each other. **Although the white church might bring more economics and materials, I'm not sure that's what black folks need. What they need is to develop a moral base that will enable them to take advantage of the economic possibilities that are there in their community. So we need each other, and that is the wave of the future.** Now what I would say to white pastors is: "Find a brother or sister and form a relationship. Out of that relationship, start creative ministries in the community. This is beginning to happen in my ministry and around the country.

**Dave:** *Thank you, John. I encourage people to get a copy of your book, Let Justice Roll Down. Also, our listeners can write in and get a complimentary copy of Urban Family, a 36-page, four color, high quality magazine.*

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## Carlos Ramirez — Verbo Ministries

**Dave:** *Your ministry is thriving in Guatemala City with over 8,000 members, 300 cell groups, and eight daughter churches. What pattern did you follow?*

**Carlos:** Our ministry was a product of Jim Durkin/Gospel Outreach. We were attempting to practice principles that were controversial at the time: multiple eldership in local church leadership and five-fold ministry equipping. Therefore, we did not have a lot of traditional church baggage to carry around. This gave us an advantage. We were free to seek the Lord and have Him clearly explain the New Testament pattern for the Church without set concepts and structures.

The New Testament gives us a simple pattern and the established Church complicates it in many aspects. **One of the clearest focuses of the New Testament concept is that the Church is an expression of God's people, and the work of the Church is the manifestation in each individual to be a minister.** This process is not the product of four years of seminary training but an automatic commission which results from giving our lives to God and becoming a servant to our society. In time this ministry matures as an expression and demonstration of the Kingdom of God. I is very people-centered.

The leadership's job was to impart to those who God brought us these concepts and to release them to become reproducing ministers and disciples in their community. The focus of Gospel Outreach is not organizational nor institutional, but rather grassroots. **As we understood it, our job was to help the people of Guatemala in practical needs and in developing commitment, discipleship, and covenant.** We were sort of radical.

**Dave:** *What sort of obstacles did you encounter?*

**Carlos:** In 1976, we began in Guatemala as an earthquake relief ministry. This opened the door into Latin America for our U.S. team of fifteen adults and six children. I was born in Latin America and have always felt that God wanted to use me in that area. Our team went to help with the reconstruction efforts resulting from the devastating earthquake. The conditions were physically challenging, but we went to help build the Kingdom of God, not just to rebuild homes—to show God's transforming power. That focus gave us solidarity as a team. It



held us together and made us strong. We were received as a refreshing version of "lifestyle Christianity."

**Dave:** *As Psalm 11:3 says, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" [They can] rebuild. Tell us about your focus on "church-in-the-home" and healthy reproduction.*

**Carlos:** For a while, it was a challenge. We were young Christians, and aside from our relief and reconstruction work, we started meetings from our own group. Guatemalans started coming, and we expanded into wealthier neighborhoods. We were not exactly

polished seminary graduates. We were rather unlikely characters to start a ministry with our long hair and our Northern California lumberjack mentality, but we just began to serve the Lord as He directed.

By God's grace the people saw something. The group grew to 60 people, so we saw a need to multiply into three groups. It was difficult for the group to do that. In the beginning our communication was focused on teaching discipleship and releasing ministry, clear Biblical New Testament principles. This was the beginning of cell group development in Guatemala. For example, in Latin America, they have a famous reputation of being the "mañana mentality"—in other words, procrastination. Being late is okay.

We began to teach discipline as order being of God's Kingdom. Growth numerically began to overtake us, so we lowered the standard of leadership a notch and called them co-ordinators.

**Dave:** *Facilitators?*

**Carlos:** Yes, responsibilities for co-ordinators or facilitators were basic—sharing and praying and supervising. In time, with more training and experience, they would be responsible for oversight of five or six home groups, but at the same time we could open groups at faster rates because of the great need. An example was a 50-year-old man who was very zealous with his group, which was constantly growing and needing more group leaders.

We did not focus on one charismatic character, but began to stress identity in themselves, in Christ, causing them to find their own ministry.

**Dave:** *Tell us about your Sunday morning services. Is it true that no*

*one knows who is going to preach at the service on Sunday? How does that work?*

**Carlos:** That is true except in very new ministries such as here in Miami where we rotate the pulpit ministry. We made a conscious decision based on a desire to see people strengthened in Christ and identify in the Lord, not a preacher relationship. When newcomers want to meet with the pastor, we find out where they live, and based on their address, we connect them with a home group co-ordinator. So they are not just a part of an audience here. Our boot camp is the home group, cell group meeting. Sundays become a fun time where everyone comes together. We use the Ephesians 4 concept of rotating ministry based on what we feel Scripture says, that five-fold gifts are to equip us to do that. One week our group will hear an apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, or evangelist receive an impartation of that gift for the purpose of their ministry throughout the week in their community.

We rotate as we see the needs. We have never had a church split. We are a big family in Christ. The benefit is that all of us are being trained. The concept works well.

**Dave:** *If the Lordship of Christ is the focus, a plurality of leadership takes the focus off man and places it on Christ.*

*Let's switch to the United States. You recently stated at Dennis Peacock's Leadership Seminar that we have departed from Biblical thinking, and the next generation is left with faulty structures. We are left playing "winds of doctrine," Give a brief analysis.*

**Carlos:** The first glimpse I got of a condition that needed looking at was in Guatemala. The missionary activity pattern was causing division and strife. The institution/official relationship left

### Carlos Ramirez—Verbo Ministries

Guatemalans with a poor concept of missionaries. Because of it, [there was] an anti-American mentality, [which] burdened me. My message was that God had sent me to be one family with them, to covenant with them. This made me understand the drawbacks of a "church mentality" and structure in the U.S.A.

The principles of God are good anywhere in the world. I asked God to make us a powerful, a sending church, not a welfare church to the U.S.A. Today the bulk of our support is in the prosperity of the Guatemalan church. We are now seeing that reproduce itself in Ecuador and Nicaragua.

That to me was the illustration that principles need to be applied according to the way God gave it in His Word and His pattern rather than many of the patterns adapted from corporate and governmental concepts. Many of these patterns are not Biblical in application to the Kingdom of God or church government, such as democracy, which only foments the chaos we have. A big problem in the U. S. A. is that we do not understand God's authority. We belittle and undermine God's authority in the Church by viewing the Church as a voluntary organization. This is not the New Testament pattern of the Church, which demanded commitment. In North America, Christians have a difficult time grasping the Biblical view of submission and obedience because we are told that we have rights and freedoms, and we apply that to God's Kingdom wrongly. Those gifted of God in America need a dose of humility, accountability, and order.

**Dave:** *I agree. As the apostle Paul said, "Lawlessness resides in each one of us." Do you think we need some purifying judgment?*

**Carlos:** Yes, but it is difficult to project. God's purification is needed in the Church everywhere, not just

the U.S.A.

**Dave:** *What is your perspective on the movement toward a city-wide Church in Guatemala City? Are leaders beginning to network?*

**Carlos:** Yes. For eight years now, many churches are being used as a catalyst for us to come together for a "Let's Pray Together" concert at the National Theater. It has been a successful event, representing mainline and other churches throughout the city.

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## Dr. Larry Richards — Church Leadership

**Dave:** *In the next segment we are going to discuss church leadership. Certainly the purpose of the series discussing the future of the Church is intimately intertwined with the perspective that leadership has on where the Church is going. We discussed the fact that the early church was based on a much simpler form of leadership, perhaps one that wasn't as academically-based, maybe based more on character.*

*Dr. Larry Richards is going to discuss his perspective on this. Let me tell you a little bit about his background. He has a degree in philosophy from the University of Michigan. He got his Masters from Dallas Seminary and went on to get his Ph.D. from Garrett Seminary and Northwestern University. Dr. Richards is the author of 118 books! So he is a man who has spent much time in libraries and in the ivory towers of academia. But I think he is also a man who has some hands-on experience and has a burden to see that the rank and file laymen can be released into ministry. Thanks so much, Larry, for taking the time to be with us.*

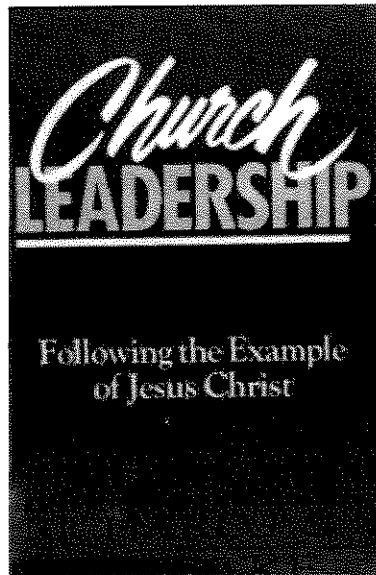
*Why don't we just begin discussing your involvement in a series of books that discuss Christian leadership, Christian education, lay ministry, and in general renewal theology. Why don't you give us your perspective on the future of the Church as we look down the road in the next five or ten years? We are definitely going through a transition right now.*

**Larry:** I think we have to look at something that is even more significant. What we have to look at is the basic assumptions that church leaders are going to make about their role. And one of the things that I believe is critical is to take very seriously the Biblical teaching that Christ is the head of the Church. We have not developed an approach to leadership in the churches which makes this a

practiced reality beyond simply theological assumptions. To do this, we have to teach a style of leadership which takes the pastor out of the role of the leader of an organization, and teach pastoral and elder leadership how to function in the unique role within the organism of which Christ is the Head.

**Dave:** *When you say that, are you talking about a team concept rather than a CEO pattern that it is maybe fashioned after?*

**Larry:** There's no question that,



Biblically, speaking the single pastor/ CEO model did not exist in the early church and was not envisioned there, and that the Biblical pattern is that of team leadership by elders who have similar functions. The problem that we have today, however, is that our culture has created the role of pastor, and pastors find themselves educated to that role and forced into that role to some extent by the people in the church.

So what a pastor needs to do—and he is the key to renewal in the organizational sense—what a pastor has to do is to understand that unique character of multiple leadership in

the Church and develop a style of leadership that develops it within a local congregation.

**Dave:** *In talking to the other contributors on this series, some are suggesting that we have been "chugging around" on one or two cylinders, looking at the Ephesians 4 five-fold ministry and that perhaps we need to see room given in Church leadership for each of the heart motivations of the five-fold ministry, not only including the shepherd, teacher, and evangelist, which have been pretty well restored in this century, but also including the prophet and the apostle. Do you have any views on that?*

**Larry:** I think that the major point in terms of the multiple leadership isn't really so much the distinctive gifts that the individuals have. As you mentioned earlier, the qualifications emphasized in Scripture are qualifications of character. I think what we see when we get to a true multiple leadership in a congregation is that God is able to model something which no individual leader can model. What God is able to model in that situation is a Body. We have to train the Church to function as the Body of Christ. For that, they need leadership which will model the way a Body functions. A single person can't do that. You have got to have a team of leaders, a team of elders who will have that capacity to model.

Now with our capacity with that kind of church, a single person can't do that. You've got to have a team of leaders, a team of elders, if you will, who have that capacity to model. Now in our experience with that kind of church, we have found that God has given different gifts to different individuals and that those gifts blend in a team leadership. I think it is personally kind of a mistake to emphasize the roles that

the different leaders may have and try to equate them to the Biblical pastor, teacher, prophet model.

**Dave:** *The Church has in many ways collapsed into a form of spectatorism—to where participation is pretty much reduced down to a passive audience and an overworked leader or a team of leaders in some cases. Do you see the rise of the cell church, meta-church, the house church movement as something healthy, something that can bring the relational networking that is needed for this Body of Christ as a positive thing?*

**Larry:** I think it is very healthy. One of the things that we sometimes mistake is that we emphasize things as movements, which may exist in unexpected forms for years. In a church which my parents participated in fifty years ago, there was a very traditional outer form, but within that church structure, there were the small groups. There were the prayer groups. Whoever was the pastor didn't seem to affect the basic spiritual life of the church, which was really carried on in this particular case by groups of women who were functioning as the Church has always functioned. Now I do see today an awful lot of emphasis on a return to a sense of responsibility and desire to participate by the lay person. I don't see a lot of that coming from pastoral leadership, though in some well-publicized cases it has.

**Dave:** *Why don't you tell us a little bit about your book, Church Leadership. If you could, give us an outline of your perspective on leadership. Obviously, it begins with servanthood. It is totally opposite, the way the world looks at things. Church leadership says that leaders must take very seriously the fact that Christ is the head of the Church and must not permit themselves to be led into that role in a local congregation, that the entire Church must look to Christ as the Living Head of the Church and not*

*look to spiritual leaders to be the decision makers and the actual persons who make decisions in the Church. What the book tries to do is to define ways that pastors and elder teams can function to serve as leaders of an organism rather than to see them serve as the CEO model, the secular model of leadership, which is okay for organizations but just doesn't work for the Church, which is essentially an organism. What we try to do in the book is give some very clear definitions of what the pastor does as he tries to bring an eldership team into being and what elders do as they function as the servant leaders of the Church rather than being the authoritarian or secular leader.*

*Would you be arguing for something of a consensus form of decision making in local churches?*

**Larry:** When it comes to making decisions, you have to go for a consensus form because the purpose of making decisions is not to win an election. The purpose of making a decision is to sense the will of Christ. This is one of the elements of Christ being the head of the Church. Now if you approach decision making as attempting to discern the will of the Lord, rather than to make a decision or to win a point, you are forced toward the process of coming to a consensus because that becomes a critical element in actually determining what the will of God is.

**Dave:** *What are your views on the concept of church multiplication through church planting versus the idea of keeping things centralized into a megachurch model?*

**Larry:** I think that there is no question that the megachurch can do things that the smaller, expanding church can't do. That's not necessarily good, because in our society churches have essentially begun to compete on the basis of what services they can provide. People choose a church based on what the church will do for them rather than

on more significant criteria. Now when you move into the smaller church, you lose the possibility of competing in services, but by doing that, you begin to reaffirm those things which are really central to what the Church is. So I think it is very important for the Church to think in terms of small rather than big, and even if you have a larger church, you have to be very serious in trying to get the people functioning in smaller groups.

We had in our church in Arizona a situation where we worked very hard to keep 70% of the people functioning in that setting. We found that if 70% weren't in those groups, which we called Chum Groups or Christian HomeUnits, then the church suffered spiritually.

**Dave:** *There is something of a re-emphasis on quality versus quantity.*

**Larry:** One of the interesting things that we found was that a lot of evangelism was taking place by the individuals and within the small group setting, but that it did not necessarily and frequently did not translate into increased membership, which was all right. People ended up getting converted, being disciplined in small groups, but often opted to go to a more traditional church, which was providing the services they want for their kids.

**Dave:** *So there are different options out there. It's interesting, though—worldwide there seems to be a phenomenon where the churches that are on the grow, have the small, accountable, covenantal, community type of emphasis to where people can know and be known as well as the celebration time on Sunday. The house church movement seems to be on the grow quite a bit. I don't know if you have any thoughts on that as a distinct entity where the church just actually says, "Hey, we don't need a building. They didn't have them for 300 years. We can do just fine. Thank you very much. And if we want to gather*

monthly or periodically for a city-wide celebration, we'll do that, but we don't have to own a building."

**Larry:** My personal bias is toward the house church. At the same time, I think that people who move in this direction need to realize that it's very important to maintain a sense of identity and linkage with a larger group beyond the house church, and, therefore, some organizational efforts do need to be made to permit the members of the house church to have that sense of identity with the larger Christian community. So celebration monthly or in other settings—that's the way to do it. But you really have to make sure that the house church does not just collapse on itself and become an isolated fellowship.

**Dave:** Good; an important distinction. Of course, many cults are developed that way, they become isolationist oriented.

You know, one of the things that Jim Rutz argues for in his book, *The Open Church*, is "Hey, cell groups and home groups are wonderful, but what about First Corinthians 14:26 where it says, "Look, on Sunday, the one time of the week when everybody gathers—millions and millions of Christians gather—it's the one time of the week when they can't really say anything. They can't really openly participate." Do you think that it is possible or that we should strive to see some of the dynamic of the small group taken into the larger celebration time on Sunday?"

**Larry:** Again you are running into personal bias and experience. I was an elder in one church in which we essentially had a very open Sunday morning ministry. And this involved sharing. It involved prayer. It involved responding openly to the sermon. It involved a variety of ways in which the congregation ministered to one another. Now, the thing that we found that was significant was that it took us two hours to do this. We didn't package a one hour service and do this

effectively. We also found in that setting that so many people have been socialized into what the traditional church was, that even people who came and who thought it was a wonderful thing began to fidget after one hour. They had been simply trained to think in terms of that one hour experience.

**We found that in our church that that one hour, sit-and-listen framework was not effective ministry and that the church, individually and its membership grew, and it grew as a corporate Body spiritually by participation in the Sunday morning setting.**

**Dave:** Good counsel. I'm sure that many of the churches out there are thinking about this. So there is an upside and a downside. And you need to be aware that it isn't going to happen overnight, although it could open up much just by giving a five or ten minute period of time. You don't have to go to two hours. You could just say, "Look, for five or ten minutes, we're going to have an open form and dialogue."

**Larry:** One of the things that I tried to do in the *Church Leadership* book was to take a look at how leadership could very gradually introduce these elements into the traditional setting without so violating the expectations of the members that they simply couldn't stand it. Even such a simple thing as having a "God-at-work spot" in which you invite a single person to come up and share what God had been doing, sort of an interview with one of the elders. It begins to open up the awareness of the congregation that what really is significant is not what's happening as they listen on Sunday morning, but what God is doing in their lives during the week, and what God is in them. And as you begin to build this awareness in people, you do have a greater opportunity and a greater freedom in terms of sharing on a significant level.

**Dave:** I am looking forward to going

through the book, *Church Leadership*, and I encourage anyone listening to get a copy of that. In closing, Larry, looking down the road here. You know in the '70s and '80s we have had a lot of emphasis on what I would call hyper-apocalyptic rapture mania. So do you see the Church moving toward more of a balanced position?

Putting your theological hat on here for a minute, [do you think that Christians are] seeing that we are called to occupy, to see the Great Commission fulfilled through evangelism and discipling the nations? Do you see that the Body of Christ is going to come to maturity as leadership begins to find their proper place of equipping and the Body of Christ gets mobilized?

**Larry:** I think that what always happens throughout church history and through our era is that people have a tendency to look for a quick fix and to grab for the fad, whatever that fad is. During my life—I'm sixty now—I've seen about every eight to ten years a new fad come in the Church that is going to solve the problems. Now, what is exciting is that while the superficial person is grabbing for the most recent fad, in the congregations across the country, very quietly, often without many people noticing, God is at work building a foundation of believers who are becoming more committed, who are learning to minister to each other and who are forming the core of congregations and churches. I think that this is going to continue. We'll still see the fads, but we can be thankfully ignoring them and look for the deeper work that God is doing and will continue to do. I do hope that more and more pastors who experience the frustration of the emptiness of the forms of ministry which they have been introduced to in the traditional church will find that there is an option and will begin to take that option.

**Dave:** I just have one other last thought. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like a man taking



from his treasure, some things old and some things new. There seems to be something of a joining of the liturgical with the charismatic in bringing together of the old patterns and blending them with the new. Do you think in some ways this is the shape of things to come, seeing the Church cross-pollinate across even Catholic-Protestant barriers, all denominational barriers, to where we begin dialoging and working with one another toward a unified goal?

Larry: One of the things that you find, for example, is that the Catholic church has been unique in its capacity to have under one umbrella totally variant strands of theology and thought. For example, Catholic mysticism is uniquely different in its assumptions and practices from traditional Catholic theology. I think as far as cross-pollination is concerned, we need to learn from each other that the return of an emphasis on liturgy is very positive, but I think we are still going to see a great diversity in which different ways of expressing our faith and our convictions are going to exist.

I think what's critical is that there are certain things that cannot be absent and have the Church be the Church. And one of those things that cannot be absent is a Church in which the layman is actively involved and committed. Our forms have to encourage this. I think one of the things that is absolutely essential for the Church to be the Church is a spiritual leadership which understands its unique role in the Body of Christ and begins to take that role, which as you have mentioned in your really never happened, even though the priesthood of the believers was a doctrine. I think that another thing that is utterly essential, which we are going to have to maintain, is an element of worship, which again is lacking in many of our Protestant churches.

Dave: We discussed that at length with Robert Webber, the tremendous work that he has done.

Larry: Oh, good. Bob is an old friend. We have written one book together.

Dave: Church Leadership by Dr. Larry Richards, published by Zondervan. Get a copy of it at your book store. If people want to find out more, do you do any more seminar things?

Larry: Well, I do do some seminar type things, but much less. My writing schedule is very heavy. I find myself pretty committed to it, although I do do some seminary lectureships, things like this.

Dave: The new work you are doing—?

Larry: Bible Background Commentary and a few books like that. I'm also working with a publisher to restructure their primary and junior curriculums to try to build in more of the dimensions of the real church experience for younger children.

Dave: Kids could have open church in their church too.

Larry: Kids can have it, and they need to have it in their Sunday school class.

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## John Rowell — Ecclesiological Alternatives

**Dave:** *In the next segment we are going to discuss with John Rowell from Northside Community Church in Atlanta some of the ecclesiological alternatives. Let's face it right now. We need to rethink the whole mindset that we have on church planting and on the way the local church meets.*

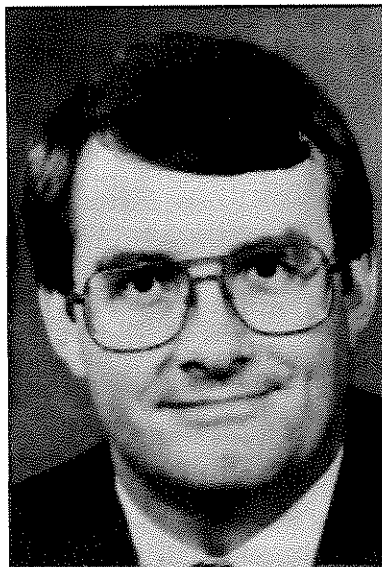
*We've seen institutionalization. We've seen professionalization. We've seen privatization of our faith. We've seen spectatorism. All of that is out there. The man who we are going to talk to about it is a man who for eight years has carried a vision to see the Church emerge as something of a community. This is a word that I think we are going to be hearing a lot. John has just recently returned from a trip to Croatia and has a deep burden to see that the kind of models that we are planting are those that really will produce fruit and allow the Body of Christ as a whole to be involved and to see healthy church multiplication.*

*John, thanks so much for being with us. In your white paper that you sent me, you discuss a concern that you see here in Western Christendom. You believe that we failed in our responsibility for qualitative Christianity in favor of something of a quantitative, megachurch mentality. You believe that church growth in one respect could be a sign of sickness rather than health. Can you explain?*

**John:** *Actually it's not church growth itself that is a sign of sickness, because obviously Jesus intends for the Church to grow. But our sense of what is success as churches grow is the place where I'm concerned. I think that we are suffering from church growth thinking gone wrong—and our emphasis on numerical growth as the primary measure for success, whether we are talking about numbers of people or budgets or buildings or what have you. Our emphasis on those outward manifestations of growth to the*

*exclusion of qualitative factors has produced, I think, a mental health disease, if you will, in the Church.*

**Dave:** *Yes, you identify it as something of a disease. One of the symptoms of a disease is that you begin to see health decline; you begin to see atrophied members in the body; and you are concerned that we have fallen into this "bigger-is-better" thinking. I will never forget that Dr. Jack Hayford said, "God is more interested in big people than in big churches."*



*You point out some interesting statistics. It's true that 80% of the churches in America never exceed 200 in attendance. To start with, you are asking the question and wondering if God is actually allowing the Church to remain small. Why don't you explain?*

**John:** *Church growth theorists who have observed the Church, not just in the States but around the world, point out that in America 85% are less than 200 in attendance, and around the world it would be more like 95% are less than 200 or 300. So with that observation, Church growth theorists, notably Peter Wagner, who I have deep respect for and owe a debt of gratitude to because*

*of what he has taught me about analyzing church health and all, that limitation that is observable around the world in every culture as a general rule has caused him to reach the conclusion that we should think about how we might approach breaking the 200 barrier. How do we help churches strategize to grow larger than 200? He has concluded that largeness is not a major measure of success in the Church.*

*From my perspective, I have wondered if that is not a wrong application of church growth theory. I think churches should grow and multiply, but if somewhere around 90% of the pastors around the world are pastoring small churches, we would do better, for example, to have small churches think big and take a bigger share of responsibility for things like world missions and qualitative formation of discipleship in the lives of people, rather than feeling like small churches are not getting the job done, and it's really only big churches that can do it.*

*So I've begun to think about better application of church life among small congregations. Really, this thought is part of the early thinking of Donald McGavran, who started the church growth movement in his book, which is kind of a magnum opus on church growth called, *Understanding Church Growth*. He noted that the need around the world was a congregation of such structure that common people could operate it and multiply it indefinitely among the masses of unreached people around the world. He makes a specific note that that model or that structure can't be the large North American church that is highly successful and covers a city block. While that will work in some instances in the States and around the world, in most instances it is not a viable model. So it begins to raise questions not only about facilities and staffing but even about pastoral formation. How do we train*

clergymen to be effective?

Ralph Winter has noted in some of his recent publications, the missions magazines coming out of U.S. Center for World Missions, that everywhere in the world that residential seminary education is used as the approach to train pastoral leadership, the growth of the church is slowed dramatically. He points out that apprenticeship models are far more effective and far more widely used around the world. So just those two observations begin to call into question some of the application of church growth theory that has become so popular with the meta-church models and cell churches that can grow indefinitely large.

Dave: Let me read a quote from Dr. Winter. I found this humorous, as a Californian. He discusses what he calls the Schuller syndrome. By the way, we are not at all putting down Dr. Schuller. It's a great work that has been done there. But this is what Dr. Winter has to say: "The New Testament itself has been revised to fit this American version of Christianity. Someone has put it this way, the California version reads, 'where two or three thousand are gathered together, there am I in their midst.' " It almost humorously says that we have really followed the thinking of the world to say that size means something. Jesus began with a few disciples, and then it multiplied out from them. You discuss—and Dr. Winter discusses—the problem of the megachurch with anonymity, limited discipleship, lack of accountability, all of these various things that anyone listening to this who is involved in a megachurch would probably resonate with, are the downside of church growth, the concept of centralized megachurch. But let's not just talk about the problems. You have pointed out some of the symptoms of what you believe is a severe sickness, a kind of mental disorder, and you discuss the expression, "poor functional ecclesiology." It doesn't have anything to do with the size of the church, but rather it has to do with the loss of mental or

philosophical commitment to the dynamics of relational ministry. You point out four primary symptoms of this problem that we have in the Church, and you try to contrast it with the dynamics of the community model, of a community ecclesiological model versus an institutional model. Why don't you lay out some of these problems that you see in what you call this highly communicable disease?

John: Let me develop the four major symptoms and some sub-symptoms under them. I will try to be brief. The first symptom we have already addressed in part. It's the passion for numerical growth and this idea that "bigger is better." One of the implications of doing that is that as we try to attract indefinitely large numbers of people to the same assembly, we create an environment where the Church member generally views himself as a part of the audience rather than a part of a mobilized, functioning army, if you will, spiritually speaking. So for laymen under this passion for numerical growth, there is a potential for manifestation of this disease that I would call *spectatorism*, where we come to watch this sacred drama go on each week, but we don't feel much like participants in it. We don't feel like there is much for us to contribute to when we come. Some of those issues touch on the open worship dynamic that Jim Rutz has brought to the fore.

On the clergy side, there is the potential for what I call a "staff infection," where Christian leaders who are involved in giving leadership to smaller congregations, who hold a view that largeness is a measure of success primarily, tend to feel a sense of failure in their ministry. They tend to search frantically for ways to make their churches grow larger. They attend seminars lead by megachurch pastors, and they come back with principles that don't necessarily transfer easily into their environment. And so there is this sense of being doomed to a failure mentality in their ministries. I think

most small church pastors think small about church. What I am trying to endeavor to do in our own setting is to have a small church that thinks big, and as we talk later in this interview about our work in Bosnia, we can demonstrate that small churches have a dramatic role to play. So as churches try to grow larger without having a necessary fabric for assuring community and Body life dynamics, there is a diminished capacity to facilitate care of the shepherds—to train and mobilize—and even to multiply. Most often in mega church settings, the Church loses its emphasis for multiplication. So the passion for numerical growth is a problem.

A second major symptom is what I call *privatization of faith*, where basically we are left to live any way we want to live as long as we attend the sacred drama on Sunday morning. So staff members working professionally in the Church are given to making sure that that drama comes off well and that it's adequate entertaining and is adequately expressive of the qualitative concerns for the showpiece of the church life. Otherwise, they pursue what I call *Montessori Ministry Methods*, where they lead people to experiment in trial and error without a great deal of shepherding leadership, without any supervision spiritually, and without careful discipleship, and it exposes people to all manner of temptation and sin without basically highlighting warning signals that could be there if they were under better care, pastorally speaking. There is another manifestation of this privatization dynamic; what I call *theoretical orthodoxy*. What I am observing as I have done consulting with a number of different denominations here in the Southeast is that there are many evangelical communities that hold to a strong tradition of Biblical orthodoxy, and it's important to be doctrinally sound and well founded in the Scriptures, but there's no need to walk your talk. In my community, as an example, most evangelical pastors would have a strong commitment to a pro-life

perspective and the sanctity of human life based on the Scriptures, but they have no need to live out that commitment in any visible way that the Church could observe or that the Church could be involved in.

Another dimension of privatization of faith is that just as pastors leave people alone so that they don't bother them, they experiment with things that can lead them into sin. So when pain is experienced spiritually in people's lives, that pain is muted because there is no place in that larger community to bring the pain to the fore. And pastors have kind of communicated the message, "I don't bother you. Now you don't bother me. I've got work to do." It doesn't have to be people-oriented work for the most part.

That leads to a third major symptom, which I would call **programmed ministry**. This has to do again with the idea that the Church has to provide an adequate array of qualitatively developed religious programs to attract people into the Church by appealing to the community as if it's a target, to win market shares like an advertiser would in our day. We've developed a kind of consumer mentality in church as well as a spectator mentality. George Barna has suggested that even today as much as 10% of the community has multiple church affiliations in its mind, and by the year 2000, he says, 25% will probably hold 2-5 churches as their local church homes with no significant commitment to any one church. That's a result of saying that we ought to go and buy services where they are being programmed to our liking.

Also, with this program mentality, we have developed a spirit of competition in the Church which lets churches compete in the same community. In my own community of North Atlanta, more than half the community would be unchurched if every single church were filled to capacity twice on Sunday. What we are finding is that the churches still have a sense of competition in trying

to earn market share. So not any one of them could get the job done significantly alone. Cooperation is almost unthinkable. Trying to mobilize for common interests is not very often done. We're more competitive than we are cooperative in Christian enterprise, though Biblically speaking, we are supposed to be in the same army under the same leadership of the Lord Jesus.

Finally, with that emphasis on program ministry and trying to develop qualitative programs, you have to have **professionally trained ministry as a fourth symptom**. You have to have that kind of ministry leadership if you are going to have quality programming. We generally equate professional ministry with credentials, and those credentials are usually expressed in educational credentials, in having the right degrees. So instead of focusing on spiritual gifts or a sense of spiritual calling or what Paul would call in referring to Timothy in Philippians 2, "proven worth in the life of a church," we reach outside the Church to people we've never met before but who hold the right degrees, and we bring them in based on educational credibility to do ministry that may or may not be effective in the lives of people, but often is effective in the terms of program leadership. As a result, many laymen certainly are being defined out of ministry responsibility because they don't hold the right credentials, and even pastors are being refined out of the process because they don't hold degrees in the right area. So we end up deferring from the Church significant ministry opportunities, for example, in the mental health community, because we have come to believe that you have to have a psychology credential to do counseling, whereas most pastors hold a theology credential. So we don't feel qualified any more.

Those four major symptoms—**passion for numerical growth, privatization of faith, programming ministry, and professionalized ministry approaches**, I think, have created an

environment that represents an **unhealthy perspective on the way we view church**. I mentioned competition a moment ago just to demonstrate that it has nothing to do with size and everything to do with the way we think about church. When I visited Sarajevo for the first time, and Bosnia, there were only three Protestant churches existing in the city. Together they didn't have 30 members. There are 600,000 lost souls in that city. Seventy per cent of them are Muslims, and one of the pastors wouldn't even meet with us for fear that we might come and start a church. His view was that there were already three churches operating in the city, three churches competing for attention and that there wasn't room for another. That would be the example of a small church pastor—he had nine people in his church—with this disease mentality that he is competing with other church leaders, and there is no room for more ministry in the city. In the cause of Christ and for the sake of the Kingdom, we've got to stop this type of thinking.

*Dave: Yes, I agree. It's an astounding story to think about that. It is a sad testimony to what has devolved in many ways from a family, a community, into an institution where we want to protect our own turf. The problem is that somehow we thought it was our own turf to begin with. In five or six minutes you have just laid out one of the clearest articulations of the old wineskin that is bursting at the seams because God is pouring some more wine into it. In the heart of the people of God is a desire for community, a desire for team ministry, for participation, for a lifestyle Christianity that affects all areas of life, not just what we do on Sunday mornings. For entering into covenant with one another and really being available and accountable to others, you are suggesting that an alternative would be a community ecclesiology. Why don't you lay out what you consider to be a healthy way? If this ecclesiastical disease is something similar to HIV, if we don't do something, the Church is in deep,*

*deep trouble. Let's talk about your cure.*

**John:** Let me characterize the disease in one more way. When you think about ecclesiastical HIV, to use your analogy, this is more serious even than that because with HIV you get the disease if you enter into what the world calls unsafe sex. In this case, my concern is that this is highly contagious whether you are joined to another church or not, and more than that, it's biologically transferable in a pathological sense in that as we start one church out of another church, we transmit the disease because we end up reproducing after our own kind. And so the need of the hour in my mind is a complete renewal of our thinking about church that leads to a different expression of church that, when it is multiplied, doesn't bring this institutional germ with it. So in that respect, the salient point is repenting of the way we have come to do church and the way we have come to think about church and going back to the Scriptures to try to identify what would be a more healthy alternative. So some of the dimensions of this would deal with, for example, the whole idea of pastoral formation. In our context we have jettisoned the idea that the most effective way to reproduce pastors is to send men to an academic environment in a residential seminary, and we have begun to believe that the Church as a crucible is a place where we can produce men who are demonstrating their value to the Body, who already are producing a following, who are able to reproduce disciples who follow after God's heart, and who already have learned how to lead a community before they go out and take the leadership of one. They are "of proven worth" in the spirit of Philippians 2. So we are given to a more contextual development approach, the church leadership development, though we are not ignoring the issues that seminaries would tend to address in terms of adequate theological foundations. We have just adapted other approaches to obtaining those ends

while men are in service in the context of the Body. So in that sense, we are committed to what we call emergent leadership rather than institutional leadership where men in the context of church life end up rising to the surface and are observable as shepherds in the community because they have the right gifts and the right sense of calling. People are following them readily. Instead of finding organizational unity around mailing lists or around rallying around the same pastor, we are developing a church through what we call family networking, where families have a sense of belonging to one another. Often when someone first attends our congregation, they already have a sense of belonging because they have deep relationships with others in the churches who reach out to them, either leading them to Christ or redeeming them from an unchurched situation or taking them from an institutional setting where they are in great pain, and trying to minister to them and bring them into the healing context of the community. So family networking is real important to us. In that sense we end up having a lot more active participation in each other's lives. And that brings with it additional responsibility that institutionalized Christians are not accustomed to experiencing. Things like a high degree of accountability in the way we walk. We are not allowed to privatize our faith. We are responsible to hold each other accountable, to speak the truth in love, to bring light to bear where people have blind spots. In that sense we tend to be more intrusive than institutional churches would tend to be, not necessarily from a clergy perspective, but the Body is trained to encourage one another, if you will, to provoke one another by love and good deeds as Hebrews 10 would tell us to do. In that sense we are responsive to one another. We are actively involved with one another. Most of us are known intimately by one another. In our context we have grown now to about three hundred and fifty people, and we have subdivided the congregation into community groups, adult

fellowship groups that are not larger than a hundred so that people have a real strong sense of face-to-face and life-to-life identity in exchange with one another. In this kind of context, needs in the Body and needs in the community are addressed by people, not by programs. So if someone in our church has a burden to minister in a particular direction, we want to help facilitate that. If they come to us burdened that somebody else meet the need, then we don't facilitate that.

If I'm talking with someone new to the church and they come to me and say, "The Church I came from had a Christian Service Brigade program or a Boy Scout program, and I wonder why you don't have one like that and why you don't start one, my first question as one of the leaders in this community is, "Is God calling you to that kind of ministry here?" If they say, "No," then I say, "Well neither has God called any one else to that kind of ministry here, and we are waiting for Him to burden someone to do that because we don't believe that programs minister. We believe people do, and we believe that they stay motivated when the Spirit of God is the impetus for what they are involving themselves in." That's been our experience. So I don't have a felt need to pump programs to meet needs. I have a felt need to co-operate in equipping and mobilizing people who are burdened by the Spirit to meet needs. In approaching Church life that way, we find that things sustain themselves much longer with a lot less need for staff members or elders to be the impetus behind the extended ministry. In that sense we are much more functionally committed than theoretically committed to the concept of the priesthood of Believers. That would be manifest not just in our ministry to each other in the church and our slogan for the church, incidentally, is "Every member is a minister." In that spirit, when it comes time to do baptisms, primary disciplers in the lives of people who are coming for baptism would be the ones who would do the ceremony, not a pastor or an

elder. Fathers would baptise their own children, or husbands, their own wives. We try to give this kind of ministry away as much as we can and extend it in those ways. So every member being a minister is important. In that sense I don't let anybody call me a pastor. The other pastors in our church are not hungry for titles. We just want to encourage people to keep walking with Jesus. So we tend to be more people oriented, task oriented. We are not feeling a need to compete program wise with larger churches. To the extent that they could do programs, we couldn't even touch them as a small church. To the extent that we can love people and build people, they can't touch us.

The analogy I have used in our situation is when a large church moves into the area and other churches begin to mobilize in response in a competitive sense, we would be more apt to embrace them and not feel threatened by them because people here are members of our family, not just attenders in an entertaining service. It's a lot harder to dismiss yourself from our assembly. The analogy I have used is thinking of my family. My boys have been real excited about the Atlanta Braves and the World Series attempts the last two years. Greg Olsen, the catcher for the Braves, is one of their favorite players. If he moved in next door to us, they would be excited about it, but they wouldn't go live with him. They know where their family is.

In that same sense, if First Baptist of Atlanta, which is pastored by Charles Stanley, moves into our neighborhood, and it is going to do that—they are building a \$64 million complex just a mile or so from where we are—I am not worried about our people moving in with them because they are part of the Stanleys. They may be excited that this big neighbor is there, this well-known neighbor, but they are not going to relocate to take part there.

So there is more functional shepherding, more depth of

relationship, more of a sense that the ministry of the Body is the responsibility of the members and not the staff, a greater sense of belonging to one another, a much higher degree of commitment, I think, across the board in giving of time and talent and treasure. The missions effort would be exemplary of how a community can extend itself even if it's small.

*Dave: I'm sure that a lot of people who are listening are saying, "Where are the John Rowells of my town? I would love to find a fellowship that had in its leadership the kind of vision that would release people into ministry." For those of you in church leadership who are listening, take heed. What God is doing in the Church in many ways is "The Quiet Revolution." There is something very dynamic happening, but it isn't being trumpeted on national TV. It isn't being headlined on the front page of Christian magazines and newspapers. It's a quiet thing that is happening, and it's people building their lives around Christ with other people and beginning to go back to an authentic version of Christianity where we really can see Christ in our midst. That really becomes the focus point. The focus is off of individual leaders. I know one of the things leaders may be asking themselves is how to make a transition from where they are today into something like this. I noted that you had said, "Trying to bring about institutional renewal simply by integrating community dynamics into sub-groups which are integral in a megachurch may only bring about a greater disaster."*

*Men like Howard Snyder have gone on to say, "In many cases, creating a new wineskin will prove easier than the option of trying to bring renewal into the institution. An example is, having babies is easier than raising the dead." What was your path of discovery in doing this process of re-empowering the laymen and seeing Christian community emerge in the local church? Was it a different one? It certainly didn't come without some risks. What are*

*some obstacles you have had to overcome?*

*John: Part of the impetus for my own thinking in regard to this kind of thing is that I was an immigrant leader rather than an institutionally trained leader. I'm a Certified Public Accountant by background and worked for Arthur Young and Company, which was one of the big eight firms at the time I was doing that. In the context of the Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, led by Chuck Swindoll, I emerged as a layman deeply committed to ministry. I had opportunity to lead adult fellowship groups that touched on these community dynamics. I became committed to parachurch ministry and then later joined the staff of that church as their first business manager. Having been steeped in the traditions of that megachurch—I think their membership was around 6,000 when I left the church more than a decade ago—I moved to Atlanta with a parachurch agency to do church growth consulting for churches, and I had the opportunity to study a great number of churches close up, large ones and small ones. I began to see some common problems in churches regardless of size or denominational affiliation.*

I used to summarize it with an understanding that we were teaching laymen three bad conclusions about church. They are, first, that a good church is one that meets my needs—we teach people to be consumers rather than contributors. We shop for churches based on program availability. Second, we teach them that worship or celebration services essentially are church. So we teach them to be spectators and not to expect life-to-life exchange in the context of church. Thirdly, we also teach them that, if they want to be involved in church beyond worship, then church involvement is a program responsibility, and we find a slot for them to serve in rather than expecting them to discover that ministry and involvement in the church are characterized by life-to-life exchange, iron

sharpening iron, ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit directed into areas that they may not be technically trained to pursue. So I began to work on shaping an environment where we were trying to work against those three bad conclusions that we assumed most churchmen have been taught and trying to reorder everyone's thinking again.

My own formation involved a ten year process of being involved as a layman and then becoming an administrative leader in a large church and still later on, a church consultant with a number of churches, large and small, to starting a church with 35 people and just giving these community dynamics a fresh start. **My concern in seeing community attempted in the context of a more institutionally minded church is that the guardians of the institution will eventually find it necessary to put the community to death because if community dynamics are pursued, they will invariably produce qualitative leaders who have to be recognized as elders or deacons or whatever the appropriate title would be in church leadership, and as community-oriented church leaders begin to take control of governing boards of the church, they begin to threaten the institutional life. The majority will usually remove those leaders from the environment rather than let the institution be threatened.**

I have a friend who speaks about institutionalization in the business community. He says, "One thing you have to recognize is that anybody who starts an institution must realize that the institution, once begun, always has the right to eat you." My experience with community attempted in an institutional setting is that always it will be consumed by the institution before it can radically affect the institution.

I think, on a kind of a macrocosm scale, we are seeing this right now globally and in the economy in the states. We've had this "big is better" mentality for decades, and

our culture has influenced our church thinking. If you look at the Soviet Union, the strong, centralized, institutional approach to life in the nation brought the nation to its knees. If you look at America right now, it's the mega-corporations that are struggling for their very existence. General Motors is producing record losses. Airline companies that we thought were impregnable to the economy and the ups and downs of the economy have failed and gone out of business. IBM has reported losses for the first time and is scaling back and trying to learn, "How do I compete in this aggressive environment?" When Carl George writes in his book, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, that the Church of the future will make Cho's church in Korea pale by comparison, it will be so large, I couldn't disagree with him more. I think we are going to see the church landscape in America covered by the same kinds of large, empty buildings that right now cover much of England and Western Europe—huge cavernous buildings with nobody attending any more. When we think about unreached people groups and the mission field, then the need becomes all the more stark.

I was speaking with Peter Kusmic, the primary Protestant leader in the former Yugoslavia. Before this war in the Balkans started, I asked him how many church planters they needed in what was then Yugoslavia. He said, "We could use 2,500 church planters today." I questioned him again, "Peter, how long will it take you to produce 2,500 church planters through the seminary that you lead, which is a residential seminary?" He answered, "John, in my lifetime we won't produce that many leaders."

And so again the need of the hour is a process of pastoral formation that is much more rapid, much less centralized, much less dependent upon academic approaches, and much more practically oriented so we can multiply the Church like an organism rather than trying to recreate it here and there as an institution.

**Dave:** *If people want to get ahold of you, you have this white paper here called Implications of Our Mindset on Missionary Church Planting. Can people write to you and get some information in printed form?*

**John:** Yes, we also have produced a lot of materials on community dynamics, and we lead seminars on starting community groups and churches. So we are available to send laymen who are doing this to teach other laymen to do this, as well as to provide videos, and other resources.

**Dave:** *Well, "the proof is in the pudding," and it sounds like you are raising up an army of people who understand their proper role in the culture. Tommy Barnett has said, "If you don't have a 'so that,' so what?" I think in a nutshell, that's it. The whole purpose of the Body of Christ is, yes, for edification, but it's to be equipped to go out and do the work of the ministry. We are sent to the world to explain God's plan and His government and to live it out and model it. Community seems to be the best crucible in order to see that really happen. I notice you made reference to Carl George's book, about churches getting bigger and bigger. There are different views on this. Some people see more of a citywide Christian community emerging, which has autonomous small groups but still come together in some form of a larger citywide celebration type of thing. Do you see a restoration of the Body of Christ citywide beginning to discern themselves? In other words, in the Bible you see that there was the Church of Antioch, or there was the church of the entire city? There were not entire denominations. Do you see us coming full circle back around to some kind of a thinking and a unity in the Body of Christ that could be demonstrated?*

**John:** I certainly am in favor of that. Whether in our lifetime we will see a reversal of denominational trends, I rather doubt. But in our own local area in Atlanta, I am as actively involved as any pastor I know in trying to draw the Church together

for the purposes of Concerts of Prayer or Pastor Summits where we go away for three or four days at a time, seeking the Lord together for the National Day of Prayer Celebrations or pro-life activism, and for the Marches for Jesus that have been experienced in a number of large churches in America. So we are cooperating in those areas, trying to work against this spirit of competition, which I think is so replete right now with churches in our community. We are working against that competitive mindset right now. We are working with black and white reconciliation in Atlanta, which is a major issue in our community. So I think that cooperation among churches in our community is vitally important. It's interesting that in the city of Atlanta we have a number of significant megachurch ministries that also have television attached to them and wide-spread radio and writing ministries.

What I find is that those groups are led with such an institutional perspective that it is nearly impossible to get their leaders consistently together to speak to anything as a voice for the Church, and though we've tried to have that happen, it just isn't happening. I think the citywide phenomenon that you are talking about will wait for legitimate City Fathers, so to speak, to emerge who are not only directing ministries that God has called them to personally as shepherds, but who also feel a calling from God to speak more broadly for the Church and the city and who have demonstrated a kind of servant heart that will allow other churches to rally around them without fear of competition or abuse or domination. So it's a trend that I would like to see come to more fruition, but I don't know if I believe we will see an end to denominationalism in my day.

*Dave: Maybe a little persecution would help us.*

*John: Well, no doubt it would. It certainly has done that in the Eastern Bloc before the walls came*

down there. Let me, for the sake of those who are listening, just kind of whet their appetites. I mentioned in passing the missions effort our church has been a part of.

We targeted the Muslims of Bosnia as an unreached people group and the city of Sarajevo as a specific target for church planting three years before the war started there last Spring in 1992. In an effort to continue focusing on our objective in the midst of this war, we have as a small church mobilized to reach Bosnian refugees in a camp in Southeastern Croatia. In one refugee camp we have mobilized seventy of our adult members (a number of them are teenagers) to do two week service on a rotating basis over six months in this refugee camp. **So a significant number of nearly a third of our adult members have been in the camp, working with people in our target group. They have done this without great financial expense, taking vacation time and such to make themselves available. In six months we have seen more Muslims from Bosnia converted to Christ in that one refugee camp than they have seen in the whole country of Bosnia for the last 50 years. So that is one small church's effort in one small contact, and it has made a major difference in the lives of people in that camp.** We believe that we are forming a team now that will return to Sarajevo. It's a team that involves Croatian nationals, trained on a seminary level in church planting that we are trying to encourage to learn community dynamics. It involves people from our local assembly who are committed to Bosnia long term, and it involves a number of Muslim converts from Bosnia and Sarajevo who want to go back home and be a nucleus for a church to represent Christ in that area. So we are seeing this applied easily in cross-cultural situations. My great emphasis is for small church pastors to hear this. They have a major role to play in most of the facets of church life here and on the mission field if they can change the way they think about church. So I encourage small church pastors to

think big and to stretch their faith and risk a little more, and I think God will really bless it.

*Dave: Yes, and while leadership comes from the top down, oftentimes fundamental change comes from the bottom up. And as you said in your white paper here, "All indications are that laymen are hungry for the opportunity to shoulder the load if the institutional barriers to their service can be removed. Church leaders must clear the way." Let me ask you one other thing. You don't like to be referred to as "Pastor." Would I then assume that you have something of a plurality of eldership within the church?*

*John: Yes, I am called a pastor. I fill the role as the senior pastor, and I basically lead our leadership team, which is made up of eight elders and almost twelve shepherding leaders. Nine men give leadership to each of the two fellowship groups, four elders in each one. Eight elders and ten shepherds make nine men in each group. So five shepherd leaders and four elders meet each month, and we make decisions on a consensus basis for the most part. This means every elder holds a veto card for anything we want to do. I can give visionary leadership to it, but I can't pull it off without their full support.*

**Editorial Note:** John closed with two examples of making consensus decisions: one on sending a team from the church to Croatia and the other on the elders' decision to purchase a building even when the congregational support for it was minimal. A few of the elders' families ended up putting up the bulk of the money.

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## Dale Rumble — *Crucible of the Future*

**Dave:** Dale is the founder and one of seven elders in the Fountain of Life, which is a local expression of the Body of Christ in Kingston, New York. He is engaged in training men for ministry and planting and overseeing churches in Northeastern United States and Canada. He has a scientific background as a senior engineer with IBM. He lives in Saugerties, New York, with his wife Bertha, and has five sons.

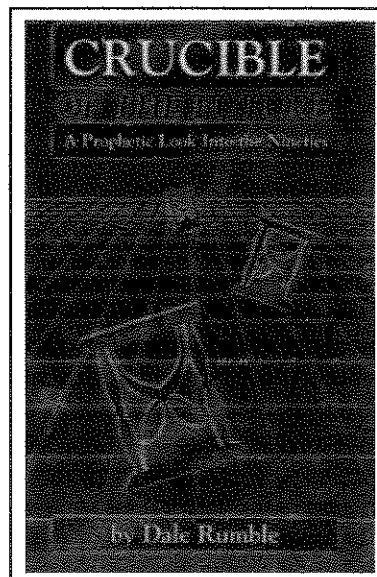
His books include: *The Diaconate: Servant Leader s*; *Prepared for His Glory*; *Crucible of the Future: A Prophetic Look into the Nineties* and *Then the End Shall Come*.

