



PLANTING HOUSE CHURCHES IN NETWORKS

***A MANUAL FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF A
CHURCH PLANTING TEAM***





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Acknowledgments by Dick Scoggins

This manual has been compiled by experiences, which span over two decades. On the cover it acknowledges that this Manual is by the Fellowship of Church Planters because, in the truest sense, it is the team that has lived and learned this church planting experience and written the manual. I put the bulk of the words on the paper, but it was only due to Jim Frosts' nagging in the early years. These words are but the experiences of the entire team. Jim also wrote the chapter on Leadership in House Churches, as well as the appendices Consensus Decision Making and Measurable Ministry Objectives for Reproducing Churches. Mike Buffi wrote the chapter on Peacemaking and Corrective Church Discipline. Doug Tengdin wrote the chapter on Why House Churches as well as the appendix on Provisional Elder Job Description. My wife, Catherine, wrote the chapter on Women Leaders in House Churches. The Wickenden Street House Church wrote the Appendix bearing their name. So you can see that it truly was a team activity.

But we have stood on the shoulders of those who went before us. In the chapter on The Pilgrimage we go through our experience with the churches which spawned us and bore with our many failures. We owe greatly what we learned from Dave Gadoury and the Cranston Christian Fellowship, the Warwick Christian Fellowship and the Lincoln Christian Fellowship. Harold Burchette, who was the pastor of Quidnessett Baptist Church, was the visionary who started all this with a vision for churches who would settle for nothing less than achieving the great commission by church reproduction. The Fellowship of Church Planters is merely another step in that vision. All the principles we have applied and adapted in this manual were taught to me by Harold in the mid 1970's and I merely adapted them and passed them on to the churches and the teams. We owe a tremendous debt to the Quidnessett Baptist Church for their courage in sending us out to plant that first church. George Patterson was responsible to take these principles and press them forward to becoming reproductive. Our 5 year monthly correspondence was invaluable in getting the team and me to stop dead-ending our discipleship. George also had the unfortunate job of working through the rough draft of this book averaging about 50 red marks per page. My time and experiences with Frontiers church planting teams has been valuable in broadening our perspectives and hopefully our methods while still relying on the same principles. Certainly it is unlikely we would ever had decided on a house church model were it not for my visits to our missionary "Doc" who was laboring at that time in Tunisia. Strategizing with him enabled me to see our churches back home through different eyes and ultimately was the seed from which house church model itself sprung. He also wrote the appendix on The Man Of Peace Bible study.

We owe what we are continuing to learn to those churches, which have been established in the last decade, which continue to grow and experience new life. We are learning much through the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches, our oldest cluster of house churches. Dennis Hardiman and John Wolfe and the other elders there continue to learn more about clusters of cooperating house churches which they pass on to us. They continue to "press the envelope" in their attempts to continue reproducing and fulfill the great commission vision. And we have learned much through Exeter Chapel and the pastor there, Phil Curtis. Exeter Chapel is another daughter church of Quidnessett planted in the early 80's. They are experimenting with different models of cell churches from which we continue to learn. Lincoln Christian Fellowship (formerly Cumberland Christian Fellowship) also continues to experiment in some of these same ways and we look over their shoulders to see what we might learn. Each of the churches in our family continues to try to fulfill the great commission vision by accomplishing what God has called them to do. We rejoice in being able to fellowship with them in God's plan and purpose for His church. So ultimately this manual comes out of many people, many churches, many lives, and many teams. We humbly acknowledge that it is Jesus who has brought us this far, and there are many who have had the courage to help us as well as let us try new things.

PLANTING HOUSE CHURCHES IN NETWORKS
A MANUAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A CHURCH PLANTING TEAM
by Dick Scoggins, International Coordinator, Fellowship of Church Planters

Preface

A new wind is stirring in the land! A mere zephyr, but we expect it to become a hurricane, which will alter the landscape of Christendom. The wind is the Spirit, who in our time is again doing new things. He is bringing renewal and transformation to the individual and corporate lives of His people, His church.

The Fellowship of Church Planters has been swept up in this wind--a new house church movement. Just as the student volunteer movement early in this century and the later para-church movement enabled the Holy Spirit to do mighty things, we believe that the house church will make a similar impact.

The purpose of this manual is to share with others who the Spirit is leading to pursue this new avenue of church life. It is a systematic presentation of what we have been learning as we have established networks of House churches in Rhode Island and southern New England, for those who want to learn from our experiences and mistakes. It is not meant to be a slick formula for planting house churches. We have shared these experiences with people outside of New England, in the U.S.A. and other parts of the world. Each opportunity has enabled us to learn more, how to distill church planting principles, which may be transferable to other cultures, as well as to learn things, which apply to New England. Our goal is to enable you, to enter into this experience. We hope this manual will help you make a good start, and with the Spirit's leading, extend His kingdom wherever you may find yourself. We will be updating it as we learn new things.

The manual is designed to be used for training by church planting teams. We encourage the team leader or mentor to copy the relevant portions, as they are needed in the church planting process. It is to be used as a manual--that is, as needed. Not read once as if reading a book can train one in church planting. We encourage you to both add and subtract from this manual as you grow in your experience of church planting. This manual grew out of papers which were developed according to needs that occurred as we established house church networks in RI These papers have been edited to make them useful to a broader audience. Our goal is not to have a polished book, but a usable manual. Where background information has been lacking I have written new papers for the manual. You, too, will probably want to keep adding to it.

This particular manual focuses on the planting of a cluster of house churches. I have written a handbook called Building Effective Church Planting Teams, which gives direction in the formation and function of church planting teams. So that would be helpful if you desire to function within a team which would be planting house churches.

The Manual has 3 sections. Please focus on those sections which are most helpful to you rather than reading it front to back. The sections focus on **WHAT** we do, the appendices helpful hints on **HOW** we do it.

A summary of the sections follows:

- Section #1 Includes a brief introductory description of the history and principles, which underlie our methods. It also deals with some of the concepts regarding “church” which we have found change when moving to a house church model. Please read this before going to section #2 or #3.
- Section #2 This section details how we try to plant a house church from seeking the first convert until the church is ready to give birth to a new house church. We define three stages in planting a house church: Gathering, Covenanting, Reproducing. This section is basic and the most detailed. The goal is reproduction--of disciples, leaders, house churches, networks and finally church planting teams. Therefore, in a sense, the task of the church is never complete, but as a virus continues to reproduce and infect the host body until death, so the church reproduces and infects this world until our savior returns to bring about the blessed end of this age.
- Section #3 When a house church reproduces it enters a second reproductive cycle which produces a network of house churches. When these second-generation house churches reproduce they enter a third reproductive cycle in which networks are reproduced. Finally as the networks grow and reproduce they enter a fourth reproductive cycle in which new teams of church planters are drawn from the networks and sent to start the process again in another area. This section summarizes these last 3 reproductive cycles.

**SECTION I
FOUNDATIONS FOR PLANTING
A HOUSE CHURCH**

SUGGESTED READING

Abbott, Paul; Charting a Revolution; Community Institute
Allen, Roland; Paul's Missionary Methods or Ours? Eerdmans
 The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church; Eerdmans
 The Ministry of the Holy Spirit; Eerdmans
 The Compulsion of the Spirit; Eerdmans
Eller, Vernard; The Outward Bound; Eerdmans
Koivisto, Rex; One Lord, One Faith; Bridgepoint
Loosley, Earnest; When the Church Was Young; Christian Books Publishing House
Malherbe, Abraham; Social Aspects of Early Christianity; Fortress Press
Meeks, Wayne; The First Urban Christians; Yale Press
Nee, Watchman; The Church; Christian Fellowship Publishers
 The Work I,II,III; Christian Fellowship Publishers
Newbiggin, Leslie; The Open Secret; Eerdmans
O'Conner, Jeromy-Murphy; St. Paul's Corinth; Michael Glazer
Vanier, Jean; Community and Growth; Paulist Press

Introduction

This Manual has grown out of the experiences of the Fellowship of Church Planters in beginning a movement of House Churches in RI and New England. The papers, which make up the manual, were developed to deal with barriers and breakthroughs in the work. We desire to pass on what we have learned to others who are engaged in this sort of work. In almost every case many mistakes were made as we struggled to learn what we needed to get us to the next step in planting reproducing churches. Our hope is that this manual will shorten others road. But some things can only be learned the hard way!

The manual is designed best used with the help of a coach or mentor. You will notice an emphasis on relationship, which is inherent in house church planting and needed by all who commit themselves to a life of church planting. The Bible teaches that “a student when fully trained will be like his teacher” (Lk. 6:40). Individuals can disciple individuals, but teams (a group of church planters operating in community) are best at planting house churches. Even better as those teams humble themselves by seeking help from more experienced church planters, there will be even greater opportunity for God to bless. With this in mind we encourage you to use this manual with a coach/mentor who has been involved in church planting. If you are unable to find a coach, then find two other men who will stand with you in this as a team. The road will be filled with mines! For more information on this you can read the book Building Effective Church Planting teams by Dick Scoggins and available through the Fellowship of Church Planters. Jim Frost is in contact with numbers of church planting teams and house churches around the country and can help you network with other like-minded people. You can contact him at:

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Chapter 1

A Word Of Caution

We have embarked upon a great adventure: the house church and its related Fellowships. We find it exhilarating with all its volatility, which also often fills us with fear (That's part of exhilaration, isn't it?). But the question arises, how do we view those who are not partakers with us in the adventure?

We get so caught up in the exhilaration that we sometimes try to convert everyone to our methods! Scripture demands no hard and fast structure for church life. The very fact that so many forms of church life have existed from the early church to the present testifies to the many ways Scripture can be interpreted with respect to church structure and the multifaceted wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10) can be revealed through His church. Someone has suggested that those looking for the "truly Biblical church" are like a man in a dark room looking for a black cat that does not exist. We appreciate the many benefits we find in the house church model, but we realize that's all they are, and there are liabilities as well. (These liabilities are explained later.)