Dale, I know that you are involved in apostolic planting of churches. God is restoring back to the Church a full, five-fold equipping ministry. What we have today functioning is a one-fold or two-fold ministry, and yet that is not what the Biblical pattern is, is it?

**Dale:** No, it isn't. We need the foundation ministries of apostles and prophets as well as the other three. It's not one [gift] being more important than the others, it's a matter of grace resting upon the ministries.

**Dave:** In your booklet, *Give the Lord Back His Church*, you begin by saying that there are many faithful church members today who are not satisfied with their Christian lives. Most sermons they hear are largely concerned with definitions of doctrine and theology and social issues. There's a blending of political, social and religious terms to where God's voice is usually indistinguishable from the opinion of man. We are at a point right now in our American culture where we are seeing systemic failure in our government, education, and even within the Church itself. You believe that all of this is leading toward the pre-eminence of Christ, that He Himself is not going to be satisfied unless He is absolutely center stage. Superstar Christianity is over, isn't it?

**Dale:** That's right. The whole infrastructure of church bodies has to be chastened and prepared to accommodate great numbers of new converts, many with severe problems, who are going to be coming in this great harvesting of souls. I believe darkness is coming on the world. I believe that God right now really has His hand on making these changes in the Church to accommodate what He is going to do through evangelism. But I don't believe it is just evangelism, that He wants to bring His material with Him, and with that material build



His house. And so there is a need for the foundational ministries to lay the proper foundations. But it is the infra-structure of organized churches that God is dealing with today, getting our hearts back to not being leaders who dominate God's people but servants who serve them, so that the Lord can minister through each member. Every member is required in the Body of Christ for the work that God wants to be done. It can't be done by just good committees or strong single ministries. It's going to require the whole Body of Christ.

**Dave:** You discuss the three foundational truths concerning the Cross of Christ: 1. We must accept Jesus Christ personally as our Lord

and Savior; 2. We then must allow for His victory or His imparting His victory over our fallen or sin nature. That's a process, isn't it?

**Dale:** Yes, it is. It begins at water baptism, but it is a process. We must reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Christ was the last Adam. When He died on the cross, He was the last Adam. God dealt with all the Adamic nature for the last time once and for all. And when He arose again, He was the first born from the dead, the first of a whole new race of beings, the Body of Christ. We have to be able to walk in the death of our old nature and receive the life and walk in the victory of the new. So the Cross is essential for what God is doing. If we don't embrace the Cross and receive the benefits of His death and resurrection, then it is very difficult to talk about moving in the Body of Christ and in various areas of gifting and graces.

**Dave:** It is the third element that God is restoring to His Church. As you said, in *Ephesians 2*, it says that God is bringing one new man. God is establishing one new Body of Christ. We are beginning to discern unity in the Body of Christ that is based on the family of God. How do you see that taking shape?

**Dale:** I don't think most Christians appreciate it. For example, if you happened to inherit or find a masterpiece, a painting by some famous artist of which there were perhaps only one or two left, it would be of tremendous value. What we don't realize [as Christians] is that we are part of the most unique masterpiece that has ever been in all time, birthed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We tend to think of ourselves as being a part of some religious denomination and not part of the most unique religious masterpiece ever. It's not only unique, it's absolutely invaluable and rare. God wants us to see that and to see that we are part of something that is rare. The vision of that oneness is to

bring us together. We are uniquely rare. God has paid for us.

Ecumenism is good, but it's not organizational unity that is required. We need the Church to really become the Body of Christ. Each congregation must move under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. **I am not against organized religion, but almost always when man has moved to organize religion, it brings barrenness. We must have spontaneity and the heart to see God move among us.** I believe that God is doing a great and wonderful need. We need to see not our differences, but our oneness.

*Dave: I am reminded of an interview that I did with Mark Virkler, who said, "It's important to realize that when early Christians were exposed to something that was different than what they understood, they went to the Scriptures to try to prove it so—rather than in the modern version we try to prove it wrong." And so there is a paradigm shift there where we are looking for unity, for areas of agreement, for community. That's a word that may be the key word to usher the Church into the 21st Century, as the reawakening of the house based church, the cell church, what Carl George calls the "meta-church" changing and staying in tune with what the culture is saying without adapting to it. Actually meeting the real needs that people have.*

*You talk in one section of your book about the traditions of men. You say, "It's easy to blame church failures and problems on the devil. After all, he's committed to lawlessness while we who believe are on God's side. However, the real culprit is the hand of man. If we research Church history, we find the subtle changes have the fingerprints of men all over them. This is where the real problem lies." You go on to point out ten areas of change that have happened in the contemporary church in which these traditions have really limited the power of God. You point out the differences from the first century Church.*

**Dale:** The first place to begin is how important the home is. When Jesus sent His seventy out, they were to look for a home that was worthy. A home that had quality of good life became the basis of a good church.

The early Church was built on the home. The early Christians came together often in their homes to share their life with one another. They came together spontaneously. We tend to come together for programmed meetings.

The second point was that there were no official church buildings for over 200 years because Christians met in their homes.

The third point was that there was a diversity in the oversight. They were overseen by a company of elders.

One of God's attributes is that He is a God of diversity. Therefore, it is no wonder that God can take a lot of people who are quite different and put them together. God doesn't put one man over a group. He puts a company of men over His Body, where each one is different. An elder who is apostolic has a different aspect of the grace of God than the prophet or a pastor/teacher or an evangelist or elder. But together there is a sense of more completely representing Christ to the people as they shepherd the people.

The fourth point was that [the Christians] really looked upon themselves as a local expression of Christ's body. They were charismatic. They had the gifts. They were very active in the ministry of the relationships of hospitality, opening their homes, sharing, comforting, praying with one another, weeping with one another, and encouraging one another. It wasn't just spiritual gifts. So there was no sense of clergy/laity. They really were a functioning Body. And then there was something that held them together over all. When the apostles traveled, there was the sense of them giving oversight. And one of the points of the early Church was that they devoted themselves to the apostle's doctrine, as well as

breaking of bread, prayers, and coming together. And they were united. There was only one church in every city. They had a united witness. Now we've been divided up in the various religious structures and denominations. God wants us to begin to have a common witness in the gospel to the lost. I don't know that we must plan to have much unity of the faith, but we must have a unity in the Spirit and a unity in presenting the gospel.

The seventh point was that [the early Church] had no titles. They specifically obeyed the Lord's command in Matthew 23:8-12 not to call themselves Rabbi or Teacher, but rather to know their functions. Today we cannot get away from titles, from Reverend or Senior Pastor. Those things tend to point away from the authority in Christ and to the authority of a man. Thus, I believe that is a handicap.

My eighth point is that in the early Church there were two things that marked a meeting: spontaneity and simplicity. They were excited. They gathered in expectancy to worship Him and to hear from Him. Today it is more the program and liturgy.

The ninth point is that the early meetings were full of ministries and spiritual gifts and prayer. The essence was that the people were testifying of what God was currently doing in their lives. It wasn't so much teaching on theory and doctrine as it was spontaneously testifying about what God was immediately doing in their lives by His Spirit. That really was the life of their meetings. Today we tend to be oriented around definition of doctrine.

**The credibility of the early Church was evident in the power of God upon them in their accountable relationship one to another and the love they had.** I believe that was perhaps why God took the lives of the man and wife [Ananias and Sapphira] who lied to the Holy Spirit, just to keep the purity. Today we find so many leaders falling into sin, and it is just a lack of testimony.

## Geoff Shearn — The Worship Service

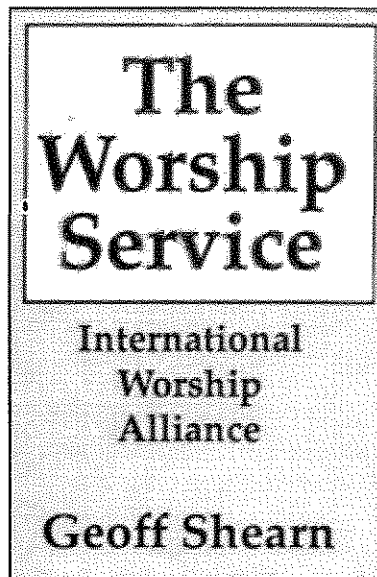
**Dave:** *Geoff is opening doors in gospel music, having been involved in it for about 30 years. What do you see happening in the American church from your perspective as an Englishman? Is God preparing the Church for a very exciting future?*

**Geoff:** I don't know that I am qualified to speak on the American church. I feel a great openness of heart everywhere we are going. There is a shaking and a breaking up of conventional values. When I came over to the States about eight years ago, I found a great sense of isolationism from one stream of the Church to another. People were very separate and focused on their own denomination or individual church. But moving from church to church, I became very conscious of a passion for God and a hunger to worship God, and it surprised me that there wasn't more interaction and dialogue between the different churches, which is more commonplace in the U.K. In fact it has been wonderful to watch that process changing. I've been involved with the March for Jesus, and therefore that has given me a good opportunity to make contact across a wide spread of churches. It has been wonderful to see how churches have come together and, as it were, find one another. They discover their common love for the Lord, their common acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ. I believe this is stirring and causing fundamental changes in attitudes. I find much more willingness to embrace and confront this and the implications it has.

There is a greater willingness in the U.S. right now in some ways than we have in the U.K., where the concept of the "pan-church" relationships is less radical. In my country, "pan-church" is a more normal concept, so it has bred a sense of complacency. I get a real inspiration every time I come to the U.S., because it inspires me to go back and say, "Hey, guys, we can't take this for granted. We

must press on and recharge and embrace the full implications of what it means for the Church to be united across a city, county, or nation."

**Dave:** *When we talk about worship, I believe it was A. W. Tozer who said that worship was the missing jewel of the evangelical church. From your perspective, worship is open worship, the ability of believers when they gather together to freely express worship to God. Are we experiencing it now? You are involved in a house church that has*



*grown from four families to 300 people. Are you seeing a new freedom to express worship as against the traditional structure? Is there more of an open flow and spontaneity?*

**Geoff:** Yes, that is true. I would say there is also a degree of complacency that creeps in. If we go back to the early days of our church, we did not intend to start a church. Basically, a group of families who had met together from a Methodist church in town started the group. The pastor came from a liberal tradition, but on a pulpit exchange with a church in the U.S., he was converted and came back all fired up. It was a joy to see the sovereign God at work in his life,

and the Holy Spirit changed him over a period of the next 18 months. The church came alive, and we worked with the young people and saw almost all of them make a commitment to Christ.

Unfortunately, the system moved him on, and the church began to lose its sense of focus and direction, and started moving back to conventional lines. This hurt us and the young people, and this is what provoked us to want to get back to our real love, Jesus Christ. So four families began meeting in our home just with the view of worshipping and praying together. We had no intention of starting a church. But on the first Sunday, almost fifty people turned up, and we were caught by surprise. So we met in a rented, local facility. We didn't follow a formal structure and did not have a pastor. Whoever felt led to share would get up and preach. The idea of a centrally driven meeting didn't connect with us. We didn't really see ourselves as a church or a meeting. We just met.

**Dave:** *So it was just an organic type gathering, like having friends over for a meeting in your living room where you would share burdens, joys, whatever God would bring from His Word, etc. When did you consider yourself a church, or do you still consider yourself just a big family?*

**Geoff:** There was a transition. During the worship, if anyone felt God was giving them a word or song, they just did it. It wasn't a question of being led from the front. It wasn't until some time later, when we began to be drawn, out of friendship, with an apostolic stream nearby headed up by Terry Vergo, that we became conscious of any real structural concept. During the process, we were finding that the work at the church became quite a drain on us because we all had our regular line of work. This was over a period of about five years. The church was growing indigenously. For example, we started meeting in homes during the week for what we called "house

groups." It never occurred to us that some kind of line needed to be drawn so that when neighbors began to show interest, as they did, they would be invited to join, and so we had non-Christians joining in the groups. Our evangelism was just a natural dialogue conversation in which questions were answered. The church grew quite rapidly. It was later, when we were being trained, that we invited a pastor to come and head us up on a fulltime basis. He encouraged us to structure ourselves to have a definite membership in the church. Also he shared the concept that the house groups should be more closed groups so that the Christians could nourish each other better, feeding on the Word of God to equip us. Slowly over a period of time, we have become a more structured church. We have reached a point where, although the worship is open, the form is still much the same. A number of us are questioning if we have missed something along the route. We are being trained to go out and touch our neighbors for Christ, whereas in the past it happened naturally. We are asking ourselves, "Why did we get structured in the first place?" It worked great before we started putting rules around the house groups. I think there is a heart now to say, "Why don't we just open it up and loosen up again and have a lot of fun with the Lord and each other?"

*Dave: As you share, I think of Gene Edwards, who is committed to total organic meetings, where no one is in charge. Relationships are allowed to build. There are people in the American church yearning for relationships with God, of course, but also with each other. Our culture is becoming more individualistic, but in the Kingdom of God we are to be interdependent, not independent. Thus, how are we to unlearn the traditions of men?*

*Geoff: At this point, we are asking the questions as much as you are. We may have experienced some aspect of it, and there may be something there to contribute, but we are learning as well. I sense that God is putting us in*

an international global Kingdom, and we are all pressing ahead on this. We need to rediscover and value interdependence and come into a real genuine peer relationship with each other so that only Jesus is the Head and the rest of us are His servants.

*Dave: I know you travel the world, so I want to ask you more about what you sense about worship. Worship is our ministry to God, with intercession our responsibility to the world. What do you see happening in worship that is fresh? You started with the Jesus People Movement in the sixties, visiting Calvary Chapel when it was meeting in a tent, and Maranatha when it was just beginning and seeing the growth of that into a Gospel enterprise.*

*Geoff: I see a situation where God is calling His people, and Jesus is truly becoming Lord of all. I think it has been demonstrated in the March for Jesus, which is a passion many of us have shared, to see Jesus honored and lifted up as Lord of all.*

*What is happening is that there is a flattening taking place of every believer having access. Every believer has the joy, the privilege, and the accountability to Christ to express to Him their love and adoration. He is putting a passion in each of us to go as far as we are willing to go. He isn't putting us under any pressure. He is just saying that it's His desire.*

*Dave: It's the priesthood of all believers. What we saw the Reformation try to do, God is now restoring in a practical way so that it is being expressed through us.*

*Geoff: And of course while we are out there on the streets, we are totally vulnerable, but we are all together. A lot of folks, including myself, were very apprehensive about starting off, but it is a joyful, wonderful experience to be with brothers and sisters in Christ. We don't care to know what church they are from. [We] just [want to] know*

that they love Jesus, and we love Jesus. We are worshipping Him together on the streets. Suddenly a new dynamic is emerging from that. What I have been sensing from the development of praise and worship across the nation is again the flattening process wherein everyone is special and precious. So we lose the sense of a standardized form of worship. One can begin to appreciate the richness of liturgical worship and the joy and spontaneity of charismatic style praise. There is a place for structured worship and for a complete abandonment in Christ. There are so many different shades, cultures, varieties, and colors. God enjoys them all. Each of us have in our own churches a unique offering to God, something that is very precious to Him.

It is as if we are giving our offering to God, and the Church down the road is giving their offering to God. This is happening all over the earth, and it is all rising up to the heavenlies as a sweet incense of praise to Him. We need to find that, understand that, and find one another to understand that we are all part of a rich tapestry of color. Instead of trying to impose a fixed set of form and structure on each other, we begin to embrace and appreciate our differences. So, we find unity in our diversity.

*Dave: This is exciting! We see the decentralization of the Kingdom of God flying in the face of the world's efforts to centralize everything. Would you go so far as to say the era of superstar Christianity is coming to an end?*

*Geoff: I think there is going to be a place for a relatively few anointed worshipers who are raised as cream to the surface of milk for specific prophetic purposes. But we are all part of that worship process. The concept of stars, I believe, is going to go. There will be those who are honored because of their servant-like spirit, but they are not looking for promotion. They will be raised up by the Lord. I do believe the traditional concept of people pressing for stardom and fame is just*

extracting a secular model. We have within Christendom been groping for a Kingdom model for how our music should be communicated. In the absence of one, we have just taken the secular model and then Christianized it. But it will ultimately not work. I think that we will find that the whole system is geared the wrong way and causing the wrong motives to be fed, because you feel you are almost worthless unless you are at the top end of the league as it were. That is completely contrary to the way the Lord looks at it. He appreciates each individual, however small or insignificant that person may seem to the world. And I believe the system needs to honor and respect that, so that we have a complete change in the way the system operates.

I can give a practical example of this. I found myself caught between the messages I was getting from many, many churches. "Geoff, we need to be released in our worship!" And we are really hung up on the whole copyright issue. People are telling us that we are breaking the law when we do overheads and song sheets, but we just want to be free to get on with our worship. Yet, I'm an industry guy involved with a number of publishing companies. So we went around and dialogued with the publishers that we have, to find a way to deal with this problem. We met with an enormous amount of resistance because they are all in competition with each other. It took a divine intervention of the Lord for a miracle to take place back in 1985. They laid down their competition and formed a collaborating group long enough for a church copyright license to be birthed in the U.K. Out of that, hundreds and then thousands of churches have found that, through a simple function of paying a one-time fee each year, they can use all the songs without having to get clearance all the time. It was exciting to see that cross over to the U.S.A. in the birthing of the C.C.L.I., which also required a miracle. C.C.L.I. stands for Church Copyright Licensing, Inc. They are

now providing the one-stop facility in the U.S. Thus, an invisible infrastructure has slipped into place, which is serving all the churches and nearly all the musicians, publishers, etc., so that all can function together. It just serves. It doesn't in any way try to control or manipulate. I believe we need to see a series of infrastructures come into place that enable the churches to network together to communicate and fulfill their function. Thus, everyone can grow to whatever point God requires them to grow.

*Dave: Please tell about the vision you saw with smoke coming from the chimneys.*

**Geoff:** A friend of mine, Nigel Coltman, had a dream one night in which he saw a bunch of little houses dotted all over the world, and each house had smoke rising out of the chimney. He woke up and thought about it. Slowly it dawned on him that each house represented a house of worship, a church with its unique expression of worship. The smoke represented praise rising up to God. Thus, the idea was of smoke rising as incense to God, and He sees the whole thing and yet recognizes and appreciates each person individually and uniquely.

We realized that what God was saying to us about Christian music is that all that God requires is some mechanism by which all these churches can relate to one another. All the rest of the systems become irrelevant by comparison.

*Dave: The whole contemporary Christian music movement, some see as from the devil; others, from the Lord; and still others, wanting to give the flexibility to worship in different styles even though "the beat is too loud for me." Crossover music is making an impact in the secular market as well as the sacred. What are your thoughts on this?*

**Geoff:** Quite simply, each of us has to be accountable to the Lord. So to whoever is feeling a call of God to communicate with the world at

large, I would say, "Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel." What I would be concerned about is that their heart stay pure and that they stay firmly rooted in their church and Kingdom values because the problem is that the further out you go, the more the pressure is to compromise values, both personally and the actual substance of what is communicated. I think it is very much a personal issue. I could not give any kind of blanket comment that would cover every artist.

I certainly believe that God is raising up people to have prominent places of opportunity to communicate their values, but I also understand that, as you move into that world, the pressures grow, and the tendency is that, as they say, you go native and become part of the system. The system ends up using you instead of you using that opportunity to communicate the values of the Kingdom. Thus, we need to pray for any of those in that system, that they stay close to the Lord and that they are supported, encouraged, and nurtured. I think they get to a very lonely place there.

*Dave: A personal friend of ours related to us that she was disgusted with the way the whole Christian music industry works and that she would rather work with a company that is secular.*

*You were talking about changes in technology that could have a dramatic impact on the way Christian music will get out there, maybe putting it into every supermarket in the country and making it available to anyone on a per song basis.*

**Geoff:** Christians have a historic reputation for being the last in line for new technology. Often it is first greeted as sin, and then becomes a normal part of our lives. So God is stirring us to embrace and actually get ahead of the technology in our thinking. We did this with the copyright license in England. I met enormous opposition from the secular

publisher's association. They said the concept of a blanket licensing was anathema to them. We had a hard time for awhile, but we pressed through to it, and now the secular industry is looking at it as a role model for how it might impact their world. So if Christians embrace new concepts, we can actually bring Kingdom values back into the world.

In the technological realm we are moving into the totally digitized [sphere], so that whatever can be reduced to digital format can be made available through electronic means. That includes the transformation of music. We already have the format which digitizes music notation and which can be presented either in the form of musical notation on a screen or printed on a hard copy or a means for synthesizers on keyboards to play that music back. Of course CD and DAT style tapes means that music in all its forms can be available in digital formats. This is happening in the visual media as well. Now all of these technologies are beginning to emerge.

One of the first things I have seen is electronic sheet music. It is now possible to walk into a music store and download sheet music on demand, and you can transpose to any key instantly. You can also pull it out on a three-and-one-half computer disc so you can use it on your personal computer. This is already in place, and we will be seeing more of that. In a very short time, you will be able to build your own CD in a supermarket through a vending machine, where you call up the songs and artists of your choice and download those to create your own CD. [You will] pay for it with a credit card. The same will be available for videos as well. In five to ten years there will be home entertainment centers where via fiber optic cables you will have access to the information, videos, and music of the world. Everything will be on-line instantly. As Christians we need to understand that we don't have to be threatened by that, but be part of it. The

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

electronic medium is allowing anything to be transmitted anywhere. We will bypass the whole concept of a Christian subculture. Our music will be just as easily accessed in a supermarket or gas station as anything else because it is electronically stored on computer hard disc so there is no product until a customer actually decides to purchase it. **As we take the gospel and worship music out to the nation, the means to purchase it will be just as accessible as the secular music.** We have been stunned to see the number of people respond to Christ who are not believers when they hear Christians worshipping God. We believe, as we demonstrate and model our worship in the public arena, that we find people being drawn to the heart of the Father. So I find a wonderful opportunity for Christian worship both in recorded and sheet music, as well as on videos, available to the main stream of the public arena.

*Dave: The next major Reformation is to see the Body of Christ restored. The implications of the technology are that anyone to whom God has given a song could put it on computer and immediately be made available worldwide. Is that part of the vision you have with the International Worship Alliance?*

**Geoff: Exactly. Worship can be written in New Zealand and available to the rest of the world the very next day. Technology will allow that. We are worship leaders and song writers who network together, who get to know each other, and then who prepare to make our music available through this computer technology. Of course it is very important to realize that the availability of a song does not mean that everyone wants to sing it. I would not want some aspiring song writer to think that all they have to do is pump it into the system, and everyone will be raving about it the next day. This would be a false expectation. But it is very important to understand that the channels will be there. We need to understand the very important principle that**

promotion comes from the Lord. This has been evidenced already with some of the great songs such as "I Will Exalt Thee," where the songs have traveled around the world through their excellence, primarily by word of mouth. So I believe that with the improvement of the channels of communications, the opportunities for that promotion will come from the Lord and become very effective and productive indeed.

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## Charles Simpson — *The Covenant and the Kingdom*

**Dave:** *Charles Simpson is the pastor of Covenant Church of Mobile, Alabama. He oversees more than one hundred covenant churches in some capacity throughout the U.S.A.*

*We are concerned about the recovery of the equilibrium of the Church regarding the role of the believer and the culture, and that would encapsulate the implications of the Kingdom of God and redemption both to individuals and institutions. That was the focus of part one of the The Laymen's Seminary, The Warfare Series. I included a segment that we did with you in that. I want to basically pick up where we left off. We were talking about the Church suffering from something of a lack of vision, something of a negative unity, a disillusionment. This opens the door for the manipulation of spiritual, social, government, and economic leaders to seize an entire nation. I want to get some of your views as to whether we are seeing that manifest now in the new administration. In this series we are talking about the recovery of the role of the believer in the local church, in terms of lay led ministry and the church seen as a community, as Jim Rutz discusses in The Open Church.*

**Charles:** The book deals with many of the things our group was concerned about in our spiritual revolution in the late '60s and early '70s. We were oriented toward the small group. In the beginning our movement did not build churches. We built small groups and called them house churches. But there was not an overall congregation. We were very controversial and, in fact, some people thought we were cultic.

I was raised and ministered as a Southern Baptist, so my upbringing was typically evangelical Baptist, the congregational structure. But when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, I was mistreated by the structure from my point of view, so I

found myself staying there for seven years. During that time I was being influenced by a Biblical view of small groups and house churches and was also being influenced by the hostility to anything new and fresh. And so, I became sort of radical in my thinking and began to travel full time. I finally left the denomination altogether in 1971.

I realized I was a pastor also, so in 1973 I came back to the gulf coast area and settled down and started small groups. Over a period of five or more years, we had as many as 50



to 55 small groups. While this was going on, we began to meet together in the process. We met once a month. As a matter of fact, we started sub-structures between the small groups and larger group. As we grew, we had small groups in congregations and the general church. So a lot of these principles are ones that we wrestled with and implemented. The home group was a body ministry in which we encouraged everyone to participate. In the open church, we do not see anything that is radically different than what we were teaching and practicing. At the time we did it, we were thought of as radicals.

Now the down side of that is, I do

not believe that any system really solves all the problems. Any method becomes a system within itself sooner or later. What we discovered that gave us some pause for concern is that in the small groups, you either have to move to some system of strong control, which many people are not conducive to, or you wind up giving them a fair amount of autonomy, which if you do, you wind up with different churches.

What we have today is a congregation that meets every Sunday, like other churches, and we have small groups that meet twice a month. We put the emphasis back on the main body, and we have emphasized that we are one Church and that everything that goes on is submitted to the presbytery of the Church. So we have come back to a more traditional system. However, we do believe that every healthy body is healthy because of the cells, with a cell structure. So we would still embrace what *The Open Church* stands for, as well as several other recent books.

We tend to have a fairly strong leadership of the groups. One pastor is in charge of all the cell groups and is responsible for what happens and who leads them. We do believe in the small group dynamic, the ministry of the Spirit within the small group, and we feel that is Biblical and will last. It is something that has come back to the Church.

**Dave:** *Rutz is advocating that we bring the warmth and participation that some churches have experienced into the larger weekly gathering. Do you think that is feasible and an alternative?*

**Charles:** I feel that every promotion of an operation should be proven at a smaller level. A person must first function properly within himself, then at a family level, and, if there, it will function at a larger level. Whatever you plan for your general

Sunday meeting needs to be proven out at the small group level. But you can never treat Sunday as a small group because it is not. You are always going to have more people who have various gifts, and if the Spirit moves, you are not going to have time for everyone. So you have to have some kind of order, and some kind of prioritization. We would say to everybody to minister in small groups, but we allow those who are proven in small groups to minister in the general church. Whatever comes forth in the general Church has to be judged and approved by the leadership and, to some degree, before it gets to the people. We have spontaneous gift operations in our services, but the pastors are accountable for what hits the flock. Thus the pastor has a responsibility to see to it that that freedom is not abused. You can go both ways. You can have no freedom and the people get abused, and then you can have too much freedom and the people get abused. I have seen it both ways.

Some churches need to open up a lot. That is a relative term. But some churches need to close up a bit because they are letting too many things through the screen door. They are not really willing to deal with what is coming before the people. I believe in the philosophy of the open church, if you will let me make it a relative term, rather than saying everything should be entirely open or entirely closed.

I like the idea of people exercising their gifts and bringing things to the floor and general body. But I also like the idea of a person being proven before they do it. I also like knowing those who labor among us and they being willing to have what they do judged.

*Dave: Then there are people like Gene Edwards.*

*Charles: Gene has been known for some pretty radical things.*

*Dave: Gene writes of seeing primitive churches in other lands where there appears to be no human*

*leadership, yet a beautiful expression of the Church, whereas, in this country we have gone way too far the other way with institutionalizing the Church and binding the ministry of the people.*

*Charles: Gene has been touched strongly in the past by the concept of "pure plurality." I do not believe in plurality or equality. I think you have diversity of callings and authority, and we have gone around this bush for 20 to 30 years. I would caution anyone from trying to maintain pure egalitarianism in their government. In the first place, I do not think it is Scriptural. Secondly, I have never seen it work consistently. Always there is somebody who is more equal than the rest when it comes to leading a meeting or when it comes to being in authority over the affairs of a particular group or institution. That is not to say that you cannot have Quaker-like services where the Spirit moves. When you get into the whole issue of Biblical concepts of authority, Kingdom is a dominating word, and it influences every sub-strata of authority in its institutions. The family has a head, the Church has a head, and every God-ordained institution is left with someone being accountable.*

*I have wrestled this through with people, and it is something I had to resolve. It does not mean that a person is responsible for all the creative life that flows. If they are gifted, they know how to help others develop theirs. The concern I have with not having any authority whatsoever or without the right kind of authority is that you leave yourself open for psychic manifestations, which are not of God. There is not a strong ability to confront, which you are going to eventually need to face what the enemy will do to counterfeit. With no one to lead the battle, you have an army without a general. So I am a believer in someone being responsible, even if it is not the same someone all the time. However, if properly done, that person does not have to dominate things. There can*

be an open pulpit and still have a strong leader. It just depends on what that leader is doing and what the people are taught to believe.

I do not think it has to inhibit the flow of the Spirit. That is a problem of the way the leader performs rather than the "wrongness" of having a leader per se. The way I read the book, here are some people who are dealing with a real closed situation where the system and the authority have been a problem. So they are allowing the Spirit to move: "Let's let everyone bring forth what they have."

I am sympathetic to that and agree with it but also, having been through it (and I would imagine that Ern Baxter would say the same thing), it does not solve all the problems.

On the other side of that, you run into some things that system and discipline can do that spontaneity cannot do. It has to do, for example, with a worldview. You will never get a worldview out of spontaneity. You will get a worldview out of systematics.

One of the major manifestations was related to the young people and children. This was a major problem that we had. We went so far as to not have any kind of youth program. We expected the family to do it all. Well, they didn't. They should, but they don't. So we came up with a "youth gap." There were a number of different things we did not have because we did not have the discipline or the system. It takes a system to build a discipline. We didn't have the system to bring those disciplines to bear. Now, in going over to something more disciplined, we have tried not to throw out the spontaneity or the small group structure. Some people will argue that we have thrown away too much spontaneity in our Sunday morning meeting. But it is still open to gifts and ministries, which frequently come, and we still have people to participate. It is a matter of a balance that seems good to the



people and congregation.

My feeling about the open church is that people ought to do it a while, and then tell us what fine tuning they have to make. It has merits and is valid, but it is also imperfect like every other concept, and so after they have done it for a while, people will say, "Here are some blind spots, or here are some things you need to put in place with your open meeting."

**Dave:** *That is wise counsel, and I will pass that on. We are going to focus in on Christ's Kingdom and the Church. A year and half ago you shared that the Church was going through a crisis of negative and positive unity. Do you think we have come through the negative unity development, and are we ready to move into positive unity? What do you see out there?*

**Charles:** We are still in something of a transition. It is not a generational transition, but a millennial one, and it is very long. The Church is repositioning itself for the long, long term if the Lord tarries, and however the Lord comes and appears to the Church. What is being done right now is going to be long lasting, so I don't see it as a quick, easy-fix transition. We are moving more toward at least some common understanding of our responsibility toward the world. There are still many, many issues being struggled with by ministers and churches, depending on the church. As I go out, I still see a lot of problems and division, but I see more and more the Church becoming responsible and the denominational barriers at least mean a lot less. One of the things that affects us is the tremendous cultural change going on in secular society. That is causing us to realize that our problem is not really each other. More Christians are realizing that the Church is under assault from secularism. There are books like *Hollywood vs. America* that are telling us that this is not accidental, but that there is a conspiratorial approach at least from a part of the enemy toward the

Church. As the Church is buffeted and embattled more from culture, it forces it to form and develop a positive unity within itself, and this process is ongoing. I see it as a positive process, and we have made progress in the last few years.

The problems externally—and sometimes internally—are great too to keep that motivation going on.

**Dave:** *You have said that one of the great problems in Christianity today is the absence of a single vision. Everyone seems to have their pet thing. You wrote, "Church government began with apostolic government." Do you see the plurality of leadership modeled in the early Church coming back to the modern Church rather than the "superstar" model we have seen over the last couple of decades?*

**Charles:** I think that an organism, by its very definition, develops an infrastructure. The more developed it is, the more detailed and defined it becomes internally and the more everything has a function. The Church is not a glob. It is a highly refined and efficient Body under the headship of Jesus Christ. The early Church was certainly that. What you will see a lot of is what I call Apostolic spheres, where God raises up a man who has a gift of birthing churches or caring for those churches—and there will be many, many hundreds and thousands of these spheres across the world, most of which you will never hear of, but which will constitute five churches or five hundred churches. These men will not dwell in isolation, but as the Spirit moves, they will come together more, and they will want to fellowship more, and the smaller spheres will become more accountable to the larger body. I do believe there will be a plurality, even a plethora of these spiritual fathers and leaders who rely on one another and get counsel from one another. I think you will see more and more of that.

**Dave:** *I know that much of the*

*institutional church falls into the trap of allowing the people to idolize the pastor, which in turn causes the pastor to think he has to do it all. This produces what George Gallup says are 14 to 15 million Christians who are tired of just going to church, sitting in rows quietly watching, and then leaving. We see what the Bible says relating to the fellowship, sharing, and prayer that went on in the Body of Christ, and that there is a growing group of people who are looking for something to happen in the churches. Where is the balance between organization or structure and openness?*

**Charles:** Each group has to go along and see where the balance is because you have to work with the people you have. I don't believe that any pattern solves all the problems. I have been in ministry for 38 years, in congregational, in leader-directed structures, and I have seen plurality and so called one-man government. Every group, from the Quakers to the Catholics, have problems. There is no single group that has discovered a way to eliminate the problems. So that tells me that the problems are not so much the structures, but the people themselves. The Scripture is clear that the flesh is our major problem. Now there are some systems better than others, but one of our major problems is that we put the wrong expectation on any given meeting. For example, I say to our people, "Sunday morning cannot be the main focus of your ministry." With hundreds of people sitting there, and with very limited time, there is no way that everyone's needs are going to be met. We have seven days a week for that.

So, you have to decide, "What is Sunday about? What is the small group about?" You have to avoid making the two things competitive or the same. What are your other team functions about? Be sure your major gaps are filled. I cannot speak for all the Covenant Churches, but we treat Sunday as primarily worship, giving, prayer, ministry of the Word, and ministry to people.

We have thirty minutes before worship where people can sing, pray, and minister to the Lord for those who want to be there, and there are a good many who come early. So we try to move upward toward the Spirit of revelation and the Spirit of prophecy, and then we have the general worship, which focuses on thanksgiving, praise, and worship. Worship is essentially to come to the place of bowing down, so the final culmination of worship is to bring people to the place of being willing to receive the will of God. At that point, we move into giving and offering, which is emblematic again of worshipping and giving over to God and the ministry of the Word. If the Word is ministered prophetically, and I believe that is appropriate to the Biblical pattern, then during the worship there should be room for people to bring forth whatever God has given them and for various gifts to manifest, and for healing and those kinds of things to happen.

I try to pick the things that are going to build the general body, things that are for them, including the manifestation of some of the gifts. I am word and worship focused, rather than gift focused on Sunday morning. (I'm talking about the predominance of the time given.)

Whereas in the smaller groups, our focus is more on each person contributing and being involved where it can be done in the time frame and relational context. Then we have other meetings, which are "team" meetings that are more focused on a particular ministry. People who have that in common are working together. So we have at least three different types of meetings which most of the people in the church are involved in.

**Dave:** *In your audio series, The Church in Crisis, you state that we are undergoing crises of every kind, and we need to know how to use these as an opportunity.*

**Charles:** I believe crises do a number of different things. I am a strong

believer in God's sovereignty and that as someone who trusts Him, He may not be the cause of all circumstances, but He is the cause of my life and able to redeem me in all circumstances. Crisis is our means to promotion rather than our destruction. The crisis that I see right now is the breakdown of secular or pagan culture, the breakdown of what is essentially false and what is false in us also breaking down. So a lot of it reaches into the Church itself. I do not see this as a Kingdom crisis—it is unshakable. It is a social crisis and sometimes a Church crisis. I do not equate the Church and the Kingdom. The Church is the Body of Christ functioning in the larger sphere, which we call the Kingdom of God.

It is a personal, family, educational, ethical, and certainly a health crisis. There is a lot of support for what I am saying outside the Church as well. The *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1993, carried an article by Barbara Whitehead saying that Dan Quayle was right. This is not a conservative magazine, and yet it is one of the most fantastic articles I have ever read that outlines the nature of the crisis. Family values were the main focus of the '92 presidential campaign, as well they should have been. An article in our local paper by Paul Greenberg, "U.S. Heads for Hell in a Limousine," makes a profoundly clear statement. The writer said, "Maybe the economy doesn't determine the culture, as the culture the economy." **We have been thinking that if we had more money, or if we would give groups more money, then the culture would get better. But what we are finding out is that life does not consist in the abundance of things. The fact is that until the culture gets better, the economy is not going to get better.**

So there are a lot of people on the outside who are assessing, for example, education, which has declined, while we spend 220 per cent more than we did in 1960. Yet we are 80 points lower on the SAT scores. Many people are seeing that

we are suffering a cultural crisis, because of our moral and ethical system, which is fundamentally off. This is a social crisis which the Church is not going to escape because it affects us, but it is also going to refine us by driving us to our moral and ethical values, and I believe it will cause the Church to shine in the world.

**Dave:** *So would you see the solution being prepared like Joseph or Nehemiah, getting revelation from God? Do you see a citywide Church coming together to get organized at the local level and developing a bottom-up strategy?*

**Charles:** I definitely like a bottom-up strategy, and I believe that where you have strong individuals, you do not need strong, dominating government. So obviously, the evangelical government teaches us that a reborn individual is more responsible, and the authority stays closer to the person. I like that. I think *networking* is now and is going to be a major word, in and out of the Church. What we have is an integrating of models. This is scientific and biologically natural, and it is Biblical that God makes all of these things to be interdependent. When they are fragmented, they die. But when they come together, there is synergism and life. So it is not labels, denominations, nor even altogether methods. It is a matter of the value system and the ethic which a group has. If they are compatible ethically and theologically, then they will network together.

This could be carried over into economics as well. The whole thing of reciprocal activities is a very godly thing where we give what we have to the larger part, whether we are talking about the economic world or business world or the Church and family world. The adversarial and competitive mentality is satanic. The key is that we are complementary. I would take that over into the gender war because the whole nature of the competitiveness

of the genders is a set up by the demonic. By nature we are complementary because we need one another, but the enemy would set us against one another. I view all of creation this way. One mind made it, and He made it to work together. So if we can approach the world and life that way, we are in the divine order. We are not at war with anything that God made. We are at war with alien spirits that are trying to destroy the essential unity of it and the plan that God put in it.

I do not want the idea that the individual supersedes the importance of the whole, because the whole or the individual to the exclusion [of the other] is destructive. If you take the central and do not care for the individual, it is destructive. If you take the individual and do not care for the whole, then it is destructive.

**Dave:** *There is a divine tension.*

**Charles:** Yes, the whole cannot exist without healthy parts, and the parts can't exist without a whole. Every cell in our body carries two codes: the code of the cell and the code of the organism of the whole. Theoretically, you can make a whole from one tiny part because the code is there. I believe that is true in God's work.

Every healthy Christian individual has both his personal code or plan or calling, but he also instinctively knows he is a part of a larger thing and that the code of the whole is in him. If you only had one Christian and the Bible, you would pretty soon have a New Testament Church as he was added to because the code is there.

As a Baptist, all I did was emphasize the part, the believer, and the priesthood. Then I became a—little c—catholic, and I began to see that the Church is also universal. Those both are important.

**Dave:** *Wonderful analogy! Please say something about your book,*

*Christ's Kingdom in History. Who is it designed for?*

**Charles:** It can be applied in family study, in Sunday school, or in a small Bible study group. We wrote it to help people understand the nature of Kingdom and covenant as they run through the Scriptures. Relatively few people have studied the Bible from a covenant standpoint. Yet God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. The oneness of God and the nature of covenant are all bound up together. So in dealing with God, we need to know we are dealing with Someone whose Word is His bond, and when He gives His Word, He gives Himself, and when He deals with man, He deals on the basis of covenants. Also, the covenant is like a constitution, and that is government, which means there has to be a Kingdom in nature. So we focus on the nature of the Kingdom-thinking philosophy. The Kingdom is the administration of the covenant. So we take it through the Old Testament, God's provisions through the gospels, the Kingdom and us as individuals, and families. We work the *Kingdom and the Church* together, and then with the *Kingdom and the Marketplace*, which is basically economics. I don't know of another book out there like volume six, and we have just come out with a volume on the *Kingdom and the World*, which is a worldview, dealing with our destiny spiritually and in the world. It is not narrow eschatologically. We give people choices and what the different scenarios are, but we try to give them a philosophy for facing the future, which is to understand the Kingdom of God now and how it might be manifested in the future. It has 120 lessons, so it is comprehensive.

**Dave:** *Yes it is. I have three of the volumes in front of me. The Scripture is off to the side. There is also a glossary of terms. If you are interested in the present dimension of the Kingdom and the past and future dimension, knowing Charles, I am sure it is probably one of the best sources you can find.*

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## Steve Sjogren — Servant Evangelism

**Dave:** *We are discussing Servant Evangelism with Steve Sjogren from the Vineyard in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has a book to be released soon, The Conspiracy of Kindness. The Great Commission tells us that we are to share the Good News and disciple the nations. These are two legs on which the Gospel stands.*

*The Church is going through a transformation where some things old are being restored as well as there being an openness to some new things. You have had a burden for seeing the Body of Christ equipped for ministry, and through small groups you have had an emphasis on relationships being developed to counter the shallow spectatorism in so much of the Church. What do you see happening in the general Church, and how is that impacting your local church of some 2,000 people?*

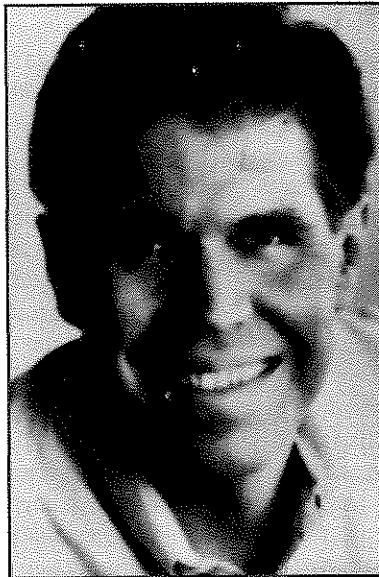
**Steve:** In the Vineyard movement, which started in 1982 with John Wimber's leadership, we used to say that Vineyard in one sense was creating something new but in another was not a part of something else. Most of us had come from, worked with, and still loved and respected the traditional Church, but we did not want to recreate what we had been a part of because it did not look like what we saw in Scripture. So we came with an open attitude and a desire to start a church, which we would enjoy being a part of and which we felt would copy the pattern of Scripture. I feel that we have done this.

I left Los Angeles in the early '80s after interning in a large Vineyard there and founded a couple of churches, one in Europe and one on the East Coast. I came to Cincinnati almost ten years ago as the third church plant.

I started from scratch with five people, driving a school bus for two to three years while my wife worked as an accounting person, doing

whatever it took. We started Bible studies or Kinships as we call them in Vineyard and began to meet in houses. We started the one group and spilt it when it grew to ten or so and continued that pattern. However, often when one would start, another would die. So it was a "step forward, one step back" reality.

After being here for about two years, we had a total of about forty people. While that is not a bad sized group for two years of work, in terms of the numbers of people we had talked to



and shared our vision with, it was rather discouraging. We figured we had talked to about a thousand people during that time so we had about a 96 percent rejection rate. I was really seeking the Lord, and one day as I talked with my wife, we were telling the Lord, "If you want us to pastor forty people, that is all right, but we need to know what You want, Lord."

Then the Lord spoke to me over a period of several weeks in a variety of ways that my vision was "small and boring." As first I wondered if that was the Lord, but He went on to say that if I would focus my vision out into the community and not worry about what was assembled here in

the Sunday meeting but to get radically focused into the unchurched community, that He would bring us more people than we knew what to do with. My wife and I talked about that and did not know what that meant but felt that it was the Lord.

So we began to go into the community with our small groups, with very little concern about what our gathered group would look like.

I call it my "Howard Beale experience" from the movie, *Network*, where the newscaster says, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it any more!" He gets in touch with the real person he was in his heart that he wanted to be and not the one that people wanted him to be or that he was afraid to be.

So I told the Lord that I did not know just what vision You had put in my heart, but whatever it is, I wanted to express it. I think it thrills God that we are willing to take risks like that. So we began to go into the community to do what we have since come to call "servant evangelism" projects.

It is really a conspiracy of kindness when we go into the community and serve people. We do not take any money and often do not even make a big deal of telling people who we are. We are doing this to show people the love and kindness of God in a practical way. Now, 99 out of 100 people will ask, "Who are you and why are you doing this?" They also ask, "How long do your services last?" I find this interesting that people in the '90s are not nearly as interested in doctrinal purity in the non-Christian world as they are practicality.

We have done about 100 different projects in the last several years and have found some incredible responses from people when we just go in and serve them. There are no money strings attached or expectations that they join our church. Very often people will ask for prayer and open

up and begin to share their struggles.

Recently, I was doing a free car wash as one of the projects. Now, I know that many youth groups do a so-called free car wash where they take a donation at the end. But we do not take donations, and when we refuse, they drop their mouths. Their eyes open and dilate. I was washing a man's car, and he got his checkbook out and began to fill out a check. He asked how we spelled the name of our church. I told him that we do not receive any donations, but he went ahead. I had to tell him again before he finally understood. Then he asked, "Why are you doing this?" My reply was, "Because God loves you!" **The man was stunned, as if he was hit by a hammer! He began to get tears in his eyes, and he asked, "Do you know who I am?"**

I answered, "No."

He said, "I'm a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs and live in Cincinnati in the off season." For about five minutes he began to confess his sins to me, sexual sins and how he had made lots of money but had squandered it and how he had not acknowledged God although he said in his heart he believed there was a God. He went on and on and finally stopped and asked, "Tell me, is there a place for someone like me in a church like yours?"

I answered, "Yes, that is why we are doing things like this!" And that is an example of what happens when we do these, what I call, high impact projects. It opens people's hearts in amazing ways.

I see my experience in evangelism in three stages. The first I call being a "shark." I was aggressively chasing after people as a brand new Christian. If you got next to me for 30 seconds, I would be past weather and politics in our conversation and on to trying to convert you. I had no sense of where people were or whether they were close to accepting Christ and would just blow them away. So I had a lot of enthusiasm but not much sensitivity or any strategy.

In the second phase, I became a "carp." A carp is a bottom fish that sucks mud. Most evangelicals have no intention of leading anyone to Christ. I know they say they are evangelicals because of what they say they believe and not by their lifestyle of sharing Christ. By their choice of not moving forward, they have become a carp. It seems that we only have one model of evangelism in America, and that is to be knocking on doors or aggressively sharing in malls, parks, etc., or we sit in a corner and smile, letting our light shine but not saying anything.

The third phase that I have developed over the last few years of ministry is what I call a "dolphin," which is the best of both worlds. He is excited and has an enthusiastic approach to life. The "dolphin" is more sensitive than a "shark" and a little more intelligent, I hope. We combine the sensitivity with the slowness of the carp. If people are not ready to be harvested, we can push away their coming to Christ with aggressiveness and delay it by months or years. So I am trying to build a church full of "dolphins" who gather on Sundays for encouragement, who are built up by the Word, and then are released as a force into the community for the other six and one half days of the week. Hopefully, they see themselves as servant evangelists going into the community doing high impact, low profile, low cost kinds of outreaches.

**We have been a small group church from the beginning and now have about 130 groups.** One of the marks of all our groups is that they all do some kind of servant evangelism projects. I decided a long time ago that I would not parent the people of my church, and so it is exciting to see getting a vision for the community. I try to be an example of a person turned on for Jesus Christ and tell my story week after week with as much openness and transparency as I can and frankly depend on the Holy Spirit to use my story and model to see its way into their lives.

**One of the exciting evidences of this working is that we have seen a number of leaders raised up who have gone out and planted other churches.** To date we have planted twelve churches out of this one church on the north side of Cincinnati, with nine of them in the Cincinnati/Dayton area.

I see that the Lord has His foot in the community in some awesome ways. Last year we touched about 100,000 people in the Cincinnati area with our servant evangelism projects. These people were directly touched, but I believe many go and tell their friends. For example, one day we wrapped presents in the mall without taking any money for it and paying the expense of the materials ourselves. People want to know why we are doing this, and we say that we just want to show God's love in a practical way. I believe they go home and tell their spouses and friends about "those people who wrapped my presents and would not take any money for it." So we have people coming to us and saying, "Hey, I know who you people are!"

For example, yesterday I was getting my hair cut by a substitute barber and he asked, "What do you do for a living, Steve?" Any pastor will know how the atmosphere changes when you say that you are a pastor. The temperature goes down ten degrees. The person gets real serious and thinks I am going to take an offering before I get out of the chair. Then he asked, "What's the name of your church?" I answered, "Oh, you've probably never heard of it. It's called the Vineyard." "Oh, the Vineyard!" And he goes on, "You are the guys who feed parking meters, wash cars, clean toilets, and feed the poor." And he named six or eight things we have done. So I asked, "How many times have you been there?" And he said, "Oh I've never been there. I just heard about it!"

Wow! I think my hair stood on end! So I said, "You have never been there, and you just heard about it?" "Oh yeah," he said. "People come in and tell me about it. They will say,

'You won't believe what just happened! These people washed my windshield and left a card in it that read, We washed your windshield to show you God's love in a practical way!'

So I suspect that we are making some ripples in the community, and I feel the key has little to do with Sunday mornings. Sunday morning, overall is to encourage the people to tell stories and let them be stimulated and go back out and serve. If we stopped releasing the people to do the work of ministry, I believe we would be in big trouble.

We have a good time when we get together for Sunday services. There are five services. Our building is not big enough to hold everyone, but we have no plans now to build a larger building because we frankly believe we can go to ten services if need be. We see that the key is the small groups getting together and then us willing to take risks going out into the community. We make mistakes, and it would be safer not to release people into ministries, but they are having a major impact.

*Dave: Yes, Jesus said that we would know His disciples by their lifestyle, by the love they express in practical ways. What your people are doing is a wonderful contrast to what we normally see. George Barna points out that in the last couple of decades, church growth has been primarily people moving from one church to another. Do you believe that the '90s is the time for the Kingdom of God to be demonstrated in very practical ways?*

**Steve:** The Boomer Generation, which is now driving the car in America, demands that life be pragmatic. Our church is run by "boomers." I was born in 1955, which is the apex of the boomer generation. I believe they want us to put our money where our mouth is. We find that people are a willing audience to hear what we have to say once we prove to them our credibility. Traditional evangelism says you present the gospel, call for

repentance, and wait for the response. What I am saying is, "Let's not tinker with the message. Before we blow them away with what they may not be able or ready to handle informationally, let's first of all approach them with a deed of kindness or charity, and then be prepared to answer their questions about the gospel." Most people have heard the words, but the problem is that their hearts have not been conditioned to enable them to truly hear or comprehend and understand the meaning of the words. When you lead with deeds of charity, people end up telling us where they are at, and then they ask questions such as, "Tell me what you mean by God?" This is, frankly, more Biblical. In Acts 2:10 when the Holy Spirit was moving, the people asked the evangelist questions. For example, when the jailer saw Paul delivered in the jail, he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" So whether we see the signs of God moving in signs and wonders or through sweat and tears, this raises the key questions.

In the '90s it is shocking for people to serve others. We go into the downtown areas and look for parking meters that are about to expire and feed them. We put a little marker on the windshield that basically says, "While you were gone, we fed the parking meter. If we can be of any other help to you, give us a call." We do leave at least a point of reference in most of our events so that if they want, they can call us back. We get a lot of calls that way.

A lady who owned a Mercedes was parked downtown. A leader in the arts community, she went out and found our ticket on her car and became so excited that she called the local 50,000 watt radio station, the most listened-to station in town, and she read our note on the air. The disc jockey got so excited he called me on the phone later in the day and asked if it was for real. When I said it was, he did not want to believe me. He asked, "Why do you do this?"

I said, "This is to show God's love in

a practical way." He said, "I'm going to come out and watch you because I do not believe you."

The next Saturday he went out with us while we did parking meters and windshield washings, and he went with the crew that did toilet cleaning in restaurants. We went in and asked the manager if we could wash their toilet for free. The managers stuttered around and then said, "Well, I guess you can clean our toilet." While our crew was cleaning the toilet, the D.J. interviewed the manager and asked, "What do you think of Christians who would wash your toilet to show you God's love in a practical way?" The best response came from an Italian restaurant: "I don't think this has been done since the days of Saint Francis. They are kind of like Monks and Nuns." This really gets their attention, and I believe this is the way the Lord went forth—on the right hand with power, signs, and wonders, and on the left hand, on our knees praying and serving.

*Dave: We are talking about a conspiracy of kindness. The word conspiracy means to bring together. It means to "inhale shared beliefs and exhale shared actions." That is a quote from Tal Brooke's Spiritual Counterfeits Project, when he did a study on the negative conspiracy. How much better that, as Christians, we conspire to go out on the streets and do the things that we would envision Jesus doing, not in a loud way, but in the out-of-way places, reaching out to the little people and demonstrating the power of the gospel in their lives? In an era when we see so much begging for money, how refreshing it is to see your simple approach. Now my question is, "Once you have reached out to these people, and they come to you, what do you do then?"*

**Steve:** Sunday morning is a safe place for non-Christians to come in and not be noticed. When we started our church, we had ten percent non-believers coming to our meetings and ninety percent Christians from other groups looking for a new

church. Our goal was to get that to a fifty-fifty split. I am happy to say that right now about sixty per cent of the people coming are non-churched. We have many 12-step people coming. We also have many I call ignorant New Agers who have the position that, "We do not much care what you believe as long as you are sincere." They are looking for a god of their own making. So they come in a variety of stages of confusion, brokenness, and need. We give a very simple altar call after each service to give people a chance to respond to Christ. **It is not unusual for as many as fifty people to ask Christ to come into their hearts on a Sunday morning. After that, we direct them toward a group, depending on their need.**

Also, there are some people in our groups who are not yet Christians. That does not bother us as long as they know that what they believe is not where we are at, but that is all right. We want them to get into an atmosphere where believers are living their lives, and it will be a matter of time until the people cave in to the call of the Holy Spirit.

We have recovery groups for people who are dealing with specific addictive issues in their lives, something similar to an AA group. We also have groups for friends and families of those who have addictive problems. For every dependent person there are supposed to be seven or eight codependents, so there are more of these types of groups than the recovery groups. We also have Bible studies at different levels to meet the needs of those who want spiritual growth in the Word. All of our groups have some Bible study in them, but there are those which are devoted strictly to an in-depth study of the Word.

We have what we call a "Genetic Kinship," which is a group of people who gather for basic, long term fellowship. It may go on for years, whereas, most of the other groups have a shorter term, depending on the needs. These kinship groups usually stay around ten people, so

they can build in-depth relationships and have the capacity to do effective prayer ministry. Shared group experiences are greatly diminished after ten members are in a group. We also have discipleship groups, some closed and some open, where there is a deeper level of accountability. Those groups will typically have a six month to a year duration period.

**Dave:** *Is this where your leadership development is taking place and coming up through the ranks?*

**Steve:** The leadership is coming through a variety of sources. We do regular training sessions. Every other month we have a training period that we do for the leaders of all these groups. Essentially, we look in the ranks of the existing groups to find the best apprentices and then pull them into the training. So there is some formal training, but it is also a matter of waiting for the cream to rise to the surface, looking for those coming early, staying late, and having the best attitudes, willing to pray and showing evidence that their heart is to serve the Lord.

We also have groups we call "Affinity Groups." These are bridge groups that go from the outside in. Probably most churches have numbers of couples where the woman is a committed Believer, and the husband is not. His line is that it is boring to go to church, and the church people think they are better than others, etc. Basically, he is describing a sub-culture, which is fairly accurate. Thus, we started the Affinity Groups to basically bridge the gap for those who are marginally or basically uncommitted to the faith. These are based on interests. For example, we have a group who rides motorcycles. They meet once or twice a month and ride together, and they do have prayer. I started a group for cyclists, and we will get as many as twenty people together for a two hour bike ride. Probably about a fourth of the people who come are uncommitted, so it is a way to build friendships in a

non-threatening environment. We also have a Gun Shooter's Fellowship. There are about a dozen different groups altogether. We are seeing people come to Christ through them.

**Dave:** *I can see that people can come to the Vineyard and find Christ in the everyday events of life. Whereas many churches have collapsed into audiences, what are the characteristics of your groups? Are they primarily leadership focused, or are people encouraged to share? If so, how do you see this carrying over to your meetings on Sundays?*

**Steve:** We want people to participate in our groups. We feel the evidence of a dying group is one person doing all the talking. There is no advantage to that kind of group. We feel so strongly about that, that we call our leaders facilitators. The facilitator is to identify what God is doing in the meeting. We have a plan and agenda, and that is the mark of a well-prepared leader. **But our bottom line value is that if the Holy Spirit does not come and energize the meeting and energize the individuals to share, whether it is a positive thing or a burden where the bottom is falling out of their lives, that is absolutely necessary for a healthy group.** A suburbanite living in a large home may seem to have it all together. But just beneath the surface, his life may be coming apart at the seams, and it is easy to believe your own press when you have the trappings on the outside. So he needs the single mom with two kids who are driving her crazy and with the rusted-out station wagon to balance him out and give him a reality check. Thus, we see it necessary that each part of the group comes with the capacity of freedom to share what the Lord is doing in their hearts.

I have been in small groups for the 18 years that I have been a Christian, and many times two or three at a time when I was helping to start new groups. **Without a doubt some of the**

best meetings have been those times when our agenda was intercepted by the sharing of the evening that became something very powerful. For example, one evening during a worship time, the Lord spoke to me very powerfully that we were not to do the planned agenda but to go out into the community and feed people. He even gave me a street that I was aware of that had some Section 8 housing on it, that we should go there and feed people. So at the end of worship, I said, "Let's go get some bags of groceries and go feed some people." They got into it and went down to the street and knocked on doors, asking if they needed food. Our people said that we wanted to show God's love in practical ways. At the end of the evening we got back together to tell stories.

The second door I knocked on was an elderly man in bed who turned out to be the actual driver for Bonnie and Clyde. He showed me a book written about him and told me of God's faithfulness to him. So I told the group later, "You will not believe who I met!" Their response was, "Well, you won't believe who we met!" They told us their stories. They had met a lady from Appalachia whose arm had been injured and had not been adequately taken care of. She had no feeling from her shoulder to her fingers, plus her face was drawn. She asked them to pray for her, which they agreed to do. In the middle of the prayer, the Lord spoke to them and said to tell her, "Here it comes!" No one was touching her, but she suddenly fell backward and was instantaneously healed of all the paralysis. And this group of ours was just ordinary people who had not done much of this ever before.

Do we see this happening on Sunday morning? With our current structure I would love to see more happening, but with the multiple services, which we are forced to have, we do not seem to have time for more than the regular worship, praying for a few people, and sharing a message.

The other churches we have planted have made this a priority at the beginning, and they are incorporating public sharing on Sunday morning. It is very exciting what is happening! In fact, to be honest, if I lived in Cincinnati and were looking for a church, I would go to one of the other churches because we are hearing exciting stories that challenge and whet appetites to get with a group of people where that kind of thing happens. But right now we are stuck in a place where I do not know how we could do it. I am open to re-examine the situation.

*Dave: How about a monthly celebration in a larger setting, or a bimonthly meeting where you can get the whole group together for a whole day of feasting? Your book, Conspiracy of Kindness, published by Vine Books is scheduled to be released in September, 1993.*

*Steve: We have an audio series and some articles that we could send to people. We are presently working on a video series.*

*Dave: Here is an exciting model that virtually any pastor can put into practice in virtually any setting!*

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## Christian Smith —Going to the Root

**Dave:** *Chris was born in Abington, Pennsylvania, and grew up in the Philadelphia area. He now lives in Salem, Massachusetts, where he is an assistant professor of sociology at Gordon College. He received his Master's and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He studied theology at the Divinity School at Harvard and has taken courses in theology at Gordon Conwell, at Andover Newton Theological School and also has a Bachelor's Degree from Gordon in 1983. He attended Wheaton College also. Chris has traveled to Africa on mission trips and to South and Central America plus England on sociological research. He has written an account of the history of the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, something that is continuing to grow. He is a member of the Salem Community Church, a network of house churches. He is married, with a son named Zachary.*

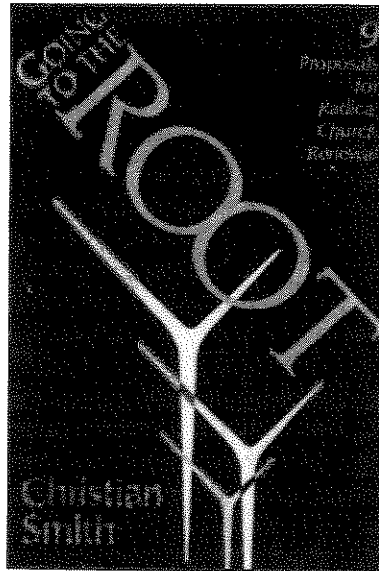
*Your book, Going to the Root, challenges people who are starting to see the importance of cell groups. You are saying to take it all the way back to the house meetings. Jim Wallace says, "Repairs in the road are useless if the road is heading in the wrong direction." Are we still, after 2,000 years, heading in the wrong direction?*

**Chris:** Speaking of churches in the United States, I believe that we are. Too much church renewal going on out there is just too superficial. It does not get to the root of the problem. There are too many people who want a better church, but they want something like they have now. The question is not, "How can I save my traditional church, but what does God want in the world today? What does the Kingdom of God demand?" My understanding of the Bible really calls us to dismantle a lot of programs and practices that a lot of people are very comfortable with.

**Dave:** *You said in your book, Building an Intentional Christian Community, "Christian community*

*is really not an option that a few fanatics might choose. God calls all believers to community."*

**Chris:** By community I do not mean communal living. I mean a quality of relationship between believers where people are really involved in each other's lives, where people know each other for real, where people's lives are really intertwined so that they can love each other, care for each other, pray for each other, challenge each other, admonish each other, and hold each other accountable. Community is a



quality of relationship that I believe the New Testament calls believers to. The problem is that in this culture we are so individualistic. Many believers do not see that individualism is not Biblical. That calls for people to relate differently to each other. Today in the United States the Church needs to get out of the rut and point the way.

**Dave:** *We need some visionaries to point the way and say this is what we found. Part of the problem Francis Schaeffer identified was that the Western culture in general tends to see the world in bits and pieces, fragmented pieces. You said that without a framework, without*

*a holistic view of life, we are going to continue to remain disconnected and dysfunctional in our homes. What is the glue that holds a Christian community together?*

**Chris:** The glue that holds it together, and the only glue, is a commitment on everyone's part to seek the Kingdom of God first. You cannot build a community on being great friends or liking each other all the time. Such a group allows the Kingdom of God to shape their lives. In this country, we are much more good Americans than good Christians. We have been shaped more by good American culture than by the Bible. On the contrary, we should conform to the New Testament by allowing the Bible to shape us. That will shake up the way we do Church these days.

**Dave:** *Where does that leave the clergy?*

**Chris:** The gifts that they have been given by the Holy Spirit will still be needed in the Church, as everyone should be exercising their gifts. I think it will be an open question as to whether the Church wants to pay their teachers. Clergy as we know them are very unbiblical. In the New Testament it is very different. They will not have the same job description. When the modern Church grasps this concept, the clergyman may be out looking for a normal job.

**Dave:** *In your book you talk about how to do without clergy. "In a church without clergy the structure facilitates the New Testament vision ministry by deprofessionalizing ministry where we can create space and a necessity for all of God's people to minister." On behalf of the clergy, it is not their fault. They are victims of a system.*

**Chris:** Oh, yes, it is not their fault. They are typically wonderful people. The problem is the system.

People grow up thinking that if they really want to do God's work, they have to become a minister or a priest, which is hogwash. God calls everyone in the Church the priesthood of all believers.

**Dave:** *Is there an unhealthy co-dependence between the pastors and the people in the pews?*

**Chris:** **Yes, even though the clergy want their parishioners to grow up and be healthy, there is a tension. On the other hand, far too many people do not want to exercise Church the way it ought to be done. They want to pay the pastor to do the work. This is unbiblical.**

**Dave:** *You say we need to have leaders based on character. We need to have more of an egalitarian system. Some might take exception with plurality of leadership. Are you suggesting a five-fold ministry?*

**Chris:** To do church without clergy is not to say get rid of all leadership. All human groups need leadership, those who take extra responsibility and who have vision. Church leadership needs to be plural and to be accountable to each other. Churches are not purely egalitarian, in that different people have different gifts. Some people are preachers, some are prophets, and some are servers. It is not to take leadership and chop their heads off or down to the size of everyone else. We should affirm leadership, we should recognize leadership for what it is. But that does not mean clergy.

**Dave:** *You feel that in a proper leadership structure, decisions can be made by unanimity and that the function of leadership is to seek God's decision on something rather than relying on an individual. That seems like a tough way to go, particularly with a large group of people.*

**Chris:** Unanimity means decision making by consensus rather than by coming down by the hierarchy. Consensus helps to build

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

communication and understanding and helps to teach us to listen. In practice there are not as many factions. It depends on what your values are. If you value unity, communication, and community, then consensus is a lot better. The size of a group has a definite impact on consensus.

**Dave:** *Jesus' message was a crowd thinner because it was a tough one that demanded a price.*

**Chris:** Tony Campolo said that sometimes revival comes when you get a lot of new people in the Church but when you also get a lot of old people out of the Church.

**Dave:** *On page 67, you say that the Bible has been misread concerning the view of women's place in the Church. The consequence of this mistaken view is to cripple half of the Body of Christ, excluding women from leadership. This fits well into the commitment to hierarchy, the clergy /laity dichotomy, and authority of ecclesiastical offices. You believe that now respectable and conservative scholars have re-studied the text in reconsidering the traditional view and that the Bible, rightly understood, teaches equality and freedom for women. That should bring a sigh of relief for women and probably scare some men. Church leadership has restricted women. You feel that it is time to bring that whole idea to an end?*

**Chris:** There is a lot of contention on this topic today. I have really come to believe that people who want to exclude women from leadership positions and ministry are misreading the Bible. They feel that on the face of what the Bible says, women should just be silent. But I really believe that is a misreading of the Bible. The Bible in its own terms shows women in places of leadership. There is a whole list of Bible scholars who have come to this persuasion on women in leadership.

What it comes down to is that everyone in the Church has gifts,

and it does not matter whether that person is male or female.

**Dave:** *Christian Smith's book, Going to the Root is published by Herald Press. He outlines nine proposals for radical church renewal.*

*You identify the three great obstacles to Sunday morning worship as the pews, the pulpit, and the programs.*

**Chris:** **Tear out the pews, tear out the pulpit, and turn them into firewood. Dump the programs. It is not that we do not need order in the Church, but we have gone overboard on order. We need to be flexible.**

Things like folding chairs contribute to flexibility, which can be put in a circle. In our church we have someone called a facilitator, not a worship leader, but someone who pays attention to where things are going and what time it is and suggests that maybe we should have a time of prayer. He does not dictate. He facilitates. The meeting is carried on by everyone who is there.

**Dave:** *The word is participate.*

**Chris:** Yes, the word is participation.

**Dave:** *How many people in your church get to share as in I Corinthians 14?*

**Chris:** **All our house churches get together every three weeks to celebrate. We have a routine that is flexible. Well over one-half of the people have some input as an individual whether it is prayer, a song, or a suggestion.**

**Dave:** *The true meaning of the word sermon is dialogue. The Latin word sermo indeed means dialogue.*

*Let's talk about the edifice complex. The Church is a caravan rather than a commissary. You point out that the Church has 250 billions of dollars in buildings. You ask, "Is this good stewardship alone?"*

*In your book you say, "Buildings witness to the immobility, inflexibility, lack of fellowship, pride, and class divisions of the modern church." Is there any justification for a building in your mind?*

**Chris:** I would not go that far. The New Testament does not say we should not have buildings. If we do go that route, the buildings should be open all week. The typical Church that is only open a few hours a week shows poor stewardship. We must remember that most people will never even enter our buildings. Buildings can be used well and thoughtfully and with good stewardship, but we still must realize that big buildings are big obstacles.

**Dave:** *You say, "With all the evidence, the burden of proof shifts to those who favor buildings rather than those who do not." What you are saying is that the shoe needs to go on the other foot. We could translate the Bible into 3,000 languages, feed 5 million starving children every day, start 75 Christian colleges in Eastern Europe and Russia, support three hundred Christian candidates running for office in the Senate, etc., etc."*

**Chris:** Just think what we could do for the Kingdom of God with billions of dollars, the money tied up in buildings!

**Dave:** *On page 102 you point out that God abandoned temples upon the birth of Christ. Jesus said, "The traditions of men are the one thing that limit the power of God." What started in living rooms and what started in informal settings has become something quite different. It says in Hebrews that God is shaking the foundations so that that which is true can remain and that which is not will not remain.*

*What we need to do is recover a view of a contrast culture versus a counter culture.*

**Chris:** One of the basic problems with Christianity in the United States is that far too many of us have become enculturated. We are much better Americans than we are good Christians. We are not to be against culture but a contrast. Today nobody ever asks why we live the way we do because basically the Christians live the way everybody else does. And, yes, people fragmentalize life. What we need to do is to see spirituality in all parts of life.

**Dave:** *You say that we have seen too much "conspicuous contentment." People need to see a quality of life. You said in your book that there has to be a balance in the house church between worship and justice. "God's goal is covenant relationship. If we come into covenant relationship and bring the culture into that, we will see a society flourishing. An institution's purpose needs to bridge across intergenerational perpetuation. We need to see the goals and purposes." What are some of the negatives and some of the positives that you see in institutions?*

**Chris:** Institutions help us to see that things that should happen do. They provide stability. The down side of that is that sometimes institutions do otherwise and violate the Word of God. Institutions need to move into the world and transform it. Hunger, starvation, and poverty are not God's will for a human being.

**Dave:** *A Gospel that brings not only redemption to individuals but also brings it into the business community, the arts, the media, etc?*

**Chris:** **Yes, the Gospel is holistic. It is not sliced up into little pieces. We are still suffering under the old conservative/liberal, evangelical, fundamentalist vs. the social gospel split. There is no reason to think in either/or. The Kingdom of God calls us to a new way of life and to be a part of transforming the world.**

**Dave:** *The Biblical ecclesiology of*

*today brings with it a preoccupation with a hyper-apocalyptic view of the world. David Koresh could be viewed as a part of the condition.*

**Chris:** Yes, the David Koresh, Branch Davidian incident reflects a lack of accountability. Most traditional churches are not Branch Davidian. However, in our churches we must cultivate the mentality that everyone is accountable.

**Dave:** *How do we get re-educated? In the atmosphere of the cell church can that happen?*

**Chris:** In our church we have theology workshops. Everyone participates, matures, and moves ahead together. We need to totally restructure theological education for the people of God. Seminary should not be just for an elite group of people.

**Dave:** *Augustine said, "We should have unity on the essentials, diversity in the non-essentials, and charity in all things." In John 17 unity is discussed.*

**Chris:** The way to work toward unity is, everyone participates. Everyone takes responsibility. We need to put aside forming our own identity by tearing other people down.

**Dave:** *In the end, grassroots ecumenicism grows out of a humility that comes from the realization that no one theological tradition holds the fullness of the truth.*

**Chris:** We need to learn from each other. On another subject, we used to be involved in publishing a magazine called *Voices in the Wilderness*. Now we are starting a newsletter that will network other house church ministries.

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## Graydon Snyder —Church Life Before Constantine

**Dave:** We are going to discuss the early Church, more specifically, what I was never told about the early Church. The author of *Church Life Before Constantine*, Graydon Snyder, is professor of New Testament at Chicago Theological Seminary and previously was professor of New Testament Studies at Bethany Seminary. He also has a brand new book out on First Corinthians subtitled, *A Faith Community Commentary*.

"At rare moments, a book appears that startles the imagination, causes one to rethink long-held 'truths,' and presents an alternative to one's understanding of past reality. Such a book, in my opinion, is *Church Life Before Constantine*. Snyder raises the question, *Do the writings of the intellectuals in early Christianity give us an adequate portrait of the church in their times?* The question has only to be asked for the obvious answer 'no' to be heard on our lips.

Do the intellectuals of any age tell it like it really is in the trenches?" These words were written by Robin Scroggs in the *Chicago Theological Register*.

Thanks for being with us to discuss some of the factual, archeological information found in your book. You mentioned in the preface that it took you about eighteen years to compile this study! Why is it that this information is not more widely understood or presented to the Church?

You said, for example, that for the first 200 years, the Christian and non-Christian cultures were largely indistinguishable from each other. Could you explain?

**Graydon:** I started by going to Rome in 1967 to study the relationship of Judaism to early Christianity in its art and architecture in its simplest forms. I was there about three months and discovered there was no such connection, or practically no

connection. Early Christianity did not have any symbols, art, inscription, or letter forms. It used the ones of Roman society. Consequently, though Christians existed, up until 180 A.D., you cannot see their inscriptions, arts, letters, or architecture. About 180 to 200, distinctively Christian symbols began to appear, like fish, anchors, palm branches, doves, good shepherds, and things of that nature. So that is about the beginning of what we call Christian archeology.

**Dave:** Do you see any message in that for us, or what is the importance of that information?



**Graydon:** You could argue several ways. You could argue that it took about 150 years for a culture to develop. You could also argue that they did not need it. I imagine the later argument will interest you more. They did not need their own churches or specific symbols and arts.

They simply used what they had. I speak of Christianity as a virus. It did not hit the culture head on, but it slowly and surely infected it.

Eventually that infection was noticeable, which says to me that Christianity can adapt to any culture. It does not have to be Greco-Roman, and you might even say that it was not good that it finally appeared.

**Dave:** You said, "It should not be forgotten that Christians, like Jews, met in open places, such as markets and halls. But, primarily, house churches seemed to be the heart of

the Christian faith. Assembling in a small kinship type community." This seems to be something of coming full circle today. You revealed in your book that prior to Constantine, there were no large, important churches built. Why don't you explain some of the evidence that supports that?

**Graydon:** In terms of the New Testament, you can find references to house churches in almost all the letters. Colossians mentions that the letter should be read in the next house church. Priscilla and Aquila seemed to have a house church. It is amazing to me that it started and kept on going, and no one changed that. So when the first church edifice appeared, it was really a house church, and to the best of my knowledge there were no church buildings before 300 or even 315 A.D. There were a couple in Italy that started about that time and one in Rome that started around 320 or 330. So somewhere in there, church buildings took on form, but I should point out that even when they did take form, there was no place for the clergy or no place to distinguish between the laity and clergy. There were no distinguishing marks.

**Dave:** In the book of Acts, we see Paul preaching at some of the Roman halls and spending time in a public settings. You said the Church had primarily two places to meet—one, in a public hall or market place, and the other, in the cemetery.

**Graydon:** I think they not only met in homes, but they soon met in the Roman pattern of meeting with families in the cemeteries. The Greeks and the Romans met with their relatives in the cemeteries where their deceased family members were buried. A little bit like some of our cemeteries, they built mausoleums where most of the family would be buried. They would meet there whenever a family member's death date should be

celebrated or maybe even their birth date. Evidently the Church met around significant people who had died. Beginning around 330, they began to build buildings on the cemetery spots, so the eating and time spent there would be more profitable. Actually those buildings were the forerunners of our churches. They looked exactly our churches—square on one end and round on the other. If a cross were put at the round end, you have the type of church that was built all over Europe. The cemetery church is the forerunner of the church building.

**Dave:** *There may be a hidden message in there for the Church in America.*

**Graydon:** I do not know if you want this information, but I tell my students that perhaps we should tear up our parking lots at church and put in a cemetery because most people are more interested in going to church where they know their family will stay and where their family before them had been.

**Dave:** *So the early Church met in public meeting places and the homes, but something insidious happened when we got our first Christian Emperor. In America we think it would be great to have a Christian leader who would endorse the Church. However, something happened when they began to build buildings. The warm community experienced in the home was lost.*

**Graydon:** My argument is that in about the fourth century—you can see it in the Confessions of Augustine—the Church decided it would not have the cemetery meetings any more. So they brought all of the meetings into the church in the city. At that point they had altars and oftentimes relics, and sort of combined everything together in one church. It was usually a large church and did not have the warmth of the family.

**Dave:** *So big buildings were going up all over the place. There arose a*

*new class in the Church, the clergy. If you did not go along with the State's ideas for the Church, it could be dangerous for you.*

**Graydon:** I think it was dangerous, but I will try to be kind. I do not think it was dangerous immediately. Around the seventh or eighth century, they started burning people at the stake, and then by the fourteenth or fifteenth century is when it really got dangerous. Major changes did occur. **You did have a clergy. You had an orthodoxy, so you could tell who was a heretic. Before Constantine, that was very difficult to do.** You had formal meetings in the large churches, so the nature of Christianity was altered. It took a while before people were called non-Christians.

**Dave:** *There are always those who are more intellectually oriented and those who are relational. Does it have to be an either/or, or can we blend and be both/and? On the one hand, you write about the Gnostics who tried to separate their lifestyle from the community, and, on the other hand, you have those who are all for community, but they have lost their love for sound doctrine and for seeing the continuity of God's purposes in history. How can these two areas work together, or can they?*

**Graydon:** When I made a statement that you cannot understand the modern Church through Karl Barth or Paul Tillich, I was speaking to this issue. We talk about distinguishing between the 80 and 20 per cent in the Church. Eighty per cent are more or less with it, while the 20 percent are thinking about it. I am not sure if that worked for the early Church, but you had people of great intellectual skill like Irenaeus, Tertullian, or Justin the Martyr. We have their writings, and, as historians, we assumed that we were understanding the Church. **It is when you first look at the house churches, the art, and symbols in the catacombs that you begin to realize that the local church was something else. They were the 80 per cent. I am**

not saying that they were not thoughtful, but I am saying that the intellectual part of the Church did not reflect what was going on with the rest of the Church. The Gnostics carried the intellectual part to the extreme.

**Dave:** *How has your book been received among fellow historians and archaeologists?*

**Graydon:** It has sold well. I have had nearly 40 reviews, which greatly surprised me. There is no other book in English like it, and except for a couple of exceptions, it has been well received. *Biblical Archaeology* has been very kind to it, and by and large has said that it is correct. You asked why this has not been out before. It is because most of the material is found in Rome and in journals not available in English. So unless you know European languages and understand something of what they are talking about, it is lost material. Thus, I have interpreted what I think it means. Not everyone agrees with me, and it has been fascinating to see who has become interested in it. It has been those groups interested in family and community life, the nonliturgical approach to church, and a simpler approach in general.

**Dave:** *Because something begins simple does not mean that it cannot develop and mature. There seems to be a move that says that we have made Christianity so professional, institutionalized, and complicated, if we are not careful, we will turn back into a cemetery. Do you see that a move toward the kind of more simplified Christianity which we see in the Book of Acts is the kind of thing we need, to see ourselves through the cultural changes we are confronted with in the next few decades?*

**Graydon:** Yes, I am sure of it. I believe the house church movement is on the move, and I would like to compare my data with yours. I just read an article that estimated that there are 100,000 small groups in the United States. I compare small

groups in the U.S.A. with base communities in Africa and South America. I understand there are an estimated 100,000 such base communities in South America. I think this type of small community that people can feel a part of, say what they wish, and not feel trapped by any kind of clericalism is on the upswing. I believe it will be the dominant faith system of Africa and that Africa will be the dominant continent in Christianity in fifty to one hundred years. I am sorry to be so radical, but I believe we are seeing quite a revolution.

**Dave:** *Let's talk about the Church in Corinth and your newest book, First Corinthians: Faith Community Commentary. You do not feel that we can understand certain writings of Paul's without first understanding the dynamics of Christian community.*

**Graydon:** That is exactly what I mean by the subtitle. My assumption is that the faith community of today sits down with the Bible in its center and talks about it. They come to understand it that way. The only way you can understand First Corinthians is to do that. The Corinthian Christians talked about the tradition of Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures, and that is how they came to understand what the faith was all about. If you approach it as too much of a scholar or as too much of a theologian, you will miss it because that is not what it is all about.

**Dave:** *You pointed out some facts about the community in Corinth that probably fits the demographics of some of our urban situations here in the United States as being multi-racial and all the problems that come from this mixture. But also to understand Corinthians, you must understand Paul. If Paul were to visit an old denominational church in Chicago, would he recognize it?*

**Graydon:** No I do not think so. I am not being critical. We toy with the idea of what would happen if Jesus

came back in the flesh and walked into our churches. Paul might recognize some of the sayings and some of the hymns, but I do not think he would recognize the architecture or symbols. He would ask if he started all this in chapter 14 (First Corinthians). "Is this what really happened?" And he might say, "I'm sorry I did that." I believe he would assume that in a faith community everyone should participate. In my denomination we have six or eight lay people who participate, but that is small compared to what it must have been in Corinth.

**Dave:** *From Constantine through the Reformation, you point out that there were those referred to as the heretics. You said, "Historically, heresy seldom derives its error or variation from a standard norm. So-called heretics can normally quote chapter and verse for their particular belief system just as the Christian Congregation in Corinth could quote Paul's words but possibly miss the intent." We need to come to some sort of unity in the Church because it seems to continue to divide and subdivide. As a theologian, you are committed to sound doctrine and understand the historical, cultural, and Biblical context as well as the language. Are we only dependent upon the grace and mercy of God to bring us together, or is there some missing element?*

**Graydon:** My argument was that the canon is made up of a variety of perspectives, and yet they are all in the same canon. So being canonical does not mean that I believe a certain thing. It means I am willing to enter into a community, a house church if you wish, where there are people who differ from me. What holds us together is the action of the Spirit, the caring, sharing, and worshipping together, even though we are different. Most heretics I have met can quote Scripture, but the question is not that it is there in Scripture, but can we come together and be at one with each other with a purpose and direction?

**Dave:** *Some will remind us that*

*even Satan can quote Scripture. I read through the Book of Acts recently and was impressed that when the Bereans saw something new, they went back to Scripture to prove it was so. Others will go to Scripture to prove something is wrong. So it depends on your emphasis. In talking about the Corinthians, you saw a Christian community that sometimes got a little "willy-nilly" on the edges, and Paul had to speak to them about keeping things in order.*

**Graydon:** Let me interrupt. That one part of what we believe, which stands with everything else we have dealt with, is the fact that there were at least four house churches in Corinth and maybe more. So I speak of the churches in Corinth.

**Dave:** *But in other places Paul writes to "the Church at . . . ." Does that mean that there was only one house church there, or did he mean that he considered all the different houses churches to form one particular church in that city?*

**Graydon:** I have puzzled over that also, and those of us interested in house churches believe that he meant "the house churches at . . . ."

**Dave:** *How do you envision the gathering that met, whenever they met? The Bible does not say a lot about what they actually did, but what it does say, we do not seem to be doing it today.*

**Graydon:** It is not a major issue as to when the Christians met, although when they first started, they did follow the Jewish pattern. So it becomes of interest to us when they made the shift. In Romans 14, it records that there were Christians who met on different days. So the day thing is there but probably not the most important thing to discuss at this moment. I do not know what time of the day they met. About 100 A.D. Pliny writes that they met early in the morning when the sun was coming up, and they met for quite awhile. I find that First Corinthians 14 is an amazing piece of

work and that all who came had something to share—a hymn, a prophecy, which I take as something from the tradition of Jesus, and probably a Hebrew Scripture, a tongue, and an interpretation. So you see I have already listed five. If you have a prayer and everyone shared and there were forty or fifty people, then you could easily have a maximum of over 300 things to share.

The issue is, how did they organize it because Paul said, "We have got to get this organized so only a few have a prophecy and only a few do a psalm and do it with order, not at the same time."

**Dave:** *There seems to be a dynamic tension between what Jim Rutz argues for, an open church where participation is encouraged, and yet, in order, so that you do not end up with a twelve-hour service. On the other hand, if a service was really exciting, maybe people would be willing to spend twelve hours.*

*As I survey what is going on in the current Church, there are two major trends. One is the recovery of the proper role of the believer in relation to the culture around him. Some refer to this as the proper role of a believer in the Kingdom of God and the rule of Christ, etc. The implication is that the believer is infecting the world's system and bringing it under the Lordship of Christ by being in it but not of it. The second major trend is the role of the believer in the local church. In America we have some serious problems with superstar and spectator Christianity leaving people feeling hollow and empty. The placing of the pastor on the pedestal has left everyone else feeling like they are left in the basement with nothing to meaningfully contribute. The whole movement toward cell groups and house churches is coming at a very crucial time in America's history when it is becoming a negative thing to be a Christian. You seem to carry a deep vision to see relational, covenantal community developed in the Church. What has to happen to see that developed in the Church?*

*Will it take active persecution of the Church?*

**Graydon:** *I come from a background that basically says that if you live as a true believer, you will not have to seek persecution. You will get it. I think there will be enough pressure. I do not see any end to the mainline churches losing members and financial support. I see other kinds of denominations growing up, and I also see house churches starting to develop. In my own church on the west side of Chicago, which is 90 percent Afro-American, it is not that different. That is, anyone can choose a hymn or offer a prayer, express need for prayer, and make an observation. That is four different ways we can participate now, and I see a future in this. I see this is what you stand for, and I agree. I think there will come an explosion from within, which will create these new communities, and the more formal communities will eventually collapse. I also think that many existing churches will discover this and adapt to it as quickly as they can.*

**Dave:** *So there is something to be said for a Reformation within the Church, but some who feel like they have gone as far as they can within the Church find they have to do something new and different. Thus people are forming house churches because they are not being fed and developed. It seems that the hottest thing now in the Church is the house church, and cell based ministry within the churches build on models like the church in Korea.*

*Some have taken this message of the Christian community to mean that we do not need formal leaders, but doesn't the Kingdom of God require some leadership and structure? That is a difficult balance, isn't it?*

**Graydon:** *In the Corinthian Church, there were many gifts of the Spirit, and I assume that means that the Church had to allow for their expressions and functions, such as teaching, etc. Just because the gift was there, does not mean that God*

*had to use it. He could draw on it when needed. As an example, our little church needed an electrician but did not have one. I am a teacher, but I learned to be an electrician and saw that as a gift of the Spirit. It is not so much what our particular skill is. It is what the community needs and God's ability to pull out of our midst what is needed. A man may have been the city clerk in the early Church, but that does not mean that he had that function within the local church. It is getting into the deeper meaning of the Lordship of Christ.*

**Dave:** *You have written that new movements cannot gain momentum without being articulate. For example, even the feminism movement of today must break with the old language and develop a new language.*

**Graydon:** *I am of the opinion that if you only refine the language, you are probably only reforming the structure. In order to get a new movement going, you have to have a new language, and one of the elements that comes into play is the speaking in tongues. I interpret the speaking in tongues, the deconstruction of the language of Paul and others, and the formation of a new language. So there comes a time when you are not articulate, but then you become articulate in a different way than you were before. Speaking in tongues sort of hangs there in between.*

**Dave:** *You wrote that for corporate worship, Paul asked that prophecy be the new language, not speaking in tongues with an indecipherable language. This, then, would become the central activity of the Spirit. You also wrote, "Rather than seeking after the Charismata, we should seek after the pneumatika, i.e., the spiritual gifts." Could you explain the difference for those who are not Greek scholars?*

**Graydon:** *I meant that the charismata, or gifts, are close to the skills I talked about, whereas the pneumatika, the activity of the*

Spirit, is to give yourself to the Spirit. My example of being an electrician was something like that. That is the community led need for some function as a teacher, apostle, or leader of some sort. We should keep our eyes on the pneumatic-directed gifts rather than particular skills.

**Dave:** *A moment ago we were discussing the rise of feminism. It appears that women are coming into their own in our society, owning the majority of assets, taking leadership in business and government, which I am not saying is negative. How has the Church historically treated women? Do you feel it has been a positive role, and is there a need for more opportunities of leadership and the expression of their gifts within the Church?*

**Graydon:** I have no doubt in my mind that the Corinthian Church had strong women leadership. There is no way to take chapter 11 than that women were prophesying and praying. The fact that Paul wanted them to put some cover on their head did not take away the fact that they were doing the same things that men were doing. I think the early Church was that way, and oddly enough so was the Gnostic Church for some years. Where it broke down was that the context in which these Churches were found, i. e., Asia Minor, demanded a more paternal system. At some point, like with Irenaeus, they put masculine leadership at the head. But it was not that way, and in my opinion does not need to be that way. I think the community of Jesus Christ can be destroyed by causes or is destroyed by causes. So we need to be careful about how we put a cause in front of a community. While I am in favor of open and free leadership, I am less optimistic about causes that tend to destroy the community we do have.

**Dave:** *How do we balance between being salt and light, having a Biblical worldview from what some accuse the Anabaptists of doing, leading us into pietism and non-involvement?*

**Graydon:** I do not think the Anabaptists were all that spiritual. They were very earthy. Nevertheless, those communities were persecuted during the Reformation and, therefore, went into hiding. Around 1930 or 1940, many of them came out and said that the world needs the Good News and the services of the Christians in practical ways such as food, supplies, and farm help. They really broke forth at that time.

I do not think that communities have to be ingrown. I admit that it has happened, but it does not have to. But, apart from the Anabaptist question, you asked a very difficult question. **Can a house church be open? Or as I put it, can it be porous? Can it stand for what it believes and yet at the same time let people go in and out?** I think maybe the Branch Davidians believed strongly in what they believed, but they were not porous. They did not let people go in and out. I believe a house church does that, and we have reached that point in many of our small groups.

**Dave:** *I would urge our readers and listeners to get ahold of your book. We as the Body of Christ, at the very least, need to be connected and covenantal with other believers if we are going to withstand the kinds of things coming in the future. Is that the way you see evangelism put forth, as a lifestyle?*

**Graydon:** I think it was primarily hospitality evangelism. The house churches were wide open. People invited their friends in. Paul certainly did preach openly in public places. Otherwise he would not have been so persecuted. But Christianity spread extraordinarily rapidly. It had something people wanted. It created family and homes throughout the Mediterranean world, and it spread because of that.

**Dave:** *What is the difference between the rural and urban churches? The action is going to be in the urban centers because cities are going to get bigger and bigger. The*

*reason the desire for Christian community is so strong is because there is no other form of community that is working in the urban areas.*

**Graydon:** People who get involved with cults are usually from vastly different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. That is the way the early Church was. Jews and Gentiles were trying to find a way to gather in faith community, perhaps for the first time in history. In Rome there was an even more complicated thing: 65 per cent of the people there were slaves from all over the Mediterranean with different languages, customs, ways of eating, and different celebration days.

However, Christianity made its headway with peoples who differed from each other. It made its least headway out in the countryside where everyone believed and thought alike. The word pagan comes from the word pagonos, which means country person. This was a person who could not make it in the Christian structure because they already had a family structure, which they thought was sufficient.

**Dave:** *I also understand that the word for sermon means dialogue, which of course is the opposite of what we mean by it today.*

*The civil government seems to be targeting religious cults, and they put fundamentalist Christians in that category. Do you see a time of persecution or a great revival coming?*

**Graydon:** I see government stepping in where religion used to be free. For example, buggies are outlawed in some states or are very heavily regulated. So yes, we have to be very careful and on our toes all the time.

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## Paul Sorenson -- Community Church of Joy

**Dave:** *The subject here is about the bottom-up movement in the Church. Paul, what is your position at Community Church of Joy?*

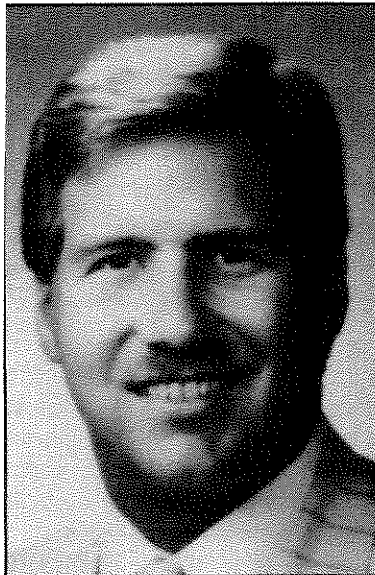
**Paul:** My title is Congregational Life but, my role is helps and equipper of people through small group ministry to assimilate people into the life of the congregation, volunteer groups, growth opportunities, and also caring for hurting people. I also help with general management of the Church.

I came from a background of many years of personal ministry before I became an ordained pastor. I saw the incredible impact I could have among youth and adults. I avoided being a pastor because I was afraid of what that might mean and the barriers that might create. But since I have been in the pastorate, I see myself as a coach, as one who equips the saints for ministry as Ephesians says. **That word equip in the Greek means, two things. First, it means to set the bone.** We find many people here at Church of Joy who come with broken bones. You can't tell somebody to go out and run if their bones are out of place. So we help people heal. It is a very healing congregation. Secondly, **equip means to help people find their place in the Body where their gifts and their ministries can flourish.** My role here is to help encourage that via being a coach and a cheerleader.

**Dave:** *I was talking with Lyman Coleman from Serendipity Ministry. He mentioned that when he thinks of a glowing report of the shift toward small groups, that he thought of Community Church of Joy, and he thought of you. Share your view of how people can be equipped through small groups and why the local church can be not only a celebration time on Sunday morning where we all gather, but also focused on meeting the needs in the small group.*

**Paul:** First of all, I will quickly mention that our Church has been what many would call a front door church. We are growing at a very rapid rate of about a thousand members a year. Sixty percent of those are from an unchurched background and have either little or no previous experience in a church.

And so a lot of people come as fresh new plants whose roots aren't very deep. When I came five years ago, we realized that to keep this place alive and growing, small groups were essential. So I started some Bible studies, thinking that everybody would flock to them. Of course, nobody came. Then I took a different tactic. I stepped back and started listening to the needs of our people, and through that with the help of Serendipity and Lyman Coleman, I realized that people really did want to be in small groups, that they really did want to grow, but they were afraid of the Bible. So we



started with where they were at. For me, leadership is not telling people they have to be where I am, but it's meeting them where they are at and then helping take them to where we want them to be. And so we began to develop groups on stress and family issues, things that they were concerned about that are Bible based but topical. And right away we had twenty groups going. It just mushroomed from there. We also found an incredible response to support groups. We offer groups for divorce recovery and grief and loss support. We provide space for some of the community based groups like AA and Koda (?). Then we have our own Christian 12-step groups where you can name the name of Christ and pray for each other. We have a group called HUG, healing and

understanding each other. It is our intensive care unit where hurting people can come. We find hundreds of people finding this is a safe place where I can heal and restore my faith. One woman had a background in physical and sexual abuse, and she said to me, "I never realized that I could heal within the church. I always thought it had to happen outside the church." Another woman, whose husband tragically died as a police officer, asked us to do the funeral for her. She had been hanging out on the fringes of the church for years and had never been involved. She came to our grief and loss group and really felt something warm and caring. She could talk about her grief. She stayed in that group for a year. I took her out for breakfast and asked how she was doing and she said it was wonderful, but, "Now what do I do?" I asked if she had ever thought of leading a group? She hadn't, but was willing, so now we have a second stage group for people who have been through the crisis of grief and are now ready to move on. That's how support groups have taken off here. It's amazing to see how people have risen to care and take leadership. Some of our small groups have thirty to fifty people in them now so that our problem is having enough space for them.

We have groups which meet in homes, which we call our growth groups. We have activity groups centered around sports activities. We have craft groups and prayer groups, and our youth department is built around small groups. That has been a great way for people who have been drawn to the faith to be nourished.

**Dave:** *How do you deal with what many people consider to be a leadership crisis in the midst of such rapid growth?*

**Paul:** This is a big challenge for us because so many of our people are new Christians. We have to groom our own leaders, and one way we do this is through a seminar called "The Circle Fulfillment Seminar." It's four 4-hour seminars that help people walk through the stages of Christian growth and ministry. 101 is called

"Discover Membership," which is our membership orientation. We talk about the faith, help them get to know each other, and build relationships in a seminar format. It's lots of fun, and when they complete that, they make a commitment to involvement and participation in the church. 201 is "Discover Maturity," where they learn about daily devotions, prayer life, tithing and giving of themselves, and we introduce them to all the classes, seminars, and growth opportunities at Community of Joy. Then they make a commitment to a small group, personal devotions, and tithing if they want. 301 is "Discover Ministry," wherein they do a gift survey and personalities -- their passions and interests and everything that helps goes into helping them serve in areas they are motivated in and enjoy. Through that seminar, we also interview each of them and help plug them into some kind of small group or ministry opportunity. After that, they can move on to 401, which is "Discover Leadership." This is where we talk about what it means to be a Christian leader. We provide mission opportunities right here in Phoenix, or Mexico or Russia, where they can make a commitment to mission involvement. So our people are moving through those four seminars gradually. This is one way we are raising up leaders. Once they complete that seminar, they are part of the circle of Eagles, which are people we see as our core group here in the congregation, it now numbers about 200. So this is one of the ways that leadership is emerging.

My philosophy of leadership is to give people enough encouragement in their area of giftedness and enough training to get started and then let them go out and come back with all kinds of questions. This is the way Jesus trained His disciples. This has been our model for small group training, pastoral care, and prayer ministry. We train them and let them go out and take some risks and then come back and talk about it.

**Dave:** *I was talking with Rich Gazowski author of "Just Add Water," and he came up with a little thing, "Ready, Shot, Aim" whereas most of what goes on in church leadership training is "ready, aim, aim, aim, aim. . . ." and people never*

*get out there. Some in education are looking at the concept of having young people serve as apprentices under a mentor instead of going through all the accumulation of head knowledge. And that seems to be the pattern in ministerial training as well. The next rank of church leaders may not focus on coming out of seminary as much as coming up through the ranks of the local church. What do you think?*

**Paul:** First of all, I appreciate my seminary background, which gave me a solid base, but I learned most of my ministry skills in the field before seminary so I was able to process seminary much better. One of the best things my seminary professor in pastoral care did was to send us out in a hospital to do pastoral care before he gave us any training. He said, "I want God to develop compassion in your heart for people before I train you in skills." And that is what happened. I think people are afraid to go out because they think they don't know enough. For example, in the field of evangelism, our best evangelists here at Community of Joy are not the long term Christians. Most Christians don't have many unchurched friends. Our best evangelist are our new Christians who are full of enthusiasm, who want to go out and tell all their friends and neighbors about what they are involved in. They invite people to come and see. So I believe there is a need for the practical experiences, but in the Acts of the Apostles, it says that they also devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and prayer, which provides a solid base for our ministries.

**Dave:** *Where do we go from here? Is your goal to start daughter churches or to build a larger building?*

**Paul:** Our plan is to develop a larger campus partly because our philosophy is what we call "entertainment evangelism," which is that through music and drama, people are drawn to Christ. There is much that can happen in a large group setting to help people hear the Gospel that can't happen in a small group. Luther said that ultimately the Church is where the Gospel is clearly proclaimed and heard. That is what we operate on. We provide

many different opportunities for people to hear the Gospel on Sunday. We don't say this is right for everybody, but this is how we feel God is directing us. At the same time we feel small groups are key to the infrastructure. However, we believe that the Baby Boomers like options. Not everyone likes small groups, whereas some thrive on it. Some want to hide in a large crowd for a time, and we respect this. I don't think the question is so much whether you are a mega or a meta church, or are you a church of small groups? The question is "Are you developing and training leaders and a system where they can multiply themselves so you aren't constantly trying to keep up with the growth?" Then I think you can grow to whatever size you want for your celebration time, so that it is exciting for people because they have the nourishment they need. We believe that we must grow large and small at the same time!

**Dave:** *So it's not either/or, but both/and.*

**Paul:** For us it is. We think there is a great benefit for the people we are reaching to have the large celebration. That's not where they find their nurture and care. That's where they will invite their friends. During the mid-week, we have a service where people are more free to share, and we teach them more about how to worship.

**Dave:** *Is there a time where people can share what God is doing in their lives, in an orderly way?*

**Paul:** Yes, not every week, but from time to time. They can share prayer requests and exciting things God is doing in their lives, and we incorporate that in our worship time. Some people enjoy it, some are more fearful of it, so we try to respect where people are at. We have other smaller gatherings where people are encouraged to share. I believe we can learn a lot from each other.

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## Jim Spillman -- The Omega Church

**Dave:** In the next segment we are going to join a man who I consider to be an elder statesman in the Body of Christ. His name, familiar to many of you, is Jim Spillman. An author of many books, Jim wrote *Omega Cometh*, which we will be focusing on here. Another of his books is *The Great Treasure Hunt*. His satirical work on the Church is entitled *Animal Church*. Jim has also done an audio tape series called *Parables of Light*. He and his wife Nancy have been involved in ministry for many years. He has a deep appreciation for the wisdom of God and for history.

When we talk about church, Jim is no stranger to churches. In fact, megachurch crowds, having preached and taught for large congregations such as Melodyland Christian Center in Anaheim, Calvary Temple in Denver, and Omega Fellowship in Santa Ana during the 70's and 80's. Over the past few years, he has really come to the conclusion that quantity does not often equate quality. These days he can be found as the pastor/teacher at the church in Apple Valley, "The Candlestick" on Promise Ranch, an 80-acre spread where he spends much of his time studying in an extensive library.