We may be persuaded that the house church model is more effective for growth and reproduction in our particular place and time than conventional church structures. But that does not necessarily mean it is "more Biblical" and certainly not that it is "right". The fact that the house church has been virtually non-existent in some societies and ages shows that God works through many different models of church life. We need to be tolerant of others even as we pursue the path in which God has led us. He uses many avenues and instruments to build his Kingdom. Para-church groups (such as Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Navigators, etc), various church denominations (Baptist, Anglican, Assembly of God, etc.), and mission agencies, are all used by God to accomplish his complex purposes. He is so creative! Who are we to judge his instruments? We have found it is hard enough to keep ourselves on the road He has called us without judging others who may be on parallel roads. A spirit of humility is needed to appreciate the beautiful variety within the Body of Christ (Cf. I Corinthians 4:6).

In Community and Growth, Jean Vanier exhorts us:

"Once it (a church community) has found its own identity and discovered how the Holy Spirit is guiding it, it must be very attentive to the manifestations of the Spirit in others. It should not believe that it is the only community to have the privilege of being inspired by the Holy Spirit;... One of the signs of life in a community is the creation of links with others. An inward-looking community will die of suffocation. Living communities are linked to others, making up a huge reservoir of love for the world....It is a sign of maturity for a community to bind itself in friendship with others; it knows its own identity, so it doesn't need to make comparisons. It loves even the differences which distinguish it, because each community had its own gift which must flourish. These communities are complementary; they need each other. They are all branches of that unique community which is the church, the mystical body of Christ. He is the vine of which the communities are branches. I am always amazed by the multiplicity of communities which exist....Some are within the churches; others are outside any institution, bringing together young people with prophetic institution who are looking for a new way of life. All these communities are part of the vast invisible church. Each is unique." (p. 85,86)

I Cor. 12:18 states: "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." God has gifted every believer and placed him/her in the body to accomplish His purposes. The context of this passage teaches that we should not be arrogant because of our place. This was a problem with the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:1-3, 11:18).

God also calls each church to fulfill a specific purpose in his Kingdom. We need to focus on that purpose and fulfill it, without comparing the calling of our church to another's (Cf John 21:20-22). If we can help and encourage others in their calling, let us do so without pushing them to take up ours!

May God grant us the grace and humility to accept one another! May we repent of any arrogance regarding the house church! It is only part of God's plan, no matter how attractive it is to us. May God help us to "esteem others (other groups) greater than ourselves!" (Philippians 2:3)

Historically and around the world today, the house church movement has been making great contributions. In China, the former Soviet Union and Muslim countries, it has obviously been the primary way of extending the Kingdom of God, but it is still an open question as the impact God will allow it to have in the Western world. You may face criticism from other Christians as you pursue this path, so you need to go often to Jesus, the Man of Humility, to learn to repay criticisms with blessings.

Key Principles:

1. There is no such thing as The Biblical church.
2. Different models of church are good for different purposes.
3. We need to follow our calling and bless others as they follow theirs. Romans 14

Questions for further thought

1. Is the House Church model "more biblical" than other models of church life?
2. What should be our attitude toward others as we try to extend His Kingdom? Look at 1 Corinthians 3-4:5. What are the dangers in diversity? Which might you be susceptible to?
3. What are some ways we can seek mutual encouragement and cooperation of other Churches and other Christians?

Chapter 2

A Great Commission Vision for the Church

If we are going to have effective church planters making up our teams, they need to come out of churches whose hearts beat for Christ's ultimate purpose: filling the land with the Gospel of Jesus Christ until ultimately "the Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever". Revelation 11:15

There is a danger today for the church to lose sight of its calling. Church Growth, meeting felt needs, marketing the church, deeper holiness, charismatic gifting, revival, the Toronto blessing, etc, etc all vie for attention. Yet Jean Vanier in his book *Community and Growth* says "the community which exists for itself will die". There is a danger that the church will lose sight of God's calling and substitute its own, self-centered calling. House churches are no less susceptible than others to the pressures the evil one brings to rob the church of her heritage rather than to be what our Lord has called us to be and do what we can only do through His sustaining grace and power.

And what is it that has called us to be and do? He has called us to be His people, His vanguard through whom He will return to usher in His Kingdom. How we look forward to the day when "the Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15). And when will this be? "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). It has always been easier for the church to substitute maintenance programs, which serve the existing saints than do the work of extending the kingdom.

In this chapter we will focus on how the early church acted upon this call, an example from more recent times which can be an encouragement to us, and finally an outline for us to respond to the Great Commission calling in our day. This vision needs to undergird everything we do, or we are likely to find that church planters alone are the only "keepers of the flame". Indeed the churches we plant must constantly have this vision before them: Reproducing churches, which are sending out teams that are reproducing, are essential to the great commission.

The Early Church

The early church established by the apostles had no difficulty understanding God's call upon them. We are familiar with the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:18-20: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The church had her orders: expand, reproduce, fill the land. The strategy is implemented in the book of Acts. Acts 1:8 "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria even to the ends of the earth." The implementation began in Acts 2 with the day of Pentecost, but really picked up steam when the persecuted church scattered (Cf. Acts 8:1-4). Who were these scattered ones? It is explicitly stated that the apostles remained behind in Jerusalem (v.1). (So much for those who state Acts 1:8 and Mt. 28:18-20 were commands given only to the apostles!). It was the church that scattered--every day people like you and me! Many probably went back to their hometowns from which they had come perhaps as far back as that first Pentecost Passover. Others probably went to where they had family or other connections. Likely many used the pattern which the Lord had used with the apostles and went out two by two to the towns and villages thus functioning as the first church planting teams of the new era. And what do we suppose they did? They shared the good news. When their relatives, friends and acquaintances heard and saw what the Lord was doing, many responded positively to the invitation to become part of His Kingdom. The "ekklesia" would gather in homes sharing the simple meal together as well as the stories of their Savior, which they had heard

from the apostles. Philip preached to the Samaritans (8:5-16) in fulfillment of the Lord's command in Acts 1:8, and Peter later opened the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). But it is these nameless scattered folk from the Jerusalem church which reached out into the areas of Judea and Samaria and ultimately started the first church made up primarily of Gentiles (11:19-21). We ought not to be surprised that it is from here that the team of Barnabas and Paul are sent evangelize the gentiles.

The sending out of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:1-4) seems to us to be a watershed, a quantum leap forward. But is it really? We need to keep in mind that the writer, Luke, is trying to recount how the early church fulfilled its mandate by carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. He is detailing how this occurred primarily through the avenue he personally witnessed, Paul, through whom he came to faith and with whom he traveled until they finally reached the capital of the Gentile world. Luke concludes his story having fulfilled his purpose, expanding on how the church carried out Acts 1:8. In fact the sending out of Barnabas and Paul as an apostolic team was not a quantum leap forward, as important as it was. Rather it was the natural continuation of the pattern employed by the Lord Jesus with his disciples (a proto-type of the apostolic band) and carried out during the persecution of Acts 8 through which the Antioch church was begun (Acts 11:19-21). When Paul and Barnabas split up, they went out as two apostolic bands (Acts 15:37-40). In the early church these apostolic bands (or teams of church planters) proliferated. From some of Paul's letters we can see that not all of them were good! But he doesn't claim that his band is the only one or that all others are not genuine. This would seem to show that such bands were not uncommon.

This would also help explain the phenomenal expansion of the early church. It seems that the normal pattern of the early church was that followers were instructed in the stories of Jesus, had experienced the Power of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Acts 1:8), and answered the call of God to be witnesses wherever they found themselves. New churches were established as new households were added to the Kingdom. Some went out in teams of two or more to establish "ekklesia" in far-flung areas. The church expanded spontaneously without mission organizations, clergy, seminaries, or any of the trappings we feel essential today. It expanded as each member saw God's Great Commission as including them. They did not wait for the Apostles to lead the way (Acts 8:1). Rather the apostles had instructed them and empowered them so that the simplicity of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:3) coupled with the simplicity of the early church structure (meeting in homes with a very simple format) could expand rapidly anywhere. How did the church expand? There seem to be two ways. One was through the natural sharing of good news with friends and family bringing new households into the kingdom around which new house churches formed (for more on this I would recommend Robert Banks [Paul's Idea of Community](#) or [The Church Comes Home](#)). The second way was through apostolic bands being sent out from these naturally expanding networks of churches to penetrate the regions beyond. Using a military metaphor we could say that Apostolic bands invaded new territory and then moved on after establishing churches, which reproduced and subdued the land. New people might join the apostolic band as it moved on (Such as Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, Luke, etc.) or other apostolic bands might spin off from these churches directly to penetrate outlying areas (e.g. Epaphras) later networking with existing bands.

How few names we have in the New Testament of these folks who moved out under the call of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Who planted many of the churches of Judea? Who started the Antioch church (we know it was group of men? Cf. Acts 11:20 "some of them"...)? How many churches did these nameless men start? We have no idea! But who can argue that here was a powerful movement of the Spirit unencumbered by the wisdom of men! Can it happen again?

The Moravian Movement

A good way of answering this question is to ask if such a spontaneous expansion of the church has happened

since that time. Perhaps the closest thing is the Moravian movement. The Moravians began in 1722 as part of the pietistic movement, which emphasized the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Moravians had a huge impact lasting until WW I. In the opinion of LaTorrette, it was perhaps the most extensive missionary movement ever since the first centuries. Certainly it was the most extensive in Protestantism. Beginning before any of the great Awakenings and before the great mission societies formed in Great Britain and the US, it was instrumental in all these events. Moravians missionaries had a great influence on John Wesley as he visited the Americas in 1738 leading to his “awakening” which led the First Great Awakening! Before 1800 Moravians had taken the Good News to Indonesia, Ceylon, India, Central Asia, Russia, Lapland, The Gold Coast of Africa, South Africa, Greenland, Labrador, the colonies in North America, several Indian tribes in North America, black slaves in North America and the Caribbean, and Indians in the Caribbean and South America. They also had works amongst the Jews and Muslims of Europe! After 1800 we find them scattered as far as Alaska and California! All this with none of the western institutions which are considered essential today and in less than 80 years!

The Moravians were the first Protestant group to embrace the mandate to spread the Gospel to all mankind. All Moravians who were part of their fellowships (called Herrnhuts) were committed to propagating the Christian faith wherever they were and to go to wherever God called them. Their membership included many with crafts, skills and business ability, which opened up doors of opportunity to work in other parts of the world. They would often set out in small bands of two or three after having sought the Lord and determined that He had called them to a particular place. They would settle there, learn the local language and customs and trade and develop businesses, sharing their faith and gathering the faithful into communities. Often they suffered the fate of those with whom they identified. Stories of persecution, being sold into slavery to reach slaves and being slaughtered along with the Indian tribes they lived with in North America are all part of the Moravian heritage.

Many Moravians were martyred, some by whites that were furious that they would take the Indian's or slaves part in disputes over land and human rights. Governments who saw them as a threat expelled others. But still they persevered on; a Pilgrim people in a barren land, seeking to bring good news to those in darkness. They did this without paid clergy, without Bible Colleges or Seminaries, and without Mission Societies. There was no centralized denominational structure, and they planted no “churches” by the day's standards. They started small, intimate communities, which had no buildings and no clergy. They focused on the unsaved, especially those who had never heard the Gospel. They were not interested in winning converts from other Christian denominations. Remember at this time the bulk of the energy of Protestantism was spent winning Catholics

over to Protestantism and defending themselves from the same! But Moravians were willing to work with and help other denominations. They were theologically inclusive; willing to fellowship with any who displayed evidence of the new birth by a transformed life. They worked closely with Quakers, Baptists, Mennonites, Methodists, etc. When the state churches and established denominations in the 19th century showed little interest in missions, many missions minded Christians from these denominations were influenced by the example of the Moravians. The result was that these folks began the independent mission societies in Great Britain, the USA, and the other countries of Europe.

Very few are well known names to the world today. Count Von Zinzendorf is perhaps the best known as an early patron, but he was not the head of the movement. The movement had no head other than Christ. It was truly “grass roots” in that simple believers drawn along by the Holy Spirit would go as God directed in small teams and begin to preach the gospel and gather those who would follow into simple communities. In some cases they saw thousands come to Christ, in other cases they saw but a few baptisms. Often new converts would go out in bands trying to reach the next distant people groups. The first Indian missionaries in North America were sent out by Moravian groups to reach the more western tribes. Truly this was a movement like the movement of the first centuries of the Church.

A Model for Us

As we try to discern God's call upon the house church movement today we should note some patterns between the early church expansion and the Moravian expansion which should be an example and an encouragement:

1. They were both lay led movements. There were some supported people, but they were not considered superior or more committed to building the kingdom than those who were self supported. All who became partakers of Christ were expected to be engaged in the expansion of the kingdom no matter where they were or what their occupation. Likewise any could expect the call of God to “go” and participate with a team taking the kingdom to the regions beyond. Those remaining behind helped in any way possible.
2. They established simple communities where people were expected to be transformed into the image of Christ and further the work of the Kingdom. These were not complex, programmed institutions requiring extensive administration and professionalism, but rather a simple community. Apostolic bands of the first century and Moravian missionaries bands were able to start communities that were thus self-sufficient and able quickly to send people on to still other regions.
3. They did not use extensive helping organizations such as seminaries and mission societies in order to carry out the great commission mandate. Some Moravians did go to Bible schools, but this did not give them a different status from the regular non-schooled Moravians. These did, however, bring new ideas to cross-pollinate with older Moravian ideas. We have already mentioned that the cross-pollination went both ways as Moravian mission ideas fueled many in other denominations.
4. They did not compete with other Christian churches, and groups, but rather cooperated with them and were a blessing to them. There was a spirit of co-laboring for the King.

Applications to Us

The above all represents values, which are highly esteemed by those of us who are involved in planting house churches, which reproduce. Because of this I believe that we may very well be in a position to contribute greatly to the expansion of the church throughout the world today in what may indeed be the last harvest. But if we are going to do so, we need to consciously embrace a great commission vision just as the Moravians did.

Below are several steps that might be taken:

1. Clusters of house churches need to continue to focus on ways to reproduce. From our experience it would seem that a minimum of three house churches should be networked to insure reproductive vitality. We need be encouraging these networks of churches to recognize, train, and release church planters to work in bands and plant churches through out the USA. These church planting teams should be mostly made up of self supporting men who hold jobs and thus set an example for the leaders of the house churches which will have to balance job, family and ministry responsibilities.

2. When families need to move due to job changes, perhaps (in keeping with the 2 X 2 principle) another family or a single person could be recruited (even if from another house church or fellowship) in order to use the opportunity to extend the kingdom by planting new house churches in a new city. Or we could check to see if there are already people starting reproducing churches in that city. As we see other house church groups pop up in the US, we need to see that neither our approach nor our area is unique. Therefore we should seek opportunities as the Lord leads to network with these. It has become apparent that house churches working in cooperation with a loose confederation of church planting teams (Fellowship of Church Planting Teams) can have a nationwide and worldwide impact.

3. We need to encourage some of these teams to go cross culturally to other countries. Here we also need to encourage most of these church planters to be at least bivocational, in not fully self-supporting. (By bi-vocational we mean have a job which provides for at least some of their support.). This will enable the team to set a good example for the leaders of the churches they are planting, who for the most part should be self-supporting, as well as provide a model for teams of national self-supporting teams to form and plant churches throughout the nation and beyond. There is no question that by making fully supported pastors and church planters the norm and ideal, the expansion of the Kingdom has greatly suffered. While God's Spirit desires to thrust laborers into the harvest field, we send them on years of deputation. The next generation of church planters need to have skills which will enable them to get full or part-time jobs in the international job market.

4. House church networks need to find ways to communicate far and wide to recruit new church planting teams to go to the regions beyond. Ways we have found thus far to do this networking:

- A. Regional meetings of church planting teams and house churches such as we have in New England.
- B. Publications like our Church Planting Bulletin (put out by FCPT New England) and the Courier, a newsletter put out the RI churches promoting mission opportunities.

5. We need to encourage Christians with business abilities to become more involved in finding ways to be involved in the expansion of the Kingdom. Business has always been important when the church has expanded. George Patterson has found businessmen often make the best church planters. The early church

made the most of the Roman commerce as they traveled the Roman roads in business ventures, which led to the rapid proliferation of churches throughout the empire. Many in Paul's band (including Paul) were skilled craftsmen able to labor with their hands when they needed to. Likewise their skills often gave them entrance into unreached communities. The Moravians also had a large number of merchants, craftsmen and businessmen among their number, which enabled them to travel far and wide with great freedom.

Many of today's restrictions on missions arise from the fact that we rely too much on fully supported people who have difficulty finding a niche in society from which to declare good news to the lost. We need to ask Christian businessmen to lead the way in getting their eyes onto the fields, looking at how to penetrate new markets, not simple for financial profit, but for Kingdom profit.

If we are going to push the Kingdom of God forward it will require a concerted effort by churches and church planting teams to saturated ground already penetrated and send new teams out to penetrate new ground.

Principles

1. Churches have a mandate from Christ to fulfill the great commission.

2. Churches should be reproducing locally.
3. Reproducing churches should be sending out teams to do extra-local church planting. These teams will be made up of bi-vocational, self-supporting, and in some cases, fully supported church planters (The latter should be the exception and not the norm.).
4. Reproducing churches should be sending out teams to do cross cultural church planting.
5. These teams should have as their goal starting churches, which carry out #1-3 above.

Questions for further thought

Have you been part of a growing, reproducing church movement?

1. If so, what do you see as the key components, which aided this? How are these components part of what you are doing or passing on? How conscious is your team or churches of the importance of these? What are some things that you can do to keep the churches moving forward?
2. If not, what has prevented your efforts from growing or reproducing? What help have you enlisted to identify these barriers? What things have you tried to break through these barriers? What kind of evaluation of these efforts are you engaged in? What new things are you trying?
3. Have you written a Vision Paper (see chapter 15) which includes the effective components of reproducing?

Chapter 3

The Pilgrimage: From Traditional Models To House Church Fellowships

This chapter tells the story from my personal perspective. It traces the pilgrimage, which took me from working within traditional church structures to planting clusters of house churches. We call a single cluster of from 2 to 5 house churches a “fellowship”. The chapter gives an overview of these fellowships of house churches as they emerged in our experience. We hope you will discern from this how the Spirit might work in your own situation.

I began the pilgrimage in Rhode Island. This is the smallest state in America with a population of about one million. Three fourths of the people live in metropolitan Providence. Rhode Island also has the highest percentage of Roman Catholics (67%), and one of the lowest percentages of evangelicals (2%).

I came to Christ through the ministry of Quidnessett Baptist Church. As part of a vision for renewal, Quidnessett started a daughter congregation in the suburbs of Providence. *Their goal was to start churches, which would vigorously grow and produce disciples, leaders, and new congregations.*

From 1975 to 1987 I was involved in this effort. We began the Cranston Christian Fellowship, a church organized along a traditional, centralized, large group church model. This proved to be a valuable learning time for me. As with Quidnessett, Cranston strongly emphasized one-on-one discipleship, and focused on Christ as the model for personal character development. I learned, both from my own experience and from those with whom I worked, that becoming a useful servant for the King involves deep spiritual healing. The discipleship program hinged on teaching new believers the basics of the faith. Practically, however, they learned to allow God to mold their character. As God transformed their lives, they became better equipped to serve Him.

During this time I also learned a lesson from personal experience about church leadership: God provides leaders from a congregation's midst. Cranston had trained me for pastoral leadership by combining opportunities for service with practical training. My lessons ranged from theology, to preaching, to training other men for leadership.

In 1981, I was sent, along with others from the Cranston Christian Fellowship, to plant another church, the Warwick Christian Fellowship. While training the next generation of pastoral leaders, I realized the benefits of plural eldership, as opposed to a one-man pastorate with a supporting board. I had begun my service in a pastoral position. Since people tend to follow the models they know, I doubted that a group of active elders would develop as long as I remained the lead pastor. So I asked the church to commission me as part of a team of men for the ministry of church planting. I hoped to create a model of plural leadership that could be duplicated in future church planting. For further material on church planting teams, please refer to my book [Building Effective Church Planting Teams](#).