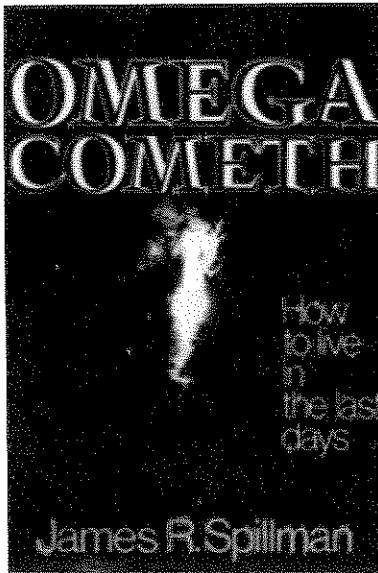
Jim has tremendous knowledge of the original language [of the New Testament] as a Greek scholar. Jim is a master of words. He has the ability to keep your mind focused, your heart moved, and your spirit soaring simultaneously.

**Jim:** It is our privilege to be with you, David. This is a big undertaking that you have decided to do on this subject. But I think it is time to do some big things for God, don't you?

**Dave:** Yes, we live in a time where we have simply got to hear what God is saying. We need to hear it directly from Him, but we also need to be open to the multitude of counselors. I am always impressed

with you when I talk with you, when I read your books, your ability to blend the logical, the historical analysis with your fantastic humor and emotion. It is a most colorful combination. I know you have traveled the world, ministering to giant crowds, being involved in television and radio, but now you have found a place of rest there at Promise Ranch.

We are talking on this series about the fact that God is restoring the Church. He is bringing back some of the dynamics of the early Church.



Let me pose this question to you, listener, and then we will let Jim answer it. Does God have a plan, a strategy for the last days Church that He is ready to unfold? Is there a renewing or a greening of the existing Church? Or is it something brand new and different? What do you think, Jim?

**Jim:** Of course, we have to answer the first question first. Does God have a plan? That is a rhetorical question. Of course God has a plan. We are not going to even conceive of a God, especially our God, the Ruler of all the universe and the Creator of all things, that He is "plan-less" here in these last days. Of course He has a plan. It is the same plan He

has always had. His plan is no different now than it was in Martin Luther's day or in the days of the first century apostles. His plan is no different now than it was in the time of Elijah or Abraham or even before Adam. God's alpha plan, that is His first and actually His only plan, shows His beginning with Adam, etc., and His plan is just the ending or the completing of the alpha plan.

The only plan God has ever had is Alpha/Omega. These days, (omega days) last days — being the last letter of the Greek alphabet — are just the culmination, the fulfilling of what God had prophesied, what God had planned, if you will. Isn't it true that all of God's plans are prophetic? All of His prophecies are always fulfilled, and today we are living in the fulfilling days. That is why it is a day unlike any other day. That is why it is a day full of so much. It is just an inundation, an overkill as it were. He is doing so much. He is completing so much. He is culminating so much of what has been started the last few thousand years. We are here bedazzled as we look upon the screen of reality.

Every day we are looking upon His multi-media manifestation of what He is culminating, and we are blessed enough to be part of it. So all we have to do is find our place in it, put on our 3-D goggles, and sit back and say, "God, bring it on. We're ready. We'll get involved. These days are unlike any other days, and we're just happy that you have chosen us to be in the omega days even more so than those wonderful alpha days."

**Dave:** Amen! I was just thinking about the big "hubbub" over the new technology for virtual reality. And really, that's the secular approach to the Christian's desire for spiritual reality. Let me read a little bit from your book *Omega Cometh*, "In the first century we saw the triumph of the spiritual. In the

twentieth century we are now experiencing the triumph of the secular. Elmer Towns in his book *WIs the Day of the Denomination Dead?* speaks of this." Then you quote a little bit from Towns book discussing that we need is, "to return to the original mystery of Christianity. Churches that can answer man's dilemma through the supernatural." In the first part of your book, you discuss the cultural revolution, how we've moved in many ways to a post-Christian society. The shift to what you call, "No deposit, no return."

Jim, we've seen the rise of the megachurch, (some believe the rise and the fall of the megachurch) and yet you believe that mega is not necessarily the model for omega. Could you explain?

Jim: We've got a ground zero antithesis here between what man thinks is important and what God thinks is important. The Bible teaches this in almost every verse. God believes that when He invests Himself in redemption and guidance and filling, etc., in a man, that He has put Himself totally IN the man and wants the man to respond totally to Him. One man manifests God's complete valuation system. That is, God doesn't feel that one thousand men over here on this property are more important than another man.

For instance, let's take Moses. Now, how many thousand men are you going to put into one church to make a Moses? Well, it so happens that God says that we all are as valuable as Moses or Elijah or any of the great men. Praise the Lord! And His value is put into one person. You can't make all value more value just by adding another person or a thousand persons or ten thousand persons. Now, man says, "Well, here is one man, but if we have a thousand men, that's a thousand times more." That isn't the case. Man is looking from his own subjective base, and God is looking from His all objective, subjective base. And He's saying, "I put all in one person." And He treats us as one person. I'm treated as one.

You're treated as one. He doesn't treat me as more valuable than you because I'm not. God knows that.

And so we are getting confused on the fact that if we have a whole bunch of Christians, say a ten thousand member church, it's a more valuable church, that God speaks through the pastor more at that church than he does at the one with ten people. That's not the case. We've got to watch out for this quantity thing. Mega means big. It's true that mega is not necessarily God's last day plan, which I think is omega man, a specially constructed man who is tricotomis and who is given a special mind, who is given a special influence on his body. And I think too, David, even though this is a little mystical, that God in this man, when it comes to his spirit side, is giving the man more latitude in the use, especially the manifested use of his spirit than he ever had in days gone by. I believe that man's spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, will be manifested in a longer, stronger way than ever before in Church history.

Dave: *Speaking of church history, I want to take a helicopter ride with you through history because I am sure it will be fun. In your chapter on the Omega man, you said that too many churches are preaching the steeple, and we need foundations. You said here, "While the house is in restoration, the basement has not been touched." Do you see that what's going on right now is a very foundational rebuilding time, and it's going to take really everybody, every man, every woman, seeing that God no longer dwells in tents? He doesn't even dwell in buildings. He dwells in the Body of Christ. You talk about the importance of discipline and of having our temple prepared for His presence. Could you speak to that for a moment?*

Jim: That was the chapter in *Omega Cometh* where I was dealing with man and his three parts—his mind, his spirit, and his body. I was dealing in that section with his body and that he has given us a marvelous

redemption for our bodies. What we have to remember is that when God saves us, He saves all three parts of us. Instantly we are born again, and our spirits are saved, if you will. Our minds are not saved or redeemed. Our minds are renewed after we have believed (we become believers), after we have become spirit-filled, Romans 12. We then have the option, the opportunity, for the renewal of the mind, and that's the salvation of the mind. Now the body, the other part of the tricotomis man will not be renewed as the mind is here. The body is not redeemed as the spirit is here and now, but the body will be replaced, that is, this mortal body, First Corinthians 15, will put on immortality. So the redemption of the body is replacement. Well what's going to happen between now and replacement time when Jesus returns? Do we have healing? Is that in the atonement? And it is. Do we have God dwelling within us? First Corinthians 3 and 6 declare that this is true, that our bodies now are the temple of the Holy Ghost. He's not talking about the Church corporate. He's talking about an individual person.

So we have the flesh problem, and Paul deals with that in Romans 7. He says, "Why do I do the things that I do, do, do?" He says, "Why do I do the things that I don't want to do?" That's the Apostle Paul speaking, and he's dealing with his flesh, and he then concludes that the spirit and the flesh are clashing. In fact, in the Galatian letter, he says the spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh lusts against the spirit. I like that concept, David, where he says the spirit lusts against the flesh. I love that! And he says, if we walk in the Spirit, we won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Here comes the discipline. Here comes my will to say, "No, I won't follow my fleshly desires, the boarder in the basement who's still there."

I received Christ as my Savior in 1950, and the Lord hasn't come back yet, and that boarder in the basement, that flesh is still there.

And I have to have a sign on that door to the basement that says, DISCIPLINE because if I let him out and let him do what the flesh wants to do, just like Paul, he'll do things that are not Godly. And he'll do things that I would be ashamed of. So I have to learn how to deal with the flesh.

Don't you think it's true that when we get together with the Church, and we have a problem, a Church fight -- you've heard of those things -- don't you think it's the flesh being let out of the basement that causes these fights? I think that's what it is. I don't think it's the spirit of the Christian, David. I don't think it's the mind of the Christian. I think it's the flesh that is let out, and then these fights start, and we see church splits.

*Dave: It does not demonstrate what Jesus said would be the one thing that the world would look at and know that Christianity is the truth, and that is that we would function as a Body and that we would love the Lord with our heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. It seems sometimes easier to love our unsaved neighbor than our neighbors in the Body of Christ.*

*When we are talking about church history, we're talking about something that Charles Merrill Smith in his History of the Church refers to as the "Pearly Gate Syndicate." Let's talk about "The Christian Corporation." Tell us some of the things that we have not been told forthrightly about Christianity and how we either collapsed into an audience, or we collapsed into a corporation and the restoration process that you see happening throughout history, maybe beginning before Constantine. Then when we started building these big edifice complexes you talk about, how the focus went astray, and maybe God is restoring back a focus on Himself and on the Body of Christ rather than big buildings and on a corporate structure.*

**Jim:** We, according to the Bible, are not going to have any of these great

big marvelous buildings such as the new Jerusalem Temple, etc., until the Lord returns. He never instructed us in His Word, Old Testament or New -- and I understand the construction of the Temple in the Old Testament. I understand why that was and why it was put there. It was a temporary thing. We all know that. But he never instructed us to build these great things for Him as a world evangelism project. He never instructed us in the New Covenant to build these massive buildings. The building He wanted to construct was the building of the temple, not the Old Testament temple, but the New Testament temple, which is according to First Corinthians, the body of a single Christian. So what we have when we have ten Christians together then is ten temples. A thousand, a thousand. This is what He wanted to do. He wanted to dwell in man like He dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament temple. The Old Testament was an adumbration, a foreshadowing of the New Testament.

The Old Testament Hebrews were not saved unto God because they had a temple and went to the Temple. We are saved unto God when He comes within us, and He establishes His living place to live within us, and we become temples of Him. But what happened is that after we got through the First Century, and on into the Second and Third Century, Christianity had pretty much been introduced to the then known world, especially the Roman side. The Romans had conquered the Greeks, and the Romans were ahead of the world and had made some monstrous empires. Really big. When Jesus was born, and Jesus was born under Roman tutelege as far as the world domination was concerned, the Romans continued to rule after Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and went to be with the Father. The Romans continued to rule after the first century, the second, on up into the third.

Now, finally then, we get to the place where the leader comes along

named Constantine. He said he had a dream. In this dream he saw a Cross, and he was supposed to conquer in the name of the Cross. Now if he had that dream, we don't know. Probably Constantine's wife didn't even know. We don't know. We just know that that is what was pervaded to us. Well, he then did successfully conquer. And he decided, "If I'm going to go to Church and be a Christian and say grace at meals and give to the Sunday school offering, since I'm the boss, I'm the Emperor, then everybody else is too." He just set it up.

Constantine also set up the idea that Sunday was to be the special day. He also set up the concept of the seven day week, (which I deal with this in my work, *The Eternal Sabbath*). It's interesting that that concept wasn't really around officially until he set it up. He of course set up Sunday as a special time. This was in direct retaliation to the Jew who had Saturday as a special time. And there is no doubt about when the Sabbath is. The Sabbath is Saturday, and Sunday is not the Sabbath but the day after the Sabbath.

When he set this up and said this is the day that everybody goes to church, then we had big time church business installed. The Roman Catholic Church dates back, they say, before that time. But actually, historically, this is the time they really became manifest in such a strong way and became the Catholic — which means general, it means "the whole world" — Church. And we come up through many, many years where the Catholic Church was the Christian Church. There wasn't any other church. There wasn't a Baptist church or a Methodist church. That wasn't until a long, long time later.

We went through the Middle Ages, and this happened, and that happened, and there were good Popes and leaders, and there were bad Popes and leaders. Finally there was a tremendous shake out needed in the 16th century when the

Reformation started, Martin Luther and Calvin and the boys. Remember, they were Catholics. All they wanted was to reform or purify the Roman Catholic Church. They didn't want to start the Lutheran church. They didn't want to start the Presbyterian church. They wanted to reform it. Well, the Catholic church didn't want them to reform it. So they became "the outside looking in."

We have at the same time in the Reformation a lot of what we call the grandchildren or the stepchildren of the Reformers. We have Mennos, the Mennonites, who came from them. The Anabaptists, who taught baptism, when you are older, so you know what you are doing instead of when you are a baby when you didn't know what you are doing. And so we have these kind of splinter groups starting, and finally it comes to a thing called Protestant and then we have Protestantism with all kinds of churches manifest. In our country today, everybody thinks we have Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, and that is the religion of our country. In a sense that's the truth. But what's happened, of course, in the Catholic church, in the Jewish synagogue, and in the Protestant church, which we now can say, "Well, at least we are 350-360 years old," is that we've got this corporation thing, this General Motors thing. We tried to put together "big biz." Well, "big biz" is never His "biz." And we've got the same problems today that Martin Luther and Calvin talked about way back in the 16th century.

The denomination is more of a hindrance than a help. Actually one of the counter balances of the denomination has been the megachurch. If the church was big enough on its own, on its own corner with enough money and its own people, they could stand against the denomination and be autonomous. You know, "call their own shots." Then we have the problem of the megachurch today, and it not being able to do what the church of the first century did. **There's no way**

that the pastor can go from house to house and have tea and cookies with everybody. He doesn't have that kind of time. So we end up with a once a week meeting, and we have a nice choir, a living Christmas tree at Christmas time. We have a Sunday school where we hope something happens. And it's just not working. The American brand of church is just like the Dow Jones averages. It's up and down, and mostly falling. Today people want something that will work. And that's why we're hearing so much about, "Well, let's have a cell group." Cell simply means a small group. Let's have a house group. Well, they did that in the first century. Why not return to it? Couldn't you have a hundred cells or house groups in a city and then meet together once a month or once every three months as a big meeting in the baseball stadium or something? You could, and we've got people talking about it. I know Jim Rutz is talking about it.

Some big churches are trying to divide up their congregations into cell or home groups. That's pretty hard. Once you've philosophically established "the big idea," the mega idea, it's pretty hard then to break it up into or small pieces. It's almost like taking a big block of granite and chipping it into small pieces. What do you have left? You have gravel. It's just not working so well.

So here we stand today in the greatest time of the work of God, and where are we going to work -- with the monolithic chunks of gravel that are put together or are we going to look for something different and something special in the work for God?

*Dave: A great helicopter ride there with you through history! That brings us up to the 20th century. We see the rise of media. We see the rise of the information age. You've said in your book, "Establishment seminaries were enlarged and their facilities lionized. (Holiness develops an I.Q.) Bible schools and Christian colleges spread like mononucleosis at a "love-in." Radio*

*becomes the ego extension of the small town preacher. The Christian star is born. Television later would come along and make him a superstar. All of this has left the world scratching their heads and saying, "Is this really Christianity? Is this really what it's about? The David Koreshes of the world who rise to some cultic, hyper-apocalyptic vision in which it involves pulling completely out of the world?" Part of it is that we tend to focus. It sounds like ever since Constantine, the clergy/laity division really went into high speed there. But there's really two classes of people. Verduin has gone so far as to say, "Essentially, they believed that the priests were given a new reproductive system in which they were the only ones who could really birth people into the Kingdom of God." The Reformers tried to solve this with the theology of the priesthood of all Believers but practically, it really has not been worked out. Do you see the whole Body of Christ being equipped to minister?*

**Jim:** I don't know, David. You talked about the media and everything being so visionalized and put before us so that we can see what is going on. For example, if there is a fire somewhere, we can immediately turn on a TV and watch it. It used to be that if anything happened in Russia, it would take three months to find out. But now we can get it in three minutes. Can't we do the same thing with the Body of Christ and actually see it working? I don't think we are now able to see the Body working as a body. If we are part of a finger, we may be able to see part of the bone, sinew, and nail and how it works; but I don't believe the little finger has the visual capacity to see the arm, the head, or the rest of the body.

I believe we are talking about an invisible Body in that regard, and only God sees what is going on. And just as well, for if we could see the whole Body, we might be so discouraged that we would consider suicide. So I don't think we are going

to see the Body manifest that way—and as far as the world being able to see the Body. The Christians can only see a portion of the Body, so I don't think that the world is to see the Body. The world is to see Christ in each temple.

I was at the car dealership today having the transmission of my brand new car worked on, and I let them see Christ at work in me. I was honest. I didn't get mad or threaten to sue the dealership. I was a noble person as I believe He wants me to be. I took my daughter to breakfast, and I treated the waitress as a person, not as a lowly servant. That I believe is Christ at work in me. Then there are times when I can actually share the message of redemption with people, and that is what the world needs to see.

Here again, if we understand that this is God's plan all the way, then we can understand that a mega church and its manifest ministry of a two or three hundred member choir and all is not the manifestation of the Body of Christ or even the plan of Christ. **It is a nice large meeting for the moment, and that's all. But if those people don't go out and manifest Jesus Christ individually and personally wherever they go, then we'll never see the world redeemed, or they will never see a real Christian.**

*Dave: Let's talk about what the Church should be. There seems to be primarily negative unity where most people know what the Church should not be, but when you then try to pin them down on what it should be, they don't seem so certain.*

**Jim:** That's called "lifeboat philosophy," where people are all seated around, looking at each other and saying, "Okay, this is what we're going to do because the stormy ocean is around us; and if we leave that circle, we are going to die." That is negative unity, and this is not what God has promised us.

*Dave: There is some value in this in that it brings us to the conclusion*

*that what we have isn't the best, so where do we go from here? Tell us something of the Omega church model that you write about in your book.*

**Jim:** The church, being a last day church, has to reflect God's original purpose and power, not something that has changed down through the years. Whether it is fadism or thinking that we are so brilliant, we have to have a different or better Gospel than they had when they first started. We must literally reflect God's original purpose and power. We have to manifest the wisdom of Proverbs, the inspiration of Psalms, the power of the Acts, the teaching of the Epistles, and the mystery of the Revelation. You give me a church like that, and I'll have a real church. This comes directly from the Word of God.

The character of the church is so important. Our character has to be pure and holy. We've seen so many problems with televangelists in recent years because we didn't have purity and holiness. Our message has to be simple in presentation but also profound in power and application. We have this method that is Scriptural and spiritual and coupled with the preparation that is comprehensive and extensive. When I say comprehensive, I mean it has to include everyone in the church. You can't have any pew sitters or, as they are referred to on TV, "couch potatoes." We have to get rid of the idea of the pew potato and his value of simply showing up every Sunday with his body and his offering. **The Body of Christ has to have an involvement in the work of Christ. If we have this, then it doesn't make any difference whether it is ten people in church or a hundred or even a church of one thousand, if it has the leadership to integrate all these people in a comprehensive way.**

We have to be realistic. The Church has to concern itself with the hungry and the thirsty, physically and spiritually. If we build buildings, then they should be practical and flexible, not just marvelous,

monstrous cathedrals with spires, that are not practical or flexible. I like the idea that the Mormons have had in building their stake churches, which was much like a gym. They would put up a basket hoop—and a pulpit for teaching on Sunday, which shows their flexibility and practicality. They also put away a year's supply of food, showing their concern for the physical as well as the spiritual. I like their idea of integrating the practical with the spiritual.

In too many of our churches we have not integrated the physical with the spiritual. Sometimes the spiritual gets so low that we end up with a real dead church. We are not in the era of the dead church, and we need the resurrection power that will be manifest in the individual sinner out in real life where "the rubber meets the road."

*Dave: It is difficult to integrate, to find the balance between being too legalistic and not being disciplined enough.*

**Jim:** Balance is the word. When I think of balance, I think of a teeter-totter, where the idea is to have as much weight on one end as the other. I don't know if the Gospel is built with the understanding of balance. I think God wants us to move into discipline and dedication that is completely leaned into Him. I think this is a key problem in the Church today, that in trying to balance everything, we have come up with a static, non-moving congregation. God wants us to be so completely involved in Him. Balance will not be a word we use, but instead, we will use the words like intensity, velocity, etc.

*Dave: I was thinking more of how the Church fears that the world will come in and infect it, instead of seeing that the Church is to go out and infect the world.*

**Jim:** Yes, the Church has decided to have its little meeting on the corner, and let the rest of the community, state, and country go to those who are not Christian -- what we think

of as the separation of Church and State. But what we read of in the Kingdom of God is that He is the King and is involved with all the rules and all the ruling and judgment, and it is Jesus Christ who is at the head of this. We cannot have our little church and our little devotional time apart from the understanding that we are to be involved in the ruling of the world. We have a lot of talk about the Kingdom, and there is little agreement on what it means, but I think for sure it means that we involve ourselves in more than just the concept of Sunday morning worship and what it involves. It is way past that.

**Dave:** *You talk about the Church as being a mobile church. Perhaps this is a good argument against large buildings and debts because you get nailed down to them. You have been involved in church planting and sending ministry teams to various places. There is a movement in which the Church is seen as more organic, much more home based, which allows men to participate, and I know in your church you open the floor and allow participation. Why don't you tell us about Candlestick Fellowship and how you integrate some of the models you lay out in Omega Cometh?*

**Jim:** It seems to me that the biggest problem for the Christian in America today is ignorance -- that we don't have the knowledge that we should have. Hosea talks about that. He says God's people are dying "for lack of knowledge." In the last part of that verse, which people rarely quote, it goes on to say, "Because you have rejected it, knowledge, I will reject you." God is simply saying that if you are going to remain ignorant, if you are going to remain without knowledge of Who I am and what I want to do, then I will reject you. And I believe that most American Christians in churches are in some mode of rejection, that God is not using them because they do not know His Word. They do not know His plan, and it is simply because they haven't sat

down to study, study, study, study, study. I'll tell you one thing, if you are going to be Jewish, you are going to be in a study mode from the time of circumcision, eight days old, right on through until the day you die. You will study the day before you die. So the Jews know more about their religion than Christians know about theirs because they are in a study mode. I am not saying that this is right. I'm just simply saying that they know what they are doing.

The reason the Jehovah's Witnesses are so effective door to door is that they know more about what they believe than the person they talk to at the door, and that includes most Christians. Here again, I am not saying that is right or wrong. I'm saying they know. We need to know. Our Church is built on knowing. God wants us to know. We recognize the Holy Spirit as our primary Rabbi, if you will, our primary Teacher, our primary Didactician. He's the One Who gives us the, "Oh, I see it! Oh, yes! That's it!" that only comes from study, from really digging into the Word. And that's what we do.

When I am teaching these folks every Sunday morning, I have questions for them to dig out of where they are, and those are teacher imposed questions. Those are the right questions for the right subject. Not only do they [also] have statements, they have affirmations. They have pieces of the puzzle to put together that they have to come up with. And when we have this (we call it dialogue), it all comes together with a great big pool of knowledge, which week by week we build on until we have a frame of reference that is very broad and very deep. And then we are able to handle the real tough questions and problems that we should be handling. Otherwise we are just too ignorant to do it. But when we have educated ourselves in the things of God, then we are able to understand the real tough questions and come up with a good answer.

**Dave:** *Yes, and beyond just the in-depth teaching and word studies*

*and digging into the original language in one of the greatest libraries in that part of California, you then get out and are actively involved in the community. Are you seeing leadership raised up in the Church that potentially could be planted and multiply the efforts that you are doing? It seems to me that we are coming into a time when we have got to multiply our efforts, not simply go with straight addition.*

**Jim:** We are seeing leadership built up to a certain extent. We are seeing God building character and knowledge into people, that when called upon to work in various places, they can do that. We have several instances where they have been called upon. I think what we are really dedicated to, **David, is dedicated to building big people and not a big church.** That really is what it's all about. We find that the dedication of a person is stronger as they are educated into the things of the Word of God. The dedication is built upon the education of the Word.

**Dave:** *Certainly discipling is an area that the Church is probably weakest on. It's, as you said, very broad but not too deep. I know you are committed.*

*Out there on Promise Ranch on the backside of Big Bear, you occasionally put on something you call Super School, which I have been through. It is a time of refreshing. It's a time of pastors unplugging their phones and their computers and digging in for a closer relationship with the Lord and a time of intense study with you. Are you still making those available a couple of times a year?*

**Jim:** Yes, we are. We are scheduling them according to my schedule. Of course I am very deeply involved in them and have to be. It is a seven day time where we ask the people -- we've had a lot of professional people, many doctors and psychiatrists and teachers and lawyers and pastors and just plain ol'



folks— we've had them come and dedicate themselves to this. What we have to fight, first of all, is that they came out of the Babylonian educational system, and they don't even know how to ask the right questions. Many times I will say at the beginning of the week, "I'm sorry. That's the wrong question." That really blows their minds because they thought they could have a wrong answer but not a wrong question. We go all the way back to the interrogative concept of the dialectic of Plato and so forth and show them how our Greek model of education through Babylon has perpetuated a bad form of thinking. It was that famous salesman, Zig Zigler, who talked about stinkin' thinkin'. We have that kind of thinking. How in the world are you going to teach the Bible and live a Christian life when you are dedicated to the philosophy of stinkin' thinkin'? Try to love your neighbor with stinkin' thinkin'. Try to apply the concepts of the Ten Commandments with stinkin' thinkin'. And so we teach them, really, how to think and what the mind is all about and what God has wanted and what God has designed the mind to be. So Super School is where you learn a lot, but the main thing you learn is how to think and how to find answers to the really important questions.

**Dave:** *Yes, and build some relationships that tend to go on as well. We didn't touch on that area. In the small fellowship there is an emphasis on relationship and really getting to know people and being able to bear one another's burdens, all these things that don't seem to be happening in the American corporation church.*

**Jim:** That's a simple one. Of course, you have to want to do it. It could be just you and your wife, and you don't have to have a relationship if you don't want it. It isn't just numbers. But mechanically, numbers (that is, small numbers) allow you to do it. I don't care, David, how big your church is or how small. There are only 24 hours in a day, and God isn't

going to change that. And so the smaller number will allow you to do that, if you have the *want* to do it and the *love* to do it. You can be highly successful in integrating yourself and your ministry into the lives of those people who come to your little church.

**Dave:** *Do you want to leave us with a closing thought? We are talking about how to reopen the Church. Where do we go from here in the restoration the Bride of Christ? It seems like we have put a lot of time clocks on the return of the Lord. Some of them have fallen through. Some of them have perpetuated an immaturity in the Church. And now there seems to be more of a focus on being the salt and light in the mean time. Let's be all that we can be in the Body of Christ. And He'll return somehow in His timing as the Church has made herself ready for His appearing.*

**Jim:** I think what we must do, David, is understand that we have taken the wrong philosophy of "churching" in our country, and we have made such a mess of it. We have gotten this idea, and I've perpetuated it for years, that we need to have a growing church, and the end of that is a big church. We need to have a big church to get people saved and then get them into the Church.

And that isn't at all that the Bible says! The whole concept in the Book of Acts of the Christians coming together was for the Christians to come together, not to bring the world or the non-Christians into their home meetings, but for the Christians to go into their home meetings so they could praise the Lord, pray, and worship in order to grow and manifest the things of God—because it is a moving of the Spirit of God in a Christian—in the sense of Christians coming together in their church rather than preaching John 3:16. We are to meet the world where the world is every day, Monday through Saturday, and we are to get them acquainted with Christ out there. That's why the

Lord said, "Go ye into all the world," starting with the next door neighbor -- not bringing them into church to get them born again or saved but to do that kind of redemptive work out there and then come in together as a church with your brothers and your sisters. We have to remember that that's what church is all about.

**How do we get it started?** Well, first of all, I look at Jim Spillman's life, and I want to be sure that I know Christ in a deep and manifest way; that I am pure in my intentions; that I have my whole heart to serve Him and I will do that; and I want to know all about the One Who loves me. I want to study His Word and know all about Him and all about what He wants me to be and what He wants me to do. And when I have done that, when I am to the place that I am satisfied that I have done those things, that I am being that man, then I want to look for another one who feels the same way. We want to come together. We want to pray together and praise the Lord together. And then we want to look for another one. God is going to bring those people into our fellowship one at a time, two at a time, whatever His way of keeping our fellowship may be all about. But it isn't to have singing Christmas trees and Sunday school contests of doubling your Sunday school. I did that years ago, and all the people flooded in and flooded out. It's Madison Avenue all again, not God.

But the fellowship of true Believers, the fellowship of the sheep—not the goats—can't have *Animal Church* (a book that I wrote). We can't have *Veterinary Fellowship Center*. We have to have a pure base. We must come in, fellowship together, worship together, and go out in power, not out in confusion or division.

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## Paul Stevens —*Liberating the Laity*

**Dave:** We are going to discuss how to liberate the laity, how to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Paul Stevens teaches at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia.

His books on marriage include, *Marriage Spirituality, Married for Good, and Getting Ready for a Great Marriage*. His books for equipping the saints are: *The Equipper's Guide to Every Member Ministry, The Equipping Pastor's Systems Approach, and Liberating the Laity*. When do you do all this writing?

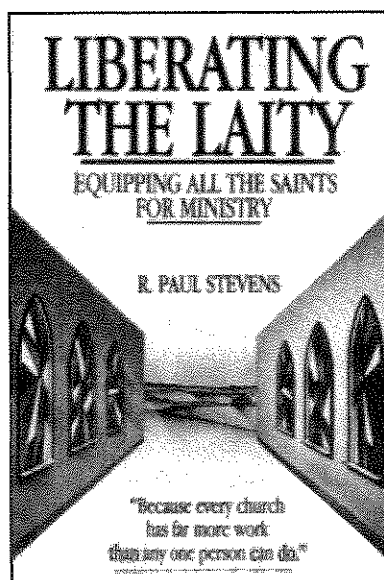
**Paul:** I never started writing until I was 46 years of age. My passion goes a long time back to my days as an undergraduate in the Master Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, when I discovered in Ephesians 4:11-12 that God gave pastors/teachers not to do the ministry but to equip the saints to do the ministry. I spent all those years thinking and reflecting and trying to implement that wonderful vision. Quite a few years ago George Malone was writing a book on those controversial gifts. He asked me to write a chapter for his book on spiritual gifts about equipping. Writing came because I had a passion for the subject. It went very well.

Then we decided to write the book *Liberating the Laity*. We outlined the book with me doing half of the chapters and him half. I got going on this and just loved it. Then my friend got very ill and told me he was going to be in bed for three more months. I told him I already had his half of the book written. So that is how the book was written.

**Dave:** An important book it is. Let me read from the back cover of the book: "Every church has far more work than any one person can do. Even a team of professionals is not enough. The New Testament solution is for every member to be a minister." The priesthood of all believers was restored in the Reformation, at least theologically. Your book goes on to say, "It's the day for radical transformation of the whole people of God into a ministering people. Nothing short of that will restore

the Church to its pioneering role in the Kingdom of God."

**Paul:** First of all, the Reformation didn't intend fully to liberate the laity. The concern of the Reformers was primarily in the area of salvation—without giving sufficient attention to the ecclesiology (that's the way in which the Church functions) to implement the vision they had of every member ministry. And some other things happened. The priest got replaced with a preacher, and that led to another kind of clericalism. So I think there is an unfinished Reformation. We



have a tremendous debt that we owe to the Reformers, the Magisterial Reformers, but there is an unfinished job. I believe God is stirring His Church in this decade to finish that job and accomplish the full liberation of the laity as a priestly people, a gifted people, an empowered people, and a servant people.

**Dave:** You say that the contemporary Church seems like a house wired for electricity with the main switch shut off. People are geared up, they have been sitting in pews, taking it all in, and now there is something of a sovereign move of God to move them into the rank and file, to get them out there on the front lines.

**Paul:** It started with this discovery,

as a student, of Ephesians 4:11-12, that pastors/teachers were primarily to be assessed not on their solo superstar abilities, but rather on how effectively they mobilized, implemented, liberated, and empowered all of God's people for ministry in the world as well as in the Church. Most pastors are assessed on the basis of their solo performance rather than on their equipping performance and their equipping orientation. So I started moving in that direction and began to prepare myself to be a pastor. But at my ordination council, I said to the council, "I have a strong sense of God's call to be a servant of God's Word and to equip the people of God for ministry, but I have no sense of God's call to be a professional minister in the sense that I will spend the rest of my life earning my living by the gospel. It would be an enormous privilege if that were the case, and I will accept it if that is right." The council was divided. The lay people loved it because they knew that someone understood that they could be called to ministry even though they didn't earn their living by it. Some of the clergy were threatened by it. I was actually ordained by a split vote, not realizing that prophetically speaking I would one day actually earn my living by hammering nails and cutting pieces of wood as a carpenter in order to plant a new church! And then I entered experientially into the ordinary lay person's life for five years. Out of that came *Liberating the Laity*.

**Dave:** You talk about the difference in the meaning of the word *kleros* and *laos*, the latter, *laos* is usually referred to as the ignorant or lay person. The Greek word actually means "the whole people of God."

**Paul:** The Greek word for the people, *laos*, is never used to describe the people apart from their pastor and their leaders, but it's all the people of God. So in I Peter 2:9-11 it says, "Once we were not a laity. Once we were not a people. We had no identity. But now we are the laity of God, the people of God."

So a pastor can't rise to any higher honor in this world. No matter how

many doctorates a pastor gets and the title *Reverend*, nothing could be higher than the honor of being a member of God's laity. It's a universal term for all the people of God.

The word *kleros* is used three times in the New Testament, and the term from which we get the English word *cleric* or *clergy* means, "the privilege of being an inheritance or having an inheritance, being appointed, being selected." The word is universally used for all the people of God and not just the leaders.

So if you walk into the Church today, you have two kinds of people. You have laity, and you have clergy. But if you walk into the New Testament, what you see is one people, *laos*. And within that one people there are leaders, but the leaders are never called *clergy* because they are lay people too. But they serve the people in every way that servant leaders can to empower them to fulfill God's purposes in the world. So we have a situation now where we have to recover the Biblical emphasis on one people, clergy, and laity, as we understand those words. We need to become one people, serving each other and serving God together.

That means that, Biblically speaking, the whole Church is really clergy, appointed by God and given the inheritance of the Spirit. God treats us as His inheritance, and yet the whole Church has no lay people in the usual sense of the word: second class, untrained, and unequipped. So it's quite a turn in the use of those words and will take a long time for us to change the way we speak about clergy and laity.

In the year 95 A.D. was the first reference to *laity* in any Christian literature, not in the New Testament at all, of course. But Clement of Rome was the first to actually use the word *layman* in the deprecatory and down-putting sense of second class and not quite as good as the clergy.

Dave: Then it moved into warp speed under Constantine.

Paul: Right from the end of the third century on, we have major problems. The Reformation partially recovered the Biblical emphasis, but I think

we've got to bring that Reformation under God, and the Holy Spirit is more concerned about this than we are. God is really concerned to liberate His people. Our generation has the special opportunity to bring it to some kind of fulfillment.

Dave: In chapter two you discuss the abolition of laity, "Biblical Foundations." You quote George Bernard Shaw, who said, "Every profession is a conspiracy against the laity." You say that what is needed is not primarily a program but an environment for abolishing the laity. What do you mean?

Paul: One of my major concerns in all three books on liberating the laity is that there needs to be something more than a programmatic answer. The programs are generally generated in a single congregation and fit a particular cultural context and are not generally replicatable—you can't take them to another church and work them the same way. So what's more important than trying to develop programs, which we pass around to different churches is to understand what inhibits lay ministry in a congregation and in society and what empowers and what liberates laity. We have discovered by both research and observation that environmental factors are more significant in the forming of people in families and the forming of people in local congregations than programmatic factors.

Let's say that a church has a program for equipping lay pastors. But the atmosphere of the church is so highly professionalized that neither the pastor really believes that lay people can do serious pastoral care nor do the people themselves want what they perceive to be a non-professional when they are in the hospital or in crisis. When they are in crisis, the senior pastor must come and see them and do whatever senior pastor does. So the environment of the church can actually counteract the program. Here's a church that may be talking lay ministry. It may have a sign out front that says, "We believe in lay pastoral care," and yet the environment will win out. Culture is the technical word we use for how an organization expresses its values and

beliefs. When the culture and the program collide, the culture will win every time.

Thus, the equipping pastor, as I say in my third book, *The Equipping Pastor*, has to be a feeder of the culture of his or her congregation, so that lay people just thrive. They pick up the message from the symbols, the cues, and the ways in which people are treated. Who gets recognition? All these things are powerful statements. The non-verbal statements are more effective than the words that are said. You can have a pastor saying, "We believe in an every-person ministry." He could say it every Sunday, and yet the people don't really get the message in that culture and from the message of the church.

Dave: You are talking about bringing into harmony our words and our actions—an integrity that speaks more than just talk.

Paul: That gets at the possible threat to pastors with the idea of liberating the laity. I think pastors are, by and large, overworked. Non-pastoral laity, by and large, are not unemployed but under-employed. They feel they are being given busy work to do in the church but don't get their teeth really into ministry. Now if we could possibly bring together these overworked pastors and under-employed lay persons in what I would call a gracious conspiracy to work together to liberate the laity, we could really accomplish something. One of the keys to that, I think, is for the pastor to pastor the church as a whole and not simply a small group or a select group of disciples. The pastor should work to equip the Church in its structure, its environment, its priorities, its mission into the headship of Christ, etc., so that the Church will equip the saints.

In other words, people would just thrive in mission and ministry if the whole church is becoming a healthy church, growing up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So there is a kind of paradox in that. I think the most direct way to equip the Saints is not to equip individual Saints, but to work with the whole, the body life, what I call in my third book, the system, the systemic life of the Church. That

should result not only in ministry in the Church (the first four chapters of *The Equipper's Guide* concern four aspects of equipping people for in-congregational ministry, such as worship leadership, lay preachers, small group ministry, and lay pastors and care givers) but also in equipping people for the dispersed life of the Church—worker-priests in the market place, the neighborhood evangelists, skilled marriage builders and justice workers in society. I see the Church as a rhythm of gathering in dispersion, so we gather like the blood gathers in the heart and lungs for oxygenation and cleansing and then is pumped out to every part of the body to fight disease and carry hormones and enzymes and nutrients and fight disease. In the process [it] gets dirty and tired and has to come back for oxygen and cleansing. So you can never take a still picture of a Church. You can only take a motion picture or a video tape or an angiogram. It's like a pumping heart. **The primary ministry of the people of God is not in the Church but in the world.**

**Dave:** *My observation is that we are in the throes of a culture crisis, starting with the family, the local church, the free market, and then lastly civil government. When we start talking about this, many people think of the Church as a democracy. Others think of it as egalitarianism or a monarchy with the pastor at the head. You argue that it's more of a theocracy, which in spiritual context will work, but when we start to work it out in a culture, obviously in a pluralistic society, we are not going to be able to impose a theocracy. Why don't you explain your view of the Church and how it should be structured? You argue that it is more of a theocracy and the head is Christ alone. You say that there is no indication that Scripture suggests headship of church leaders on a local basis, and yet most people look to their pastor as the head.*

**Paul:** I think that is a very serious problem because it implies that the head is disconnected from the Body, that Christ is in heaven reigning but has no direct influence on the Church. So you have a delegated human leadership with pastor and the elders or whoever who are intermediaries between the Head,

Christ in heaven, and the people. The result of that is that people are not in direct contact with the Lord for themselves, which is our enormous privilege under the new covenant that each person can actually relate to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit for themselves. And if that is true, then the Church is not the corpse of Christ because Christ is not dead and neither is it the body of Christians. That is, people come together to worship and discuss Christian things and live the Christian life. That's a body of Christians, but it is the Body of Christ. That changes our whole philosophy and practice of Church leadership. It means that **the pastor and the pastoral team and the elders or whatever are not the leaders of the Church ultimately. They are equipping persons and leaders who facilitate the Headship of Jesus, and their ultimate goal has to be to get people to respond to the leadership in that people.** One way I have of putting this, I actually got it from a family systems therapist, who said that in her work she is not the leader of the people when she counsels families because she finds that problems that emerge in a family life are often systemic. They relate to the life of the family itself and not just the individual in the family. She said, "I'm not the leader of the people. I'm the leader of the process." And so I said, "That's exactly what I mean by the equipping pastor." The equipping pastor has strong leadership to give, not a wimpy kind of person at all. But she or he is not the leader of the people. She or he is the leader of the process whereby the people get in touch with the Head for themselves and discern the Lord's sovereign plan and purpose for that individual congregation and its life together and its mission in society. That's a big challenge, but that's the way we have to move. It's a different kind of society from a simple democracy where one vote means you find the will of God by the majority. I'm not against democratic church government. I'm not against Episcopal or Congregational or Presbyterian. I think all forms of church polity lend themselves to submission to the Biblical norm, which is Jesus as the Head of the Church.

**Dave:** *What about the talk among many leadership circles of the importance of the restoration of five-fold ministry? Some have identified that we have really been functioning with a one- or two-fold ministry over the last several hundred years at least, and now there is something of a fresh understanding of the role of the apostolic ministry, the prophetic ministry. Some of our brethren would argue that these are not relevant today in this dispensation. Others maintain that God is restoring the Church back to a full five-fold ministry. Speak to that.*

**Paul:** I'm not sure that I can speak to that as deeply as you might wish. My reading of the New Testament is that the apostles in the primary sense with which Paul speaks of himself as an eyewitness of Christ, born out of due time, but nevertheless taking his place with Peter, James, and John as genuine eyewitnesses of the resurrection, that that form of apostleship is not even possible today because their witness to Christ is now enshrined in the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament. However, **I am not persuaded, as some people are, that there are no apostles today. There are people with an apostolic ministry who have cross-cultural, missionary oversight, pioneers in new works. These people have an apostolic type ministry. We are blessed by them.** Every denomination has somebody, several people, and should have many people like that. New parachurch movements are generally formed by someone who has apostolic type gifts. I think it's very dangerous to call them apostles. And when people start to call themselves apostles or allow others to call them apostles, I think it caters to something that is very dangerous today in the Church. But having said that, I'm thrilled that God doesn't seem to pull back from the Church anything that would be edifying for that Church for accomplishing its mission in society.

We don't have prophets in the Old Testament sense today because we now have the Scriptures. And we don't need prophets in that same sense. But we do need people who speak with immediacy from the Scripture or words that are of immediate relevance to people or

congregations, as Paul says in I Corinthians 14:3, for encouragement, upbuilding, and comfort, not for, "I've got some secret information on you that you don't know that I know about you. If you will just admit it, God will deal with you." That's a terrible abuse of prophecy. Prophecy is immediate speech from God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit consistent with Scripture that is encouraging to the people of God and upbuilding.

I have seen many examples of this, but it's not prophets like the Old Testament prophets, and it may not even be like prophets in the very first stage of the Church when we didn't have New Testament Scriptures. There was only the oral tradition, witnessing to the resurrection of Christ. I find myself saying, "There's something in that restoration movement, but there's also something in my opinion dangerous, a kind of recovering of something that we are not supposed to recover because the Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth of Christ through all history." I prefer not to use the word *dispensation* for that because Biblically I find myself primarily thinking there are two dispensations, B.C. and A.D. That's before Christ under the old covenant, and now these last days have come. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, fulfilling Joel's prophecy. We're now in the next dispensation, which is the new covenant.

**Dave:** *You have a chapter in your book on the theology of equipping laity, the ministry of work, and equipping for missions. You then begin talking about strategy. You talk about six ways to beat the sole ministry trap. You build a case for voluntary clergy. Talk about the strategy on how to make this transition to this new type of equipped laity. Do you think there is really any other option for fulfilling the Great Commission?*

**Paul:** Let's talk about the second part of your question, which is, "Can we fulfill the Great Commission without an empowered and equipped laity?" The answer is, "No!" We will never reach the world by sending a sufficient number of fully theologically trained and financially supported missionaries

throughout the world. Only the release of all the people of God, every member, being light and salt and a witness to Christ wherever God has sovereignly placed them can reach the world. Just think of where all God's people are this day of the week rather than on a Sunday, seeded into the world in ways that you could never send missionaries. And if they can be empowered, trained, and equipped by their local congregations; if local churches became mission stations instead of whatever they are; if they became places where people gained the opportunity to be refreshed in their spirit, to be Biblically taught and then to be sent out as missionaries into their homes and neighborhoods and work places, that's what will accomplish the Great Commission.

The first part of your question was, "Where do you start with your pastor?" It depends on your situation. Most churches are not ready for radical change and won't change until they become convinced by God that change is what God wants. I encourage pastors to teach for a year first. Teach Ephesians. Teach giftedness. Teach every member ministry until the people are demanding change. You can't suddenly go to a congregation and say, "I've been reading Paul Stevens' book, and I'm convinced now that I only have one gift for the ministry, and you thought I had everything. So I'm just not going to visit anybody pastorally any more because I don't think that's my gift. And I'm not going to do administration because that's not my gift either."

That's not the way to start. You start by loving the people and loving God's Word and working with the people to understand what God is really saying in His Scripture, working with the leadership groups, asking them to tell the pastor to give feedback on how in this particular church the pastor's gifts and ministry are emerging, what they are strong in and what they are weak in. That gives them insight and discernment that the pastor cannot possibly embody all the charismatic gifts of the spirit. In one human being, he can't be a preacher, teacher, pastor, administrator, helper, wisdom, knowledge and everything all wrapped up in one person, "the one

person band syndrome." I have a very simple proposition that what Jesus wants done in a local church, He will provide the gifts for. We don't even have to go out and hire them from outside the congregation. Generally, God provides within a congregation the gifting and talent that is needed to do what He wants that congregation to do. The gift mix is one of the signs of that.

**Dave:** *Jim Rutz puts forth in his book the concept of beginning to implement open worship, open sharing, open ministry. In the context of the Sunday once-a-week gathering where the whole Church comes together, do you think this is one of the ways we can begin to phase in toward the goal of equipping and releasing people so that everybody can participate rather than remain a spectator?*

**Paul:** Yes, it's the tip of the iceberg. It's a very important thing to do, to model in the gathered life of the Church the every member ministry we want to see. However, unfortunately it can just be modeling the gathered life of the Church and not relating people to their everyday life. Open worship and that freedom of sharing convictions and discoveries from God have to begin to relate to what people are doing Monday through Saturday. For example, I believe a church could be substantially changed in its culture if for 52 Sundays of the year the pastor interviewed a different member every week and simply asked the questions: "What do you do for a living? What are the issues you face in your daily work? How does your faith make a difference?" And then ask, "How would you like us to pray for you in your ministry in the work place?"

By the end of that year, people would begin to see that ministry isn't just what we do in the Church, and it's not just what the pastor does, but it's what we do all week long as we love and serve God in the entirety of our lives.

For more information:

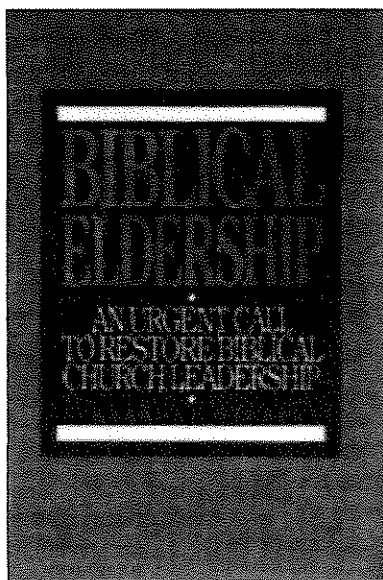
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## Alexander Strauch — *Biblical Eldership*

**Dave:** *Alexander is a graduate of Denver Seminary and has been involved in a plurality of Biblical eldership at Littleton Bible Chapel in Littleton, Colorado. He has authored several important books, but we are going to focus on the discussion of Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Leadership, published by Lewis and Ross, Littleton, Colorado, with a study guide. He has also written about using the home for Christ—what the New Testament teaches about hospitality. His new book is entitled The New Testament Deacon: The New Testament Minister of Mercy.*

*I was reading another book you wrote about agape leadership, Lessons in the Spiritual Leadership of R. C. Chapman, who Charles Spurgeon said was the saintliest man he had ever known. You wrote, "Across all denominational barriers, religious leaders agree that the crucial problem facing the Church today is the crisis of integrity. Power struggles and divisions are the norm, not the exception. All too often God's work becomes a matter of ego, a competitive game, a ladder to success in the big business of religion." You also point out a quote from Paul Billheimer who said, "The local church may be viewed as a spiritual workshop for the development of agape love. Thus, the stresses and strains of spiritual fellowship offer the ideal situation for the testing and maturing of love." As we approach the subject of biblical eldership and what God is doing in the Church today, we see some major shifts going on. In many ways the superstar Christianity is collapsing all around us. We find as Chapman wrote, "In the reform of the Church of God, we must always begin with self reform. Schism and division will increase so long as we begin with reforming others. Wisdom is only with the lowly." Begin with introductory comments of what you see happening.*

**Alex:** *I think the first thing Biblical Christians have to deal with is the Bible. What I am finding as I read is that there are many statements being made and things being done that have no connection whatsoever with the Bible. In fact, they are actually contrary to the Bible. When you start with Jesus Christ, the Author and Founder of the Church, He emphasized love, humility, and faith in Him. I believe the structure of the Church should harmonize with and promote the very nature of the Church. That is why, when you start with Acts*



*and Paul's first missionary journey, they established a form of government and a structure for the Church that harmonized with the teaching of Jesus that would promote His teaching. Before He left the earth, He commanded that we are to love one another with the same quality of self-sacrificing love that I have shown to you. And I believe that Paul and the apostles reached into the Old Testament and took from Israel a form of government that is ancient and very fair. It is good for a local Body and emphasizes love, humility, and faithfulness. They took the elder system of rule, corporate rule by leading, qualified men. This is not a*

*mystery, nor do you need to be a scholar to understand. All through the New Testament, there are adequate examples and teaching as to the elders and the Church on eldership. So what amazes me is that something so clearly laid out in the New Testament, we have done so little work on it.*

*About 15 years ago our church asked me to do a study on elders. What shocked me was that there was no weighty or adequate books written on this subject. So I started to put some materials together, and friends urged me to put it in the form of a book. I feel that I have just introduced the subject and that there needs to be a lot more work done in the area.*

*This is not something that God has left unclear. The Church is to be led by a plurality of qualified, Godly men who together lead the Church under the senior pastoral leadership of Jesus Christ Who promised that He would always be with us. He is our senior pastor, and under Him we are qualified under-pastors. I believe one reason people react to eldership so strongly is that they don't understand Biblical eldership. They don't realize it has the best of both worlds. You have a team of qualified, functioning men. This is not a passive committee. People say, you can't run the Church with a committee." I totally agree. People also say, "You can't run the church with a board." I totally agree. Eldership is not a board. It is not an executive committee. It is qualified, functioning pastors who together give their energies to God's work. Among those elders, some will be church supported. I Timothy 5:17-18. This is troublesome to some people. You have elders who are teaching and some who are being maintained materially by the Church. So I find that most critics of Biblical eldership don't understand it. You have full-time elders and self-supporting elders together under*

Jesus through prayer and the guidance of God's Word leading God's flock. And it is open to any male in the church who qualifies and desires it. It is a very healthy form of government.