I joined Jim Frost, another church planter from the Cranston Christian Fellowship, to form the Fellowship of Church Planters. We began a church, the Lincoln Christian Fellowship, in a northern suburb of Providence; it was similar to the Cranston and Warwick centralized models but with an emphasis on plural leadership from the beginning.

By 1987, I noticed stagnation in the fellowship. This was not new; I'd witnessed it in the other churches we had planted. In every case, after initial rapid growth, it leveled off. Numerical growth had stopped; thus any vision of planting daughter churches remained only that...a vision.

Although Quidnessett had planted another congregation in 1981, it returned to its original attendance of about 450 and became cool toward further church planting efforts. Cranston maintained about 300 in attendance, having planted no additional churches since Warwick in 1981. Warwick, too, had plateaued at 130; the congregation had neither planted nor demonstrated a desire to plant additional churches. Lincoln plateaued at 110 with no enthusiasm for church planting. All these congregations had been formed with a vision for evangelizing, reproducing disciples, and reproducing churches, yet all had now cooled to the original goal.

We seemed no closer to establishing spontaneously reproducing churches than we had been 13 years earlier. What could be learned from these efforts? Was there a way to realize the vision? Could the barriers to reproduction be overcome? I wondered if my view was only an idealistic pipe dream. Was it lunacy to dream of vibrant churches calling people into a vibrant life in the Kingdom of God, a kingdom so powerful that the kingdoms of this world would be turned upside-down?

If these were the types of churches God had called us to plant, we were willing to be faithful to His plan by trusting Him to provide the laborers we needed. If necessary, we were willing to reach the state by planting churches one by one. We estimated, however, that this would take over 300 years! On the other hand, we were also willing to try new approaches to achieve what we believed to be God's plan: *churches reproducing as rapidly as the Spirit of God would allow*. The opportunity to try a new model came quickly.

NEW DIRECTIONS

We were committed to the church planter being itinerant, moving on quickly after forming a church. About this time we began a small evangelistic Bible study in rural Rhode Island. The area was quite resistant to the gospel; we had great difficulty imagining the group ever becoming a church like its larger, centralized sisters. As Mike Buffi (a new member to the team) and I moved on to work in the densely populated suburb of East Providence, Jim remained with the rural work, working slowly and patiently. He began to consider how the group might become a house church, a concept we'd only just discovered reading from Mennonite material.

While examining the house church approach, we were struck by certain aspects of small group dynamics. The house church is much like a family made up of individuals who, to varying degrees, are able both to give and to receive love. In this smaller group the crippling manifestations of sin are more easily brought to light. Consequently, hurting souls receive the healing they need to become capable of love. We have a motto in the house church: "You can run, but you can't hide. And if you run, we will run after you!" We witnessed people learning to love one another in practical ways, a miracle of amazing healing in interpersonal relationships. The warmth of a circle of people sitting or sharing a meal together encouraged rapid assimilation of new people into the church. The level of intimacy was extraordinary.

We began to read about other models of house churches. One we call the independent house church model. In this model, each house church is completely independent of any others. It stands autonomous, having little interaction with other Christian groups. As a team, we rejected this model. It took into account the versatility and vibrancy of a house church, but it ignored the fact that such a group is also volatile. We found it also tends toward elitism and pride, with a result that the church does not reproduce well. Although our first effort at house church planting was an isolated house church, we realized that the church would draw strength by cooperating closely with other churches. Densely populated areas seemed ideally suited to building a strong, interacting cluster of house churches. Because the house church concept was both simple and flexible, it seemed the perfect vehicle for reaching diverse urban people groups. Already God had used it to engender not only personal sanctification, but to bring healing and restoration to broken families. Given the sad state of typical urban family life, metropolitan Providence seemed ripe for a house-church harvest.

With Jim's rural Chepachet House Church as our guinea pig, we decided to try the concept with the church in

East Providence. It had begun as a six-person investigative Bible study. When we started the house church plan, this group (25+ members) had only recently “covenanted” (more on this later) as a church (East Providence Christian Fellowship). They were meeting regularly for Sunday evening worship and were agitating for a Sunday morning service. Undoubtedly, the group was becoming a centralized church, similar to the other churches we had planted.

I explained to the church that, although we should desire to grow, it would be impossible to grow and still maintain our present intimacy as a small group. I strongly suggested that rather than having a large Sunday morning service, we meet in two separate homes on Sunday morning, while continuing to meet together Sunday evening. The group was not enthusiastic about the proposal; they had become quite tightly knit. Many resisted the idea of splitting up, although they admitted that we had already lost the intimacy of the smaller group. But instead of considering the affect of size on intimacy, they sought “programs” for the larger group to restore intimacy. I could see that the way forward would be difficult.

After much prayer and discussion, the congregation reluctantly agreed to a three-month trial, meeting Sunday mornings in two homes. One group met in East Providence; another in the East Side of Providence. After the three months, the community assessed its growth in terms of relationships, intimacy, and service to one another. The response was overwhelmingly positive; all agreed that this pattern was the Lord's will for East Providence Christian Fellowship. At this point, having rejected the independent house church model, we gravitated toward a cell house church model. Churches would begin as small house groups. As they grew and multiplied, they would remain united for weekly, large group meetings and many other activities. Eventually, these distinct cells would purchase a common building for united activities. The cells would coalesce to form one church.

THE PILGRIMAGE: FROM A CELL CHURCH TO HOUSE CHURCH FELLOWSHIPS

By the spring of 1989, East Providence Christian Fellowship was meeting regularly at two locations on Sunday mornings and jointly on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The church was combining small and large group activities. One of the members had a business in an office complex and made space available for large group meetings. Other members were looking for a building to rent. All of this encouraged us to keep heading toward the cell house church model. We envisioned new members joining a particular house congregation where they would receive their basic discipling and shepherding. This would be their nuclear family - their church. Simultaneously they would develop allegiance to the larger community, their extended family (at that time, the East Providence Christian Fellowship). The definition of a church as one local congregation became blurred--purposefully. The people now had two loyalties: to their own small house congregations, as well as to the larger church.

In January of 1990 two elders were appointed in EPCF. Later that spring deacons were appointed and a third house group began to form out of an evangelistic Bible study. We were on our way to a united church of three congregations. Conflict, however, arose. Most members of the newer group, Mount Pleasant, did not attend the large group Sunday evening services. They pushed for a separate mid-week meeting to pursue evangelism with a Bible study. At the same time, attendance from the other house groups began to wane at the Sunday evening meeting. New people remained on the fringes rather than being integrated into the larger group. The leaders prayerfully evaluated the situation. Some interesting thoughts resulted:

1. The consensus was that the larger facility for Sunday evening was too sterile when compared to the warmth of a home.

2. More and more energy was going into the large group meetings. Meetings which required a great deal of planning (preaching, kids clubs, nursery, etc.). These maintenance activities had become so absorbing that little energy remained for growth activities (discipleship, evangelism, personal shepherding). The larger group was siphoning energy, which the small groups needed for growth and reproduction.
3. The larger group effort showed a dramatic loss of flexibility. To meet the needs of the larger congregation, meeting formats and scheduling had become quite rigid. The leaders saw this as a tragic loss since the house church's flexibility was one of its greatest strengths.
4. In the larger group, interacting was easy among old friends from the different house churches; newcomers, however, tended to talk only to those of their own house group. The larger group meetings were not helping the small groups bond together.

As the leaders prayed and discussed these things among the congregations, and ourselves we saw that the cell house church model was not appropriate for our vision. The Lord was leading us in still newer directions.

THE RESULT: A FELLOWSHIP OF HOUSE CHURCHES

In August of 1990 the leaders adopted a new approach. The East Providence Christian Fellowship X a centralized church made up of 3 house cells X became the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches, a decentralized network of house churches. The fellowship consisted of three house churches: East Providence House Church, Wickenden Street House Church and Mount Pleasant House Church.

The practical effects were multiple. The Sunday evening meeting was dissolved; instead, each house church focused its energies on developing a written covenant and vision statement (more on these later). A person could join a particular house church by signing its covenant and having hands laid on by the leaders. In addition, all the house churches in the Fellowship started to meet as a large group once monthly, on an evening (although during the summer a Sunday late morning or afternoon picnic became the norm.)

The house church meetings were limited to two per week to allow members time to deepen their intra- and inter-house church relationships. Likewise, the members were encouraged to develop relationships with unbelievers X bridges for the gospel. The mid-week meeting was largely devoted to planning activities. Sunday meetings were given to worship and Bible study. There was no formal preaching. This plan preserved the versatility and vibrancy of autonomous, cooperating house churches, while offsetting the dangers that arise from a house churches' volatility. A fellowship of from two to six house churches forms, based on relationships built in the course of the churches' normal growth and reproduction.

Presently (July 1992) the original East Providence of House Churches has reproduced three additional fellowships of House Churches: West Bay Fellowship, Northwest Fellowship (Both in Rhode Island) and the Southern Massachusetts Fellowship of House Churches.

THE FUTURE

We hope that the changes we have made in our approach to church planting and reproduction will enable us to accommodate whatever harvest the Lord grants. We have been excited with the number of people engaged in the expansion of the Kingdom. Elders, shepherding deacons, church planters, singles, couples, men, women, teens, and even pre-teens are all finding significant places in God's plan for His expanding Kingdom. This rapid growth reminds us of the words of our Lord Jesus:

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.” Matthew 11:12

We are especially excited about the house church fellowships' part in the broader world of missions. Financially, the fellowships have been very involved; 50% of the offerings routinely go toward outside mission endeavors. The East Providence Fellowship of House Churches created the position of missions coordinator to help continue and deepen the interest in cross-cultural missions. The desire is two-fold: to support those already in harvest fields and to recognize, train, and send new church planters. Each fellowship has been encouraged to adopt a team abroad as well as one here in the states. Interns from teams overseas have made visits and some remain for internships with the house church fellowships. The churches have planned for some of their leaders to make trips to the teams abroad. In these ways we hope to stimulate creative relationships between churches and teams. (At this writing 12 church planters have been trained and sent to the Muslim world and another 6 to other fields.)

Truly, we have arrived at one horizon only to find another. We are awed, excited and fearful of what lies ahead. Certainly the growth this year is encouraging; it is, perhaps, a spark. Hopefully, this spark will start a fire of church growth and reproduction X not only in RI but also in southern Massachusetts and beyond. We cannot control the future; we only strive to be flexible, to look ahead, to plan, and ultimately, to accommodate whatever the Lord brings.

Principles

1. Simple churches can reproduce more easily and have leaders who come from within the congregation.
2. Churches should have plural leadership. In a cluster of house churches, the leadership team would be made up of the leaders of each of the house churches.
3. Churches meeting in homes are like family where healing can take place in an intimate environment.
4. Meetings should be kept to a minimum leaving enough time for one on one discipleship, evangelism, and relation building.
5. Clusters of churches should keep an eye out of people to train in church planting so that they can be sent out to other areas.

Questions for further thought

1. What is a Fellowship?
2. What are some advantages of the house church model?
3. What is the difference between an independent House church and a network of house churches?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Chapter 4

Background on Discipling

In this part we lay the foundational principles of our church planting methodology. Discipling provides the building blocks of reproducing churches. Jesus commanded His apostles to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”. Their implementation of the plan is recorded in the book of Acts. And what was this implementation? The apostles went and planted churches. These churches, in turn, reproduced disciples who in turn went out and planted new churches. This cycle has reproduced itself down to the present age. The questions answered in this chapter are what does Scripture mean by discipling, and how does it bring reproduction?

The disciples, of course, were disciplined by the master, our Lord Jesus. Please study the gospels to see Jesus' discipling. Two thematic studies we have developed on discipleship appear in Appendix 1 and 2. They are entitled Entering the Kingdom and Living in the Kingdom.

Discipleship for Jesus was relational. He called his disciples to *be with Him* (Mark 3:14). He lived with them, ate with them, rejoiced with them, and wept with them. Over and over his love for them is stated and displayed. They were not students of a class He taught, nor were they "ministry projects" upon which he worked. They were brothers whom he loved and to whom he was dedicated. He lived with them, worked with them, and loved them in such a way that their lives were changed forever. Such is the ministry of discipleship. We see this discipling carried on in the ministry of Paul, both on his team and in the churches (Cf. Acts 20:17-38). The letters of Paul are filled with personal, often heart-wrenching exhortations, warnings, blessings, thanksgivings, all of which reflect a highly relational ministry.

The ministry of Jesus and the early apostles reshaped broken, battered, carnal people in such a way that they soon also reflected the love of Christ. The apostles were merely the human agents of God's spirit who enables us to love God and our neighbor in practical ways. How did this happen? How does it happen today? Scripture clarifies that we have been born into a fallen and broken world. God created us for fellowship with him and with one another. God created us to love and be loved. But the fall has fundamentally altered the face of our world. Instead of us giving and receiving love, we find ourselves battered by the sinfulness of this world, which seeks for self rather than for others. We are born as sinners and are selfish by nature. We learn patterns of coping and survival which are self-centered (whether self-assertive or self-protective) and thus contrary to love. Crippled spiritually, we learn how to survive in a lost world, but it is a temporary survival, which only leads to more pain later on, and more violations of God's plan of love.

Against this hopeless backdrop comes the man of hope, Jesus who is the Christ. He preaches good news of a new Kingdom--a kingdom of love, righteousness and peace. He lives this type of life before the skeptical disciples and teaches them how to live it as well. He displays before them the ultimate act of selfless love by going to a cross and dying. Even worse, He is cut off from the Father, with whom he has enjoyed unbroken fellowship since before time began, thus redeeming them and those who will believe because of their word. He calls his disciples to follow him in suffering in this broken world. As they go they are to call out anyone who is willing to follow Him in His kingdom. Those who join them in this pilgrimage are trained along the way to love, even as Jesus showed and taught his disciples.

Thus Christianity is not simply a set of beliefs but a new life! Jesus Himself said that those who follow Him would be recognized by their love. It is not a body of knowledge, which needs to be imparted, but rather a relationship that needs to be learned and practiced. Our Lord began the process; His gospel must be transmitted in flesh and blood rather than by a book alone. He himself came as flesh and blood to live out the life of the Kingdom before his disciples. He was tempted and suffered as they would in the process of living out the kingdom life in a fallen world. Wherever His disciples went they modeled the kingdom. To those who followed they imparted the principles of kingdom living. They often remained for a time to help new disciples begin practicing this new life in the kingdom, learning as the original disciples did with Jesus, that it was not easy and there would be many failures from which they could learn and grow.

THE DISCIPLING NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

Since God's calling to us is relational in nature (he has called us to love him and love our neighbor) obviously a relational church is necessary to obey his calling. But obedience to His command to love is not a one-time act of "joining" a church, for relationships do not work that way. When we get married, the wedding signifies not the end of the relationship, but the beginning. The rest of one's married life is spent exploring, failing, repenting, and learning new ways to love. If the wedding day is the highlight of a marriage it is a sad relationship indeed!

In the same way when we enter into salvation we begin a new journey into a New Kingdom. We are like immigrants leaving our Old World and coming to a new country. New customs must be learned. A new language, new ways to do old things like money management, ordering the home, etc. We enter the Kingdom of God. We often resist change; as we progress in this new life we find old ways die hard. We find that we are still self-promoting or self-protective. We find that we still love ourselves more than we love God and much more than we love our neighbor. We find that we are fearful, lonely, tired. We find that God does not always seem near. This kingdom is not what we expected. There are times when our mind wanders back to "Egypt" and the old life beckons.

But God never meant us to walk the life alone, nor did He desire us to learn the ins and outs of this New Kingdom only from the pages of a book. Just as our Lord became incarnate to show forth the kingdom, He, through His Holy Spirit, is incarnating Himself in those who are following Him. Those who have progressed in the kingdom are called to display kingdom living to the newer ones and mentor them over the difficult obstacles in the road. The church is the family in which this dynamic exchange occurs. Older ones in the Lord help newer believers. In so doing, they must learn to love these new ones who are often not lovable. As these older ones do so, they face the obstacles to love in their own life. The Lord uses unlovely ones to reveal to us older ones our own selfishness. We are required to repent and be renewed in order to love and serve them. Thus not only do mature believers model the life of the kingdom and teach its precepts to the unlovely new ones, but they grow through the process. Thus the whole church is continually being transformed from one stage of glory to another as each one learns how to love more perfectly.

As you see above, discipleship in this manual means a dynamic relationship that brings God's healing to the crippled state into which we are all born and nurtured. The healing is for both the discipler and the disciple. We can now turn to the definition of the church we need for this kind of discipleship.

Principles

1. God has saved us into a family. Salvation is corporate. Ephesians 2:11-3:13
2. Older ones in the faith should be helping train the younger ones. Titus 2:3-5, 2 Timothy 2:2
3. Thus discipleship should be relational and reproductive--not programmatic! The discipler grows even in the process of discipling. Ephesians 4:11-16

Questions for further thought

1. What is the foundational building block of reproducing church?
2. What was Jesus Pattern of Discipleship?
3. How is life in the Kingdom similar to immigrants living in a new country?
4. What provisions does God give to us to help us live our lives as Kingdom people?

Chapter 5

The Church Illustrated

We believe that God's salvation is corporate in nature rather than individual. By this we mean that God intends through our salvation to purchase for Himself a people (Cf. Mt. 1:21, I Peter 2:9f) who join Him in the cosmic warfare in which He has been engaged since the fall of Satan (Cf. Revelation 12:10,17, Ephesians 3:10,11, 6:10-12).

Although God saves men and women individually, His purpose is to add them as subjects to His kingdom where they join with others in this cosmic struggle. Thus, all new believers need to be added to the body of Christ (Acts 2:41) where they can find their place of ministry (I Corinthians 12:18) and the purpose that God had for them when he saved them (Philippians 3:12, Colossians 1:24-28).

The church of God is made up of local churches. These local churches are groups of believers who are committed to obey Jesus Christ and accountable to one another for carrying out His plan for them. This simple definition of the church is like defining the Rockies as a mountain range; it fails to summarize the beauty and majesty of these mountains. To get a better glimpse of God's great mystery, we must go beyond a mere definition to illustrations of the church. These illustrations give insight from which we can develop the functions and structures of the church.

THE CHURCH AS AN ARMY

An earthly army is made up of units, which are in turn composed of individuals. When the army goes into battle the effective coordination between these units and individuals determines who wins the war. A unit functions effectively only as the individuals in it work together to accomplish their task. This coordinated activity is also seen in the "corporate" nature of our salvation. Although we are saved individually, only when we find our place within His Kingdom and work in cooperation with others, are we able to accomplish that which He plans for us.

The individualism of our western culture blurs this aspect of salvation. Like lone rangers, we seek to accomplish God's purposes in isolation. Others may help us, but we often try to follow God along our own individual paths. We often go to seminars, do Bible studies, listen to sermons so that we as individuals might become like Christ. But God desires that the whole body grow together into the reflection of Christ (Ephesians 4:16). We are like lone snipers hiding here and there randomly getting in a shot at a disciplined and coordinated foe. God commands us to put forth a coordinated, corporate effort in order to secure victory!

This understanding has tremendous effect on our practices as churches and church planting teams. Neither our church planting teams nor the churches are merely a collection of individuals who come together for worship or training. Rather, we are units of God's great army, and of His kingdom engaged in a life and death struggle. God has called us and enabled us to find one another. He has equipped us so that, relying upon Him as well as each other, we can carry out the task He has assigned to us. But this happens only as we learn to work together; to trust one another; to appreciate each other's strengths, and our own weaknesses. God provides others to make up for what is lacking in me in order to carry out the task. God's work, by its nature, calls us to be molded and shaped together. Then not only will we win the war, but we will also learn how to love one another.