**Dave:** *Amen. I'm sure there are some men who are frustrated, feeling they have hit the top rung of where they can go in the existing structure. Unless they launch out and plant a satellite church or do something in a missionary fashion, they are stuck with where they are. How did the gulf develop between what you call the New Testament apostolic churches and the emerging churches of bishops? You wrote, "A vast hierarchy of officials with an exclusive priestly class replaced the simple brotherly oversight by elders found in the New Testament. Centuries passed by, and the Reformers made a noble attempt to recover eldership, John Calvin being chief among them with his Institutes of the Christian Religion. But they could not fully break free from the hard soil of ancient clerical traditions. George Mueller and the Brethren Movement tried to give it the rightful place and restore it to the Church, but their efforts were short-lived and greatly confined." How have traditions stood in the way? What are the false traditions that we need to lovingly challenge?*

**Alex:** Again, we can see everything in the Church illustrated in the Old Testament. God gave Israel a clear plan, but we see through the entire Old Testament God's people drifting away from the privilege of being God's people. For example, in I Samuel God's plan was for Him to be the King and Ruler over His people, for His people to love Him and follow His ordinances, and He would bless them in some incredible ways. They would be the light to the whole world. The world would look at the nation of Israel. Since they had no diseases, they would have many children and an abundance in their production from the land. They would be a great testimony to the world that God was

in their midst. However, it was never good enough. They wanted to be like the other nations. God told Samuel that they hadn't rejected him, "but Me." Man is spiritually lazy, and when you come to the Church of Jesus Christ, those of us who read Church history see a degeneration. **We see the apostles coming with justification by faith alone. We see the immense privilege of being the children of God, being indwelt by the Spirit of God, and being the temple of God. All these great privileges and honors, plus the wonderful mission that was given to the Church. You see it almost immediately lost.** You see the Church going to clericalism and hierarchy. The Church wanted someone to run the faith. They were lazy. They would rather pay someone to run their religion for them so they could carry on their own life goals and activities. So we see an abandoning by the people of God of their status and mission. And it is not long before a small, exclusive class of people actually become the church. Everything gets reversed completely. Man is lazy and would rather pay someone else to do the work. Yet God says, "I want to rule over my people. I want all of my people to enjoy their lofty privileges of being the temple, body, and bride of Christ." But the people say, "That's not what we want." A natural response from fallen creatures.

That's another reason why our church theories and structures must agree with our theology. And theology always has practical ramifications. That's why when we want to put as much authority as possible in one man, we think the Church will go. Of course it will seem to function smoothly for a time. But if you know anything about the fallenness and sinfulness of our human nature and the unholiness of our egos, we know how horrible that is. We need one another, the perspective of one another, the accountability of one another. **The more I understand theology and my nature, the more I want strong**

**accountability, closeness with my brethren, and to be carefully following the nature and mission of the Church of Jesus Christ.** This is the best for me. So it is the whole history of the people of God, not one that should be shocked by [what is going on now in the Church].

I just start right in my Old Testament and go right through the nation of Israel. We are told in Romans that it is there for us to learn from. So I start with the eldership in the nation of Israel. In fact, another reason people don't understand eldership is that they don't understand the Old Testament. It is all explained in the Old Testament. There are over a hundred occasions where the elders are presented in the Old Testament. There is an enormous bloc of information there about eldership.

So when Westerners come to eldership, it is a new concept for them. They just need to go to the Old Testament. It is the whole idea of corporate leadership, that it's a male leadership with no idea of an elder over the elders. God is the King, and the local elders have tremendous influence over the people of God, right down to the judging of family matters. If you had a rebellious son, you brought him to the elders. If you had a disagreement in the marriage, you brought it to the elders. They judged local intimate family matters as well as led in the affairs of the nation.

So if we start in the Old Testament, we will see all these trends, all these problems. It is all brought up there. The Church of Jesus Christ does exactly what Israel did.

**Dave:** *You said in the introduction of your book, "One of the purposes of this book was that one of the most critical needs in the Church today is for more men to take seriously their God-ordained responsibilities to lead and serve in the Church." Most Christian leaders see that the lack of strong leadership by the men in*

*the family is one of the basic problems in our society. Do you see the correlation in the Church?*

**Alex:** Absolutely. Satan strikes at the root of things. If he destroys the man, the father in the local home and the extended home which is the church because the church is an extended family, then he has dealt a death blow. We have all the passive men who should be teaching and leading their families, but instead we have a lot of frustrated women out there because their husbands, who hide behind the newspaper and their business, cannot even lead in prayer at the supper table. They do not pray for their children daily. They do not even open their Bible with their children. Their children go through marriage situations, and they have no counsel from Dad. They are checked out. The same thing comes into the Church. There is always this mutual support and interaction between the local church and the family. **Our churches are in desperate need of more pastors or elders or shepherds—the same thing in my terminology and Biblical terminology. Elders have been called to pastor the Church. Our churches are in need, not of one pastor but a multiple of pastors at every level, and we need more pastors in our churches.** The men are not there. I have a friend who is in one of the fastest growing evangelical denominations, and he has said to me, "Alex, I don't know of a single man in his '40s or '50s who can open the Bible and teach the congregation the Bible or really have any knowledge of theology or of our Christian heritage." That is an utter failure on the part of the clergy. Something is wrong that you have these men who have gone through seminary and come into churches but they never develop the other men.

**My goal as a shepherd and our goal here at this church as shepherds is constantly developing the next generation.** The major part of our work should be developing men.

We've gone through a crisis in our church. I am one of the major teachers. I've been that way for 24 years. I have lost my voice now for almost 4 years. It has not caused a glitch in our church. We have got plenty of teachers, plenty of men who we have developed over the last 15 years, and they are just going right on. We need to be developing, truly developing—I'm not saying just put them in a Sunday school class and make sure they give their offerings. I mean that they are developing their pastoral role of the church. This is a great need. Something is wrong that the clergy are not reproducing themselves in the local church.

I have another friend whose job back in Long Island (and he's a seminary graduate) is to fill in pulpits. He has said to me on several occasions, "I visit these churches, and they are still in infancy, 30-40 years in existence. They are in total infancy, and the moment the two year pastor leaves, they start at point zero again. There is no one who can fill in. There is no one who can teach the Bible. They just start all over until they find their new pastor who will last for two or three years, and he's a fill-in pastor." Something is wrong with the system!

**Dave:** *That's for sure! James said that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. You point out in your chapter on nonclerical elder—or leadership that we have had a double-mindedness even from our own scholars.*

*We have, as Francis Schaeffer said, a fragmented world view. We see the world in bits and pieces. You point out that this division of clergy and laity is also an artificial division. What is the solution to it? It's something that has been with us now, as Rutz would say, "Seventeen hundred years is long enough." Do you see that this thinking is fundamentally changing with the top level scholars and thinkers, or is it always going to be with us? Is there always going to be an uphill*

*battle until Christ returns?*

**Alex:** Oh yes, it's basically entrenched in the human mind. There is the clergy. The demarcation line is ordination, and I have a whole chapter on that to show that it is not even built upon any kind of Scriptural basis whatever. That will be with us to the end. People are not going to give up clericalism. They are not going to give up the sacred clergy. It will be individuals and individual churches that see the high privilege of being the people of God and that God never ordained clericalism. **If He did, He should have made it clear in the New Testament. When I read the New Testament, I read about brethren. I read about fellow soldiers, fellow prisoners. I read about giftedness and apostles and evangelists. But I don't ever read about "reverends" or sacred clerical people or holy people in that sense.**

That is something fundamental to the Church, and it should have been revealed in the New Testament. And it was not! But like Israel, we have bought into certain things, and we are going to be stuck with it. Now there is a sense in which God judges His people by just letting them have it. If you pursue something enough, He will let you have it, and that will be punishment itself. There is a sense in which the Church is stuck with some of its own rebellion and stiff-necked behavior. And so it will be individuals and local churches that desire God's desire for them, to be all that God wants them to be. Those are the ones you have to go after, and those are the ones who will hear. I would just feel that the writings that I have had through Biblical eldership is touching those people, giving them a greater clarity, articulating these doctrines from the Scriptures. Biblical eldership is basically a Bible exposition. As we encounter the Scriptures, we should want to follow the Scriptures. So I would just say that we need to be after those who are longing for what God has for us.



I would like to come back to this pastor thing. We have pastors in our church. One of them is a telephone man, and he puts up and installs telephone lines. He is one of the finest pastors you would ever meet. He's never been to seminary, and he's not even been to college. Yet his heart for the people, the way he leads them, the people love him, [the way he] teaches the Lord's people and ministers to them and encourages them. It's incredible! You can't produce a guy like this in seminary.

We have another one who has been an insurance man. His counseling ministry, his wisdom—over the last 24 or 25 years there are people all through our congregation he has led to Christ through his free family counseling. He is an insurance man. He's not been to seminary or college. **There are thousands of men out there like this with an incredible, loving ability to shepherd and care for people. But they will never be given the right place in the Church.** They can get on the board. They can be put in a Sunday school class, but they will never be given their proper place in the Church. And the Church is missing something! These men bring a perspective to our church, a dimension to our church that is missing in the professionalized ministry church. I just see such giftedness being sidetracked.

I wish you could be at some of our elders' meetings to see the wisdom, the wonderful perspective, the incredible love and care and sacrifice that these men give to God's people. And they are not short-circuited simply at the board level where they give their counsel and step aside and let the professional ministry do it. They are doing it! And it's work, and it's sacrifice! But again it comes back to Jesus with the cross. He's expecting all of His people to pick up a cross. He's expecting all of His people to make the sacrifices, the time requirements. We think that God's people don't have to put the requirements into

God's work, the time requirements, but they do. I see men out two or three nights a week in baseball, sports, in clubs, or in their activities. God expects His people to put that kind of time into the care and nurturing of His people.

*Dave: I am convinced that we in our church leadership need to make a transition to a plurality of elders, mutual accountability, covenantal relationships, all the things that are the very heart of what both the Old and the New Testament are built upon. In chapter 21 of your book, you discuss how to make it work. I appreciate the spirit in which you have written this. I guess it's from spending time in the writings of Mr. Chapman, who said, "Humility is the secret of fellowship and pride is the secret of division." Whenever you begin to talk about changing structures, you are rattling cages and unearthing all kinds of things that [many people] would rather just leave it the way it is. You have given some practical steps [which people can] go through in this discovery process—through the Scripture. What would you say to a pastor in a church who says, "I am willing to consider going through this kind of transition?" What are some of the things that you have discovered to work well in this process?*

*Alex: I have literally talked to hundreds of men about this, Dave. The first thing you do not want to do is rewrite the constitution. Don't start theoretically. Don't start with a church battle over constitution. You will have people leaving. The pastor should start with a group of men that he identifies as men who are meeting the Scriptural qualifications, which I emphasize much in *Biblical Eldership* because that is what is emphasized pre-eminently in the New Testament. They must be qualified men. If you get non-qualified elders, you set yourself up for decades of problems. You will find men who meet the Biblical qualifications and then start meeting with them*

regularly for prayer. And then work together in visitation, in small groups and in teaching. I advise men in the leadership who want to move to eldership, do it first. Then see if there is a body of men who are committed to together shepherding the house of God, the people of God. Start doing it, start moving as a Body, and then start teaching on it. Be patient.

One of my fellow colleagues is a rancher. He always has great illustrations for us. He says, "When I move cattle, we yell and scream, and the dogs bite at their legs, and we move them. But whenever I move sheep, we have to be gentle and very slow. And I walk out in front, or they will scatter."

**Whatever you have to do, you have to move patiently and slowly and very sensitively to the Lord's people. They should not just change in a moment. You need to be teaching them and you need to be modeling it and then just moving in a direction.** Pray that God will open their minds and hearts, that they will see the truth. Once people are convinced from the Bible, then you will have a stampede. You will have to stop them. But if they are not convinced from the Scripture, you are going to have an uphill battle, and probably you will divide the church. So I suggest, do it first. No one in the church is going to complain about the pastor meeting with the men in the church for prayer. No one is going to complain if men are ministering to people.

Now if you start out with the titles first and the Constitution first, you have got a war on your hands. No one is going to stop a man from loving God's people, teaching God's people, and ministering to God's people. So let's see if you can find a group, a body of like-minded men, who believe that we need more than one man to shepherd the Church of God and then start slowly moving in that direction. So that's my advice to men wanting to do this. And then, of course, find other churches who have

done it. Talk to them. Meet with them. Have them come in and talk to you. But always be patient. Remember it's the Lord's work. If the Spirit of God does not touch people, you are just wasting your time. Don't try to beat people over the head with this. People just take time to change. They go through phases in change. They have to hear the doctrine. They have to see it modeled. There are a whole series of procedures that are true no matter what doctrine you want to teach in the Church.

*Dave: We need to go back to the Bible, our handbook for life. It's a handbook for Church ecclesiology. It's a handbook for our involvement in building strong families and strong churches and for rebuilding our nation.*

*Alex: An old Puritan once said, "The Bible is full of infinities and immensities." When I was in seminary, we had several professors who drove this point home: "All the answers aren't in the Bible. You can't find everything in the Bible." Well I am sure you can't find whether I should buy a green car or a red car. But let me tell you there is more in the Bible than we realize about the Church, about how to proceed than we even can conceive of.*

*We just don't know our Bibles!* That's really the issue. Jesus said to the Sadducees when they were making fun of Him and they brought up this strange question about a man with seven wives, He said to them, "You don't know the power of God, and you don't know the Scriptures, or you wouldn't even ask this silly question!"

Brother, that Bible of ours is so full of truth for us today. The truth is that Christians are not reading their Bibles. I have a discipleship ministry with men. I met with a man for lunch yesterday and am meeting with a man today. One of the first questions I always ask is, "How much time are you spending actually reading God's Word?" It's very small, very small, missed day

after day, week after week. I was with a group of Bible teachers, and I asked them, "How many of you are regularly reading the Scriptures?" Not one of them raised their hand. We don't know the Scriptures, and God speaks through the Scriptures. I believe that many of the things we are talking about today and thinking about today are right there in the Scriptures. We need to constantly to be meditating and asking and praying.

I love Acts, chapter 13, a momentous moment in the history of Christianity, a turning point in the Book of Acts. You see, these five men are named, not one. Five men are named prophets and teachers, and they are ministering to the Lord, and they are praying and fasting. Probably that includes the whole church too; John Stott says that. These men are taking the leadership. All of a sudden the Holy Spirit reveals, "I want to separate Paul and Barnabas, two of your key men, and we are going to start the first missionary journey. The Gospel will start reaching out to Gentile churches." But notice. They are waiting on the Lord. They are fasting. They are praying. And God reveals one of the most important things that happened to the Church. Paul later looks back and said, "The door of faith was opened to the Gentiles."

Just that little section of Scripture is so full of truth for us today. How to proceed and how to work together as a Body and move as a Body. It's all there. We just have to have faith and believe and put our minds there. But we are so busy doing other things. I like what P. T. Forsyth, an Anglican theologian thinker, said, "One man who truly knows the Bible is worth more to the church than a whole group of workers who don't." We need more men who are busy in the Bible.

*Dave: "He who has ears, let him hear." Alexander Strauch, we really appreciate so much the work you have done. It's a gift to the*

*Body of Christ, and I encourage everyone listening to get a copy, at the very least, of Biblical Eldership. Your new book, The New Testament Deacon, will probably be most helpful for those wanting to do a systematic study on the role of the minister of mercy in the Church.*

*We are talking here of renewed interest in missions, in church planting. Do you see that the restoration of Biblical eldership fits nicely into the cell church, releasing people into a smaller group emphasis and relational type of thing that seems to be exploding worldwide and now is working its way through the states?*

*Alex: Yes, I'm glad it's exploding because all you have to do is take out the Pauline Epistles and read them. Read them with open eyes and notice the strong emphasis on inter-relationship, the Body, the one another commands. I don't know how we can miss that, but we seem to miss it. The church truly is a Body. It is truly an intimate family where the local church members sense their responsibility for one another and their ownership. These are very important concepts. The concepts of coming to church Sunday morning, one-hour-alone Christianity where you are anonymous, and you come and hear the sermon and leave—that is so anti-Christian.*

All I can say is it's our rebellious spirits that we invent the Christianity of our own making, which we have been doing for 2,000 years, and we are good at it. The whole emphasis of the Pauline Epistles, the great apostle to the Gentiles, is, "You are together, members one of another." Jesus Christ actually wants to reveal Himself and minister to His Body through each individual member, manifesting Himself, pouring out His love and His gifts through each member ministering to every member. It's beautiful, but we don't want it. We don't want the involvement. We don't want the responsibility of one another, but that's God's plan and

program. The more we see of that, and we are seeing a lot of it, the better that we will be. Christianity is to be a wholehearted religion, not a Sunday morning religion—wholehearted religion with Christ manifesting Himself to every member of the Body, through every member ministering one to another, opening our homes, sharing our lives, sharing our money, and full commitment to Jesus Christ and to His people. That's His will. That's what He taught in the Gospels. And our God deserves that. When we consider what He did for us on the Cross, He deserves 100% of us, and yet we are so overbusy today. I believe the great plague of Christianity today is over-commitment, over-business. We are busy with a hundred things, and then we have God slotted in some place there. That's why we don't have more elders. That's why the churches are dying for more leaders. I believe we've got to address this. So I'm very encouraged with the things that I am seeing in the way of getting back to Apostolic New Testament Christianity and with each member taking his responsibility, each member seeing himself important as ownership of the Body and as responsible for one another and away from this spectator Christianity.

I have read several reviews of my book. I read the review and I said, "What is this man talking about?" I believe in leadership. Leadership is very important. There is the gift of leadership, and there is a lot said to the elders who are to oversee and to lead the people. But the kind of leadership that the New Testament envisions is not monument building. It is actually pushing other people forward. It is protecting people and wanting them to come to their full potential. It's a completely different orientation in leadership. Much leadership today is completely self-centered. People are dispensable. People are just things, so I build my monument. I see church leaders today who are building monuments and they have got to have control of the money, control of

everything. People are just pawns for them to get to their goal. Christ-like leadership, and we see it, is perfectly illustrated in the Apostle Paul, who says this in II Corinthians, "I speak of the authority God gave me." And who can say they have the authority Paul had? It's authority to build you up, not to destroy you. So Paul was given as an apostle—a gifted apostle—authority. But it's always to build others up and push them forward and see them develop. We have seen this in our church with my losing my voice. If I had been in any traditional church, I would have been fired four years ago, Dave. I'm talking to you on the phone today, but I only have got about an hour to two hours of voice power a day and then I lose it. I have not been able to speak. The last three years I have only given about twenty sermons. I've not been fired, I've not lost my job, the church has gone on. There are other brothers, very competent in the Word. That could not happen in the average church. I would have been gone, long gone, but no one has even talked of that because we are a family here. Our whole purpose is constantly building and pushing other people forward.

When I came to this church as a young man, it was a very small church, but it was led by elders who had regular full-time jobs. What I saw in this church was a group of men who are now in their '70s and retired. We just retired our last elder, who started this church in his home. When I came to this church as a seminarian, I just saw this spirit of pushing these young guys forward. Well now these men are all retired. They are all in their '70s, and they can sit back and in a sense say, "Hey, we've pushed these guys forward. They are running the church!" We have ten missionaries who are church planters. Every one of them was raised in this church. We have five people who get remuneration from the church, every one of them raised up in the church. So we have raised up all our missionaries, all our workers, and right from the

beginning the elders had a vision that we have constantly to be building and training and pushing people forward, not protecting our turf, not protecting our little egos. These men quickly stepped aside for better preachers, pushed them forward on the platform for the overall preaching. So that's God's will.

It's so clearly laid out in the New Testament. You don't need to have a Ph.D. or learn Greek to understand it. You just have to have a good ability to read.

*Dave: Maybe that's the problem. We've got too many Ph.D.s. We need generalists as well.*

Alex: Right! Just read and ask God for an open mind and an open door. The important thing is the supremacy of a loving community ministering one to another, getting those unholy egos out of the way, confessing that daily to God, a humble serving spirit, a sacrificial spirit. That's the whole nature of the thing. Dave, is that hard to understand, the New Testament?

*Dave: No, we've just spent 2,000 years complicating it. It's simple enough for a child to understand.*

*With regards to your losing your voice, Pastor Cho has a similar testimony. When he fell sick, that's basically what happened to his church in Korea. The other leaders had to come in and fill the place, and now look what's happened.*  
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# Eric Svendsen/Steve Atkerson-N. T. Restoration Newsletter

**Dave:** We are going to discuss the New Testament Restoration Newsletter. We are also going to talk about some concepts that God is restoring to the Church. Obviously [by] the title of the newsletter, God is doing something in the way of restoring. And in order to restore, we have to have a model to go back to. I am certain that both Eric Svendsen and Steve Atkerson would say that we need to restore the Church back to what the Bible says it should be. Oftentimes it seems like we look at modern models that are out there, but we need to take a step back and look and see what the Bible actually says.

Eric lives in Waukegan, Illinois. He studied at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He's now a co-editor of the Restoration Newsletter and a computer software consultant.

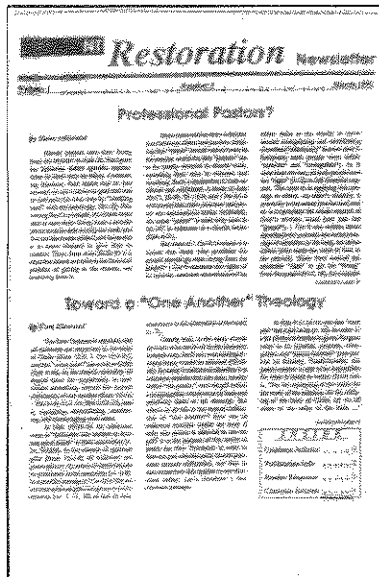
Steve Atkerson is from Atlanta, Georgia. He has his Master of Divinity degree from Mid-America Baptist Seminary. He is involved with the house church there in the Stone Mountain area of Atlanta and is in sales of industrial electronic parts.

Let me read from the statement of purpose of your newsletter. "Ephesians 2:20 says that the Church is to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Whatever else it means, at least it suggests that for the Church the apostles are to be the source for obtaining all faith and practice. While no evangelical would dare deny the apostles this right in matters of faith, it is remarkable that the apostles are given only minimal consideration when it comes to the matters of practice. This apostolic neglect has been manifested in two ways. First, by sustaining man made tradition for apostolic tradition. And second, for eliminating the need for any kind of form at all.

Eric, you believe that we need the full counsel of God. We need the apostolic/prophetic as well as the other giftings in the Body. The newsletter that you are endeavoring

to publish nationally is designed to help focus on the distinctive practices of the New Testament as normative for all ages. Could you explain?

**Eric:** I'm glad you brought up the distinctive practices. It's not as though we are trying to institute all New Testament era practices, such as using candles to light the meeting or wearing tunics. What we are after is trying to restore the distinctive New Testament practices, things that were not necessarily part of the culture of that day. The reason that we are focused on that is because we think



there is theological significance in many of the practices, and we think that is missed today.

**Steve:** Of course, we are making a distinction between church tradition as authority, as in Roman Catholicism, holding up church tradition, and we are saying that apostolic tradition is what is important. When the apostles taught things, then they naturally did things; they grew out of their teachings. The patterns that we see in the New Testament for ecclesiology we think are more than just an accidental. We think they are purposeful, and we see commands in Scripture to follow those normative New Testament patterns. We believe they ought to be normative for the Church of all ages.

**Dave:** We are now touching on the corners of the 21st century. For all purposes the 20th century has been an era in which we supposedly had revival after revival. Starting at the turn of the 20th century, the pentecostal revival, and then the charismatic renewal much later. Some would refer to it as the third wave revival. And yet under the classic definition of a "revival"—one that has any impact in the culture—we are left scratching his head, saying, "Where's the beef?"

We really are not seeing the Church impacting the culture in the way that we saw the early Church doing. What do you think are some of the reasons for that?

**Steve:** I think you are right about that. I think the swing of history has been that throughout the past couple of thousand years. You start with a living organism, and pretty soon that develops into an institution. People get tired of the institution, and they swing the pendulum in the opposite direction and are doing things that are not necessarily New Testament things, but they want to be as free as possible in their worship. So they adopt practices of their own that they consider pragmatic and practical for that time. What we are trying to do is pull both of those together. We don't want to forfeit doctrine, certainly, but we also don't want to forfeit the living organism that we find in the New Testament Church.

**Dave:** It seems to me that you are suggesting that we need to see all of the gifts functioning in the Church, not just some of them. Some people are talking these days, a popular subject is the restoration of the five-fold ministry. Others say, "Well, I actually count about twenty-fold when you consider all the giftings in the Body." But when you are talking about equipping the Saints for the work of the ministry, you believe in a plurality of leadership rather than focusing on [a] one-man-band type of thing that we see in superstar Christianity in America, the megachurch. Do you see that as a model that is waning and being replaced with something else?

**Steve:** We would hope so. Getting back to the reasons for it, again if you jettison New Testament patterns, then you could justify just about any form of church government. But if you are going to try to go by the patterns of the New Testament, you certainly do have a clear pattern of a plurality of elders or a plurality of leaders in every church. But even at that, that's not to say that these leaders act as dictators per se. I think you still see a lot of consensus where the leadership or the authority that any leader has is primarily the authority that comes from any influence that he is able to exert over the congregation through his lifestyle, through the example that he sets, through his teaching abilities, through his persuasiveness.

So even the position of an elder is not like a military thing where you respect the rank and maybe not the man. The only authority he has is the authority that he has earned. That's not the kind of thing that he can go in necessarily and boss the Church around, but rather he is persuading the Church. You have this dynamic relationship between the shepherds and the flock, and there is really no difference between clergy and laity. There is no such thing as clergy. There is no such thing as laity. They are all God's people. They are all priests. You still have leaders, but it's much more of a dynamic relationship than what you see so commonly today when you have a professional pastor who is putting on a show every week. And there is this distance from the people, maybe symbolically seen by the pulpit being elevated and separated from the congregation.

It's much more real and down to earth. What I see is that plurality of leadership and yet ultimately decisions being made by the consensus of the whole church where people love each other enough that they are willing to work through their problems, that they are willing to put up with each other and love each other enough until they can come to consensus on something. It's much more of a dynamic kind of a process than has typically been the case historically. Naturally, we would like to see the church return to that.

**Eric:** If I might piggyback on that, one last point is that the leaders in the church come up from the ranks of the church. They are not called from afar as is done so often in today's contemporary church. The advantage of that is that you then know this person, and the person knows the rest of flock, and that person has derived authority simply by being there and earning the respect of all the people around him. They soon look to him as a leader, and that is how leaders are made. They are not necessarily simply ordained and placed in leadership position. They need to earn that respect.

**Dave:** *What we see functioning in the New Testament was that out of the ranks of the community, leaders emerged naturally. It wasn't something where they shipped them off to seminary. You did an article, Steve, on professional pastors, as somebody who was one. In fact, both of you were ordained. You believe that there is something of an illegitimacy to the whole concept of seminaries.*

**Steve:** On the aspect of professional pastors, of course, I was one for many years. The ultimate reason that I left the professional ministry was because I came to believe that there was no New Testament pattern for a pastor who made his living totally off the church. In fact, not only is the New Testament pattern to have self-supporting elders, but you actually have what amounts to a command by the Apostle Paul in Acts 20. Here's Paul who, as an apostle, did have a right to make his living off the church, and of course he waived that right and went into a tent making ministry. In speaking to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, he said, "Look, guys, you know I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing, and that these hands have supported my own needs. I did this as an example to you elders that you should do the same thing." And remember the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Paul said that in the context of silver and gold. That tells me that primarily elders are to be in a position of giving to the church financially, not receiving from it. That's not to say that a person who loves a pastor or an elder can't show

his appreciation in some way through gifts. I'm not denying that. But I'm just saying I don't see a New Testament pattern for a pastor who makes his living totally off the church. That ultimately is why I went back into secular work.

Now about seminary, Eric, what do you think about that?

**Eric:** It seems to me that there are four problems at least with the seminary. One is that the potential elder has to uproot and relocate to a seminary if there is not one in his location. In the New Testament you don't find that. Instead you find the opposite. The apostles are going to the churches, strengthening them. Paul and Barnabas stay at certain churches two or three years, several months sometimes to train leaders. Paul drops off Timothy in one place, and Titus in another place to train leaders.

Secondly, this kind of training that is received in the seminary is somehow seen as qualifying the potential elder as an elder. And that's not necessarily the case. Paul lays out the requirements for an elder in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. All but one of those are moral requirements. There is a requirement to be able to teach, but the rest of them are moral requirements. It's really difficult for me to understand how someone who is going through seminary and becoming ordained at an ordination board can necessarily demonstrate those qualities or how the ordination board can know that that potential elder has those qualities because they simply don't know enough about him.

**Dave:** *It's very easy to lead a double life. We see things coming out of the closet about people in public ministry all the time. It seems if leadership came up through the ranks, there would be a lower degree of that. Before elders were given any kind of an enlarged platform, their lifestyle could be examined more closely.*

**Steve:** Don't think we are anti-education and anti-training. We are not. We just believe that should be done on the local level. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the existing elders in a congregation to train the potential elders. We would like to see that done on a local

basis rather than having to ship the poor guy off somewhere and having to disrupt his life and move his family.

**Eric:** Paul was not so much interested in mass production of elders as seems to be the emphasis of the seminary. He was more interested in pouring his life into a few faithful men. It says something to that affect in Timothy. In II Timothy 2:2, he says, "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." It seems to me from that passage, you can support the fact that Paul was interested in pouring his life into a few faithful men and that those men, were to then train others. He even says that.

**Steve:** The way we understand the church to operate is through what we call "open participatory meetings" where virtually anyone who desires to can contribute and participate in the church meeting. In that kind of a dynamic setting, obviously many more problem situations can arise. You have elders perhaps taking control of the situation, or you have people learning to express their thoughts, to verbalize their feelings. In this kind of a training ground, if a man is inclined toward being an elder, if he has that desire and has that gift in him in that regard, that's a perfect week-by-week training ground as he sees existing elders responding to different hard situations, or as he himself struggles to express his thoughts and ideas, he gets the expertise through that kind of a church setting where it's almost constantly on-the-job training.

**Dave:** *You are both advocating more of a house church as the heart of the Church. Many churches are trying to decentralize and start up small groups or house fellowships or cell groups or whatever name you want to call it, and yet they still maintain the building. Are either of you totally against buildings in general? Do you think they are just such a stumbling block that most people can't get beyond that being the church rather than the people and the functioning, the Body ministry going on? Can it happen only in a house and not in an institution?*

**Steve:** Again we would look at what the New Testament pattern is.

Consistently in the New Testament when it mentions the meeting place for church, it's in someone's home. There were some exceptions when an apostle was in town teaching. The Apostle Paul in Ephesus for those few years rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus. But I would make a distinction between the meeting conducted by an apostle with large numbers of people there listening versus a regular church meeting, which was of course more certainly the norm.

And so when we look at the New Testament pattern, we see that, consistently, church meetings were in homes, and then you look at subsequent church history. For the first 300 to 400 years, the church continued to meet in homes—that gets our attention. Of course the standard answer people give is, "Oh well, they were just persecuted." Or "they didn't have any money and that's why they met in homes." But to us that's not convincing because when Paul as Saul persecuted the Church, he knew just where to go to get those Christians when he went house to house persecuting them.

But actually if you look at church history, it seems that persecution of the Church was sporadic throughout the Roman Empire and usually localized. So just because the church in Rome was persecuted, that doesn't necessarily mean the church in Philippi was. Somebody easily could have erected a church building sometime in those first several hundred years, but nobody did. We think that's because, one, the apostles laid down that pattern of the church meeting in the home. But that's not to say that's a magical thing all by itself. It's simply a matter that form follows function.

If your function is to have an interactive church meeting of mutual accountability and decision by consensus making, then that's going to dictate that your form be a small meeting typically no bigger than would meet in someone's home. If you start having many more people than can meet in a home, you start to lose the intimacy. You start to lose the accountability. You start to lose the opportunity for everyone to contribute in the church meeting if they desire to. We believe in growth through

multiplication. When a church gets too big to fit into somebody's house, it's time to start another church. We really do think that if you violate a New Testament pattern, whether you immediately perceive it or not, you are in some way crippling the Body of Christ.

The main reason I can think of that Christians will build a church building is to accommodate more people. As soon as you have done that, you have almost defeated the purpose for having the meeting in the first place. And you have to go into this spectator mode where, basically, one person does all the talking, and everyone else is passive.

**Eric:** All the current attempts to implement New Testament patterns and New Testament practices into the institutional church are valiant and noble, but in our opinion we don't think they will work for the simple reason that the things that were written to the New Testament churches, the letters, the epistles, were in fact written to house churches. They are geared to work in small group settings. In fact, they were never meant to work in a large group setting, and they don't work in a large group setting. Invariably, what you have when you try to introduce mutual participation, for instance, you can talk about going up and down the aisles with a roving microphone and try to get people to talk, but what will happen is that you will get a handful of very vocal Christians who week after week will stand up and share their heart with the rest of the crowd, but the others will atrophy. They will think, "Surely, in this room full of hundreds of people someone will have something more important to say than I do. So I just won't say anything." And since it's impossible in a church of several hundred people, for everyone to speak, you are going to get that attitude week after week.

**Dave:** *A compelling argument for keeping things small. I'm thinking in my mind, there are people who just won't go to a house church. They will say, "I just won't go if that's what I have to do." Isn't there some room for accommodating the unbeliever who isn't going to come into a home setting where he would feel "on the spot"?*

*Isn't it possible to come to Christ through a larger gathering that is less threatening and then maybe be plugged into a house church or a cell group where he really sees his identity and he functions in all these wonderful things that happen when disciplesd?*

**Steve:** There is room for that, but the emphasis is wrong. In most cases you have the emphasis on that one large meeting, and everything else is considered secondary. So most Christians go to the large meeting, and they see maybe the Wednesday night or Thursday night Bible studies or home cell groups as somehow something they don't need to be committed to. What we are saying is, it needs to be just the opposite. There needs to be the primary emphasis on the home groups, and the large meeting is something that is secondary. If you read through the New Testament, you will see time after time that the purpose for meeting together was not for evangelism. It was not for worship. It was for mutual participation and encouragement so that the saints could then go out and do the work of the ministry. So while we are not condemning the current practice of having evangelistic meetings, we are just simply saying, call it an evangelistic meeting or a religious lecture, but it is not a church meeting as defined by the New Testament.

**Steve:** I read something interesting by Watchman Nee on the normal Christian church life. He said that most Christians have never been to a normal church meeting. What he meant by that was that New Testament church meetings were small and interactive. He said that most Christians have only been to apostle's meetings where one person gets up and does all the talking.

We are not against big meetings per se, but as Eric said, we would see the weekly meeting of the house church as central, and then every month you might rent a lecture hall and have all the house churches come together for one big I Corinthians 14 type praise service. That's secondary to what is primary.

Again, I have read books on evangelism, and it seems, really, David, that it's the other way

around. There is a book on lifestyle evangelism by Jim Petersen, and he says most unconverted people are never going to go into a church building, that you are more likely to get them into your home anyway. And so based on the experience of these guys who are really gifted in evangelism, what I hear them saying is in what seems to be a post-Christian America, your average pagan is not interested in going to a church building any way.

**Eric:** And in fact, when that does happen, what occurs more often than not is that it creates a nominal spectator type of Christianity. You are going to get people in there who are interested in joining First Church for social reasons or simply to ease their conscience. But there still is no accountability. There's no intimacy, and this person can simply do what he wants the rest of the week. When he comes to church, no one knows the difference. When he doesn't come, no one knows the difference. Relations go not much further than a slap on the back in the foyer and people saying, "How have you been doing?" What's usually expected is no response at all.

**Dave:** *There are compelling arguments for the intimacy. I know that many people are trying to mix the two with some degree of success and some without success. Let me tell you my experience. I have been involved with megachurches—with Jack Hayford and now with Tommy Barnett at Phoenix First Assembly. The biggest problem they face is relational, seeing some kind of a covenant formed within the Body of Christ to where there is some level of accountability, to where there is a feeling that somebody really cares.*

*Let me tell you a sad testimony. You mentioned Watchman Nee. I witnessed a Witness Lee Local Church here in Scottsdale, Arizona—THE CHURCH OF SCOTTSDALE. I saw more of the New Testament dynamic modeled and a lifestyle of Christian sharing, interaction, and body ministry there than any where that I have ever been. That is a sad testimony when you can visit a group that is pretty much identified as a cultic group because of their exclusive view that they are THE CHURCH of Scottsdale.*

*I wanted to ask you how you deal with this, "anything healthy should be reproducing." Do you see the house churches you are involved with, Steve, going through a process of raising up leadership and planting additional churches and making room for growth and being involved in evangelism?*

**Steve:** Yes, we do. Raising up leaders, for the last year—in fact I just finished a course for the men who were interested in Koine Greek. We went right through *Machen's Grammar* and *Greenland's Grammar* and then also a book on exegesis, and we did translation work. We are trying to teach the equivalent of seminary level courses for those men who would be leaders, and we are training in that area.

As far as evangelism, for instance, I teach a monthly evangelistic neighborhood Bible study. I have consistently about 15 people who come once a month just from my street here. We have gone through John's Gospel. We just recently finished that, and we started a new subject. So we do see evangelism going on. The members consistently witness one-on-one level. Many people report that in the church meeting—what they have done, who they have shared with. So we do see training, we see evangelism, and we see growth. We started our church two years ago with five people. We've had on a consistent basis as many as 30 adults coming to our house church. Right now we are down to 20-25. A lot of people will move off.

We have come to the point of starting another church a couple of times, but we have always been hesitant to do it, so far, because it is new to us. We have been going, as I said, about two years. We also are in contact with other house churches and people in this area who would like to start house churches. And so we do anticipate in the very near future being able to start at least two and maybe three fellowships right in this immediate area.

Jumping out of my own experience, up in Salem, Massachusetts, Christian Smith and some of the brothers in the Salem Community Church have a network of four house churches that they have been able to grow over the

last years, starting of course with one church. I understand they got up to the size we are right now, and that's when they started the second church. We are going through the same growth pains they did. They said that is the hardest thing to do when you actually birth the new church out of the first one. It is hard to know how to proceed. What I am saying is, "Yes, we are pregnant, and I think we are going to be giving birth soon. I'm excited about that!" I see other house churches where that has worked, and I don't see any reason why in God's sovereignty that can't work in our case as well.

Of course, there are house churches all over the United States. This is by no means unique to us. A lot of people will call us who hear about us and hear about our newsletter who are in house churches, and who have a network of house churches that make up a community church. That's how they hold each other accountable. It seems to be working a lot of places.

**Dave:** *It certainly is an option that a lot of Christians would jump into if they could find out where house churches were. It seems like it is very quiet. You almost have to stumble upon such a church or know somebody because it is not promoted.*

**Eric:** That's exactly right. One of the things we have had difficulty with so far is trying to find out where everyone is who is interested in this. It's a difficult thing to do. You don't know whether to advertise it in a newspaper or a Christian magazine. And so it is difficult to find these people. What we have done in conjunction with Christian Smith in Massachusetts and several other people who were involved with a house church conference in Dayton, Ohio, last fall, is to decide to produce a networking newsletter. The first issue just came out a few days ago. That is our recent attempt to help network house churches.

**Steve:** Even though we do have a low profile, one advantage of that is, since we don't have a tremendous sum of money tied up in buildings, in budgets, in the maintenance of property and supporting a church staff, that does free up all of our disposable income to go directly to either supporting missionaries or

helping needy believers or helping orphans or whatever. We are able to give as much to missions as a church many times our size because 100% of what we give goes directly toward meeting needs as opposed to administration, which many times a church is saddled with a building and a debt. You know, much of a church's assets are siphoned off toward the status quo. So even though we have a low profile, on the other hand, we are able to do a lot with a little because of the way we are organized.

**Dave:** *Yes, I can see that. In Christian's book, Going to the Root, he outlined what could be done if the 300 billion dollars worth of U.S. church buildings were liquidated. We could pretty much take over the world. We could really make a big dent in our national crisis and in many countries overseas if tonight every pastor woke up with the revelation that they would do better without buildings.*

*That leads me to another concept. It could be that God has a plan to bring the Church back to basics that is really out of our control. You know, there is one thing about strategy. That's one side of the coin. The other side is the sovereignty of God, and He may be putting the Church in America through the washing machine here. He may throw us into the dryer for a while and get some of those wrinkles and spots out of us. Part of the thing I see the house church doing is providing some degree of protection for the Church if we become identified as David Koreshes.*

*Let's take on a controversial area: women teachers, women in the Church. I know you have a concern that we have a balanced Biblical perspective on women in the Church. The feminist movement in my view is a loss of the proper role of men. If men will be men, women would be content without feeling they have to be men, too. Part of it is that the Church has squelched women and said that they can do certain things but not be involved in leadership. There is another view that says that women should be able to do everything. Since there is no male or female in heaven, women can take the exact same roles as men.*

**Steve:** It has been my experience when I was in the institutional church, I taught on a lot of these things that we have talked about here today with little more reaction than a yawn on the part of those who heard me. But when I ventured over into what the Scripture says about the role of women in ministry, it became downright persecution. That's when it really got uncomfortable for everybody involved. It's funny that it raises such emotions in folks, but I just want to say publicly that we love our sisters in Christ and consider them our full equals spiritually, intellectually, and everywhere else.

**Eric:** Our concern—and this is not something that is confined to the house churches, but there does seem to be a disproportionate number of house churches or house church ministries that subscribe to the egalitarian view of women. [Egalitarian: "advocating full political and social equality for all people." Webster's Dictionary]

We debated about even writing anything about the women's issue in this newsletter because we are devoted to ecclesiological issues, issues that pertain to the church, to the house church in particular. Since there was so much already written on this in evangelical circles, we were hesitant. But then it occurred to us that everything that was being written about house churches also included a section on the role of women, and almost every one of them took the position that women should be able to do anything in the church. So we just wanted to add a few articles to that to help balance the way the deck is being stacked.

**Steve:** We feel that sometimes some of the leaders and the shakers movement have thrown the baby out with the bath water in their desire to jettison many of the trappings of history that have encumbered the Church. We felt like maybe they have gone too far and have actually thrown out what the Bible says specifically concerning the role of women in ministry.

**Dave:** *If you want to get the details on that, you can write to them. Essentially, you believe that women have a central role in what God is*



doing. Jim Rutz has a section in his book on the feminism in the church and why real men don't play church. Proportionately, there are more women in the church than men largely because the closed church system or the over institutionalization of the church has made most men feel more like Charlie Brown than John Wayne because they can't really be involved. Is your experience in the house church that men begin to emerge as the dynamic, strong, God-ordained leaders who they should be in their homes as well as in the context of the church?

**Steve:** I have certainly seen that. We are not afraid to say what we understand the Church to teach on the subject. We do feel that women can prophesy. For example in the Scripture you have the examples of women prophets. We think that men have a lot to learn from women because women have tremendous insights into the Scriptures.

In I Timothy 2 we believe the Scripture forbids women from teaching or having authority over the men within the Body of Christ. Now that would not apply to a math teacher or women in the secular world. But in the Church we think it is wrong for a woman when she stands up and teaches Scripture or has authority over men. She is violating the very Scripture that she wants to teach. So as we have followed the New Testament pattern, again there is not a pattern of the New Testament of a woman who is set apart to teach. Naturally that does fall to the men.

In our church it has worked itself out beautifully. The women do not feel oppressed or in any way enslaved. They are free to contribute in the meeting, and they share insights and words of prophecy with us. They pray, and their presence is a blessing. They encourage the men. The men are doubly aware of their responsibilities to be the leaders and to be the spokesmen or to call down error if there is error in the meeting.

**Eric:** It's very rare that the men are doing anything more than the women can do anyway. What I mean by that is that we do have teachers, but the role of the teacher in a house church is not the role of magisterial, behind

the podium, awe-inspiring messenger of God. He's more like one of the guys. He is just giving a word of instruction, and people are commenting on it. They are relating their experience with things like that. The women are all a part of that. They are not hushed or anything. They are able to prophesy and give insights and share testimonies. We don't squelch any of that. It's only when someone gives a bad teaching. Maybe he is new to the church, and he gives a bad teaching. Or he is trying to purposely mislead the church. Then the overseers, the elders speak up. That really is one of the only things that we don't allow women to do.

**Steve:** In other words to publicly judge something that has been said in an authoritative way. We feel like that is the role of the men as the leaders to do that.

**Eric:** Other than that, you would never suspect that we have a view on women in the church if you were to visit one of our meetings.

**Dave:** *If a woman sensed that something was out of order, you are suggesting that a better thing to do would be for her husband to stand up. You and I both know that women tend to have better discernment than men. Women sense things that we do not.*

**Steve:** Women would do well to nudge their husbands. For instance, Pilate should have listened to his wife when she told him to leave Jesus alone. In the same way, a wife, if she senses something wrong, rather than attacking it in a meeting, she should get her husband to [confront the issue]. She [thus] filters it through him and his ministry. I think it ultimately goes back to Creation, in that Adam was created first and then Eve. That established the position of priority or headship. When you violate that, you are inviting disaster on the Church. If a woman moves into a ministry that God did not intend for her, and conversely if a man assumes a position that God did not want him to have, not only is frustration produced, but ultimately disaster because we are not operating in that sphere of ministry that God gives us. We don't want disaster. We do want to follow the patterns in the Scripture. Not only are they

patterns, but they are direct commands. And the reasoning for those commands goes all the way back to Creation as a fundamental thing that God has instituted as a difference that between men and women in the role He would have for each one of them to follow.

**Dave:** *The bottom line is that there are different spheres, and we need to understand those areas in God's government. There is a sphere for man, woman, the family, business, local government, etc., and if we could run in our own lanes, we would do fine.*

*What we are seeing now is that because we as Christians have not practiced self government to any measured degree, civil government has moved in to fill the void. I'm using this as an illustration. It is good talking with you about the importance of the home.*

**Steve:** I want to say that we still love our brothers who are in the institutional church. And we thank God for those who are teaching the Word, where people are being saved, and all the good that is coming through that. Obviously, we have to follow our convictions and do what we feel Scripture commands. But to be honest, I have to say that I hope God brings the whole Church to follow New Testament patterns, and, thus we see ourselves as prophets, those who are trying to model the truth.

**Eric:** All we are saying is that God's design is better than man's, no matter how pragmatic that design may be, and that serious consideration should be given to New Testament patterns before going on with the status quo. If one takes a look at the New Testament pattern, you can see the theology behind it and to the extent that we don't practice it, the way the New Testament pattern is laid out, we forfeit the expression of that theology.

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## Kelly Varner — *The Issues of Life*

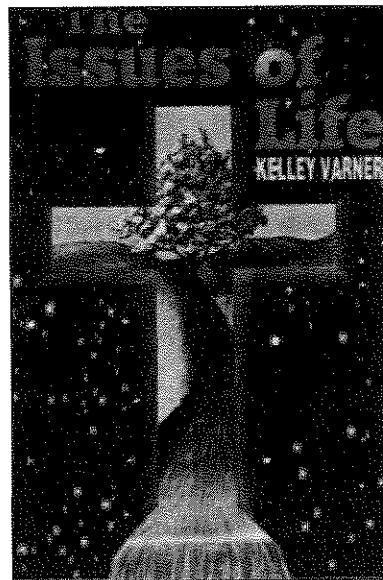
**Dave:** *Kelly has traveled extensively and carries a deep vision to see the Body of Christ demonstrate the nature and ministry of Jesus. He and his wife and their four children live in Richland, North Carolina.*

*In your books you have said that the Church has two primary issues to deal with, the Kingdom of God and the proper understanding of the Covenant. Is it really that simple?*

**Kelly:** I wrote in the introduction of my book, *Issues of Life*, the premise taken from Proverbs 4:23, "Out of the heart are the issues of life." John 1:18 says, "Jesus came out of the bosom [or heart] of the Father." Therefore, He is the issue. The revelation that God gave me out of that is when Jesus was revealed, He was revealed in a twin dynamic, in that He as a priest was a worshiper and intercessor. In relationship to the Father in Heaven, He is the worshiper, and in relation to all men on the earth He is the intercessor—Son of God and Son of Man.

**Jesus is the issue.** He is the answer. We are to return, as Paul said, to the simplicity that is in Christ or the singleness in Christ. To say it another way, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The key to introducing that is to show that man is confused. And to talk about the confusion of man you have to go back to Genesis 11 and the tower of Babel where man tried to build a name for himself in various ways. In illustrating that, I said the American Church has **misunderstood or is confused about two things: one, the Kingdom of God, and two, the covenant of marriage.** American Christians do not understand the Kingdom of God. The reason I say that is because most of them still feel they have choices. The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that we are bought with the precious blood of Jesus. Therefore, we are no longer our own. We are His property. I do believe in

the sovereignty of God, that in covenant we belong to Him. Rather than some great doctrine or theocratic exposition on the Kingdom of God, I made it very practical. We do not understand His Lordship. We do not understand His Kingdom because we still think we have choices and actually we do not. He is the Way, and His way is the only way. He knows what we need when we need it. The other thought was, we do not understand the marriage covenant because traditional dispensationalism, which is on shaky legs in America



and which has robbed the true Church of its identity in Christ in that it has not realized that the Church is Abraham's seed, that the Church is the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Church is the circumcision. Actually in Galatians 6:16, the Church is the Israel of God. Dispensationalism has caused us to miss that.

**We have been taught traditionally, if we have grown up in a fundamental sense or classical Pentecostalism, that the marriage supper of the Lamb, whatever one's notion of that is, is future when we die and go to heaven or whatever. It is later. But what that has left in the back of people's minds is a subtle**

**error that we are not married to Jesus Christ yet. But we are.** In the Song of Solomon, which is a love story between Christ and His Church, chapter three refers to Christ as the Church's spouse allegorically. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul speaks of Christ and His Church as being husband and wife. So we are married to the Lord now, but because of certain teachings, we are kind of flirting with Jesus, and, therefore, we think we have options.