THE CHURCH AS A PILGRIM PEOPLE (E.G. A WAGON TRAIN):

Another illustration of God's purpose for his people is a wagon train. We are pilgrims caravanning to a better country. Much like Israel coming out of Egypt, our goal is to arrive at a Promised Land and (for the sake of the analogy) to raid Satan's kingdom along the way taking prisoners who will join us in our journey. Each one in the train of wagons has a job to do. God has given each one gifts, talents and resources to be shared with the others so that goal can be reached. When attacks come and the wagons are circled, each wagon must prevent the evil one from penetrating the community and destroying it. As we travel together, grow together, succeed and fail together, we get to know each other and help one another as new trials occur.

The process is as important as the goal. Our calling is relational. The warfare is such that love (From God) overcomes the attacks of the evil one. God has called His people to love: to love him and to love one another. When He first called us we were not predisposed to love, nor did we know how to love. As a matter of fact, the rest of our Christian life will be spent learning to love. When we join the wagon train (not just ride near it), we find many who are offensive to us, that irritate us, and that are just plain wrong in their view of things (for we, after all, are always right). As we travel together this leads to conflict and discomfort. But these very difficulties also enable us to learn to love. And when the enemy attacks, we see these people that we find hard to love fulfilling crucial roles; our new appreciation for them allows a foundation from which love can spring.

We also find that often the very things that were offensive to us are invaluable in the battle. In the process of getting to the Promised Land we learn how to love -- if we submit to the lesson!

THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY:

God has called us first into relationship with Himself. He has set His love upon us like a banner, and claims us as His children. This love led Him to send His unique son to die on a cross and purchase us, that we might be adopted sons in His family. He has called us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. He gives us His Holy Spirit who continues His work in us until we are remade in the image of His Son.

But He has also called us into relationship with the other members of His family. He has called us not only to receive His infinite love, but also to pass on that love. God wants his invisible love to be made visible on earth through our love for each other in His family, the Church. Perhaps this illustration of the church as a family with children is the most appropriate for this manual. God's plan for the family is reproduction. Adam and Eve were commanded to fill the earth. God's ideal was for one generation of healthy, godly families to produce another generation of godly families and so on down to the present. Of course the fall into sin messed this up. Yet a godly family is the foundation of society and of the church community. So this remains God's plan for His people.

God has called us into His family. He is our Father. We are His sons. Others in His Kingdom are our brothers and sisters. And yet we are so ill equipped to carry out his plan as a family! Most of us learned family life in our flawed, earthly families. We learned wrong ways of coping with those who sinned against us and we sinned in return. We learned early in life wrong ways of relating to those in authority as well as to our peers. Much of our Christian life will be spent unlearning these natural reactions and relearning how to love in deed and in truth.

The church is the place for the family to relearn this new way of life. The house church, because of its size and ability to give more personal attention, is an ideal setting for these lessons. Discipling relationships are developed as older Christians teach newer ones to love God and their neighbor. As the group undergoes the natural conflicts in family relationships, barriers to love arise from the flesh. These are dealt with by those who shepherd and disciple the sheep. In this small church environment, patterns, which cripple our ability to love, are compassionately brought into the light and we repent of them. New patterns are learned and practiced under the loving care of a mentor who helps us move toward love and service (Cf. Gal. 5:13-15).

In this family context each member of the house church often painfully learns to function in a family to carry out God's plan for the church. Each member learns how selfish he or she is. But they also learn how to bear such revelation, being covered by the blood of the lamb. Individual care also enables them to grow through these failures by the grace of God, as they learn repentance and restitution, which leads to further growth.

In this family context believers learn to die to their own selfish agenda as they cooperate with and submit to the corporate wisdom of the community. They learn selfless service as they see needs in the body and move to meet those needs sacrificially. They learn in humility the limitations of their gifts and talents, and the benefits of mutual dependence that God provides in his church.

As conflicts arise, we run up against others selfish desires and see how they cause our own flesh to erupt. We then learn new, godly ways to deal with conflict. We learn the crucial lessons of repentance, restitution, forbearance and forgiveness.

The leaders, of course, learn much about leading by loving, guiding, shepherding and nurturing (as opposed to leadership by edict, Cf. Matthew 21). They learn God's wisdom of plural leadership in the church. They learn to cooperate with other leaders, and how to influence them as well as work through conflict with them.

Above all, the members of the church learn how to love; practicing for the perfect Kingdom, which is yet to be revealed in all its fullness. But when it is, we will recognize it as our home! In the meanwhile we are called to grow in love, and as this love is displayed to others to see others touched by God's love. In this context it is natural that reproducing churches should be the result.

Principles

1. God's salvation is essentially corporate and incidentally individual, not the other way around.
I Peter 2:10, 2 Cor. 11:1-3, Rev. 21:2,9, Mt. 1:21
2. The church is an army of God engaged in worldwide conquest of cosmic proportions.
Rev. 11:15, 12:7-17, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:1-11, Matthew 24:4-14
3. The church is a pilgrim people on a mission forsaking the Kingdom of this world.
Mt. 12:25-29, 2 Cor. 2:14f, Eph. 4:8, Hebrews 11
4. The church is a family where we are members one of another. Ephesians 2:11-22, 4:25, I Timothy 5:1,2

Questions for further discussion

1. How is the church like an Army? How does this differ from what we see in our traditional churches today?
2. How is the church like a pilgrim people? What happens if a member fails to carry out his or her respective duty?
3. In a wagon train the roles of men and women often differ. How is this true in the house church? Are both important? How?
4. How does our church family help us reshape our view of family life?
5. What are some other illustrations that the Bible gives us for the church?

Chapter 6

Why House Churches?

The above illustrations of the church help us to understand how the church can exist in a home, indeed why it may be better to exist in a home. This chapter has been redone as a tract which we use to inform those who are interested in the house church. You are encouraged to use it that way as well. Our purpose is to explain the house church, study its development, and see how this can be applied today. We hope to answer any questions you have. We will look at the following questions:

1. What is a house church?
2. What is a house church like?
3. How does size affect the quality of community?
4. How do house churches work?
5. How do house churches encourage personal growth?
6. How do you get leaders for house churches?
7. How are the offerings used?
8. How widespread is the house church movement?

1. WHAT IS A HOUSE CHURCH?

We define a house church as “a group of people small enough to meet face-to-face, who have covenanted together with God and each other to be the church under the authority of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” One might ask whether such a gathering of people can be a church. Can such a group provide a place to worship, learn, share, discipline one another, be in mission together, make decisions together, and mutually submit to Christ's authority and leadership? Looking at the church of the first century helps answer these questions.

When the New Testament was written, if you had asked directions to the nearest church, they would have pointed toward someone's house. The household was the primary social unit in the Roman Empire. These households usually consisted of a number of families under the authority of one older man. Interaction among the members of this household was intimate and meaningful. The New Testament describes these households and notes that entire households would be baptized at the same time.

In the New Testament, churches normally met in houses. Today, the most obvious difference between a “house church” and a “sanctuary church” is where they meet. Either is able to fulfill the commands of our Lord concerning the church.

2. WHAT IS A HOUSE CHURCH LIKE?

The Bible describes the church as “the family of God.” A house church is like a family. A church must have a

Biblical understanding of family in order to function as one. The church family should be an extension of the household family. The same dynamics of communication, commitment, intimacy, growth, participation, caring, sharing and responsibility in our household family overflow into our church family relationships. If our household family relationships are not what they should be, our church family won't function properly. Because the house church acts like a family, it is easier to recognize and correct these problems

One of the greatest challenges to the church today is good communication among members. The house church requires us to communicate. It's not easy to hide from someone if you sit directly across from him. If a disagreement occurs we have a natural tendency to harbor bitterness and anger. In a large sanctuary you simply go to another part of the building where you do not have to see the other person. In a house church the relationships are obvious and divisions must be bridged quickly. The Bible says that God expects His family to be a loving, caring community. We are "to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and builds up itself in love." In a house church, good communication among the members reflects our loving relationships with each other and with a loving God.

3. HOW DOES SIZE AFFECT THE QUALITY OF COMMUNITY?

Size is the real issue. The church should be relational, personal, intimate, and committed. It should be like a family. The Bible uses family terms to describe our relationships to God and each other (father, mother, brothers, sisters, son, daughters, and child). Size definitely affects a group's relationships. Social scientists have shown that smaller groups encourage more participation, closer interaction, more accountability, and closer relationships. This is nothing new; our Lord worked with only twelve men that he could build into a community. Spiritual growth happens best in an intimate environment. This needs face-to-face accountability, which depends on size.

If one member is not present or leaves for some reason, the church feels his or her absence. This is healthy -- every member is crucial. Because each one is so important, all are responsible to minister to each other. With this kind of commitment, the church becomes welded together with love. If this commitment is not sustained, a house church soon goes out of existence. Growth stops if the group is exclusive, self-satisfied, or becomes apathetic. The group must be encouraged to reach out from the very start. Without this foundation, anything we build, whether a sanctuary church or a house church, will eventually stagnate. In most house churches, the members write their desire to form new house churches into their covenant.

4. HOW DO HOUSE CHURCHES WORK?

The members of the house church are responsible to shepherd each other. The body lends support to those who struggle, to those who are wounded, and to those who want to grow. Members must be willing to give and receive admonition. Each person is assured that even in the worst of times others will continue loving and caring for him/her. These relationships will not be shattered by conflict. Each person needs to know that in spite of difficulties others will remain faithful to him/her. The house church then becomes a family, which is committed to uphold each family member.

Because a house church is small, people develop meaningful relationships more easily. This encourages each person to take part in all the chores. There are no observers in a household. In a house church, not only do members observe and receive instruction but also everyone actively participates in the ministry of the church. The church in the home fosters a high level of commitment. Participants either become significantly involved or they drop out quickly. The house church fosters mutual commitment. People minister to each other concerning everyday problems: family members examine how the Bible speaks to their everyday concerns. The Bible is our authority as we deal with real life situations in a caring family environment. Some of our

meetings look like family “pow-wows” around the dinner table where we discuss the day’s problems and look for solutions.