**Dave:** *What I appreciate about your books is that to read them is to read Scripture because you write out all the verses and then explain them in an expository way. This goes to the heart of what you wrote, that you really believe that in the next move of God in the Church, we will see a centrality of Scripture and will not be focused as much on man's interpretation or doctrinal differences. You feel that it is going to come back to one issue, Jesus Christ Himself. Are you saying that here on earth we will never come to any doctrinal unity, that we should just forget that?*

**Kelly:** I don't know the answer to that. I know what Ephesians 4:13 says, that the five-fold ministry will be around until we all come into a unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. The Greek word for knowing means a full and accurate knowledge, but it is not informational knowledge but relational knowledge. The focus here is not information but on the Person. I am a foundation preacher. I lay foundations. I am a Word man. I am very stringent when it comes to the Scriptures. However, I have discovered over the years that I have gotten away from preaching a message or series of messages, and I am just preaching Christ because He is the sum of all the parts. What men do sometimes is similar to six blind Hindus washing an elephant. One is washing a leg; another, the ear. The one thinks he has a tree, and the other, a great leaf, but they

are all washing the same elephant. The point is that we tend to emphasize the parts and not the whole. The word *integrity* means wholeness, and I believe if we set forth one aspect of the gospel and set it forth as the whole gospel, we lose our integrity. All some churches preach is Kingdom, or healing, or faith, etc. You can take any aspect of the gospel, which is good in and of itself, and it is important and vital, a part of the foundational stones. But when we build a life or ministry on part of it, it is what Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27. We need to build our house on the rock and not sand. Sand is particles of rock, but we need the solid rock foundation, which is Jesus Who is the sum of all the parts. There is a great hunger in America to come back to the centrality and supremacy that is in Jesus.

**Dave:** *In a recent article, "The Coming Great Revival: Jesus Will Be the Issue," in Revelator Journal, you mentioned that "the local church, the house of the Lord, is going to have to be a city of refuge as never before. As in Hezekiah's day, there were not enough priests to minister at the altar, and I believe the same move is going to hit America." Can you explain that?*

**Kelly:** In Hezekiah and Josiah's day, two great kings of Judah, there were great revivals. The backdrop is II Chronicles 29-32. When Hezekiah came to the throne as a young man, the Bible says that he began to carry the filthiness out of the holy place. That is happening in America as God is cleansing His people and cleansing His Church. I believe there is a re-emphasis on personal holiness—not legalism but real personal holiness, and the bottom line is that, the Israelites cleaned up their act according to II Chronicles 7:14. "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves . . ." God sent a great revival, and there were not enough priests to officiate or perform all the sacrifices at the temple. In our terms, there were not enough preachers and teachers. There came such a move of God, or in

contemporary terms, so many people got saved that there were not enough ministries to accommodate them. If we had a move of God today as there was in the time of the Book of Acts, we would not be ready for it because in America, the Church is mostly platform oriented and entertainment style ministry. The priesthood of all believers and "every man a minister" is not a reality. Philemon 6 says, "Every good thing that is in you in Christ Jesus is to be communicated."

**The most important things pastors and leaders can do right now is to reproduce themselves.** Paul's language in II Timothy 2 is "to commit these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

**Dave:** *In your local church how are you dealing with this? Is it happening in small groups or how?*

**Kelly:** In our church it is happening in a variety of ways—in cell groups and with me imparting my vision. In America the one thing that is so needed is for leadership to spend time with the people. It takes time to disciple, train, and equip people. It is not just done didactically. The Bible says in Acts 1:1, "All that Jesus began both to do and to teach . . ." He taught it didactically, point by point, precept upon precept. But He also taught by example. There are many young men and women in my local church with the call of God on their lives, some for full time ministry.

I am spending time with them. I am equipping them in many ways. I put good materials in their hands. I make sure the five-fold ministry—prophet, apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher—is coming through here to help me equip them. When I travel to minister, we travel together in team ministry. I am delegating in my local church the things that I do just as rapidly as I know how to do it. We are going to get in trouble if we say there is just one way to do this. If you make a careful study of Revelation 2 and 3, there were seven

local churches, and a similar word was given to each of them: "To him who overcometh." To each church, Jesus brought a unique word. I travel in the ministry. I call it the "snowflake" principle. When I go into a local church, my first question to the Lord in prayer is, "Lord, what are you saying to this people at this time?" Locales are different. Even cultures are different. So the bottom line is that what will work for one may not work for the other. We need to be flexible. If we get into a rigidity that says it has to be done this way, we will lose some of the unique expression that the local church is supposed to be.

**Dave:** *Around the throne will be every kindred and tribe and a lot of diversity. Thus, we can have unity in diversity. We need new wineskins but also new wine.*

**Kelly:** You need both.

**Dave:** *In The Priesthood is Changing, your previous volume, you wrote, "God is anointing the priesthood to incorporate all who are called and who are willing to obey and submit to God's Kingdom. The Epistle to the Hebrews is present truth to the Church in the '90s. The reason the author of this letter is anonymous is that our total focus might be on the One Who is the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ." Do you believe, as you said here, that these are transitional days and that we are still going through that transition, or are we coming out on the other end yet?*

**Kelly:** It depends on who you are individually and corporately. I think corporately we are still going through it. In fact some of the mainstream in America are just starting into it. Individually there are still those going into it, and they are still in it. And then there are those just coming out of it. The word *Hebrews* means, "those who cross over" or "to cross the river." It literally is a transitional term, and historically it goes back to the days of Josuha when they left the wilderness and entered the land. I

see everything in the Bible in threes. The root Scripture is Proverbs 22:20. "He has written to us excellent things,"—literally threefold things. In Israel's history they came first out of Egypt, secondly, through the wilderness, and third, into the land. If we equate that with contemporary Christianity, to come out of Egypt, they came out with the blood of the Passover Lamb. That to me is to be born again, to be justified, to be saved. They went through the wilderness. That was a time of development, training, discipline, and so forth. I see that in the Pentecostal realm. But then they inherited the land, the inheritance. That was the purpose for their coming out. Deuteronomy says, "He brought them out that He might bring them in." And the word I use for that realm is the word *maturity*. There are other words you could use. But the importance in America is that God is taking a Church that is evangelical and spirit-filled and is bringing it into the maturation, into the consummation of its purpose and maturity. The word *destiny* is a good word to use there as well.

**Dave:** *Let me read a little here. "Jesus is not going to play 'patty-cake' with His Church in the '90s. He is not going to take sides these days, especially over moot points in theology or eschatology. He is for Himself. Get ready for some powerful changes." You then talk about the five-fold ministries in Ephesians 4, and that you believe these are going to be the foundation to build upon in the next move of God?*

**Kelly:** Those five ministries are functions of the elders. They are moving and operating right now. We have not seen as much of the apostle as we will in the future. I mean by this that the purpose of the five-fold ministries is to equip the Saints for the ministry. Still, here in America there is far too much emphasis on the one man or one woman, which is really a platform ministry. The key in my mind is for the ministry not to be *above* the people but *among* the people. Peter

said that in I Peter 5 when he said, "I'm an elder among you." Of course the pattern for all our ministries is the Son, Jesus, Who was "the Word made flesh, who dwelt among them." That was the whole purpose of His coming to the planet, and He reproduced himself. In John 12:24, He was the grain of wheat Who fell in the ground and died and reproduced Himself in the twelve and the early Church. I believe our main concern needs to be in reproducing ourselves. And taking that a step further, our purposes are generational—our children and children's children. Our focus and purposes are getting bigger. What God is doing, He is not just doing for one generation but has generations in mind. I believe that is important also.

**Dave:** *Amen. You said here in the chapter, "The Priesthood Is Changing," that the magicians and soothsayers of Babylon are helpless and about to call for Daniel. Recently God gave Paul Cain favor through a prophecy for Bill Clinton. The President invited him into the White House and has taken him into his confidence because supernaturally God revealed things to Clinton through Paul that he would have had no other way to know. Do you see this type of ministry, not through the political right affecting the affairs of nations and affecting the shift of our culture toward the Lord, through this type of prophetic ministry?*

**Kelly:** From a Biblical standpoint, you will remember that the Old Testament closed out with a promise that Elijah would come and turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the sons to the fathers. In Matthew 17 Jesus explained that Elijah was John the Baptist, and yet Jesus also prophesied in a dual sense that Elijah shall come. The point I am making is that prior to the coming of the Lord—I believe in the literal coming of the Lord—there will be an Elijah ministry on the earth, a prophetic ministry that will be forerunner and make His path

straight. That's the basis of it. A part of that Elijah ministry you will remember in 1 Kings 17. When Elijah is first mentioned, he just showed up in the palace and said that it's not going to rain because "I say so". And that ended up with a confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel. What you find as you study Scripture and prophetic ministry, from Samuel on through, is that Kings or political leaders were certainly influenced by the prophets. I believe that we can look at these as one of the aspects that God is doing. More and more honor will be given to whom honor is due. I believe more and more as we move into the '90s and the next century that men are running out of answers. In fact they have no answers, and I believe that God is going to raise up men, prophets if you will, who are going to have answers.

And I believe that more and more, their voices are going to have to be reckoned with. Of course that is being abused in the prophetic ministry in some respects. Nevertheless, it is still valid.

**Dave:** *Yes, usually when something is missing and it comes back, there is an over-emphasis.*

**Kelly:** Everything is abused and counterfeited. Matthew 24 said there will be many false prophets around. You cannot have false prophets without true ones. So it depends on how you look at it.

**Dave:** *Your books always leave people with hope and a conviction. They draw the reader into the presence of God.*

*Let's talk for a moment about worship. You say that the new army of priests who the Lord is raising up is not a cast system, which the Church has fallen into with the clergy and laity. There are certainly leaders who are needed to equip the Saints, but you say the priesthood is twofold in that the Church's responsibility toward heaven is worship, and the Church's responsibility toward earth is intercession. Can you explain?*

**Kelly:** The simplicity of that is that there are two great commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart," That is worship. "... And your neighbor as yourself." That is intercession. Loving God and loving people and the resurrection life. It is the Holy Ghost Who we receive and the Life of God that is imparted to us in relation to Him in worship. We turn around and communicate that to other men in intercession.

Jesus Christ is the pattern for this. In the first chapter of Mark's gospel, verses 31-35, it says, "In the morning Jesus went out and spent the morning with the Father." That is worship. In the afternoon He came back and healed the city. That is intercession. Remember Job 9:33, where Job cried out for deliverance.. That was Jesus, of course. He cried out for an Umpire Who would take hold of God with one hand and take hold of broken humanity with the other. Jesus did that. He took hold of the Father in worship and took hold of us in intercession. He is the pattern Who has given us the same word of reconciliation. In worship we touch God and without worship we have nothing to say or give. Once we are in touch with the Lord, we take the life that we receive from Him, and we sow it into the earth, into other people's lives. That to me takes all the complexity out of knowing what God has called us to do. Love God, and love people. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. So I teach my people here that you are never out of order to bless somebody.

What I am after, brother, in these things, is a handle for people. I am a teacher, and I want people to have something they can use in their individual walk with the Lord and in their home and local church. This has to be made pragmatic and practical. We have to get our heads out of the clouds because America is really in trouble. The Church is called to be salt and light, and I really believe we can change it.

**Dave:** *Let me read a little more from the chapter dealing with the*

*priestly responsibilities as a leader. "His authority is established in worship; his direction, in intercession. The river of life flows between the banks of His way and His mind. This direction is clearly defined and can be changed at His choosing. It is not always a straight line, but it is always between two banks." This is a beautiful presentation of the tension that exists between these two elements. We tend to think in terms of either/or, but what you are saying is both/and. These are two legs on which the gospel of the Kingdom can really fulfill the Great Commission.*

**Kelly:** I see those two banks as the Word and the Spirit, the two witnesses. Whatever move of God that is upon us has to be Scriptural, and yet it has to be something up-to-date, present tense, and birthed by the Holy Spirit.

**Dave:** *Give us a little picture of your new work, Rest in the Day of Trouble.*

**Kelly:** In December of 1992, God opened my understanding of the Book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a prophet who lived in 600 B.C. just prior to the fall of Jerusalem. The backdrop of his day was that politically he said the law was paralyzed. Justice never went forth. The number one crime of Judah was killing babies, abortion if you will. It was throwing babies into the fiery lap of Molech, the heathen god of Moab and Ammon for four generations. Thus, Judah 600 B.C. is America 1993, and the book opens with a sob and ends with a song. It opens with the cry of the prophet, which you could liken to the individual believer who is a concerned citizen, or you could liken Habakkuk, whose name means "to embrace Jehovah," to a prophetic church. He cried out, "How long and why?" And God's answer to him was, "I'm going to raise up the Chaldeans to judge Judah."

**The Lord began to speak to my heart, and I saw three Chaldeans coming to**

**America. In fact, I believe they are already here. One, the economy; two, immorality; and three, violence. And we are crying out, "Why and how long?" And the answer to Habakkuk, because he was trying to figure it out with his brain instead of his heart, caused him further perplexity, so he had to pray. In prayer he experienced an experience with the Lord where he saw the Lord. He saw the Lord to such an extent that he was lifted out of his circumstances and saw the Lord much like Isaiah who saw the Lord "high and lifted up." His sob became a song, and in chapter three his song is a tremendous Messianic prophecy. Not until I began to exegete it—and my book becomes a verse by verse commentary on the Book of Habakkuk—did it become a tremendous picture of Jesus Christ from His birth until He wounded the head of the serpent at the Cross and ascended and sat down, King forever. And so at the end of the book, all Habakkuk could do was sing. The premise of the book is that although there is no visible evidence of God anywhere, "yet I will rejoice and will sing because I have seen the Lord. I'm going to be able to rest in the day of trouble."**

I do believe there is a day of trouble on America. I believe we have voted "money over morals," and we are in for some rough waters ahead. And the only answer for America and the American Church is for them to see the Lord and to see Him in such a dimension that all they can do is sing. That briefly encapsules it.

It is a different book than I've written before. Before, I had written especially to the spirit-filled Church, but this book is to America, the whole nation. And I believe it is a message of hope.

**Dave:** *Do you believe we are at a point where we need to have tears in our eyes as we repent over the state of the Church?*

**Kelly:** The priests need to be weeping between the porch and the

altar. In the book of Ezekiel, chapters 8 and 9, there were those who sighed and cried because of the abominations that were in the land. And they alone as intercessors were sealed by the Lord. It truly is a serious day, and I believe that Scripturally speaking it is a day of the Lord. In the day of the Lord, the lid comes off everything, and it is His day, and He is going to reign. I believe that and that He is speaking to a people and that there is a ministry and a people in America who are responding to the Lord. There is a ministry on the planet that is not interested in fame, glory, or wanting to be seen, but they want Jesus to be seen. And He promised that if He be lifted up, He will draw all men. And that is what I'm trying to do with all my heart.

**Dave:** *You have an extensive audio tape library that is sent all over America and into other nations. Do you take speaking engagements?*

**Kelly:** Some, but I am first a father, husband, and local pastor. I travel one week a month. We continually hear from people who have read one of my books, who want to know more of what God is saying. As I delegate more responsibility here, I will be doing more traveling. But right now I want to devote myself more to my writing.

**Dave:** *At the 1990 Atlanta Congress, the Lord gave you prophetic insight about the Church being birthed, having to do with the three generations. Could you share that?*

**Kelly:** That was taken from Genesis 48 regarding Jacob, Joseph, and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The original ideas were not mine, but from a friend who is a pastor in Raleigh, North Carolina. The message is that Jacob is the older generation of say, 50 and above. Joseph is the Baby Boomers, my generation, ages 25 to 45, and then his sons are the young people and children. It is hard to summarize quickly, but what it boils down to is that God's pur-poses are

generational. There is a history and a destiny, and unless we have anointed memories, we can have no radical hopes. Joseph's generation and my generation had gotten caught up in the leisures of Egypt and worshipped our gods of time and money. He brought the grandsons in to see grandpa, and grandpa sat up in bed and prophesied to his grand-children. The whole story is how God brought together three generations in the purposes of God and to show that what the Lord is doing is far greater than any of us really understand at this point. This is hard to summarize in a few words.

**Dave:** *God is building across time and wants us to be involved in something bigger than ourselves. He is knitting the hearts and bringing the worldview thinker and many of the prophetic hearers and lovers of God to a place of unity around the centrality of Christ. It is very exciting to be a part of it!*

**Kelly:** I appreciate the opportunity to share with you. **What is wonderful right now is that there is no one man, message, or movement on the planet that has a corner on what God is doing. A beautiful picture of that is the Book of Nehemiah. Each one had their part of the wall to build. What you are doing, and what I am doing, or what someone else is doing is different. But at the sound of the trumpet, we will all come together. Each one of us is working on a certain part of that wall, and we are repairing the breach. I am a writer, but not everyone is a writer. I am also a musician, but not everyone is. I believe if everyone will ask the Lord to show him or her what his or her portion is and get on that wall, we will see the thing built. So the package you are putting together is a picture of 60+ guys who are working on their part of the wall. And each one is uniquely gifted of God.**

**Dave:** *Yes, and we need to stop being so busy tearing down one part of the wall and simply build our part.*

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## Leonard Verduin —Reformers and Their Stepchildren

**Dave:** *Leonard Verduin [ver-dine] is our oldest vintage contributor, at 95. He earned his Bachelor Degree in Theology from Calvin Theological Seminary and his Master's Degree in History from the University of Michigan. He has translated the complete writings of Meno Simons. In 1950, he was awarded a Fulbright Research Grant to study Medieval Protest Movements in the low countries.*

*His books include: Reformers and Their Stepchildren, Anatomy of a Hybrid, Somewhat Less than God, and The Biblical View of Man.*

*He pastored for 20 years as the campus chaplain at the University of Michigan. Now retired, he resides at Apache Junction, Arizona.*

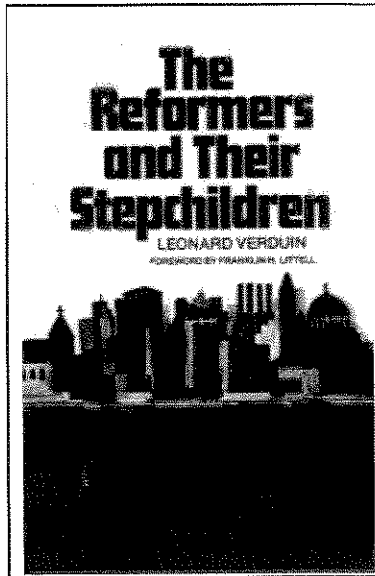
*As I have read your books, I have learned that you are of the Reformed background, but you think very highly of the heretics. Give us a definition of a heretic.*

**Leonard:** That word has changed its meaning. I am using it in its old meaning. It originally meant a person who stands before alternatives and makes a choice between them. Today it means a guy who is off the beam theologically. I want to be thoroughly orthodox, but I do like these people who said that you have to make choices in life. I think God intended that for human beings.

**Dave:** *Let me read from the foreword to your book, The Reformers and Their Stepchildren: "With the popularization of the distinction between the Church or sect and State, many Americans have fallen victim to the Constantinian view of the role of religion in human society." It seems to me that you are unhappy with what happened to the church under Constantine, as Christianity was changed into Christendom early in the 4th century. Could you explain your view of this Constantinian synthesis?*

**Leonard:** In my way of looking at things, that's one of the biggest blunders ever committed. It did not

bring martyrdom, as is sometimes said. It only changed the people who were being martyred. Now it was Christianity that was doing the martyring over against another element that also said it was Christian. Jesus, I think, saw it coming. Human beings are inclined to mix these two realms. God has two programs at work. He has a program that is supposed to hold back the awful symptoms of the sick patient so that there isn't outright and complete chaos in the earth. We call that the State, and its definitive weapon is the sword. Then there is the second program,



and its definitive symbol is the Cross. Those two must not be mixed. I'm afraid that history is the record of one long case of the mixing of wrongs. I think that that is the biggest problem that we have had in the past, and it's a problem even today. It's so natural for human beings that unless you look out, you're going to slip into it. That's the whole problem.

In the 4th century, the Church began to use the sword to make Christians. That's a classical case of the mixing of realms. It takes special care and the grace of God to keep these two from becoming one. But at the same, time you've got to be awfully careful that you don't pull them completely apart from each other. And that also happened. There have been

people who are so sure that we are not of the world, that they went out and lived out in the desert or on top of a column. They believed they must hide from the world. That won't do. This truth at this point again is elliptical. You are not of the world, but you are in the world. And you better try to keep those two from canceling each other out.

**Dave:** *I get the impression that you are convinced that through the career of Christendom, there was always a remnant. We talk about tracing the Church from the book of Acts to where it is today, approaching the 21st century. God always seems to keep a faithful remnant, however small that is, throughout history. And throughout history, it seems like that remnant often is referred to, as you say, heretic. There was an element that did not go along with this improper view of separation of Church and State.*

*In your book, Reformers and Their Stepchildren, you say they were referred to as the Donatists, the stablers, the heretics, the sacramentarians, the winklers, the Anabaptists, even communists. Tell us why this group was always so persecuted simply because they wanted to remain pure to what the Gospel teaches.*

**Leonard:** Well, the rest of the world's religions insist upon having 100% patronage. They can't allow an element to be different. They try to snuff out. In fact, that is the central purpose of religion. The whole possibility of dialogue going on in a society certainly is controversial. And that's the purpose of religion in the thinking of the primitive man.

Just as soon as Christianity became the religion of the Empire by official decree, everybody was ordered to the baptism font. There were people who said, "Now it's going wrong." And they sneaked off into the desert, and they have been there ever since. I'm sure that all through the twelve centuries that followed upon the Constantinian synthesis of Church and State, at all times there was a

remnant. Most historians don't say a word about it. The Church that resulted from the union, of course, it would like nothing better than to say that they were alone on the field for 1,200 years. But that's not the case. I have studied that pretty deeply. We don't have the time to go into the whole arguments.

I want to give you one proof that there always was throughout the Middle Ages a non-Catholic element, which I call the remnant. Adolph Schmidt, the German expert in the history of dogma, still considered the best authority we have, the greatest, says, "During the twelve centuries that went before the posting of Luther's thesis, it never lacked for an attempt to do away with the State Church/priest church and to reinstitute the apostolic congregations."

Now how can you say it in any plainer language? There always was a remnant, the Christianity of the medieval world.

Here is a second proof. The medieval church of Christendom, the Catholic Church, created a special order. They were known as the Dominicans. The reason they created them was they thought that would be a way in which they could offset the influence of the underground church, the remnant. And so they did everything that the others did. They wore the same clothing. They went two by two, they went preaching out in the countryside. Their only difference was that they tried to support the central church, whereas the remnant tried to replace that central church. But that there always were these people is beyond any doubt.

And the fact that so many surnames were invented is proof enough that the Church at all times took this very seriously. The interesting thing is that all the names the Church invented in order to blacken the face of the remnant, they are, all of them, compliments. It's good to be called Cathar, as some were known, which is taken from the Greek verb, meaning "to clean up."

These heretics, these people of the

remnant, said, "You can tell a Christian by the tracks he makes," and that was no longer true. In fact, the united church, when the Church became co-extensive with the empire, said there was no difference. "You can't tell by the way the people live at all." In fact, there were times when people tried to prove their orthodoxy by saying how wicked they were.

What is wrong . . . with being "a cleaned-up one?" What is wrong with being . . . "a man who makes fun of sacraments?" The New Testament doesn't know the concept of sacraments. A sacrament is a device whereby a group of people already held together by their flag and by other characteristics or ties are now also held together by another tie, a red one, which is religion. And so ended sacraments with which to tie the whole empire together.

I kind of like being a descendant of those remnant people, being a winkler. They were people who went off by themselves and had little gatherings. I would like to know what is wrong with that. If a bunch of us wants to get together and talk about religious things and do a bit of praying together, I don't think that that's anything dirty at all. It's nice to be a winkler.

The Anabaptists, I think that that's a compliment too. If baptism has become christening, something done against a person's wishes at least without consulting him at all, before you cut the umbilical cord so that you can have complete coverage, what's wrong with a person who later on says, "I don't trust that baptism at all? Hey, do it over!"

The Bible teaches that there is no such thing as absolute ownership. Anybody who owns something had better reckon with the fact that he is not the only one in the world. And God placed us all on the same globe. It means that if someone is suffering and you have abundance, maybe you had better take it to heart and help him a little bit. What's wrong with that? I'd like to know.

They called them Lollards, too. I think it's nice to be a Lollard. The word is derived from a Flemish word, meaning to "sing softly." It's

LOLL- with the suffix -ARD added, which means, those lousy Lollards sing. There is evidence that way back in history there were a group of songs that the people knew to be the songs of the Lollards. And the interesting thing of it is that they sang them to secular tunes, the kinds of tunes that you would associate with drinking parties. They did that so that if the Inquisitor would be listening, he would think the song was all right. So they had one song they sang, which translated said, "I married a woman. God knows I'm sorry." They did that so as to get away with it. What's wrong with getting together to sing Gospel songs, I'd like to know, even if you have to sing them to lousy tunes, as that one was? I compliment people for being Lollards.

*Dave: Obviously you have some strong feelings about this throughout history. When you talk about the Constantinian disaster, prior to that time, the Church met in homes. They gathered. They had times of celebration. They met day to day and broke bread together. Then Constantine, almost overnight, declared that Christianity was now the official religion. The creation of this mix between the Church and the State came about. Immediately, buildings were built all over the place. Do you see a problem here with buildings being used, and the fellowship and the warm intimacy of the home being lost?*

*Leonard: Yes, it is very interesting that the underground Church in the Middle Ages—I have dug into whatever there is left of their record—they referred to the cathedrals as "a bunch of stones." What was the language that the typical cathedral used? It simply is a sign that this was a Christian civilization, and it resides with its offices in this beautiful building. And because these underground people, the remnant, didn't believe that this was a Christian nation, they didn't like these buildings that said that it was. And so they called them just "a bunch of stones."*

*It's very interesting that the Anabaptists of Reformation times, who are the direct descendants of this remnant church in the Middle Ages, asked their converts not ever to*



go into "a stone pile" again. They didn't like the idea that Christianity was getting to be a matter of buildings, especially government buildings, public buildings. They met in caves. The early Christians met in the tunnels of the chalk mines. What was wrong with that, I'd like to know? They were a group to themselves. Why shouldn't they meet by themselves and strengthen themselves? That was the only Church that there was during the first three centuries.

**Dave:** *We're discussing Reformers and Their Stepchildren. On page 38 you say, "Now there were two papal systems, an old one and a new one, both of them opposed to the stepchildren for the same reason, namely the latter's rejection of Christian sacralism. The real issue was on the question of the type of church which should take the place of the old one. A thousand years later after Constantine, we see Luther and Calvin and Zwingli trying to pick up the pieces with the Reformation."*

*"Luther," you say, "stopped short of a full Reformation, content to walk hand in hand with the State."*

**Leonard:** That is easily explained. There is conclusive evidence that all the Reformers—Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and even some of the lesser ones—they all knew about the remnant. They knew its thought pattern, and they knew its way of living, and they loved it. They were going to try to copy it. I find Luther saying things early in his career that couldn't possibly have come from any other source but from the underground Church.

The same thing is true of Zwingli. He was heard to say, "Nothing saddens me more than that I have to baptize children because I know that it not ought to be done."

But Calvin was also converted to the underground Church first. But you must not forget that to go that way was going to cost an awful lot. You would almost certainly get killed. That's a matter of fact.

Luther had already been sacrificed. Christendom had set a trap so that

they could catch Luther when he entered the forest, and they were going to kill him. And he got away with it because some nobles on his side beat them to it, and they whisked him off to the Wartburg [Castle].

Let us today not take it at all lightly when these Reformers said, "Just a minute. Are you really going to butcher all of us, one after the other, for all time to come? If we can have these nobles on our side, why not?" So they began to shake hands with the nobles, some unhappy nobles, nobles who were prepared to cut the Empire into pieces and go their own way. And pretty soon you get half a dozen new Christendoms on the scene. And they all of them had the same sickness, which the original Christendom had. Namely, they were not hesitating at all to use the sword. They believed "you can tell a Christian by the way he walks." All the medieval mistakes made because of "the big blunder" were made by the Reformers after they had decided it was too terrible to go the way of the underground Church, and they agreed to make a deal with the nobles. That can be traced from the record completely, I am sure.

So the only element that didn't succumb to this and didn't agree to it came to be known as Neodonatists, and they also were called Anabaptists. It was because soon there were half a dozen Christendoms in the picture that it wasn't as dangerous any more to be Anabaptists. So they got away with it, partly because of the Reformation, all right. But the only straight heirs of the underground church in the Reformation times were the Anabaptists. No wonder they were called Neodonatists quite so often.

So then, that is what I feel must be said about the Reformers. They started right. If they had only been able to go that way, we wouldn't have gotten the State churches out of the movement. But we know that they did. The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States was needed in order to put an end to that dispensation.

**Dave:** *You have pointed out in your book that there needs to be a*

*distinction between authentic Christianity and historic Christianity. Would you explain that? Most Christians want to feel that they are connected to history. So when you say historic Christianity, there is something that rings true because even Jesus said that the Kingdom of God involves some things old and some things new. But yet you make a distinction.*

*Let me read here from your book. You say, "Authentic Christianity's firm conviction is that at the terminal point of history, there are two camps, the saved and the lost. This was embarrassing to many of the Reformers. Men who think in terms of one category in the here [the State] find it hard to live with the idea of two categories [which the true Christian believed in] there. It seems that the concept of purgatory, [the idea that man could keep man from hell], found its way into the world of Christian sacralism because it offered a convenient way out of the embarrassment."*

**Leonard:** Yes, this is simply the situation, that Christianity expects dialogue everywhere. Jesus was aware of this, but He saw a movement on the horizon. When He was sending His disciples out on their first commission, one of the things He said was, "Don't think that I came to bring peace to the earth. I didn't come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword." If you want to know what that means, sometimes there will be a dialogue between a father and his son. (That's a text that I don't think I've ever heard anybody preach on. It sounds impossible.) But you must remember that peace originally had the meaning of sheer togetherness. Unhewn stones were, in that civilization, known as "peaceful ones." Nobody had broken them in two. When Jesus says, "Think not that I came to bring peace," He was saying, "Don't think that I am going to bring monologue into the world with everybody talking the same way. We're going to have people talking two different ways always."

It strikes me that this is so much in line for what man was created for that if he finds himself living pretty soon in a unanimous society,

the first thing he does is fall asleep. I don't like to live in a unanimous society. I don't see any good coming historically out of living in a unanimous society. The First Amendment was, of course, meant to bring about dialogue. It at least sets the stage for dialogue.

There you have my conception of proper Christianity and improper. The interesting thing of it is that the compositism with which the Church started must be called microcompositism. *Micro* is the Greek word for *little*. The units are small. Jesus went the whole limit. He said the units are individuals, father over against son. Units are small. In the days of Constantine, we get macrocompositism. *Macro* is Greek for *big*. And now you get nation against nation, the Roman Empire over against all other empires. Today we have a choice. This macrocompositism is out. There are no longer Christian societies. They may claim to be, but they aren't.

Anybody who cares to look at it will grant that in a society where 6% of the people go to church, you must not call that a Christian society any longer. In fact the time has come when Christendom is an interlude, which has a prelude going before it of the first ten generations and a postlude in our times. The centerpiece is gone. You cannot be a member of Christendom anywhere any more—except perhaps in the Roman Catholic 160 acres in Rome. The rest of it is all a thing of the past. I am not crying about it, although I see some new problems coming up.

**Dave:** *In essence are you saying in America today, while our money may say, "In God we trust" and the Ten Commandments hang over the Supreme Court, that de facto, we are a post-Christian society?*

**Leonard:** Modern society has no standard to go by except to listen to what people are saying. That's the only thing that America has to live by any more. We listen, and we decide what is right or wrong by majority vote. That means that if Christians will speak up and speak loud enough and speak frequently enough and faithfully enough, then

this society will say, "Just a minute! There's a big group of people out there who don't think that homosexuality is just as good as anything else. Maybe we had better listen to them."

I'm sure that the Christian Church has been silent way too long in a climate in which we had a chance to speak our peace. It is high time that we get together and let ourselves be heard. But I am also sure that the God-intended way for the Christian Church to influence society is by what has come to be called "passing through a semi-permeable membrane." That is the only way it can be. It seemingly is impermeable, and yet that is the way we must work and influence the world. You get through the remnant, through a membrane that you cannot penetrate. If you think that is not going to work, I would like to remind you that all the strength that you have is gotten by this method, of something going through a semi-permeable membrane. That's the way you are fed. I think that's the way the Church is supposed to influence the world, by this passing through an impermeable membrane.

**Dave:** *Any other method?*

**Leonard:** Not by law, not by the sword, not not by force.

**Dave:** *That Scripture that you quoted earlier—"Jesus said, 'Don't think that I have come to bring peace, but I have come to bring a sword.'" Is that in fact what the Church used after Constantine in order to justify the use of the sword in bringing about an end to heretics? We read about the problem that the "heretics" have had throughout all of history. It seems like persecution and martyrdom are the future for anybody whose is willing to stand up against that. Do you think that is true in our era today? You said that you feel we may be on the verge of—or in the middle of—a Neo-Constantinianism where we see a New World Order emerging. What is your view on that?*

**Leonard:** I am afraid of anything that is not geared to dialogue controversy. Anybody who is not prepared to meet people who stumble over the Cross of Christ, the

very same Cross in which I have learned to glory, I expect that. I don't think I can be healthy unless I live in that kind of a climate. If we are going to in America change the climate in such a way that there is no longer the controversy, the discussion, the debate, then I think we are moving in the wrong direction.

It's very interesting in this connection, however, that the last book of the Bible pictures a very strange situation. Everybody knows that is a strange book, but I will tell you something about it that is stranger even than most people think. Here is a man who has been hustled off to an island because he was a Christian. He was hustled off by a pagan civilization. While he is on that island, he says all the pagan religions are gone. There is nothing left of them. In their place has come a false Christendom. And off in the corner there is a small group who are asking, "Please shorten the time up a bit. This is terrible!"

How that man on the Island of Patmos got that vision is something that I will never understand. I don't know, either, for sure, what he was talking about. It could be that he was talking about the birth of Christendom in the 4th century because it was the exact fulfillment of what he saw. All the pagan religions were gone and in place of that came a pagan Christianity. And off in a corner was a remnant that still had the truth without this change. Maybe it is still coming. I don't know. We may have a religion some day in which all faiths have been joined together and that is "the right one."

I am pretty sure that every human being has a religion. There are no such things as unslanted human beings. They all have something to live for, a view of things, a philosophy of life, a reason for being, a picture of yourself, a source of right and wrong. Is that done by men? Is that determined by men or has that been determined for men? You have to take a position.

Anybody does. I don't know of any person who speaks without giving evidence of a slant. Maybe some day we are going to have that slant, that all religions are equally good, and

they are all the right thing, and you had better be a part of this great big thing. Then maybe we will have another remnant. If so, I want to belong to it.

*Dave: You have walked with the Lord over nine decades. You have seen God restore things even in your lifetime that perhaps Luther and Calvin were doing the best they could. They tried to restore the priesthood or the justification by faith, and they thought to some degree that the priesthood of the believer would become a reality, and yet it really still today remains a theory. We don't see the average Christian out there doing the work of God. We see it still delegated to this special class of clergy.*

*What is your view on the clergy/laity division that has been throughout history? Among the "heretics" typically, they see themselves all in ministry, don't they?*

**Leonard:** If you ask what I think about ordination, my answer is that I can't find it in the New Testament. Jesus was not ordained. The twelve apostles were not. Paul was not. Nobody was. I think that the ordination that came on the picture was the direct result of "the Constantinian blunder."

Now you have to ask people who are in position to do things. They can perform. They can deliver the goods. Hitherto, you have to be a believer in order to be a Christian.

There are two ways you can fish. You can fish with a pole. You can also fish with a net. If you fish with a pole, you are deeply interested in getting the attention of that fish. In fact, the kind of bait you use is all designed in order to make it look good to him so he will come up and grab it. But if you fish with a net, you couldn't care less how the fish thinks about it. You will get him against his wishes anyway. So you scoop him up with the net.

Isn't it interesting that there was a document put out by the underground Church in the Middle Ages that had the title, "The Net of Faith"? It talks about fishing with a pole. I wonder whether he made a

distinction of the two kinds of fishing.

You have to be prepared for people trying to make a circle out of the remnant. And that happened also in the Constantinian synthesis when Christendom was born. Up to this time, Christianity was a matter of two things: it was a matter of pardon and a matter of renewal. The one takes your status in hand and changes your status in the eyes of the law. The other was your condition, which was taken in hand, namely as a sinner or as a person living a better life. Those two are not separable in the New Testament. They are the two focal points of an ellipse, and is it any wonder at all that the Constantinian venture caused the whole concept of a way of life, a matter of condition, to be thrown in the waste basket because you have to look through your eyes only two minutes to know that no two people want to live the same way?

Some people live like sots, and some people live like saints. So they said, "Let's throw that away. We will invent a salvation scheme which is simply a matter of changing your status." And they had that by way of sacrament. They had men who were ordained, who by being ordained actually got in position for being able to reproduce, to beget people on the spiritual level. I tell you that the medieval ordination of priests implied that he had a new reproductive system whereby he could now produce Christians. It started when a boy reached his 14th year. Then he was in position to begin to beget.

And so they got a spiritual 14-year-old happening when he was ordained, and now he was in position to beget in a new way, namely on a spiritual level. All you had to do was to let him get at you, and he would make you over. The water of baptism actually was supposed to change a person so they would never be the same again. The whole idea that "Christians can be known by the tracks they make" was erased. It did not count in the Middle Ages except in the underground Church.

Interestingly enough, the people who criticized that remnant Church said, "Ah, so you think you are going

to earn salvation, are you?" They didn't teach that. They simply taught that if you were saved, you can tell by the tracks you make. They did not say, "You are consistent." They don't say, "You are perfect." They would even point to David, who although you could tell by the tracks he made that he was a child of God, there was a time when he went way wrong. They said, "We all do that."

They made an interesting distinction. They said that a Christian cannot live in sin, but he can fall in sin. There were actually cases in medieval times when people tried to prove that they were innocent when the heretic hunters were on their trail and had caught them. The people tried to prove that they were innocent, were not members of the underground Church by saying things like this: "I drink and I swear and I fornicate. I tell you I am a good Christian." That actually is on the record, that they tried to get out of it. They thought they could get straight with God by telling a story like that. They thought maybe that's what it would mean that they would let them go.

There is a statement that comes out of the underground Church in which it says, "The moment a man begins to talk about the Word of God, about the commandments of God, forthwith, these biting curs (those are the theologians of the State church, of Christendom), immediately those biting curs say, "There goes another heretic."

Only heretics talk about the Word of God. Only heretics talk about conduct such as becomes the Saints. That's a giveaway that you are a heretic. It was that way all through the Middle Ages, and it got that way again in Reformation times.

Sorry, the Reformers settled for new versions of Christendom, and they added all the old problems and got them all back again. One of them was the matter of conduct. **Martin Luther, I like him. He was a child of God who did a lot of good in the world. But he certainly said some funny things. He spent a whole hour, according to the class notes that remain from one of his members of his class, to try to point out to his**

students: "How detrimental for salvation good works are. If you have got good works on your hands, that's almost a sure sign that you are a heretic, and you are outside."

I don't think that anybody needs to worry about what the Almighty will think of you for trying for good works, for behavior, and keeping with God's will.

Dave: *There is a popular talk show host named Rush Limbaugh who has a saying, "What we have in 20th century America is the rise of symbolism over substance." It seems that what you are talking about is the substance of the gospel. The substance of what the remnant believed has always been and perhaps always will be a challenge to the society that wants to function on symbolism where we have a form of Godliness, but we deny the power thereof.*

*What kinds of words of encouragement can you give to that hearty group of remnant out there?*

Leonard: They don't want to settle for the simple stuff. The biggest argument that I can think of is that, all the pagan religions, instead of word, they have symbols. I don't want to judge the conversion of Constantine. That's up to the Higher Authority. But I do mistrust his formula. There was a sign up in the heavens that looked like a cross. It was a misty day, and there were straight up and down lines and side lines. He thought that was a cross, and the message he got out of it was, "In this sign conquer thou." So there he went with his gun, trying to win the case.

I already mentioned that when the Romans were on their way to another battle, they would butcher a chicken and have somebody examine its liver. I don't like this omen stuff. It's a sign of primitiveness. Don't think for one moment that we human beings don't have omens and that we practice them. I just want to say that when a boy puts a ring on a girl's finger when he gets married, that's an omen. That's a sign. The Christian religion says you can have signs. In fact, the Belgic Confession says that the Lord's Supper is a doing in picture what has already been said in words. I like the

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

priority of the language and of common sense consideration of what is being said rather than this omen stuff. You very soon have too much omen.

There was a man in the Old Testament who was told that God was on his side and was going to drive the enemies out. The man said, "Hey, I heard all that, but would you please repeat that with an omen? I will throw out a towel, and then tomorrow morning I want you to have that towel dripping with water, and all the rest of the world will be dry. Then I will know what you are trying to say." The Almighty actually stooped to say in omen what he had already said in sentence. Then the man came back and said, "I hope this won't make you mad, but please do it the other way around. This time, have water on the land and nothing on the towel." Believe it or not, the Almighty stooped again to do this thing also. So now the man knew for sure it has been said by words, and it had been shown by signs.

I distrust the Christianity that is not word-related. Once again we've got an error here. The question is abroad that has been faced in theological circles recently whether the object of faith is language, sentence, proposition, or person. People say, "You can't put truth in proposition. That it's just a person to person relationship." Karl Barth went far in that direction. I just want to say, you can't choose between those two. You don't know me as a person unless you have been in language contact with me. As soon as you meet a person who is completely of a different language, you can be over against them like you would a dog. You can pet them, you can stroke them, and maybe give them something to eat. But you can't be human over against them yet. There first has to be language between the two of you to be human.

That's the way between God and man. There's language between us, and there is person between us. Isn't it interesting that the early Church felt the need of two Latin verbs to give expression to the act of faith? One of them was *credere* from which we have our credible. That's done over against statements made. The

other one was the verb of *fidere* from which we have our "fiancee". That means over against a person. You trust a person. Which one of these two is Christian faith? Is it one, or is it the other? My answer is, "It's the two in combination with one another."

In taking a word to heart, you have taken a person to heart. Isn't it interesting that when John was trying to tell the story of Jesus Christ, he said, "In the beginning was the word, and the word became flesh."

Dave: *Leonard, I understand that you are working on another book, My Fellow Heretics. Do you want to give us just a glimpse of the issues you are discussing in that?*

Leonard: It is pretty much the same field. I try to show first what kind of a creature man is. Then I want to try to show what the early Church was like. I try to show what happened in the days of Constantine. I show what happened in the life of Luther and what happened in the life of Zwingli and the life of Calvin. There was one individual in the Reformation times, the author of the Belgic Confession, who seems to have been brought up in the underground Church. He talked like one. He never went through the second conversion. To the end of his days, he said, "What's happening now, that we are joining up with the nobles and establishing a new Christian society, is going in the wrong direction." That's the way he died.

Otherwise, all the Reformers went through two conversions. First away from the meaningless religion of which the air was full, to the religion of the underground Church. When they saw how expensive that was, they turned around and said, "We'll make a Protestant version of the thing." And that's what we got out of the Reformation. Don't get too excited about it because it's all past history anyway.

Dave: *On this particular series we are talking with leaders who are calling the Church back into more of a laity-based ministry, in other words, seeing the Church begin to not focus on the Sunday gatherings*

where we all come together weekly and meet in big buildings, but come back to much more of a intimate, accountable, covenantal, relational type of meetings. Do you see that as a positive thing, perhaps a new type of Reformation or a new type of underground Church emerging in North America?

Leonard: Well, I have talked about making a circle out of the ellipse, correcting things. And corrections are almost always over-corrections. I would even say that Anabaptism was an over correction in some ways. I am inclined to think that the highly systematized religion that we had in the past in which we have certain people who wear a uniform, they are the ones who have received the new ability to procreate on the spiritual level.

By the way, it was an interesting fact—I say this in brackets—that when they got this equipment for begetting on the spiritual level, they were supposed to sign off on the other level, the physical level and not have any physical children. If I read the record correctly, they sometimes kept them both—spiritual and physical begetting. So I'm afraid of a vulgarizing of Christianity.

I don't think that you can have any movement that doesn't have an organization, even the camera club. You've got to have somebody who takes the presiding seat, who calls the meeting, a treasurer, a secretary. You've got to meet in groups. I don't want to go along and say that Christianity was meant to be a gab fest. I'm very scared of that.

Dave: Well, there's something of a distinction between a "gab fest" and a group of committed believers who have made the decision that they can gather like the 1st century did and like the 2nd century did with full participation, either in homes or in other buildings.

The Church is in a transition here in America right now. In closing, I would like to get your thoughts on what would be a positive direction for the American Church to move toward.

Leonard: Well, there is no doubt

about it that the face-to-face intimacy is of the nature of things. I also believe that if we could really cleanse ourselves of all the remnants of the past, of the State church concept, the concept of ecumenism would immediately be helped. We remain apart largely because of political background. If you are Lutheran, you are almost certain know a little German or a little Scandinavian. If you are a Calvinist, you can speak Dutch. It's those things that have really kept us apart as much as anything.

I also believe that if Christians come together, having felt the hostility of the world all day long, then when they get together, they are not very likely to begin to fight with each other. Ecumenism will be fed if we can get rid of the concept of Christendom and as groups of Christians who have met up with the opposition of the religious world—religious in the unbelieving way—I haven't met people who began to quarrel right away about a theological item, about church government and all that who have all day been in contact with an unbelieving world. It's the kind who don't know that experience, who when they get together, begin to scrap with each other. Just assume, as you accept the concept of a false church, you have got to be careful about divisions.

You know the story about the Scotchman. There was a division in Scotland, and it seemed they were going to have another one. A guy was sitting with his wife one evening and said, "Mandy, we are going to have another split in the Church. I don't think we can stop it any more. It's gone so far." He spit in the fireplace and said, "Mandy, the time may come when you and I are the true church, and all the rest is false church." And he spit in the fireplace one more time and said, "Mandy, there are times when I have my doubts about you."

That's the way it goes if you haven't been fighting with the unbelieving world, then you are going to fight about something else when you get together. You don't have to be careful about theology. I am very much insistent on clear-cut theology, the Person of Christ for instance. It

wasn't just another Abraham Lincoln. You must know why not, and you must talk about it—plenty.

Dave: In Isaiah 26:9, it says, "When judgment comes, it teaches people righteousness." Do you think there is a certain Providential element—that when God applies pressure to the Church, it purifies it?

That maybe a dose of external persecution may be what is needed for a Church that has largely been watered down and divided and bickered and not focused on Christ to get its act together—do you think that may be in store for us in America?

Leonard: Oh, I don't doubt for one minute that there is a lot of Christianity in America that if Paul would come back to life, he would say, "What in the world is going on here?"

You take for instance, this self evaluation theology [that says] you've got to have a high opinion of yourself. I heard an Indian on the reservation come back at a speaker who said, "One of the worst things is that we have a low evaluation of ourselves. We've got to get proud of ourselves."

The Indian said, "I read in the Bible about a man who misbehaved against a woman. And the priest told them about a real bad guy. The man who had sinned against the woman said, 'Who in the world is this guy? He deserves to be killed.' The prophet pointed to him and said, 'That's you.' " What happened to the man's self evaluation? I think this is a piece of theology that does more harm than good.

Every Christian has to have moments when he says, "God have mercy on me, a miserable sinner." At least that's the way it starts.

I said that all the dirty words they invent for Christians are all compliments. The word *sect*, for instance, is meant to be very humiliating. It's terrible to be a member of a sect. The word *sect* comes from a Latin word that means "to follow."

It's interesting that the Church

which I've called Christendom tried to bring that word *sect* from the word *sacaro*, which means to cut, namely the Body of Jesus, the Church. You are cutting the Church. No, it comes from a Latin word that means "to follow."

There was a heretic on examination during the Middle Ages who was accused of being a sectarian. He said, "Sure I am a sectarian. I follow Jesus Christ." He knew the meaning of the word. The word is a compliment.

**Dave:** *We live in a society where we need to learn to define our terms, don't we? Thank you so much, Leonard.*

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## Mark Virkler — Communion with God Ministries

**Dave:** *We are discussing the emerging five-fold ministry and how team ministry can be facilitated in the local church. Mark Virkler has authored dozens of study guides and books discussing what God is doing in the Church and how you can get into the flow of it. He has a complete learning curriculum called the Lamode Lifelong Learning: An Exciting Creativity Curriculum for Today's Christian Where Learning Is Doing. Mark and his wife, Patty, and their children live outside of Buffalo, New York.*

*He received his Bachelor of Arts from Roberts Wesleyan College and his Masters of Divinity and Doctor of Bible and Theology from Miami Bible Institute. Mark was raised a Conservative Baptist, educated a Free Methodist, and influenced and trained by Catholic and Protestant Charismatic teachers. Thus, Mark's theology and ministry bears the marks of a unique blending of these traditions. This illustrates the curriculum we will be discussing, where what God is doing can be seen as inclusive, a both/and, not an either/or situation.*

*From the introduction of your book dealing with the dynamic five-fold team ministry, I am reading, "The stage is set for God to usher in an amazing breakthrough in leadership style. The pattern has been out there all the time, but we have not seen it. It is the five-fold, team leadership style delineated in Ephesians 4: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher." Mark, when we talk about this, some feel that Christianity has been chugging along on two or three pistons, which is enough to mow the grass but not move mountains. Tell us about seeing the five-fold ministry arise, so we can equip the Body to spread the Gospel and disciple the nations.*

**Mark:** I think you are very correct. We have been chugging along on two or three pistons. We have had the

evangelists with us, and whenever we have had a person in church leadership who we have called a pastor, regardless of whether he was a prophet, evangelist, or teacher, we always tried to get those gifts to function in a prescribed role that we defined for pastors. In reality, many of these men have not been pastors. I got saved when I was fifteen and went into the pastoral ministry, and I was never a pastor. I started out as an evangelist, and then became a teacher in the Body of Christ. Although I served in the role as a pastor, I never really was a pastor. Now I am out of pastoring, and I



would be glad to serve in a church leadership team as a teacher.

I believe what God is going to do is restore the elders in the local churches the same as Paul did wherever he established churches. In First Timothy he established elders—plural—over the group, and it was then called a Church. It was not called a Church until then. It seems that the elders are composed of what Paul called the five-fold team in Ephesians 4:11. If a church is run by a team of those five ministries, you end up with counsel that is much broader in scope, with the whole heart of God ministering to that local congregation rather than just a part of God's heart ministering. Now traditionally, we have evangelistic churches where the pastor is in fact an evangelist, and they focus on evangelism. Then we have some teaching churches

with a teacher serving as a pastor, or some headed up by apostles, which usually are very much into architectural design, building usually huge churches that are very structured and organized. It seems that the pastor will take his heart motivation and build that particular congregation around that. So on a Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m., you can go to churches in America and find those heart motivations manifested.