5. HOW DO HOUSE CHURCHES ENCOURAGE PERSONAL GROWTH?

When a group is small enough to meet in a home it is small enough to be considered family. In our culture the family unit is under siege. We need to return to biblical values for both our household families and our church families. The house church affords a unique opportunity to experience family relationships. The household churches of New Testament times had an overwhelming effect on believers. Each member was encouraged to be involved in the lives of the others. By doing this they were able to influence the whole world for Christ. One first-century person opposed to the faith described Christians as “men who have turned the whole world upside down”.

House Churches offer a unique opportunity to discover and develop our spiritual gifts. Every-member-ministry is encouraged; each member becomes a minister. Small groups integrate personal growth and ministry by allowing the whole church family to minister. Every man, woman, and child is accountable to the group as a whole. Members who otherwise might be mere attendees are responsible for the well being of the others. The house church is soon aware of being the body of Christ, a gathering of “priests” with gifts for everyone’s edification.

6. HOW DO YOU GET LEADERS FOR A HOUSE CHURCH?

The house church makes it easy to recognize and develop leaders. Leaders recognize and encourage others with leadership gifts. Because of the small size of the house church, men are readily recognized for their leadership ability, trained, and given responsibility. Ongoing training by the leaders of other house church’s and by church planters should assure continued development of capable leaders.

7. HOW ARE THE OFFERINGS USED?

Because house churches don’t need to purchase or rent an expensive building, an enormous financial burden is eliminated. This frees more resources for the relief of believers in need and the ministry of church planting. A cluster of house churches may feel the need to support at least one coordinator (“pastor-at-large”). This can be easily done with as the churches cooperate.

8. HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT

The house church is a worldwide phenomenon. Billy Graham has said, “at various church conferences and retreats the emphasis is increasing toward the house church in many parts of the world.” Observers note that the church in China is growing at a phenomenal rate. The Chinese meet mainly in house churches. Jonathan Chao of the China Church Research Center estimates that there are between 25 and 50 million believers in these house churches. There are also thousands of small house churches in many other countries. Christianity Today cites reports from North Korea of tiny gatherings of believers meeting in homes. One estimate puts the number of house churches there at over 1000. Reports from Vietnam show that Christ’s body continues to grow, mostly in small groups. The Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul numbers over 600,000 and meets in small home groups. In Mexico City, Galo Vasquez, director of Vision Evangelizadora Latinoamericana, expects to see 10,000 self-functioning house churches established by the year 2000. The house church has

emerged in Europe, particularly in England. The Ichthus Fellowship is a large church made up of small house churches in London. Robert Banks, author of Paul's Idea of Community, has seen house churches established and developed in Canberra and Sydney, Australia.

House churches are being formed in the United States as well. Del Birkey, author of The House Church, has been involved with house churches in Illinois for more than a decade. Lois Barrett, author of Building the House Church has been involved with house churches in Pennsylvania and Kansas. The Grace Fellowship Church in Baltimore, Maryland states that “house churches are the background of our church. To be part of our church is to be part of a house group.” Serendipity Training Manual for Groups lists churches that have adopted small house groups as a means of growth.

We believe that the house church can facilitate the expansion of the church here in New England, the USA, and the world. Through these small house churches, communities can be reached for Christ Much in the same way that communities were reached in the first century. We invite you to join us in This is an exciting adventure as we walk hand-in-hand with millions of other believers all over the world.

Questions for further discussion

Briefly answer the 8 questions that make up this chapter.

1. What is a house church?
2. What is a house church like?
3. How does size affect the quality of community?
4. How do house churches work?
5. How do house churches encourage personal growth?
6. How do you get leaders for house churches?
7. How are the offerings used?
8. How widespread is the house church movement?

SECTION II
STAGES IN PLANTING
A HOUSE CHURCH

SUGGESTED READING

- Banks, Robert; Paul's Idea of Community; Eerdmans
When the Church Comes Home; Eerdmans
Going to Church in the First Century; Hexagon Press
- Barrett, Lois; Building the House Church; Herald press
- Bilezikierian, Gilbert; Community 101; Zondervan
- Birkey, Del; The House Church; Herald Press
- Burchette, Harold; Spiritual Life Studies; Columbia Bible College Bookstore
People Helping People; Author
- Coleman, Robert; Master Plan of Evangelism; Revell
Master Plan of Discipleship; Revell
- Dewecse, Charles; Baptist Covenants; Broadman
- Edwards, Gene; How to Meet; Message Ministry
Revolution; Message Ministry
- Fee, Gordan; NIBC 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus; Hendricks
- Fitts, Bob; Saturation Church Planting; Print Publications School
- Garmo, John; Lifestyle Worship; Nelson
- Griffen, Em; Getting Together; IVP
- Griffins, Mike; God's Forgetful Pilgrims; Eerdmans
- Hadaway, C. Kirk; Home Cell Groups and House Churches; Broadman
- Hesson, Roy; The Calvary Road; CLC
- Hillers, Delbert; Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea; Baker
- Hodges, Melvin; The Indigenous Church; GPH
- Jacks, Bob; Your Home a Lighthouse; Nav Press
- Kreider, Larry; House to House; Touch
- Martin, Ralph; Worship in the Early Church; Revell
- McArthur, John Jr.; The Ultimate Priority; Moody
Keys to Spiritual Growth; Revell
- McComisky, Thomas; The Covenants of Promise; Baker
- Nee, Watchman; Assembling Together; Christian Fellowship Publishers
Love One Another; Christian Fellowship Publishers
- Neighbor, Ralph; The Shepherds Guidebook; Touch
Where Do We Go From Here; Touch
- Orthand, Raymond; Let the Church Be the Church; Word
- Peterson, Jim; Lifestyle Discipleship; Nav Press
- Prior, David; Creating Community; Nav Press
- Riley, Betsy; Small Groups Manual; Worldwide Discipleship Association Inc.
- Roberts, Mike; Crossflame; Fellowship of Church Planters
- Strauch, Alexander; Biblical Eldership; Louis Roth
- Stott, John; Men Made New; World Wide Publishers
The Lousanne Covenant; World Wide Publishers
- Strobel, Lee; Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary; Zondervan
- Trudinger, Ron; Cells For Life; Logos
- Viola, Frank; Rethinking the Wineskin; Present Testimony Ministry
- Wakkentin, Margorie; Ordination; Eerdmans
- Warren, Rick; The Purpose Driven Church; Zondervan

STAGES IN HOUSE CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

**Gathering
(Dating)**

Goal

Gathering 2 or 3 who
desire to become church

**Covenanting
(Engagement)**

Goal

2 or 3 covenant
to be the church

**Reproducing
(Married, Planning for
Children)**

Goal

Church starts a new work



Project: Get a gathering
meeting going

Activities

- Prayer
- Find a Man/Woman of Peace
- Train to penetrate social circle
- Start a gathering around the Word
- Begin a discipleship chain

Project: Write a covenant

Activities:

- Studies on the church
- Reading schedules
- Men teaching, evangelizing in home
- Community building
- Conflict resolution Skills
- Develop Emerging Leaders

Project: Develop a vision
statement

Activities:

- Studies is purposes for the church
- Evangelism (more gathering)
- Leadership meetings and studies
- Leadership appointed
- Gradual withdrawal of C.P.
- Fellowship of leaders begins
- Prayer, Continue gathering

Chapter 7 OVERVIEW

The following overview is a summary of the rest of this manual. The divisions in Section II follow the three stages outlined below. This section assumes the church planter is starting from scratch and will thus go through the 3 stages we have found in house church development. Each stage has a **goal**, out of which arises a **project** and from which **activities** flow. You are encouraged to use these as a starting point and adapt them to your needs. Section III of the manual outlines what to do once the first house church begins to reproduce. Below is a summary of the three stages.

STAGE 1: GATHERING

GOAL: Two church planters gather a group of 2 or 3 family units who realize that God's plan is to extend the gospel through the church.

PROJECT: The church planters find a man/woman of peace who can gather members of his/her social circle to become the nucleus of a house church.

ACTIVITIES: The church planters train the man/woman of peace to penetrate his/her social circle. Gathering meetings begin.

STAGE 2: COVENANTING

GOAL: The two or three families covenant together to be the church.

PROJECT: The families write a covenant, which embodies the relational commands of the New testament regarding the church.

ACTIVITIES: Community meetings begin, overseen by one church planter. The other moves on to other gatherings. Initial leadership emerges. Discipleship chains begin.

STAGE 3: REPRODUCING

GOAL: The church begins other gatherings, which lead to the formation of new house churches.

PROJECT: The church writes and implements a vision statement, which outlines the goals for evangelism, and edification, which they believe the Lord, has for them.

ACTIVITIES: Initial leadership is appointed. The church planter lowers his profile. Leaders take more responsibility for shepherding.

STAGES IN HOUSE CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

God has called his church into being and given it His marching orders: to extend His Kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth! In every generation the challenge is the same: *to publish the good news that Jesus Christ has indeed come to extend His Kingdom by inviting whoever will follow him to become part of His global plan of conquest.*

In order to complete the task, the church must understand its purpose and constantly evaluate its progress in fulfilling the commands of its savior. For us, this means developing a church, which constantly reproduces. By reproducing disciples, leaders, churches, church planters, and church planting teams, which will plant churches which will repeat the pattern, we are answering the call of Christ here in Rhode Island, and, as God gives us grace, to regions beyond.

The house church has presented us with a structure simple and flexible enough to enable continued and unrestrained reproduction. Like a virus, under the right conditions it can replicate itself rapidly and adapt to new conditions. However, it can also turn inward, crystallize, and become an isolated small group of self-centered “naval gazers”. Let us be the guerilla invasion force God has called us to be!