I believe God is bringing us to the day when we are going to see all five heart motivations manifested in a typical Sunday morning service. It is going to be an exciting day because it will not be a lop sided program or ministry but one that expresses all five heart motivations in one service.

**Dave:** *I know that an integral part of your message to the Church is the restoration of the relationship with God. In the earlier part of the series, we dealt with the early Church and some of the blunders made under Constantine. As a result of the Reformation, the Body of Christ splintered and fragmented. Could you share your views on why we need the solid Biblical worldview, on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, the close, intimate relationship with Christ?*

**Mark:** In New Testament times, they sent out teams of prophets and teachers. This is recorded several times in the Book of Acts. The teacher will tend to be more an analytical, structured sort of person, while the prophet will be more the visionary, intuitive type. Rather than trying to make the prophet into a thinker, a three-point-sermon, hermeneutical type of guy, it seems better to team the prophet with the teacher, and let them go out together so each can do what they are called and gifted to do.

I remember hearing Paul Cain, a tremendous prophet in my

ation, prophesy, and I have had him try to teach. Typically he is not a three-point, structured preacher/teacher. The church was able to encourage and perhaps force him to major on his gifting of prophecy. Before that, he would preach, and by the time he was finished, he would be too tired to prophesy. Whereas, when a person is operating in his gifting, he can go on for hours and hours. So if you put a person into a mold that is not his, he will be exhausted in no time.

**My goal is to put up a church team with people around leaders who complement the heart motivation of the leader and let each one on the team function out of their heart motivation also. This will minister tremendous life because it is coming from the gift that God has placed within them.**

*Dave: Take a moment to lay out some of the heart motivations you see for the five-fold ministry.*

**Mark: One of the words that is used for the apostle is *architect* in Greek. We know what the work of the architect is. He looks after the structural design. He has a heart for the whole building. Others approach the building as specialists. The apostle establishes the foundations and is concerned about the organization and that every part is there and fully and adequately expressed.**

The prophet has a heart for creative, inspirational flow. He is in a dream-vision-prophecy flow and is a seer who can communicate divine vision. He may be a prophetic worship leader, a person who prophesies, but also he could be a prophetic artist or musician. The prophet will be responsible in the Sunday morning service for the voice of God brought in, that the sense of God's presence is there.

The evangelist has a heart for the unsaved. He just wants to see them won to God, so he is out there making sure there is an altar call every Sunday morning. There is no way he

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

will ever close a service without giving an altar call.

The teacher is the one who wants to train. He is going to be sure that there is good, organized training that happens during the Sunday morning service, that meat has been put on the platter for those who are growing.

The pastor is the one who has a heart for the sheep. He just loves people. He is going to make sure that, as people come and leave, they will feel loved, warmed, and cared for, and that their needs have been touched and met.

Each one of those five people are bringing to the service a different heart motivation, and they are asking questions out of those heart motivations and making sure that those questions get answered during a typical service.

At the close of the meeting, if you have an elder's meeting, which is for people with these five heart motivations, each will ask different questions. We have even created a worksheet by which they can evaluate the Sunday morning service to make sure that all the parts are there.

The evangelist will ask questions like, "How many got saved? How many were filled with the Spirit and was there a strong sense of joy and celebration?"

The pastor will ask, "Did the people get healed, emotionally and spiritually? Was there a place for the prayer ministry where we could lay hands on people so they could feel the touch and warmth of God? Did we greet people at the door, and were the people built up in love?"

The prophet will ask, "Was there the free, mature flow of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the service? Was there a strong life flow in the worship? Could you feel the vibrancy of God there? Was there a strong sense of faith present?"

A teacher will ask, "Was the sermon practical and clear, and did it challenge the people? Were the people who professed faith followed up?"

The apostle will ask, "Was the service orderly? Was it balanced and free from the spirit of control? Were the tithes and offerings good? Are the Church needs being met and the building cared for?" So if you have an elder's meeting and you are working your way through a worksheet like that on a weekly basis, what you are basically doing is making sure that the whole heart of God is being expressed on a weekly basis.

Or, if it is a home cell group, you could evaluate it on the same basis to be sure that you have the presence of the five-fold ministries present in the meetings. **No longer are we then one sided in our Christianity. We are making sure that we have the whole heart of God expressed in our home cell groups and Sunday morning services. If a church will do that, then I believe they grow in ways that they dreamed of before.**

*Dave: There comes a time when we lay aside the ways of the child and move toward maturity. So are you saying that if you try to come into maturity without the full five-fold ministries at work in your church, you are greatly limiting yourself?*

**Mark: Absolutely! We the Church have never taken the time to identify the heart motivations in people. One of the things we have produced here in the book, *Discovering Your Heart Motivation*, is a 45-question test, which helps you evaluate the heart motivation that God has placed in you because we assume that heart motivation is placed in everyone. In Ephesians 4:7, it says, "To each one of us grace is given according to the measure of Christ's gift." The focus in that is that each one of us has grace. Thus, in verse 11, the grace is that some would be apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers. So these verses tie together and**



establish the fact that each member of the Body is given one of these motivations or gifts. These can be identified in our classrooms by having the people take tests such as we make available. You can help people begin to function in their motivations and to grow in them, and eventually some of them will become leaders on the team in the Church. Some will find their place in the home cell group or even in their own family. This can be a great help within a family to know what motivation or gift each member of the family has and how this affects the interaction.

I have worked in churches with all kinds of leadership structure. I have worked in democracies where each person has one vote, so a Christian two weeks old could vote out a senior pastor who had been there 25 years. I saw that that was not right. I have also worked under a structure where there was a one man rule, a dictatorship. It may have been a benevolent dictatorship, but it sure was not a five-fold team.

The Bible says, "In the multitude of counselors there is safety." It also says, "Prepare plans by consultation." So the Bible is big on "two or three witnesses." The one-man rule is not what you find in the New Testament. But, on the other hand, democracy is not what you find, either. We tried other things, such as boards of control, committee meetings, and such, and none worked well. Of course, there is also the denominational structure, which can speak into a situation, and with one man leading a whole church, it can go amok in a hurry. Whereas, with five people, with five different heart motivations, it has all the opportunity to go a long, long way.

I do not think we have really tried running a local church with an elder team, with the character qualifications for elders taken from Timothy and Titus, and where there was a mature expression of the five motivations. I am not aware of that ever being done in a local church. I believe we are going to find that it

works tremendously well.

**Dave:** *Of course, the Bible gives us a picture of an infant Church, and we have to fill in the blanks as it matured. But from your perspective, do you think that is the kind of team ministry we saw functioning in the first 200 to 300 years of the Church?*

**Mark:** I clearly think that was taught in the Book of Ephesians, and I think I see the pattern in the Book of Acts. The only place we see a clear pattern for church leadership is in Ephesians 4:11, and yet it is the only one that we have not truly seen in action yet. I have tried a half dozen others, so I am going on to try this one for the next 10 years. I have a suspicion that it will work better than all the rest.

**Dave:** *Can you give us an example of a local church where it is functioning successfully?*

**Mark:** I am not sure that I can. The book is about six months old, and to me it came as revelation. So I wrote about what I think should be. Currently, I travel full time on the road and am not a member of a leadership team. I have started a church in the past, and I may in the future. If I do, I will definitely try it.

**Dave:** *I know it takes time for these things to seep in. Jesus said that the one thing that would limit the power of God would be the traditions of men, usually religious traditions. What kind of responses are you getting from typical CEO-type pastors as you share these things with them? Are they open, are they fighting you, or are they resonating with you?*

**Mark:** I was in Toronto with John R. Knott in a Vineyard Church. He wanted a copy of the book because his heart really hungered for it. He sought to set up that kind of structure and now has it functioning. Whether it is laid out according to my book or not is irrelevant, but philosophically he is functioning in this way. John has started ten

churches in that area. He not trying to protect his position. He is not insecure, which is one of the biggest problems we have in the pastorate, the need to be secure to protect our job and pay checks. We need to help pastors get beyond that.

Our ministry looks for creative ways to fund ministries. We have found ways to fund putting five people on staff, so that takes care of part of the main objection that people might lose their job, authority, or position. We fund ministry through business, which is one way to take care of the money. As far as losing authority, our book suggests consensus-making, where each presents his or her case as forcefully as possible and then let each one in the group do the same. But the decision is not to move until all five heart motivations have been heard, honored, met, and received in the meeting. When they have been, and all the concerns of the five have been met, then you are ready to go for it. I believe it can happen, but some healing will have to take place. Of course, funding must be taken care of. Paul used tent making, and I am not opposed to that at all because it gets me out in the world and keeps me in touch with what is going on. I was in the pastorate for 25 years, but I am working in the business world for half the week.

**Dave:** *The 1990s are requiring some new wineskins, and I think your book presents a clearly articulated Scriptural case for plurality of leadership, for how a team can function. It also has worksheets to help you function, whether you are in leadership or not, and to discover what your heart motivation is. Isn't that the whole purpose of the five-fold ministry, to prepare people for ministry?*

**Mark:** Yes, to help you function in the ministry that God has prepared you to function in. When you have a lay person saying, "I want to go to work," we first find out what his or her heart motivation or gift is. Then when we find out how God has built them, we can better see where they fit in so they can express their true

gifting of God. When you put a round peg in a round hole, it is beautiful, but when you get a round peg in a square hole, they are angry, mad, rebellious, and the thing falls apart. So we do not just offer any job to any person. We first found out how God has made them and then offer the best job for them.

The Japanese corporations are doing this now. When God speaks something into the atmosphere, I believe that anyone who listens will hear it worldwide. When you are hired by a Japanese corporation, the first week is spent in psychological testing, trait testing, etc., to find out what your abilities are. Then they put you in a job that is best for you. This kind of leadership is called "synthetic" leadership in different parts of the world.

The Israeli Air Force uses this type of leadership. They pick the person on the team who has had the most experience with that particular situation. It is not one person who leads at all times, but the person who has the most experience leads in that area. So, in a five-fold ministry team, if it comes to evangelism, the evangelist would be expected to take the lead in bringing what the group needs. Or if it is discipling, then the teacher will be expected to hear from God and bring forth to the group leadership on how to disciple the congregations better. When leadership works as a team, there is much evidence to show that you can go much further than when you try to do it alone.

**Dave:** *The kind of problems we face in the coming decades will require real team leadership. There are fears some have about it, but for the days ahead there is strong evidence it will be required. In one chapter you write about mastering communication skills, and we all know that this is a common need. You talk about metanoic alignment, from the Greek word that means "reawaking of vision, an institution." What about this?*

**Mark:** It is an alignment that happens when everyone feels that he or she is working at full capacity, in sync with everyone around them, and things are coming together on cue. It was not even planned, but everyone is operating in their giftedness, and it just happens. There is an energy you feel because you are doing what you love to do, and you are being complemented by those around you. The American environment does not provide for that to happen very often.

I worked for seven years on a staff of 13 pastors at a Full Gospel Tabernacle, and I felt that alignment because I was allowed to be a teacher on staff. I taught in their Bible school. I was dean of students and director of development. I wrote 30 books or so while I was there, and man, that was a life flow! The areas that were weak, in business and pastoral care, were taken care of by others on the staff. They gave their part, and I gave my part. It was electric! What I did was beyond my ability. My ministry went world wide as a result of that, and it was because I was in sync.

**Anyone who has had that and loses it will spend the rest of his life looking for it. I believe that is what we can find by working in a five-fold ministry team. So I am very excited to see that happen in the Church. It will take care of burnout, which happens basically because I am working in a job that I am not suited to work in. If you are doing what you love to do, you can work all week and never experience burnout because there is a life flow. If you are not, then you are up a creek.**

**Dave:** *The good news is that the Church is being restored. We are recovering the Genesis mandate to take dominion over all areas of life as well as the Great Commission mandate. You also feel that Ephesians 4:11 is a mandate as well. Could you speak to that for a moment?*

**Mark:** It was not a suggestion that we might want to set this up or that it was a good idea. It says, "God has established in the Church these things. . . ." If God has established them in the Church, then it is up to us to identify what He has already established. We do not have to make this happen. It is already there. Identify what is in the hearts of the believers and call that forth and make it a working principle by which our Church operates.

**Dave:** *Cell church, meta-church, open church, house church—these are words that are beginning to cross the lips of almost every traditional CEO, top-down, structured church pastor in this country and have already touched countries around the world. Do you see this as another fad or the other half of the equipping of the saints? You have a whole study book on how to set up and run a home cell group. Speak to the importance of that—and if you see this as a model for restoring covenant relationships in community that will not be accomplished typically on Sunday morning.*

**Mark:** I do see this model. It is in the Book of Acts. There are two things in that book. One, in Acts 20:20 Paul says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you everything that was profitable and declaring to you publicly and from house to house." There were two basic locations that the early Church used. One was public, and the other was from house to house. That is also found in Acts 2:37. So from both ends of the Book of Acts you have the two settings for the Church to operate in. I believe in those two settings. I believe different things happen in each setting, and we need both of them. I recommend that everyone go to one public meeting a week and one home, small care group every week to receive the two ministries that each offer.

The five-fold ministry team can operate in both, the large and the small group meeting.

**Dave:** *Your "Lamad" learning method comes from the Hebrew concept that we learn from doing as well as hearing. Tell us a little of what you have in the curriculum?*

**Mark:** We have a curriculum package that takes people from salvation to functioning in one of the five-fold ministries. It covers a course on salvation, baptism, mentoring, communing with God, living naturally and supernaturally, how to live in the anointing, dream interpretation, plus eight quarters of going through the whole Bible. We have a course on the Holy Spirit, caring for the body, marriage, communication skills, and contemporary issues. When you get to the five-fold ministry stage, we give you two full courses on two of the five areas and team you up with a mentor to help you. It can be used in Sunday schools, church-centered Bible schools, and home cell groups, and is all transferable to a Bachelor's Degree from a couple of universities. Thus, it provides a tremendous resource that a pastor can draw from if he is looking for adult level curriculum.

**Dave:** *You touched on women in ministry. There is the traditional view that basically says, "Sit down and shut up," or the feminist view that would say, "Women can do anything men can, and better." But there seems to be a view emerging, saying that both men and women can find a place of public ministry, but it needs to be done in an orderly fashion. Share your view of women in ministry and especially women in teaching?*

**Mark:** I grew up in a very authoritarian home, and I have mellowed out considerably. Pastor Cho uses a lot of women in home cell groups as leaders, and he says it's not a violation of women teaching men because they are under his authority and are an extension of him. As long as women are operating under his covering, it is all right to use them as leaders in home cell groups.

I am open to that position. I think the key issue is usurping authority, and if a woman is not doing that, I do not have a problem with it. My wife is a smarter woman than I am, and she is more intuitive. She hears the voice of God more easily. So I receive tremendous value from her. It is a gift to receive from her, and I do and that is why we put her name on all our books as the co-author. There are many lists in the New Testament that do include women in prominent ministry. I have no problem with a woman helping to teach. Priscilla and Aquila were a team, and the woman is listed first. In the Oriental culture, whoever is listed first is taking the lead. So it is obvious in this case that the woman was taking the lead, but it was a husband and wife team working together.

As long as there is not a spirit of control, which goes for men as well. I would not receive ministry from men, either, if they had the spirit of control. So as long as the spirit is proper, and the woman is operating under a multitude of counselors, as all men should operate under a multitude of counselors, I do not have a problem receiving from them if they are gifted and operating under the area of giftedness.

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## Peter Wagner — Church Planting for a Greater Harvest

**Dave:** Church Planting for a Greater Harvest is written by Dr. C. Peter Wagner, who is the professor of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary School of Missions. Peter was educated at Rutgers University and received his doctorate from Princeton, a Master of Divinity from Fuller, and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. He has authored over thirty books, two of which are Your Church Can Grow and Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help You Grow.

*You have said that planting churches is the most effective form of evangelism under heaven. We have tried many ways. Do you think we are coming to the place where we see church planting and multiplication as the only way we can fulfill the Great Commission?*

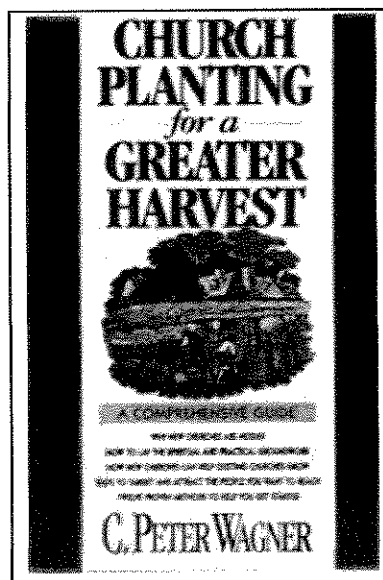
**Peter:** The statement about church planting being the best form of evangelism is not a statement for the future but of the past. Wherever the Church has grown, it has grown through the multiplication of churches, which includes the United States. Churches that have grown in the U.S. have been churches that have aggressively planted new churches. Denominations that have stagnated are those that began to cut back on planting new churches. This is a matter of fact.

**Dave:** Did you write this book for that hardy group of pastors who want to get involved in planting? Is it a call to do church planting, or is it a how-to book for those already in the process?

**Peter:** It is for both. More and more, people are beginning to understand that this is a fact of life. They are beginning to ask the questions of why and how should we plant churches. When I wrote the book, many denominations were planting churches and projecting new churches. The Southern Baptists are one of the more aggressive denominations to plant new

churches, averaging one new church per day, and have for years. That is one of the major reasons they are the largest Protestant denomination in America.

There are many who desire to plant churches, but strangely enough there are very few seminaries that have actually taught their students how to plant new churches. I started teaching it at Fuller in the mid '70s and found out that it had not been taught previously. My students were so interested that we started doing a seminar with it in the early '80s



with the Fuller Institute. That was the bread-and-butter seminar for us during the '80s, so I put down in this book what I had been teaching in the seminars since I do not teach it anymore.

There are many people out there who are assigned to plant churches, and they want help. But also, the mainline denominations who have been in decline for almost thirty years are beginning to wake up to the fact that one of the reasons they are declining is because they are not planting new churches. Some of them are reinstating church planting in their denominational long range planning. So they are also looking for this kind of information.

**Dave:** Are you talking about planting churches overseas or here in the states?

**Peter:** This book is focused just on the United States.

**Dave:** So the idea that "bigger is better" may be called into question? Is the megachurch part of the downside on the relational aspect of the faith? Are we looking at cell groups as a better model?

**Peter:** The question of large churches versus small churches to me is a both/and, not either/or. I think there is tremendous ministry being done through large churches. But the problem of the large church is that they require a certain kind of skilled and gifted leadership, which make them function well and minister to the people who are in them, and there are not that many of those kind of leaders around. Actually, 80 per cent of the churches in America are under 200 members, and this is where most of the action is. Thus, small churches are very important. Statistics show that new, small churches grow faster than others. New churches grow faster than old churches, and small churches grow faster than large churches. So planting new churches gives us an ongoing supply of new, small churches, which have the highest potential for growth.

**Dave:** Looking in history a bit, the problem we see is with professionalism, spectatorism, and institutionalism. What is your view about what was accomplished in the Reformation and what is the need for an ongoing Reformation in terms of a recapturing what was going on in the early Church and in terms of the priesthood of believers becoming a reality, not just an ideal, so that all the members of the Body are equipped and led to find their active place in the Body of Christ?

**Peter:** Martin Luther and John Calvin rediscovered the priesthood

of all believers. In their mind, the application of that was in reforming the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church the theology was that the ordinary person, in order to get to God, had to have a priest. So Martin Luther accurately saw that people could come to God by themselves and have direct access to God. God could forgive their sins without a priest to be an intermediary. That is a lasting, positive legacy that we received from the Reformation.

However, what Luther and Calvin never saw, or even John Wesley, was the ministry of all believers. You do not find that at all in any of the Reformation theology. The fact that God gifts and equips all the members of the Body of Christ, not just the clergy, to do the work of ministry was not seen. Therefore, although they rediscovered the theology of the priesthood of all believers, they did not reform the clericalism of the Catholic Church. Thus, clericalism has persisted throughout history, and it is only recently that the Church around the world is beginning to discover the ministry of all the believers.

**Dave:** *At what point do you see this new restoration taking off? Is there a watershed event? You mentioned on a 700 Club program that you felt Ray Stedman's book, *Body Life*, published in 1972, had been the #1 turning point in the 20th century restoration of lay-involvement in ministry.*

**Peter:** The way I reconstruct the recent scenario is that God wanted to begin to do this with the Pentecostal movement at the beginning of our century, but because the rest of the Church did not have a theological grid to interpret what was going on with all these supernatural gifts coming forth, the Church just declared them heretics. You can go into our Fuller Seminary library and find books that list Pentecostal right next to Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, etc. Now we sit back and wonder about that because it is no longer our mentality. Then the Charismatic

movement came along and started talking about spiritual gifts in the early '60s, but they quickly developed the reputation for splitting churches. Part of the reason for this was that, while they believed that all believers have spiritual gifts and should use them, they made two mistakes. One, they took too narrow a list of gifts, which was only the First Corinthians 12 list of gifts, and secondly, they divided the Body of Christ by teaching a kind of baptism of the Holy Spirit, which manifested itself in certain gifts that created categories of first class and second class Christians. So with churches being split, mainline evangelicalism rejected the Charismatic as well.

It was in 1972, when Ray Stedman wrote his book, *Body Life*. Ray, being a pedigreed evangelical, said that gifts of the Spirit were okay. When the rest of us read that and began to believe it, what he was doing became an irreversible model. He was having services on Sunday night where the believers were leading and participating in ministry. We cannot go back to straight clericalism because of what Ray Stedman and others have given us.

**Dave:** *There are a number of models internationally that are working. The house church in the U.S.A. is perceived as being in competition with the traditional church. Do you see them converging at some point or running parallel and continuing to talk badly about each other?*

**Peter:** Maybe some would consider them competition, but if house churches are churches, then they are churches. They are just as much an alternate church as one that meets in a church building. I personally see the house church movement increasing in the U.S.A., but not as an either/or alternative to the more traditional church. I think for the next two hundred years we are going to see both of them.

**Dave:** *Do you see the possibility of God applying enough pressure on*

*churches in a given city where they begin to identify themselves as the church of that city? For example, on the prayer front, pastors are gathering for prayer. Do you see the possibility for a citywide celebration of the Church and there being unity on facing specific issues?*

**Peter:** I think so. I believe this is a definite sign of our times of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. I think focus of our evangelism around the world is going to be increasing in the cities. What God is showing us and what many people are picking up now is that there is a church of the city. I like Francis Frangipane's book, *The House of The Lord*, where he talks about the church of the city.

I believe He is raising up certain people as elders of the city to bring the Body of Christ together. Other than prayer, this is what the enemy fears the most. They go together, for as God's people come together in prayer, that is the most potent weapon that we have against the principalities and powers of darkness. This is actually happening, not as rapidly as some of us wish it would, but it is definitely a trend.

I am convinced that God's will for the city is not a new ecumenical movement, a new ministerial alliance, or organizational forms for the Church, but respecting the individuality of each church or denomination or cluster of churches in the city. Yet those churches in spiritual unity in functions like Marches for Jesus, Concerts of Prayer, and city wide evangelism crusades with mutual respect and support is what we will see God doing more and more in our cities.

**Dave:** *In Jim Rutz's book, *The Open Church*, he is making a case for taking some of the dynamic that takes place in a cell group such as everyone sharing and participating. Do you think that is something that can take place in the larger celebration gathering of the congregation, or is that appropriate?*

**Peter:** This is the sort of thing that

the Plymouth Brethren have experimented with throughout their history. This is what Ray Stedman was doing. It is not a new idea. I do not know of any group who did it more than the Plymouth Brethren, and their movement never grew, never took off. So we need to look back into history and allow the past to predict the future.

*Dave: Would you give us an overview of the high points of what you present in your book as twelve ways to plant a church, especially as it applies to church multiplication, of churches and larger churches planting sister churches?*

**Peter:** I purposely named that section of the book, "Twelve Good Ways," because many people think I am just going to tell them how best to do it. There is no one formula that I know to plant a church. There are many ways that so far have worked in different times and places under different styles of leadership. But the two major classifications are: modality, which means the new church is planted from the parent congregation starting a new church. The sodality model means that they started by some sort of agency such as a home mission board or a denominational agency.

A very common way is for a local church to challenge a group of members to go off and form a nucleus of a new church. This is very feasible, and I think the most effective way for a church to evangelize a city is for a church to grow to around 200 or 250 and then split fifty members off and have them start a new one, and then to have the original congregation grow back to 200-250 and split off another group. In the meantime, the fifty grow and eventually do the same. This is an extremely effective way to evangelize the city.

However, experience has shown that it takes a lot of energy and takes more energy than most Christian leaders are able to sustain over once or twice. Another method is colonization, in which a group of

people actually move from one city to another. I know of a group that has done this. Then there is the concept of the satellite churches, where one large church spins off a whole series of smaller, satellite churches, but the senior pastor of the large church remains the pastor for all the churches. Each has its own functional pastoral leaders as well.

Then we have Rich Wordon with Saddleback Community Church, who has planted over 15 churches over the last 12 years. He does it by simply recruiting a church planter in his church. He trains him, raises initial finances from his own church, sends the person out a good distance from the supporting congregation, and helps that church for a year or two. So there are many ways that it can be done.

*Dave: We need to see the small and large working together and redefine success with more of an emphasis on quality instead of quantity. What do you see coming down the road in the twenty-first century? Also, do you see a relationship between our theology, especially having a Biblical worldview, and our ecclesiology?*

**Peter:** Yes, I do, but that is a long answer. As a closing statement, I would like to focus on number one, we have a rather disturbing situation in the United States. We have not seen a sociologically significant segment of our population come to Christ since the Jesus People Movement. A good bit of the church growth that has taken place over the last two decades has been transfer growth, rather than conversion growth. I do not mean that no one has been saved, but not significant segments of our population.

So we have an incredible task in this country to win non-Christian people to Jesus Christ. Thus, as we think of evangelizing our country, planting churches, and the various forms of our churches, I think that we need to build into all that an increasing burden for evangelism. I feel that one of the keys to that is

prayer in our community. As the Christian leaders in our communities join together in intelligent, targeted, warfare prayer, we are going to see the principalities and powers moved so much that the god of this age is not going to blind people's minds as much as he has been, and we are going to see significant numbers of non-Christians come to Jesus Christ and then be flooded into whatever kinds of churches. So in summary, I want to stress prayer and evangelism.

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## Jack Wallace — Watchmen in the Homes

**Dave:** *Jack Wallace is one of the pastors from Phoenix First Assembly of God Church who has labored for many years serving there. Phoenix First is one of the largest, fastest growing churches in America, where Tommy Barnett is the senior pastor. It is known as a church with a heart that reaches out into the community with over 140 ministries. This church was highlighted in the book, The Open Church, as one that practices open ministry.*

*Has your background and education largely been the school of hard knocks?*

**Jack:** That's about the only education that is worthwhile. I have had a seminary education, but it is trial and error praying, learning, and adjusting yourself to different demographic groups and kinds of people and cities. Some have been very blessed from the Lord also.

**Dave:** *Since I have known you, you have ministered the Word in power and anointing, and right now the Lord is opening new doors for you, which may be characteristic of what God is doing in the entire Body of Christ. You headed up the Watchman Program, which divided the city up into square mile blocks and sought to find leaders to host home meetings.*

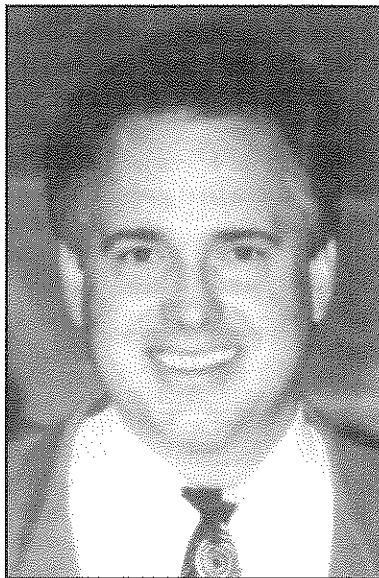
**Jack:** Basically, our church was growing so quickly that it was literally out of control. We had thousands of people being added to the church yearly, hundreds weekly. Pastor Barnett and I recognized that there had to be a system of accountability and a way to keep track of these people. It has always been my heart, as I know it is most pastor's, that we are not responsible for reaching the city. It is the people of God who have to get excited to do that.

As an evangelistic Christian, before I was with First Assembly, I was very good at getting people motivated to go out and win their city for God, but I gave them no formula, no plan, no direction, or no road map to do it. They broke down the doors of the church to get out and win people for

Jesus, but it was "helter-skelter," like firing a shotgun. The Church has done a lot of shotgun blasting and not enough target shooting.

So what we felt we needed to do at First Assembly was to create a ministry where the people were the most important aspect of it and where it was reaching out to the people in their neighborhoods.

To back up a little bit, I had the vision before coming to First Assembly that, if we divided a geographical area up into small enough pieces so that even a young



Christian would feel comfortable and confident, that he could accomplish the task set before him. Often as a Church we say, "Win the world!" But the average person does not even own a globe. Their viewpoint of the world spans time zones, dialects, and such. So, what we decided to do was like cutting a pie and inviting people to eat a piece instead of the whole pie. What we did was divide Phoenix up into over 300 hundred square miles. Our goal was to put a leader into each of the 300 areas. Subsequently the members of the church in that area would be under the leader's guidance and care. He would keep track of the people in his square mile. What if we had one hundred members in that square mile? Then we would find ten leaders.

Some people called it home groups, and others, cell ministries. I would like to say it was simply a New Testament pattern for the Church—they met house to house. Cell groups in this country have not met with the greatest of success. I think we are a different type of society than Korea, which is the modern home of the cell group. The United States has not done a good enough job with the cell groups. They are important, vital, and crucial to the growth of the Church and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God on earth. We really do not have a choice for it is a Biblical mandate to win the lost and provide a nurturing environment for their upbringing.

In my opinion, the Church on Sunday should be a pep rally, a time of motivation, a time for the believers to gather and worship the Lord and give something back to the Lord for all they have received during the week. The offering of praise and worship is so important for the difficulties of life today. It blesses me to corporately worship the Lord.

I also believe there needs to be a time of preaching the Word, slanted toward encouraging the Saints to fight the good fight and reach out in their neighborhood. "The attention goes where the power flows." I do not know who coined that phrase, but whatever the pastor gets behind, that is where the people will go. That is really the key to the success of the home ministry. The pastor at large must encourage the saints to be involved and make it the main thrust of the Church. It cannot be a secondary, third, or fourth area of ministry.

Evangelism must be number one in any church, so naturally the people must be encouraged, motivated, and taught. They need to be given a program or ministry direction in order to accomplish that goal. A lot of times we tell people to do something, but we do not tell them how. We need to instruct the people, divide them up, show them their piece of the pie, and then give them a fork and tell them to go to work.

That's it in a nutshell.

**Dave:** *What you mentioned about the pastor getting behind it is truly the key. Leadership comes from the top, but often change comes from the bottom up. When the building is still a focus of the Church, and people are expected to be there every time the doors are open, how do they find time for the cell group? Have you found this to be a problem?*

**Jack:** It certainly is. Something they are looking for in the secular world is flexible work schedules. A lot of people are now working out of homes, and large corporations are handling flexible schedules to make it possible for both members of the household to work. The point is that people are beginning to look at the time crunch. In the Church, pastors tend to be "control freaks." We love to control everything. We want to know where everyone is and what they are doing and talking about. We fail to give them the respect they deserve. We are afraid that, if we put them in a home group, all they will do is badmouth us, or that they will get out of control or start their own church.

The only experience I have comes from First Assembly. There are over a thousand watchman ministers across this country and around the world. Some of the Asian churches took this pattern. I try to take away everyone's excuse, whatever it is, that is keeping them from fulfilling the call of God on their own lives. Take away the church building or corporate movement and ask, "What is God's will for me, as a person who attends this large group?" Pastors need to have faith in the sovereignty of God, that people are better than what we sometimes think and that they can handle more than what we give them.

Of all the home groups and of all the people in leadership there, we have never had anyone go off and start their own church. We have never had an insurrection or split because of a home church. We have had problem people, but I am talking about a movement coming out of a home group created by the Church. On the other hand, people in the groups have had a great zeal to build the church in their neighborhoods. The large church provides a meeting center, a corporate focal point for all

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

the small home groups to come together.

That is what we see in the New Testament Church. When they came together, the place was shaken, and that is exciting! If you start a whole bunch of little fires and then bring them together, all of a sudden people are amazed at how much fire you have. People in a large church cannot have a feel for what is going on in the congregation unless they are in small groups. They hear the news-making events of someone shooting another or a family losing a loved one. But unless they are close enough to look into other people's eyes, they cannot really feel what is happening in people's lives. We make this possible by shrinking it down into a small group. When you bring all these together, then you have true power. If you are not in a small group, you will feel on the fringes, even though you are bodily present in the large group.

**I am almost anti-homogeneous home groups because that puts all the lepers in one colony, all the divorced in another, all the "movers and shakers" in another, etc.** The old people need the young, and the young people, the old. The divorcee needs the happily married couple to know that there are good marriages out there. The guy who has gone through nothing but financial upheaval needs to be in touch with the person who has gone through bankruptcy and carved a new life for himself. But if they only hang around with their own kind, you will have a bitter church that is not going anywhere.

**Dave:** *The kind of church you are describing is moving away from the strong, professionalized pastoral leadership. What would you say to pastors—who have looked at the superstar type of leadership pattern of the megachurch—about moving toward the involvement and empowerment of the laity?*

**Jack:** As far as patterning churches after the so-called superstar church model, Tommy Barnett speaks at conferences, the biggest ones in the world, on how to create a great church. He can do so because he has done it. But what pastors have to be very, very careful of are two things. One, they are not Tommy Barnett,

Jack Hayford, Jack Hyle, or Jerry Falwell. They must be who God has called them to be. God has not called every pastor to pastor a church of 12,000 people.

As pastors, we look at others and think, "He is successful, or he is not successful!" We base success on size. However, God does not base success on size. Some may think that it is easy for me to say that since I had a part in the large growth at Phoenix First. I used to think that was success, but real success is a body of believers who love God and who are not intimidated by the world or its systems. They know who they are in Christ Jesus and do not believe the lies of the world. They can be parked right in the shadow of the largest church in the nation and still feel successful because they are doing exactly what God has called them to do. They are reaching their neighborhood for God in a way that the large church may not be reaching them.

One of the key differences between the small and large congregation has to do with the ability to take chances. If a small church loses one member, it can make a difference in their mission. On the other hand, if a large church loses a dozen or so, it probably will not even be noticed. Therefore, the larger church is in more of a position to take chances. For example, Phoenix First puts on large pageants, which include some choreographed dancing. The world is used to dancing, and it draws them in, whereas, most churches have a hard time dealing with it. But, we use it as a means of reaching non-churched people with the gospel.

You asked how do we give people the liberty to try things? I feel that much of this depends upon the pastor, for the congregation will be a reflection of the pastoral leadership. The pastor of a large church has to keep up his enthusiasm and vision, or the church will stagnate. If the pastor is open and delegating, the congregation will follow suit, be open to new things, pick up responsibilities, and take risks. We fear change—all people do. But I believe the pastor's ultimate responsibility is to release and free the Church to fulfill its own



visions. This will then fulfill the vision of the pastor, which is hopefully to see the entire city changed for the glory of God. If that is not his vision, I do not know why he is in the ministry. Our task requires everyone in the Church, not just the pastor.

There are some mega churches where most of the action is centered around the pastor. They may have a large group on Sunday morning, but most are visitors who are coming for the show more than to become a part of a Body ministry. They enjoy the show and cannot wait to get back for next week's show, but during the week, nothing significant happens in their lives. The church grows because there are many disgruntled Christians who go where the best show is. However, if Christians are happy in the Lord and they are involved in a ministry that is meaningful to them, then they will stay.

One day Pastor Barnett said he wanted me to be responsible for ministry development, "so anyone who wants to start a ministry, I will just send them to you." However, I did not know what I was doing. Someone would become excited to do something so I would say, "Great, go do it!" They might ask, "But, how do I do it?" I would then give a brief run-down, and they would then go out and do it because God told them to do it. If God did not tell them to do it, it would flop. I would not have to kill it. From that we have developed over 140 ministries. They attracted others with a similar vision, raised the money needed, and did what was necessary to get the jobs done. Where these types of ministries are tied with homogeneous home cell groups, you are going to see people moving out to win their neighborhoods and eventually their entire city for God.

If there are failures, much of this failure can be laid on the pastors who did not provide the vehicle for the people to express themselves. Therefore, many churches simply die.

We have many talented people who came from other churches. They came to us because their former church would not let them do the

ministry that was on their hearts. Therefore, they will come to a church where they can fulfill their ministry. This is not sheep stealing. It is going where they can really have their needs met. They must feel they have an opportunity to do their ministry, and if they are servant Christians, they are happy Christians.

*Dave: Phoenix First is an inspirational church. What would you say to those churches who have been focused on the Sunday morning meeting, the sermon, and the traditional mode but who now want to break up into small cell groups? What are some of the obstacles they need to avoid to keep from failing?*

**Jack:** The most obvious reasons for failure of small group ministries within a church is no real leadership or direction from the pulpit. There has to be vision leadership from the pulpit where there is a heartfelt vision to see the city reached for the Lord. The pastor has to be willing to pay the price that, at all costs, he wants to reach the city, and the only way to do this is to mobilize the army. They must be broken up into little platoons and squads so they can carry the battle to the enemy, and the battle can be waged one house at a time, one block at a time. I recently saw a movie about how wars were fought in the colonial times. The men lined up in neat rows, one row behind the other, right out in the open, and blazed away at each other. It may have been noble, but it was a dumb strategy. The Americans had fewer soldiers, but we hid behind rocks and trees and won because our strategy was better.

A small church can do the same thing by being very effective in what they do. Lining people up in neat rows and letting them be spectators is not the best strategy. The people outside the churches are afraid of the building on the corner, whether it is small or large. The large church is scary, the small one also because they will be easily recognized. So the only way to get them into the Church is to first introduce them to the people by asking them into your home. This should be the most comfortable place in the world. Christians need to get used to having people into their homes. All the people can do is say,

"No" to your invitation or decide not to come back for some reason, but what have you lost? You never know what God will do with the seed you sow.

So the first thing is that the pastor must lead in the vision. Two of the seven pastoral staff at First Phoenix were won to Christ in that church. They learned to pastor a home church. From there they usually went into another ministry such as the Hennings, probably the largest wheelchair ministry in the world. God raised them up to pastor the elderly and wheelchair people. Leo has been raised up to lead a ministry to AIDS patients. He does not have a seminary education, but he has the best training in the world, trained by doing. He started in a small ministry, and it grew. He went into another, and God blessed it. It is now huge. They probably would not have been able to pastor a small church, but because of the unique situation here, they are now leaders with very important positions where many leaders from around the nation would love to minister.

The next thing is the ability of the pastor to see through the natural realm to the spiritual and to be able to recognize spiritual leadership. They may not look like leaders or appear to have the qualifications, but sometimes God would back me into a corner and force us to choose one of these people for leading a group, and it would totally change their lives. Now they are leading large ministries and doing a great job. They were given vision, watered, and helped, and now they are working well.

The pastor is a needed element to get these kinds of projects going. He has to do the type of job that Peter or Paul did when they came in, proclaimed the vision, challenged people to pick up their responsibilities, and then be man enough to release them to the ministry God has put on their hearts and allow God to fulfill His call on their lives.

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## Robert Webber — *Worship Is a Verb*

**Dave:** *In this segment we are discussing worship. From Jim Rutz's book, he has reported that A. W. Tozer said, "Worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church." Worship toward God is the ultimate duty of man. We have other duties toward man and the culture around us, but our worship is what God desires. This is what we will spend eternity doing. Thus, we need to understand more about worship.*

*Bob has been on the forefront of the worship movement for over two decades as a speaker, author, and teacher. He has also been a professor of theology at Wheaton College since 1968. Bob is currently involved in the development of the Institute of Worship Studies, a school for pastors and other church leaders, plus a seven volume Topical Encyclopedia of Christian Worship.*

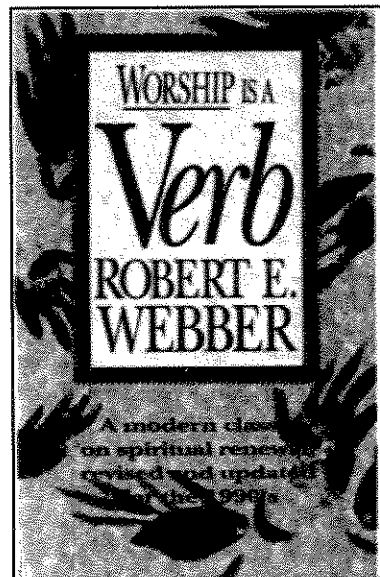
*We are going to discuss portions of two of his books, *Worship is a Verb*, a modern classic on spiritual renewal, and his newest book, *Signs of Wonder*, discussing the phenomenon of convergence in modern liturgical and charismatic churches.*

*Bob, I noted that you are a graduate of Bob Jones University, Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, and Concordia Theological Seminary. You certainly have the background to understand what worship is. In reading your books, I was impressed that you also appreciate the need for having the heart of God and listening to the Holy Spirit. As you said, there is a change going on from passive worship to active worship, which is the premise of your work on *Worship is a Verb*.*

**Bob:** Maybe I can speak to it in terms of the communications revolution that has occurred. As most people recognize, communications began with oral communications, and then in the medieval period of history communications was visually centered. However, that was turned

aside by the Reformers, who began to emphasize a written and verbal communication. Now since 1950, we are living in a completely different society. We are living in an audio-visual society where the written communication is not nearly as strong as it used to be, and so, one of the things I am concerned about is that we recover the visual side.

My feeling is that the Enlightenment really did a job on Western people in particular. It turned us into cerebral persons, persons who reduced the whole



person to mainly the brain and forgot about the fact that we also visualize, hear, feel, and touch. I am concerned that we return to a worship which engages the whole person and not just the intellect.

**Dave:** *As important as the intellect is, and would to God that more persons really used the mind of Christ, it is not the whole thing. Let's begin with the problems we are facing now as a Church, which you have identified in your book, *Worship Is a Verb*. For example, in most churches today worship is dominated by the pastor.*

**Bob:** This is a problem in Protestant worship, and what is strange about

it is that one of the reasons the Reformers rebelled was that they wanted to return worship to the people. Luther, Calvin, and the Anabaptists were successful in that. Now here we are four hundred years later, and one of the big problems in worship is that we have become spectators instead of participants in worship. This is exactly the problem they had in the medieval period. What we need today is a new reform that returns the worship to the people so that they participate and begin to exercise the priesthood of all believers.

**Dave:** *This touches on the second problem you listed here, that congregations are little more than an audience. We are used to sitting in front of the television and to being in other audiences. Do you see this as transferring into the Church where you see the New Testament model being more participatory?*

**Bob:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I will tell you about a discussion that I had with a student some time ago. I was discussing the fact that the congregation has become an audience, and we even use this kind of verbiage, speaking of the platform and the congregation as the audience. I was saying that this is just not New Testament worship, which demanded participation by all the people. Today we have people who just want to come to worship and be entertained. He said to me, "Bob, that's exactly where people are! They have been involved all week, and they want to come to Sunday worship and let the musician, pastors, and others just entertain them." I said, "If that is the case, and I believe it is, then we are really in deep trouble because this is not Biblical worship, which is to come from the people." Thus, we have to break down this concept of audience.

**Dave:** *I was in a megachurch this past weekend, and I counted five or six times when the pastor referred to*

*the congregation as an audience. As the congregation, we are quite willing to let them do it, but as you point out in the book, this puts a tremendous burden on the pastor each week to come up with something more exciting. Often the pastor ends up in burnout and/or with other failures. In point three of your book you say that free worship is not necessarily free. Can you explain?*

**Bob:** All worship is a kind of liturgy. Almost every church does the same thing again and again, but people who come from the free tradition like to boast that they do not use the same approach to worship week after week. Let me give an illustration. I was talking to a pastor who has a small church, about this problem and he said to me, "Bob, I have got my order of worship on the computer. All I do is plug in new hymns, sermon titles, etc., and push the button, and there is my order of worship." So people who have a concern about doing the same thing week after week need to recognize the fact that they do the same things and don't even have the variety that you would find in a truly liturgical church.

*Dave: There is something of a dynamic tension between having a set order and allowing freedom. You talk about the convergence of the two approaches to worship. Is it possible to have freedom within structure?*

**Bob:** Absolutely! I think what we need to do is talk about how freedom and order relate to each other. The liturgical church brings order, and the Charismatic church brings freedom. I think we need to sit down and see how the two work together.

*Dave: I would think it will take on a pattern of variety, depending on the local church. We tend to see what is working in one church and then want to transfer it into our situation. It usually doesn't work because God is a creative, spontaneous God Who wants us to be open to what He wants at that moment. The fourth problem relates to the fact that the mystery is gone.*

*What do you mean by that?*

**Bob:** I think this would go back to what I said earlier about the Enlightenment doing a job on the Western world. Its overemphasis on the rational has taken away the mystery. Specifically, within many congregations we try to explain faith to the "nth degree" and do not allow for the mystery that God is above us, that we worship the transcendent God, and, thus we try to reduce God and His truth to syllogisms and propositions that we can analyze and systematize and understand. But when we do that, we lose the majesty, awe, the otherness, and the transcendence of God, and we do that in worship.

*Dave: In your book, Worship is a Verb, you broke it up into eight principles, which you believe are foundational for worship, beginning with the Biblical basis, celebrating Christ, and the historical order of worship. I was most interested in principle seven, where you mentioned that all creation joins in worship. You discuss the fact that there are four areas of restoration: the preparation, the Word, the table, and the dismissal, and that makes it possible for the recovery of the priesthood of all believers. Medieval and pre-Reformation worship was clergy-centered, and the congregation merely observed as spectators, not participants. In the 16th century the Reformers insisted on a form of worship that was distinctively congregational, worship done by the people. However, you think we have drifted back into a pattern which has lost the participation of the congregation. You said that you see a radical rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers. Is this something you see happening internationally?*

**Bob:** Let me give you an example. A couple of years ago, and this relates to the book *Signs of Wonder*, when I was writing the book, I made a visit to a number of churches noted for worship renewal. I actually discovered four things related to that. One was that all of these

churches had small groups. In each of these small groups, designed for Bible study, fellowship, and community, the people identified the group as their "small group church." Later when they came into the larger congregation, they were much more apt to be involved and bring with them the sense of the priesthood of all believers. I know the small group movement is all over the world, but there are still numerous churches that have not yet applied the small group principles. As they do, they will discover that the people, as a result of their involvement in the small group, will rediscover the priesthood of all believers, which they will bring into worship.

*Dave: I agree with you, if we see an open type of service on the public side it is usually a manifestation of what is happening in the small groups. It is also a great testing ground for people to try their spiritual wings. It is easier to share with a dozen people you know than five hundred.*

**Bob:** Yes, but it prepares you for participating in the larger group. Another thing that I might say to this is that I found that whenever you began to ask questions about any aspect of the Christian faith or the practice of the Church, in particular, it opens up everything. So to ask questions about the priesthood of believers and their function as a small group also opens up questions about worship and the priesthood of believers in the larger congregation. No matter where we begin to probe, we will end up touching every aspect of the life of the church.

*Dave: Let's talk about confronting our prejudices. We all have our own deep convictions, and you wrote that you were forced to face your own deep prejudices. You began to take off your blinders of preconceived ideas, and you let yourself enter into dialogue with different forms of worship, whether it was liturgical, traditional Protestant, creative, or praise traditions. Those were the four that you identified as broad*

categories. You see a new convergence of these traditions happening and a spirit of oneness and openness bringing the Church together around this experience. Why don't you share some examples of that?

**Bob:** First of all, I'll give an illustration from a neighbor I recently had lunch with. He is an older man in his seventies with a critical mind. He said, "Bob, let's face it. Most people go to church to have their prejudices confirmed!" That was a scary point, and I think, coming from a man of his age, not being a radical but one who has observed the scene, he recognizes that an awful lot of people do have prejudices. That is one of the things that we really do need to confront. A lot of people grow up in a particular community and never step outside the circle. But one of the things that seems to be happening today is—and I don't have any statistic on how widespread this is—that people are moving out of their circles. I speak in a lot of different churches and pastors' conferences, and I frequently ask, "Are you a member of a church or community of worship that you were a member of when you were a child?" I have discovered that most people will have been in three, possibly four different churches, and even different worshipping traditions. As a result, prejudice is being broken down, and in many churches facing worship renewal, people will draw from the various experiences and traditions that they have been a part of. They recognize the various aspects of worship found in one or the other traditions. **Therefore, there is a convergence of the traditions, which arises out of the breakdown of prejudice. This I believe is a work of the Holy Spirit.**

**Dave:** If we are to recover some of the rich, historic, orthodox, ritual type of worship, which the Eastern churches are known for, the problem, you point out, is that most Americans know little about history and, sadly, care even less. Thus, we have cut ourselves off from the rich treasure of resources and collective

spirituality of the people throughout the ages. This diminishes our vision of God. Could you explain that further?

**Bob:** First of all, if we cut ourselves off from history, we are in a sense repudiating the work of the Holy Spirit. We are saying that the Holy Spirit was not with any of the previous Christians until the 20th century. Now, a lot of people do that. If you back them up against the wall, they would say that they really do not think that, but the thing is that we act that way. We act as though the traditions of the past were not gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the Church. Therefore, we tend to despise them, and if we despise them, we despise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So my basic concern is that we recover the sense that the Holy Spirit has always been with the Church. I recognize that there are high and low times. There are good times and bad times, but the Holy Spirit has always been with the Church. Therefore, we need to mine the past and see what the Holy Spirit has given to the Church, which can give us a liveness in our worship today.

**Dave:** In your section on "Worship in a Changing Worldview," you said, "The worshipping Church that is sensitive to a dramatic changing worldview seeks to develop a worship open to the supernatural, aware of mystery, and committed to participation." You talk about the fact that the Enlightenment worldview, the Darwinian philosophy, Freud, and Karl Marx have heavily influenced our culture, all seeping into the Church. You say that the anti-supernatural worldview has been brought in. Yet you see a dynamic model emerging in which "our view of the universe has been revolutionized. The idea of an unchanged and static universe is replaced by the idea of a dynamic and expanding universe, a universe that had to have a beginning, will have to have an ending, and more likely has a Creator." You see this shift as being on our side as the culture is moving more toward a

recognition of a Sovereign Creator. Whether it is the Jehovah God we know or not, do you feel that this will work to our advantage as the whole culture shifts toward this?

**Bob:** I will try to put this into perspective. I remember back in the 1970s, when Secular Humanism was the big issue. I wrote a book about it. I believed it was there, and it is still here. But, what is interesting is that it seems as though the world shaped by Secular Humanism could not handle it forever, so what emerged is a point of view opposed to Secular Humanism, the New Age movement. Now, the New Age movement is not in any way a Christian worldview. I would not argue anything positive for the New Age movement other than the fact that it has sensitized us to the spiritual. We Christians have a worldview that is spiritual.

**We say there is a conflict going on between Christ and the powers of evil. By living, dying, and rising from the dead, we say that Jesus has overcome these powers of evil, and the principalities and powers have been bound, dethroned, and ultimately will be destroyed. Worship celebrates that.** It tells that story, and it feasts on that. The worshipping community experiences the powers of Christ over the powers of evil. As each individual and community continually struggles with the principalities and powers, they find that the overcoming power of Christ, which is communicated to them in worship, is the strengthening power so they might be able to live in the context of a world that is confronted by the powers of evil.

So what I am saying, basically, is that the Christian has a very positive worldview, a very hopeful outlook because Jesus Christ is the victor over the powers of evil, and we need more positive communication of this position's worldview to the people whom we witness to.

**Dave:** As Tony Evans said, "America's only hope is the

Church." We certainly need this optimistic view that, in spite of trials and tribulations, we are victorious, not victims. I notice in your book that part of your experience has been the home church. Do you think we are going to see more of this in the future?

**Bob:** First of all, let me say that there is precedent for this in the Scriptures. Studies of the Church in the New Testament have indicated that in the major cities there were house churches and city-wide gatherings. That phenomenon seems to be happening today, and I see that as the main future direction of the Church. The Church needs to have the house church meetings that feed into the larger community and possibly then for an entire citywide meeting as well. I think we are going to see that in the future.

**Dave:** Yes, this seems to be happening more and more. Our society has moved toward independence while the believers need to move toward interdependence. In the second section of your book, you talk about six areas of convergence in worship. What are some of the preconditions for worship renewal? One that you mention that I heartily agree with is that change has to come primarily from the bottom up.

**Bob:** There are four things that I discovered as I studied the churches involved in renewal. One is that each of these churches had a clear understanding of the Gospel. Specifically, they had an understanding of Christ as the Victor over the powers of evil. I believe that is an important thing to recover. Second, they had an understanding of what it means to be the Church. The emphasis was on the people of God, the community, and the household of faith. Third, they were divided into small groups. The fourth thing was that the gifts of each individual had been discerned and put to work in the life of worship and also the life of the Church. It seems to me that in my experience with these churches,

when they met these four preconditions, they are much more apt to turn out to be good worshipping communities than the churches who do not pay attention to these preconditions.

**Dave:** I really enjoyed chapter six, "Experiencing God's Transforming Power on Sunday Morning." In the introduction, you say, "The worshipping church defies the Enlightenment's intellectualized worship and establishes an open worship in which God can act. I teach a course on worship at Wheaton Graduate School, a course which draws students from many different traditions of Christianity represented in the student body. The course is organized around six different services from different periods of history: New Testament worship, early Christian worship, Reformation worship, early American worship, praise tradition worship, and an emerging model for future worship." You are saying that experience shapes learning more than the intellect. Thus, experience really shapes the way we believe, more than our thinking. Could you explain?

**Bob:** There is a Latin phrase the early church used that is translated to mean, "The rule of prayer is the rule of faith." Out of that, the early church was convinced that experience precedes reflection. A good example of that is to say that the Church is a worshipping community before it is a theological community. Now there is a little bit of the "did the chicken or the egg come first" here because both are intertwined. But if you look at Christian theology, Christianity began primarily as a response to the Christ event in worship. Then as the Church progresses through history, it begins to think about its worship. I will give a specific example. The worship of the early church is triune. Benedictions, doxologies, and baptism are all in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the theology of the Trinity emerged in the 4th century. The Church was reflecting on what it meant to say,

"Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Church worshiped first, and then reflected second. I am saying that what we should do in our culture is recognize that we need a worship in which we experience God as present and in which we experience an encounter with Christ, a meeting with the power of the Holy Spirit. Then when we reflect on that, we will come to understand what it means to meet Jesus in worship.

**Dave:** Scripture says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." Maybe there is more than just an accidental order to that.

**Bob:** I think so. This whole line of thought can be developed out of Hebrew thought.

**Dave:** God is transforming lives as we open up to His form of worship. You point out that worship is characterized by three-way action. First, we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, offering praise and thanksgiving. Second, He dwells in that praise to bring us the benefit of Christ for the maintenance and transformation of our relationship. Third, we receive His transforming power being opened to divine action, allowing the Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Christ. Please share about the analogy of worship, the meeting between God and His people, just as we would do in meeting other people if we invited them to our home.

**Bob:** If I invite someone to come over for dinner, they come and knock on the door, and I run, open the door, and welcome them. I bring them into the living room, and we talk. After that, we go to the table, and we eat and talk together. Then someone says, "It is time to leave," and we show them to the door. There are four actions there: the action of entrance; of communication around ideas; communication around food; and finally the dismissal, being sent forth. This is exactly what happens in worship. In worship we meet God; we rehearse His saving deeds; and in that rehearsal we remember and

recall the living, dying, and rising of Christ and His saving act. God is present. He is really there, not symbolically, but actually present. As we are open to God and communicate with Him, we are shaped by Him. The analogy of having someone over for dinner is a very simple analogy of what we do when we gather for worship. God enters, speaks to us, we sit at the table with God, and then He dismisses us into the world to serve Him.

**Dave:** *It is so simple that even a child can understand. Unfortunately, much of the worship that goes on today is man-centered, and I believe God feels robbed. You say that there is a renaissance of Christians reclaiming the arts, or, as you say in chapter seven, "Encountering Christ Through the Arts." Some people are afraid of even opening the door to such things as the dance. What do you see as some of the positive things happening in this area?*

**Bob:** First of all, people have to understand that the arts are rooted in the Incarnation. What the Incarnation says to us is that God meets us through flesh and blood, and we all recognize that that is true. If that is the case, the implication of the Incarnation is that God meets us through tangible, physical signs. One of the tangible and physical signs can be the arts. As Augustine said, "You see one thing, but you apprehend another." And so we might see a dance, but what we apprehend is the encounter with Christ. I am aware of the fact that someone could do a liturgical dance in the flesh and in such a way as to point to themselves, and that would be wrong. But the fact is that you can misuse everything. However, to use movement in the appropriate sense would be to say, "Accompany the text." I will give you an example. A number of years ago I was at a service where the text at communion was, "Lord have mercy." This is an appropriate text when you come to communion, at

least at the beginning. A young woman danced to that song, "Lord Have Mercy." It was very moving and not in any way detracting from the text. It made the text take up residence inside of me and made me aware that God's mercy was expressed to me at the table in bread and wine.

**Dave:** *It was keeping the focus on Christ and allowing the creativity He has placed within us to be expressed toward Him. What are some of the things that you see as the shape of things to come in worship?*

**Bob:** I think the Church is recognizing that we have a common enemy in the powers of evil. Therefore, it has a common basis in the work of Jesus Christ. I think there is a new appreciation for the Church as the work of the Body of Christ all over the world. Because denominationalism is, in a sense, breaking down, we are also beginning to learn from each other's traditions, one of which is worship. As the Body of Christ searches for a way to worship more expressive of the true Biblical worship, it is going to find that both the ancient, more liturgical traditions and the current contemporary charismatic praise and worship tradition have maintained and recovered an element of Biblical worship. Therefore, as we become more sensitive toward each other and the Biblical prescriptions of worship and experiment down the pike, we are going to find that the fullness of worship will contain both the historical and the new. It will be bound together in new experimentations.

**Dave:** *It is going to be exciting to see how it all comes together. What you are basically saying is that you could walk into any church, regardless of the name on the front of it, and find a full, blossoming worship that would incorporate the best of the old and the best of the new. You could find as much participation in an old mainline*

*church as in a store front church.*

**Bob:** You will certainly see that in renewal churches.

**Dave:** *Give us a brief overview on the Topical and Illustrated Encyclopedia on Worship. Also, is the Institute of Worship Studies a training school?*

**Bob:** I could put the two together. The new title is the Complete Library of Christian Worship, which is a seven volume work. The first volume is *Biblical Foundations of Worship*; the second, *Twenty Centuries of Worship*; third, *The Renewing of Sunday Worship*; fourth, *The Role of Music and Arts in Worship*; the fifth, *The Seasons of the Christian Year in Worship*; sixth, *The Sacred Actions of Worship*; and seventh, *The Ministries of Worship*. These are all about 500 pages in length, double columns, and eight-and-a-half by eleven. So there is an enormous amount of material here that represents all the different churches.

As far as the school is concerned, the Institute for Worship Studies is using the seven volumes as its textbooks. Four different levels of courses are available for students. The first level is called *Personal Enrichment in Worship*. These are seven courses designed for lay people. The second level is called *The Worship Leader's Program in Worship Studies*. This is designed exclusively for leaders in worship. There are twenty courses. The third is the academic course of studies. There are eight courses, a seminary type of education. The fourth level is for graduate school level studies.

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## Tom and Lori Wilke —*The Costly Anointing*

**Dave:** In this segment we are going to join Tom and Lori Wilke from Hebron Worship Center in Wisconsin. They have been involved with full time ministry for many years. Lori has a very dynamic and anointed music ministry as well as a teaching ministry. She has written a best selling book, *The Costly Anointing*, published by Destiny Image. The Wilkes have a number of audio resources designed to impart life and to help prepare Christian warriors for the battle that is ahead.

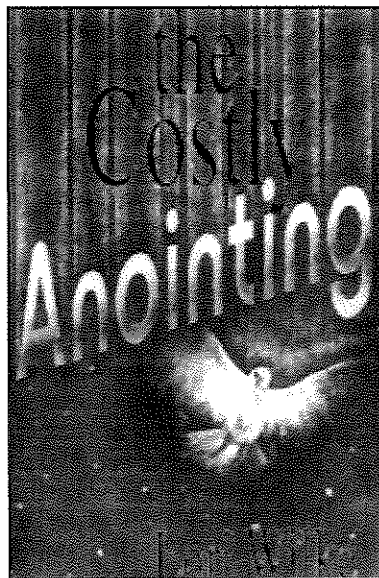
Tom and Lori, thanks for being with us. The topic that we are discussing in this series is that God is restoring the Bride of Christ. We see that there are dynamic things happening all over the country. Various different emphases are coming to the Church right now. We are seeing an emphasis upon the involvement of all Christians in the work of the Gospel because really there is no way that we can see the Great Commission fulfilled if it is locked up in the hands of a few professionals. Why don't you share what you are seeing from your vantage point of traveling and visiting with churches?

**Tom:** I see a great mobilization of the grassroots members of the Body of Christ. I believe that there is a real impartation of gifts and anointings coming to the local church to reach out to their communities. There is also a real understanding that God wants to bring restoration to their communities and to hurting people. So we as people are helping to equip them for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of one another. Where that comes to practically, I believe, is where the normal 9 to 5 person who comes to Church has a place and an opportunity to share and to be used by God and the Holy Spirit to help build the Church and to help express the love and the power of God through local community.

**Dave:** It seems to be kind of a two-leg restoration that God is doing, both on the side of Christians being more involved in their community and demonstrating the gospel as a model, a lifestyle that affects all areas of

life, that affects not only when we are gathered together but when we are scattered into the world. But also I think there is a restoration of the importance of intimacy with God and ministering from a place of rest. Lori, in a couple of your resources you have discussed the importance of developing that intimacy through intercession prayer. Maybe we could ask Lori about her perspective. She has written the book, *The Costly Anointing*. Could she share with us about that?

**Tom:** I will let Lori share exactly what God has put on her heart in



regards to that. Her book is a manual to help to equip people in their anointings. That's why God had Lori write it. "The costly anointing" is that everyone, if he or she will pay the price to be intimate with God and to walk in what God has called them to, can be used by God, and there are no limits to what God can do in your life.

**Lori:** Unless one goes out with the peace of God, in other words the peace of God really is a shield for you when you are in the warfare. Unless there is that peace in your spirit, you really shouldn't go into the midst of the battle because you will be making a lot of messes out there without God's peace and grace in your spirit. A lot of people want to do a lot of good things, but the fact

remains, what is God doing? What does God want us to do? Sometimes it's best if you just stay back and have fellowship because without that fellowship, you won't have the anointing to be able to share with others God's peace and God's life and even the Sword of the Spirit, which is cutting to the enemy.

That is an important thing that God's peace, which passes all human understanding, rest and rule and reign in your heart, which just simply comes from fellowship with God. It comes from knowing Him. It comes from wanting to know Him, and then you will be mighty and do exploits as the Bible says. So the key is to know your God. The way to know God is to have a love relationship with Him, to be very close with Him, to be very real with Him, to love Him above all else, and to lay down your life for the sake of His calling and His gospel to be shed abroad in the world. And that comes by just simply loving Him enough to want to serve Him. When you do know somebody well, when you do know God well or anybody else, you will be willing to serve them if you love them with all your heart. And that's, I believe, the key to the warfare. First must come the love relationship and the intimacy with God and self, and out of that will come the working relationship or the working warfare.

I have developed my life style to the point where I don't get over- worked because when I get over- worked, I know that the peace is not there. I am worrying and it's not in the godly spirit that God has for me. The intention is that we do those mighty works like God said. There will be many that do mighty works, and God will say, "Depart from me because you didn't know Me." And so there is a valor, and there is a strength, first and foremost, in the worship that you have of God. And then out of that does come the mighty works. But don't get the cart before the horse. Don't get things out of balance and out of priority because the priority is that you know your God and have that peace in your spirit.

**Dave:** Lori, what do you make of the obvious implications of the Scripture

that says when the Church comes together, we are to come with something to share, to participate? One of the authors I work with, Jim Rutz, has basically laid open some historical information that is troubling to some people but encouraging to others, and that is that for several hundred years, the Church functioned as a living room movement.

*There seems to be something of a fresh movement toward the empowering of the laymen, really practically seeing the priesthood of all believers. Is that something that you and Hebron Ministry are committed to, and how is that beginning to work its way through? I know Tom was mentioning that you have developed a school of ministry designed to equip the Saints for their work of ministry. Is that right?*

Lori: Absolutely! Yes, I would say our whole spirit revolves around that, not only at the church but when we do travel out, we impart that into the pastors' lives and into the lives of the people. I know I was thinking about this the other day when I looked at my little daughter. I thought, "What is really truth, God, when you are dealing with raising up people in the Kingdom of God and pastoring and also teaching and traveling outside and imparting this to the leaders in the Church and also to the parishioners?" Because as you said, everybody is a leader. Everybody has an anointing. That's why I wrote that book, *The Costly Anointing*, because everybody has an anointing abiding within them, and everyone is a leader in his own respect. What is involved in raising up leaders? I believe first of all that the people need to take on a heart of a servant, a tremendous unselfish heart of a servant whereby they would want to see others to be even stronger than themselves. I look at my daughter, and I say, "God, I would want better for her than I ever had." I would want her to know God even more than I ever could know God, or I want her to see the Word of God, the truth of God imparted to her and for her to be able to excel in the things of God with a double portion, with a double anointing more than I ever could receive. And if we go out and minister to our Church that way, if we go out and minister to the Body

of Christ that way, we take on the Spirit of Christ because that is the servant's heart, the heart of a total selfless person, wanting to see better for others than themselves, to think more highly of others, as the Word says, than yourself. And if you do that, you will truly be a Godly leader and see that everybody has a significance in the Body of Christ, and we are simply to impart and give life to others and help them to see their hope. Let them have dignity in life. And then if we do that, we are truly a leader in God's Kingdom because that's what leaders do. They impart a greater love, a greater strength than they could ever see to people's lives. Hopefully, that is their prayer, that they are proteges or that their associates would become far greater than they could ever be.

*Dave: Yes, it's definitely here to stay. I think it is really the shape of things to come. I was mentioning to Tom that on this audio curriculum we are working on, interfacing the cell group movement, the meta-church, the open church, and small group emphasis—it goes by many names—it seems like the people of God are just thirsty for relationship with God and with one another. The superficiality of the megachurch era that we have been a part of seems to have left people a little bit thirsty. There is a desire to move on with God. I think that many people believe that in preparation for a time of testing in this nation, the emphasis on small groups and relational accountability, all of these wonderful things that we see functioning in the New Testament, seem to be lost in the crowd today and that they need to be restored to the Church.*

Lori: Absolutely!

*Dave: It's difficult when you have exciting, dynamic teaching and music ministries to keep the focus off an individual. How do you guard against what I would call superstar Christianity there at Hebron?*

Lori: Well, I think that the best way to guard against it is first of all to take on the spirit of the servant, like I had mentioned before, the spirit of the servant leader, not the "stardom" leader. The stardom

leader will end up in the pit, down the line. You are going to find that this works. I tell people that, and I help people at the church to know that we are not there to be stars. We are there to help to train them in ministry themselves.

If you are talking about programs, we have a lot of small group people who are in the church who are being raised up at this point, but more than that, there are people who are being trained in ministry themselves by the pastors. We have picked out a lot of strong leaders who can be leaders with some training. I guess I am more interested in not so much what their part or portion is—in other words, what position people have in the Church—as much as what they can do in their realm of influence, whatever it is. If it's at their church, if it's on their job, or if it's at their home. And so in doing that, we raise them up to be leaders who can influence their environment, and then that Spirit spills over us when we are in the church service.

In the late service that we have on Sunday evening, we have what's called open church whereby the people are free to be able to share their testimonies, to be able to share a word or a song. And we have allotted a whole hour for that before we even go into any teaching. There is that time where the people come together with "some a psalm, some a hymn, some a word." These people can share their lives, what God has done for them, which in turn blesses people because the word of our testimony does overcome and strengthen others. So that's the way we have incorporated it in the church so far although we are not a very megachurch at this point. We don't have a lot of people to deal with at this time. However, it is a healthy, growing church. It is very powerful and dynamic in our area, which is amazing because Milwaukee is a tough area to pastor. But we have asked God to guide us in the ways in which we can incorporate the anointing of every individual. That's why I wrote the book, *The Costly Anointing*. I really wanted the Body at Hebron to know that they are special, and they are different. Everybody has that "specialness" about them. We pray that we have that servant's heart



that we can share over with our congregation as pastors. I believe that's the key ingredient, that the pastors take on the servant's spirit.

**Dave:** *That's exciting! I'll bet that on that Sunday night's service, sometimes it's hard to shut people down when they get going, sharing what God's doing in their lives.*

**Lori:** People have said that they just thoroughly enjoy that time when they can have a part. I have come to church before where I was at one point in my life gifted in prophecy, and I didn't even hardly know it. But I felt it. I felt it in my spirit, and I felt that God gave me a couple of words at times for the Body. But I was never able to share those things in a proper, orderly way. It was frustrating, David! It was just frustrating for my spirit and for my life! And that is why we wanted to help the people at church. They may have those giftings for the Body, things like prophecy or the gift of faith or a word of wisdom. Those gifts are for the Body, and there is a way of channeling it so that they can use those gifts. That is the way we have chosen to do it in the public setting, to do it in a setting whereby we allot them a certain amount of time.

**Dave:** *Well, Lori, I know you have an agenda of things to do. I encourage anyone listening to get ahold of Spirit to Spirit Ministry. Also, get a copy of The Costly Anointing. Get ahold of some of the audio resources, which include both singing and teaching, kind of interwoven together. Is that right, Lori?*

**Lori:** Right. Is that *The Costly Anointing* book you are speaking of?

**Dave:** *I was speaking of the tape series. I have two of them, The Prayer Warriors and The Spirit of a Warrior.*

**Lori:** Yes, those all have music and teaching in them. The *Spirit of a Warrior* has a lot of music in it too. We have designed that a little different from normal. Because of the musical gift that I like to share with the Body, I didn't want it to limit it to a music tape and then a teaching tape. So we did music usually in a bookend type of thing where it starts

out with a song, and then it may end with a song. And sometimes maybe there is a song in the middle. It just depends on what we could do. It does flow. In fact, one of the tape series that I have, *Prayer Warriors Arise*, has an actual ministry in it where I did the whole service. The way I flow is that I do some teaching, but then I do some singing also. A lot of that just stayed on the tape. So you will get a little of both worlds in there.

**Dave:** *It's very, very good. I encourage readers to get ahold of Spirit to Spirit.*

*I know that you move in the prophetic area. Oftentimes the role of a prophet is that of plucking up and rooting out and dealing with areas that God is not happy with in the Church. Do you want to speak anything forth into this series that you believe about Biblical ecclesiology or how the Church should be structured? What is God's dealing with the Church about?*

**Lori:** Well, I do because I have been really studying out a message lately on the message of God's grace and goodness to the Body of Christ. I guess it's really important, and I see this in you, David, as I'm speaking. I can hear it in your voice in just the discernment that I have from you. You have a spirit whereby it is not condescending to people. It's very gentle and a very easily entreated, the Bible says, "wisdom from on high." It's gentle. It's easily entreated, but it does come with authority. I feel that as I speak to you and as you speak to me, I feel that spirit of grace. I would really like to see the Church be free from the condescending attitude that a lot of the leaders have toward the sheep. I see that having its roots in the fact that many pastors have taken on a spirit of scolding the Church. They scold the Church for all their naughty things. The spirit of a prophet is very meek at the same time that it is very authoritative. I see John the Baptist drawing the hearts of the children to the Father. So there is a gentleness. There is an easy entreatedness. There is a wisdom on high that comes forth as pastors and leaders speak. I guess that's the order that I would like to see in the Church. I would like to see

pastors preach at their churches without a condescending attitude, without this judgment and yet with discernment. Yes, with discernment so that they can speak truth and say, "This is where it is. This is where we need change." But with such a spirit of grace about it that people will say, "Yes, I can change. Yes, I've got the grace. This is encouraging. This is something where I can change."

It's not so much that you feel scolded or you feel reprimanded, because a lot of people I have seen, David, their breastplate is down. They don't know their right standing with God, and they've been wounded. A scolding mentality is just going to keep them farther and farther away from God instead of encouraging them as believers to be able to come to God themselves and know God's voice and encourage them to walk in the ways of the Lord and do those exploits when they do know their God well. And so my prophetic encouragement would just be that God is not mad at us. Jesus took the shame and the punishment that was due us, and now we stand before our God with right standing. Yes, we do need to change, but yes, we have right standing with our God so that when we do need to change, we know we can come to God and find the answers, the grace, and the help and know that our God is requiring change of our lives. But that's not too hard for us. Grace is there for us, and our Jesus is there for us. He has been the propitiation for us, which means that the wrath of someone unjustly wronged has been satisfied. So the Father God's wrath has been satisfied. We now can revel and know that our Jesus was our propitiation. He took the wrath of God so that we can now come boldly into the Holy of Holies and know that we can obtain grace to help in the time of need. The veil has been parted. The anger of God has been satisfied. We can come straight into the Holy of Holies, and we can share that peace because we have been in the Holy of Holies ourselves with our God. That goes for everyone, everyone.

**Dave:** *In Jeremiah 11:21 it says, "For the pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord. Therefore, they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered." I think*

that undergirds what you are saying, that God is looking for a deep repentance and humility, beginning with the leader. And that begins with each man in the home, and that begins with each woman of the home who is called as a minister since the Bible says we are all part of the ministry. We are all part of the priesthood. Some are set aside full time, some labor making tents and doing other things, but they are still ministers.

I want to ask you one question that I think is blowing through the Church right now that needs to be addressed. The role of women in the Church is something that needs to be dealt with. Women for a long time have been quoted Scriptures out of cultural and out of Biblical context, which basically are interpreted, "Sit down, and shut up!" And yet many leaders are beginning to rethink the role of women in the Church. I'm not talking about feminism, which moves into a spirit of rebellion. I'm talking about an understanding that we are in mutual submission, husband and wife, man and woman under Christ. Do you see exciting things on the horizon for women moving under the anointing of the Spirit in the Church in the years and decades ahead?

Lori: Oh yes, I'm excited about it! As you said, as long as it doesn't take on the spirit of the feminists, it is going to really excel because there will be a liberty. I told Tom when we were talking about this the other day, "I've never really made a big deal of it. I've never taught about women in ministry per se, but I have many, many times encouraged women in their ministry to become who God has called them to be." So in that point, I like to emphasize the fact that God calls Whom He will. There is just no doubt in my mind that God has called women to be used of Him. I looked around when I was traveling and said, "Here I am, a little red-headed woman. I don't consider myself as being any special person any different than any other woman in the Body of Christ, although I know I have been called by God. And I looked at these hurting people and I said, "God, I know why you chose me—because I have such compassion for the lost and such compassion for people, that I would give virtually anything I have to know somebody

was helped or that somebody was aided in knowing God better." I believe when somebody has that kind of heart, no matter what they are, male or female, they are candidates for the anointing of God and for the calling of God to be used of God. And once that happens, there is no stopping what God can do in our lives. Katherine Kuhlman, for instance, said, "I believe God had chosen a couple of men before me for the position in the Body of Christ, but they didn't want it. And so God found a woman."

It's interesting, but sometimes women have a yielded spirit where they can hear God. I think that's why God uses them so much because they are tender before God, and God wants to use that kind of individual. He needs to use a tender heart. In that respect, I believe women are tremendous candidates for the glory, for the anointing of God in this hour. I believe that that quiet and gentle spirit that is submitted to the Lord God and to those in authority will be tremendously used by God.

Dave: Thank you so much, Lori. Again, the theme of this is the restoration of the Bride of Christ. Jesus is absolutely committed to preparing the Bride without spot or wrinkle. Some like Dennis Peacocke have said, "Welcome to the world that Christians have abandoned." We are now destined to go through the washing machine and the dryer and probably have a hot iron put on us. If that is true of rank and file Christians, how much more true is it of leaders? Are we as a Church ready for some shaking in the Church?

Tom: I believe that God has been shaking the Church. I believe His shaking is equivalent to His restoring. Perhaps they go hand in hand because even though God loves the Church and He has died for it and has shed his blood for it, paying an awesome price, that price comes with a desire to have a Bride that is holy and pure and without spot or wrinkle. The first message that the Lord ever gave me when I was called into ministry was "Spots, Wrinkles, and Blemishes." He began to show me that there was a shaking place to remove those, and that it was more than just the impurities of conduct in

our own life. It was actually those people who were hindering the work of God and hindering the Bride from becoming what it was called to be. Spots, wrinkles, and blemishes are referred to in the New Testament as people. Now that's pretty scary, but Jesus said, "Let the wheat and the tares grow together so that we don't root out the wheat." I think a lot of leaders in the Body of Christ have had a tendency to try to remove those people who hindered their own agendas or to suppress those things that have been counterproductive for their own ministries. And Jesus said, "I'll take care of those things." Only Jesus knows how to prepare His own Bride. So as we as leaders get before God and get His heart and His agenda, I believe we will be able to raise up the true Saints of God who are a part of His Bride. And restoration is a very important part of it, but I would include that forgiveness is the number one process in which restoration takes place. Not judgment!

Dave: Forgiveness moves out of humility and repentance, realizing that sin lives within each one of us. Tom, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us.

Tom: We have the resources that we have put out through our own ministry, Lori's teaching tapes, several of mine, her book, and her music tapes which are a tremendous blessing and are being aired on many radio stations around the country. We also have an 800 number for contacting our ministry if anybody would be interested in contacting us for product or setting up meetings.

We come to serve in whatever capacity is needed. That could be concerts. It could be special music. It could be ministering the Word in thematic teaching—whatever the Body that we are going to is in need at the time. We love people, and we love the Church. We are called to build it and help equip it.

For more information:

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## John Zens — Searching Together

**Dave:** *Wouldn't it be exciting to bring back the first century Church life into the 20th century and on into the 21st century? John Zens has spent a lot of time "fleshing out" the New Testament principles for the early Church.*

*John was born in California. He is a graduate of Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, and Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, the latter from which he received a Master of Divinity degree. He also attended the Graduate School of Theology in Glendale, California, and earned a Doctorate of Ministry degree.*

*John has pastored churches from Tennessee to Oregon since 1976 and now is one of several elders at the Word of Life Church in the St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, area.*

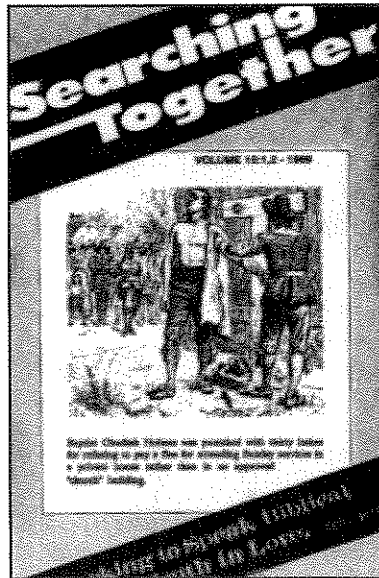
*John has written extensively. His books include, Studies in Theology and Ethics, Dispensationalism, and Searching Together, a quarterly journal. The latter discusses the cultural relevance of the gospel and also tries to promote the rising of the ekklesia, the empowering of laymen in our modern society.*

*With your theological background, we could talk about history and how we got so far off track. Tracing back before Constantine, the Church got into a deplorable condition, and the Reformers tried to fix it. Tell us what you see as some of the important areas that the Church is waking up to now.*

**John:** *In the last ten years there have been a number of books published from various sectors that have promoted a more Biblical view of the priesthood of all believers. Of course, the old ways are still very entrenched, but at least a number of writers have come to notice that there is a discrepancy between what is going on in the modern Church and the simplicity of the New Testament. Of course, there are not a lot of practical models out there for people to actually see. But nevertheless, we are in a time when we are moving toward the emergence of some models that can be looked*

*upon as returning to the simplicity of the New Testament and trying to flesh out those principles with one another.*

**Dave:** *If we looked back in time, we would see a Christianity that was simpler, more basic, and more relational. Everything about American culture seems to be screaming out in search of that, and yet the traditional church structure does not seem to be cutting it. What we have are the dead, cold, traditional, pastor-led, small churches. And then we jump from that to the dynamic, Charismatic,*



*megachurches where, as Jim Rutz says in his book, it really wouldn't make much difference whether you were there each week. In contrast to that, we have a movement emerging that sees the home as the base of ministry. While many people are discussing the separation of Church and State, maybe one of the problems with the Church is that we have separated the Church and the home. What do you think?*

**John:** *Yes, I would agree with that. There are certainly some cultural forces that militate against the expression of the high level of commitment among Christians because probably since the mid-1850s, there has been this rugged individualism that has come forth in our American culture, so people tend*

*to think that they can go it alone and that they can be resourceful with their own initiatives. The idea of being committed to a group of people where you submit to one another, learn from each other, and glean from the resources of each other, from what I have viewed and from what others tell me, is just really hard to find: a group of Christians in any given locale who are really willing to give that a shot. They are so used to going to Church Sunday and then just going home afterwards and shutting their blinds and continuing the roast, shutting other people out of their lives. That is a very dangerous, unbiblical view of Christianity. I hope that, as time goes on, people will come to understand that we must be more dependent upon one another. Most of the commands in the New Testament cannot really be understood without some kind of a relationship with other believers. Obviously, when the Scripture says in Ephesians 4 that we are to be long-suffering and forbearing with one another, what sense do those imperatives make without the assumption, the presupposition that you are in relationship to other believers and that you are "ongoingly" involved with their lives? At least 80% of the imperatives of the New Testament assume that you are in relationship to other believers in your geographical location. And yet over the years, I have seen so many people frustrated because they see this vision and they want it, and yet when they try to flesh it out with other people, you find that some people stay for a while. But then they realize that you are talking about a high level of commitment, and suddenly they want to evaporate and disappear into the woodwork of these large megachurches. It is a difficult situation. However, it seems like there is a growing realization that this other model of a more simple approach to church, perhaps more centered in the home, is emerging where people are realizing that there is something wrong with the way we are doing church for the most part. They are realizing that so many of the accouterments that we value are not even in the New Testament. In the*

New Testament there was a simplicity that indeed needs to be recovered and sought after, which will involve sacrifice and commitment. It is not easy. It takes a lot of work. And that is precisely where most American Christians are again infected with the cultural idea that everything has to be instant and quick, and everything has to be gratifying, and you have to see results immediately. There is so much of that going on that it is very difficult to just realize that we are to follow Christ and love one another and be committed to one another. That is where joy is to be found, in obeying the commands of our Lord.

*Dave: It has got to be simple enough for the kids to understand it, and yet it's so profound that many adults don't understand it.*

*We need to allow for flexibility. In one of your books, Searching Together, you discuss the lessons we can learn from the restoration movement of the 19th Century. Every new movement seems to bring a certain amount of adrenalin, a certain amount of excitement, the idea of a revival coming to a church. You trace the restoration movement in this issue, and you discuss some of the things we can learn. Why don't you outline a few of the parallel things. You said, "No. 1. Movements in their 'distinctives' tend to become more important than Christ." In many ways, while we are talking about the importance of having a Biblical worldview, a Biblical ecclesiology of how the Church should be structured, we always have to keep in mind that there are many areas that the Scripture is simply silent on. We have to allow for a variety and flexibility.*

*But do you see inherent in this movement toward cell church, decentralization, the home church movement, the possibility of seeing that as THE THING God is doing, and the other things being shunned and almost put down?*

*John: I think that movements have always tended to perhaps be linked initially to a charismatic personality, and then of course there would be some converts to the movement. Then in varying periods of time, the movement would calcify*

### *Opening Day in the House of God*

and become set in its ways and its traditions, probably more likely than not viewing itself as being closer to the truth than any other tradition. So you end up with a sort of calcified tradition. All the traditions, whether Wesleyan or Presbyterian or whatever it might be, end up where people are defending things that were valuable in the beginning of their movement. They are not open to suggestions that their current situation meet the demand of the hour.

There are all kinds of ways in which churches manifest a rigidity, and they refuse to be open to really evaluate. How can we meet the needs of one another and of the people in our neighborhood? Are we willing to be stretched and realize that a lot of the things we do are not in the New Testament? There is a liberty. The Bible does not tell us what time of day to meet. We have lost that whole dimension to just take the basic principles of the New Testament and try to apply them in any culture that we live in. Wherever you are, you should be able to take gospel principles and see them "fleshed out" in your neighborhood. Many churches are calcified, terrified to change things that they have been doing for 25 years.

*Dave: The few things that the Bible says to do, often we do not do. The Bible says that we are to gather for edification of the whole Church. Oftentimes if this is done, it is only done in the foyer or in a home Bible study.*

*You are involved in a house church setting. Tell us about your experience in a typical Sunday service.*

*John: It might be helpful to go back to the roots of our starting. The church started in 1980. I came in 1983. The nucleus started after a typical split, which was not very pleasant. The people who were forced out were literally booted out against their will. When they started the nucleus of a new assembly, they immediately realized there had to be something better than what they just had been through. They felt that the New Testament had a better plan. So the Lord used that experience to show them that they needed to be really*

careful how they started the new assembly. From the very beginning, there was a certain holding loose of things and not just assuming that we would do things a certain way. There was that openness from the beginning.

In March 1983, I spoke at this church. I was impressed with what I saw here. They set the tables up in a horseshoe shape. Everyone took notes when I spoke. After I spoke, it was opened up for questions, and we also opened it up for discussion. Over the years, we have faced various issues together. We have always tried to involve everybody in the Bible study.

To give one example, in 1984 we studied together the Lord's Supper for eight to nine weeks. We divided the group into different categories. We had the data in the Old Testament, the gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. We had these different groups. Everybody in the assembly was in one of those groups. Every group had one elder in it. As we worked our way through the material, one group would be responsible for information, for guiding the discussion, whatever the focus was when we discussed that particular subject. The bottom line was that we found group study to be very valuable. It allowed a lot of insights to come out from multiple parties. It also allowed us to cover all the Biblical material that we could find. We were not omitting anything important. After we were done, we had a summary meeting and went over all that we had learned. The goal, of course, was to implement how we would practice the Lord's Supper as a result of the study. It took us actually two weeks after we did our first summary week. Then we had a few lingering issues, which we dealt with. We set a date for changing and starting up fresh. We always said that whenever we started something new, it was not set in concrete. We could try it for 30 days, and then if we wanted to evaluate it, we were free to do that. It was a beautiful thing. The Spirit moved us and led us. The people were not just waiting to be spoon-fed by the elders. They were really digging in. As an elder, I really profited.

That gives you an idea of the basic

methodology that we try to do in all things. We try to involve the Body in all the decision making that takes place. In Bible study, we always try to focus in on getting input from a cross section of the people, not from just a monologue. In terms of our meeting specifically on Sundays, we are sort of traditional. But to some we would be considered pretty radical. We gather at 9:45 in the morning and have coffee and doughnuts. At 10:00 we have a teaching time. We are right now going through some material related to the attributes of God and the application of redemption to sinners. The teaching is not a monologue. It is for ten minutes, and then it is opened up for reaction. The teaching usually goes on for another ten minutes. Finally questions and discussion end the segment.

In this study the teacher has gone to the computer and printed out literally hundreds of Scriptures that relate to these different headings. We go around the room and have people read those Scriptures. Then we have comments from the teacher. Later he opens it up for comments from the group.

At 11:00, we have a meeting upstairs. We meet in a traditional Lutheran building that was built in 1914, but that is where the traditionalism ends. When you come upstairs into what would traditionally be called a sanctuary, we have a ping-pong table set up. We have couches and folding chairs that are mobile. It is a family atmosphere.

In the second hour we have announcements and prayer requests. Then we sing some hymns. One of our elders, the one who teaches music in the public school system, generally chooses hymns. Then we have a teacher who teaches for 30 to 40 minutes. That is usually a rotating situation. Almost never do we have the same person teach twice in a row in our assembly. We have six people who teach, setting up a schedule for a whole year where we have assigned people for every Sunday. Of course, there is always flexibility for that.

After the teacher is done, we have a wide open session. Typically, we begin by responding to the teaching

that has just been given. Questions can be asked of the teacher. He just sits down after he is done among the people. If other people have insights on the passage or other comments they want to make, then that is of course allowed.

Generally speaking, after we have finished talking about the teaching, then we move into prayer requests that people have. If somebody has a burden on their hearts that they want to share, if someone has a hymn they want to sing, whatever, it is just a wide open session. It usually lasts anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes. We go on until we feel we are done.

Finally we sing the doxology and have prayer. Then we go downstairs and eat together. We have a buffet where everybody brings something. Then we have the Lord's Supper at the end of the meal with a family responsible for that each time. It can be a husband and wife or even the children. We just rotate families. They are responsible for guiding our thoughts in that context of the Lord's Supper.

**After the meal, we spend any where from one to three hours still at the building, continuing to talk with each other. If people want to talk to the elders, that is usually when that will happen. If there are any special needs in the assembly or burdens, then people will go off together and pray or whatever. Sometimes people will go out to a restaurant together at 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon and spend more time together. It is just sort of as the Lord leads. We try to edify one another.**

We don't have an evening service. We spend from 9:30 in the morning until 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon together. We try to go with the flow.

*Dave: It sounds like the morning service may turn into an evening service informally.*

**John:** Right. We have about 45 people who come. In our assembly everybody who comes is very committed to the Body. We don't have peripheral people, really. We do have visitors from time to time. But the point is that we do not have to worry about whether somebody is going to show up. Basically,

everybody who is a part of the assembly is here unless they are traveling or sick. We have a high level of commitment, and I think that is a key. That is what the Lord has done. We are committed to working things out together. We are committed not to run away from each other. I have been here ten years now, and we have gone through some stormy times in those ten years, but we have stuck it out together. The key is that we have been committed, that the Lord wants us to work things out. We believe that when we assemble in His name, the Lord is in our midst. And when we have a problem or a disagreement of a serious nature, we believe the Lord will bring us into one mind and one accord on these things. And so far we have never seen Him fail to help us through those difficult times.

That is really a burden on my heart in terms of what I might say to Christians. Do we really believe what the Lord says that whenever two or three are gathered in His name that He is in their midst? Of course, in that context where that was stated, there is the idea of doing Kingdom business. Unfortunately, in the context of Matthew 18, there was an offender and that offender did not repent. So the Church has to ultimately make the decision to view that person as a publican and a heathen.

But the point is, what Jesus was saying is, when you are doing that kind of business, He is with you. I have seen over the years, as I have spoken in various churches, a real spirit of unbelief of that statement. When I teach these principles about loving each other and being long-suffering with each other, it's like people say, "Obviously it's Biblical." We can't argue with that, but who practices this? Who really shows this model? Who really works things out? Who really believes that Jesus is going to guide His people by His Holy Spirit into light and consensus and "one-mindedness?" There is just very little practice of that. We need to give it a chance. **Every church is going to face difficult times. Everybody knows that. The issue is, "What are we going to do when those tough times come? Are we going to run from each other? Are we going to just give up?**

Are we going to get mad, or are we going to pray and fast with each other and seek the Lord until He brings us into one-mindedness on the problem?" I think that relates to commitment. Most people are very loose. Their attitude is, "If I don't like this church, I will just go to the one down the block." We have so many churches in this country that we can just swing from one to another, and no one will ever know we were there because it is so large.

Commitment is such an important concept in our day. Again, there are so many things in our American culture that militate against commitment. Look at the marriage commitment. Very few people today when they get married are really committed for better or worse, through life and death. It is sort of a flippant commitment. There are very few people who are committed where they work. They think, "I don't have to work eight hours, and I can get away with cheating." The idea of loyalty and commitment just is not something that is in the American heartbeat right now. Naturally, for the Body of Christ to expect commitment, it's almost like, "Hey, what are you demanding from me? I've got my own life to live."

You mentioned before that the Reformation view of the priesthood of believers was, in my opinion, too individualistic. Indeed Luther asserted the priesthood of believers. However, it was not in the context of a corporate situation in which you would submit to one another, but it was more an individual priesthood of believers where he was asserting that each believer had the right to study the Bible without a Roman Catholic priest. I feel that the Reformation view of the priesthood was stunted. It was not really a full blown New Testament view of the priesthood in which you were committed to other people. Obviously, in the context of the Reformation, it was impossible to have a committed fellowship because you had a State church. There was not the option of whether you went to church or not. You could be whipped or fined or whatever if you didn't go to church. It was just assumed that you had a *corpus Christianum*, a territorial conception of the Church. Naturally, it was

impossible to see a priesthood of all believers in a New Testament sense come to expression there. And of course, that is where the Anabaptists, on the other hand, did capture a glimpse of the New Testament view of the priesthood of believers where they did meet in homes, and they did have the Lord's Supper in their homes. They were viewed as radical and threatening to their culture.

[Anabaptist, from the 1828 *Webster's Dictionary*, "one who holds the doctrine of the baptism of adults, or of the invalidity of infant baptism, and the necessity of rebaptization in an adult age. One who maintains that baptism ought always to be performed by immersion."]

**Dave:** *Where does evangelism fit in? Is it something that you are looking at, a lifestyle evangelism during the week? How are new people brought in? Are you committed to planting and multiplying what you are doing? One of the complaints against a small group is that it tends to become inward grown.*

**John:** Yes, I agree with you that it is a concern. Over the years, we have had to evaluate that repeatedly. That is a concern that strikes home in our particular geographical situation. I guess I would have to say what you said is accurate. At this point, we are pretty much in a lifestyle evangelism where people are meeting others in their work settings or wherever they are. It has just been a very difficult thing for us. Where we are right here in Wisconsin is heavily Lutheran. 99.9% of everything is Lutheran. It's not like the Bible belt in the South. A lot of people here go to church, but it is just sort of a dead ritual. Most of it would be a liberal Lutheranism. The bottom line is that it is difficult. We don't feel that door-to-door evangelism is appropriate. That is an area that we recognize as a potential problem. Fortunately, the Lord has been allowing us to rub shoulders with other people. That is a problem since we are spread out geographically. Most people average being about 20 miles from the church building, which is a meeting place. You could not call us a community church. That is an area that we have discussed over the

years. We have faced it. So far, our group has not become sinfully ingrown because the Lord has done various things with us to restrain that.

**The strongest assemblies that I have seen are the ones that have a good balance between reaching out in various ministries and building up themselves within.** The Book of Acts presents that, where you have the Church going out, but you also have the building up of the Body. That is a very important principle. Over and over I have seen house groups end up fighting each other and devouring each other because they did not reach out. That is a sore point with some people.

**Dave:** *My experience has been that we have got an either/or functioning. What God seems to be doing is trying to bring it to both/and. I say that lovingly to those churches that are very evangelically oriented but maybe not as community oriented. And then there are those that are heavily community oriented but not as evangelically oriented. Which one is important? Well, both are important. Somewhere between evangelism and community is a balance.*

*Why don't you talk for a few minutes in closing about your perspective on unity? Jesus prayed in John 17 that this would be the way the world would know that He was really the Lord, that Christianity was not just a nice idea or a wonderful philosophy but really was the way, the truth, and the light. You in your writing discuss that unity is an important element and that we need to, as Augustine said, be committed to unity on the essentials, which does not mean necessarily the lowest common denominator, but have diversity in the non-essentials and charity in all things. Are we moving toward a new Reformation where we are going to see unity cross over the divisions and boundaries we have set up?*

**John:** Perhaps. I don't claim to know a lot of what is happening. What I perceive is that certainly a number of Christians seem to be having their eyes opened about the problems of the traditional view of the local church or denomination being separated from other groups because they feel that they are closer to the

truth. As Paul began in I Corinthians, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos . . ." I feel that the ripple effect of that sin of clustering around human personalities is essentially the root cause of all the denominations and groups and various bodies of Christians that we have raised up since the apostolic age. I have renounced being identified with any movement or any personality. I want to be a Christian, and I want to be open to fellowship with anyone else who names the name of Christ and has a credible profession of faith. There are just so many Christians in America today—and probably all over the world—who gravitate toward a human personality, whether living or dead. They say, "I am of Calvin" or "I am of Luther." There is such a mentality that militates toward open unity regardless of their theological persuasion. We need to distance ourselves from that mentality. It is a party spirit.

Why do we have all these denominations? It is because over a period of time at some point when their movement started, they all believed they were closer to the truth than anybody else and that God was with their movement. At least what they communicate is that God was with them more than "the other guys." We need to recognize that as sin. That is not right. As long as we hold onto this idea that whatever group we are in is closer to the truth than anybody else, the unity that Jesus desires is certainly not going to be fostered and cultivated.

Generally, Christians need to examine themselves and examine the groups that they are a part of, and if there is a party spirit, we need a corporate repentance. How can the Lord turn this whole thing around if we do not repent of the sin of I Corinthians 1? We have got to get rid of this party spirit. There is just so much of it that, it takes time. All I am saying is we need to start somewhere and just consciously renounce this party spirit and be open to fellowship with other Christians. We need atmospheres where the Bible can be discussed without fear of intimidation or threatening, where people are free to express their opinions in a context of love and be

able to help one another and correct one another as we study the Bible. So I am not for this mushy situation where you just sit around and don't even discuss Scripture in the name of holding the unity. Unity should be based on an emerging of truth as we study it together. But we always must recognize that we will never be absolutely unified on every little point regarding the millennium or the role of women in the church or whatever can come up. We are always going to have differences. But we need their charity. We need to love each other and work together if we feel that we have light that will help the other brother. The most basic thing that the Lord talks about in His Body, we need to get back to those. He said, "A new commandment I give you, to love one another. If the world sees that love, they will know that you are My disciples."

I am afraid we are just not doing a very good job of displaying that love. Because of a party spirit, how can we love each other as fervently as we should? Because we each are trying to guard our empires and guard our denominational heritages. As you know, some denominations openly say, "We are closer to the truth than everybody else." Others may not say that, but still, why do they exist? I am not foolish enough to think that ever in our history we are going to have absolute Biblical unity in all Christians. But I do think that as time goes on, we should grow in our expression of love and be willing to set aside our party affiliations and love one another fervently.

*Dave: I have always been impressed with Paul's approach where he said in the Book of Acts, that when we see something that we don't understand, our position is to go to Scripture to try to prove it wrong. Paul's approach was the Berean approach, to go to Scripture to prove itself. In your booklet, Desiring Unity/Fighting Division, you wrote, "No two persons can arrive at a correct understanding of each other when they are determined to prove each other wrong."*

**John:** In our culture in churches that we call fundamentalist, I am tired of preachers haranguing on the sins out there in the world. Paul says in

I Corinthians 5 that God is going to take care of the world. He says, "You judge the things that relate to the Body and the problems there." I hear preachers haranguing on homosexuals, haranguing on this, and haranguing on that, but my question is this, "Who is reaching out to those people that they are haranguing? Who is reaching out in ministry to those who might get abortions or those who are homosexuals or the drunkards or adulterers?"

I don't think it is right for preachers just to yell at the sins that are out in the world if they are not willing also to extend a loving hand and show them the love of Christ. I also think that we need to realize that Jesus was criticized for hanging around with the wrong kind of people, and of course He didn't compromise His holiness. But the point is He did hang around people who were scum in order to bring the gospel to them. Somehow we need to have that kind of attitude in outreach. Paul said, "Once you were like that, but now you are washed. Now you are cleansed." God used somebody to touch us, and we need to be open to touch those who we may not agree with their lifestyle. But I don't think it is right to yell at them if we are not willing to extend ministry to them.

I also feel it is hypocritical for the preacher to yell about the sins in the world, which are so obvious, when they skip over the sins in the Body of Christ. They don't talk about gossip and backbiting and all the sins among professing Christians. It's easy to talk about sins that are outside our cloistered churches. I think we are being hypocritical in that. We need to focus on what Scripture says, "Judgment begins with the household of God." We need to look at ourselves and say, "What do we need to do to repent of our party spirits and repent of our problems?" How are we going to display the love of Christ to the world if the world doesn't see us imaging the love of Christ among ourselves? I think our priorities are mixed up!

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## CONCLUSION – THE FUTURE CHURCH HAS ARRIVED!

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So what will you do next? Act on what you've learned? Or just think about it?

A little reflection always helps, but I hope you'll act promptly. Certainly, David Bradshaw has given you a huge choice in *how* you act—conservatively or radically. On one hand, you've heard from leaders associated with the evangelical establishment, such as Carl George, Tom Houston, Jim Montgomery, Larry Richards, Paul Stevens, Pete Wagner, and Bob Webber. On the other hand, you've listened to some good radical views from the likes of Dave Bercot, Gene Edwards, Rich Gazowsky, Rick Joyner, Nate Krupp, Ralph Neighbour, Chris Smith and John Zens.

These leaders don't all agree on emphasis or technique, but *they're all calling you to move in the same direction: establishing a strong, free laity backed up by effective pastoral types ... all together transforming the church and society like never before.* Which, they agree, is gonna take some changes.

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