To avoid the common pitfalls of a small church, we must know where we are going and how to get there. Then we must ruthlessly evaluate our progress, not by some absolute, legalistic, human standard, but by prayerfully looking at the health of our church, the call of God to reach the lost around us, and the motives of our heart as we “plunder the strong man's house”.

Let us consider the 3 stages of house church development as we have found them, the goals for each stage, and suggested activities to reach these goals. We will also share materials, which have been useful in helping those responsible (called church planters in this manual regardless of their official capacity). Each house church will be different, but experience reveals some common goals, activities and problems. The order in which problems arise, the speed at which the church comes to grips with them, and how they overcome them vary from church to church. Materials have been developed by the Fellowship of Church Planters to help overcome problems, both of individuals and groups. More materials will be needed in the future and those already developed will constantly undergo revision according to the needs.

STAGE 1: GATHERING (dating)

GOAL: Gather a group of 2 or 3 family units who realize that God desires them to form a church.

PROJECT: Get a group of seekers or believers to meet and look into the Word to see God's plan for mankind (the church!).

ACTIVITIES: The most important activity during this phase is evangelism. This evangelism, however, does not focus on gaining individual disciples, but rather on gathering a group of disciples into a loving, committed body -- the church.

The Church Planter may begin by winning a single person to Christ. But he emphasizes not only the person of Christ, but also the corporate salvation to which the convert is called. Evangelism should include a focus on the Kingdom of God and the new life to which He calls us. Group or individual studies in Matthew (Cf. Chs. 1, 5-7, 12-13, 16, 18, etc.) and Acts (Chs. 1-11) are helpful for this. When a person comes to Christ, we use the booklets Entering the Kingdom & Living in the Kingdom for training a convert to become a corporate disciple. (See Appendices 1 and 2 for these studies)

As soon as possible, a gathering meeting should be arranged where a new believer or seeking unbeliever can bring his family and friends to hear about the good news. Thus the gospel can penetrate that person's social circle. It is best if this occurs on his "turf"--his house, or a relative's, or an interested friend--any place unbelievers will gather. Biblical examples of gatherings like this would be at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10), Matthew (Mt. 9), Zaccheus (Lk. 19). The gathering meeting should last over a definite period of time, with a specified purpose for the "studies". For example, 6 studies in Matthew on the Kingdom of God, or 4 in Acts on the church, or a single meeting to see the Jesus film. New friends can come at any time, and people can of course stop coming. At the end of this specified period a new set of studies might be proposed, to help the group embrace God's purpose for them to become a church.

A new believer or seeker should not be extracted from his social circle into an already existing church until his circle has been evangelized. (The exception to this rule would be an alcoholic or drug user if his social circle would keep him entrapped.) Each new social circle is potentially a new house church; do not alienate the convert from his people. If he is alienated already, the convert should be shepherded into an already existing house church where he can develop new friends and relationships. A new church will not be planted in this case. The goal of this gathering stage, once again, is for 2 or 3 family units to commit to follow Christ by committing themselves to become a church. Obviously then, the church itself is an important subject for evangelistic studies.

There may be some individual discipling during this first stage, but the primary thrust is to penetrate the social circle. Therefore, a gathering meeting must be the goal of individual discipleship. We teach the seeker or new believer to explain the call of God to his Kingdom to his family and friends through his personal testimony (Cf. John 9) and Bible stories. The goal of the gathering meetings is to find 2 or 3 believers committed to becoming the church. As we move into the second stage of house church development, the group moves on to the Covenanting and Reproduction stages. It should keep having at least one gathering meeting in order to penetrate new social circles for the Kingdom. When all the social circles represented by those in the church have been exhausted, the church prays and plans to penetrate new ones. We teach and help every believer to penetrate his social circle for Christ and to take the responsibility for learning how to do it. It may be the only opportunity God ever gives those in that particular circle to hear the good news. Every single social circle represented in a house church presents a potential new house church. *We call this Gathering stage the dating stage because we get to know each other and begin to bond to one another.*

STAGE 2: COVENANTING (Engagement/marriage)

GOAL: Have the 2 or 3 families covenant together to be the church, ministering to each other.

PROJECT: Write a covenant defining the relationship believers are to have in their church.

ACTIVITIES: Once the church planter has gathered 2 or 3 families who see that it is God's will for them to become the church, the next step is to commit themselves to be all that God calls them to be as the church. We do this through a covenant. The covenant enables the 2 or 3 families to define their relationship. They commit themselves to keep learning and applying the lessons of love and thus live out the community life of the church. Part of the covenant's statement relates how the community lives out the life of Christ and calls others to follow. Thus growth and reproduction are part of the covenant.

During the gathering meetings, as spelled out in the booklet Entering the Kingdom, a person declares himself to be in the Kingdom by repenting, being baptized, and added to the church (Acts 2:37-41). We encourage church planters not to count converts until they take these 3 steps of initiation into the kingdom of God. Therefore the first families understand the importance of obedience to the Lord in these basic activities. We focus on the 3rd activity (being added to the church) in the covenanting stage. Sometimes we wait to baptize until they have agreed on a covenant, and sometimes we baptize first, depending on the nature of the group. Likewise, sometimes we wait to celebrate the Lord's table until covenanting, and sometimes we begin before. Remember that this is the engagement phase, so we want to make sure they move through it and don't get comfortable in it. Otherwise it is kind of like living together--some of the benefits without the bond (which will be essential once the honeymoon wears off).

At this stage in the development of the house church we begin a Community meeting. In America we would probably meet on a Sunday, although the primary consideration should be when the families can actually meet regularly. Some of our churches change meetings fairly regularly due to rotating schedules of the members.

The community meeting will often consist of a worship time and a teaching time. The teaching time may also include planning and implementing what has been learned (like writing the covenant). Usually in preparation for a study time, a reading schedule is prepared by the church planter to be used in the homes of those forming the community. Families first study in the home what will be covered at the community meeting. Thus the heads of the home are taught early to take responsibility for shepherding in the home.

For male heads of home, this is the first step in developing leaders, since leaders must care for their homes. These reading schedules assign a few verses each day, with a question to start discussion. The families are encouraged to spend 3-5 minutes each day reading the assigned Scripture and discussing the question, usually around a mealtime. This forces people out of the passive learner's role so prevalent in churches today. The community meeting's teaching is often simply sharing what God has taught the family in his Word that week. Several reading schedules appear in the appendices.

Reading schedules during this stage might include verses or stories from Acts, Ephesians, the "one another" verses of the Bible, or a topical study on The Church (see appendices 3-5). Remember, the purpose of the studies is to fulfill the project for this stage: write a covenant, which defines the group's relationships. Teaching times of the community meetings should be divided between study and applying the studies to drawing up a covenant. The Lord's table should be included during the worship time. The male heads of households should be taught to officiate at the Lord's table. All the men who covenant, on a rotating basis should share leadership of the various aspects of the meetings. The community meetings should be for believers interested in covenanting, not unbelievers! Separate men's meetings may be helpful at this point, to

equip them to lead both in their own families as well as the family of God (the community meetings). Separate meetings for equipping women ministers by the older women will also happen (More on this in chapter 17).

Gathering meetings (Stage 1) should continue and expand as the group penetrates other social circles. If two church planters are working together it may be wise to determine which one will head the work, and focus on leadership development. The other should focus on starting new gatherings. A whole new social circle might be penetrated while the group progresses through this stage; a second work would begin. Twins are planted!

During this covenanting stage the church planter trains new men to help lead both the community meetings, and the gathering. The church planter focuses on training one or two key men. As new people are added to the gathering meetings and become believers, those who brought them take responsibility to ground them in the faith. We have developed materials to help young believers shepherd new believers into the community (appendices 1 and 2). Those who bring new ones are in are taught to shepherd them in the faith. Leadership develops naturally around these discipleship “chains”. Men shepherd men and women shepherd women. Discipleship chains emerge along relational lines.

Those attending gathering meetings are encouraged, upon becoming believers, to attend the community meetings. The purpose of gathering is to show people the complete salvation, which God has wrought in Christ, which includes the corporate (church) aspect of salvation. They normally are brought through the initiation activities of repentance, baptism and preparation for covenanting by the person who brought them to the Lord.

Writing a covenant with its corresponding Bible studies and community interaction is fun and helps build a loving community. This is why we call it the engagement stage. We have committed ourselves to marriage, but aren't married yet. During this stage, though, conflict often begins. The community begins to become a healing organism. People learn new ways to deal with conflict, selfishness, etc. In our experience, during the covenanting stage we have times when we despair of the group ever coming together. Most groups covenant, because dissolving the relationship becomes more painful alternative than resolving the conflicts. When this happens you have a church, supernaturally touched by God and ready to live out its covenant. The covenanting stage is painful, but rewarding. The covenanting stage ends with *Covenanting Together* as a church (usually after drawing up the covenant and studying the booklet *Covenanting Together* as a group).

STAGE 3: REPRODUCTION (Married planning for Children)

GOAL: Start a new church or two. (A minimum of three house churches networked has been shown to be strong enough to sustain a reproductive vision. We recommend that the CP team not disengage until a cluster of 3 house churches exists.)

PROJECT: Develop and implement a vision statement sealing God's will for the church over the next 6 months. This vision statement should be in two parts: a plan for evangelism by the believers, and a plan for edification which is the responsibility of the church planter and the initial leaders (Eph. 4:12). These two ministries are related. Edification includes equipping the congregation to reproduce (disciples, leaders, and other congregations). The vision should have measurable goals, which can be evaluated periodically over the 6-month period by "health checks".

ACTIVITIES: A new church's first vision statement will be fairly simple. When it reproduces, it draws up a new, more complex vision statement. We will focus now on a new church's vision statement. (In section III more complex vision statements are examined.). The Vision Statement includes evangelism and edification. The church planter works on the edification part, the congregation on the evangelism part of the statement. It should envision the next 6 months measurably and realistically. Several things should be included:

1. Teaching on leadership for the community meetings. Home reading schedules are provided with Bible verses corresponding to the activities in the vision statement. The church is equipped by God's Word at once to embrace and implement the vision. Heads of families need to be encouraged and equipped to continue the training in their homes through this daily Bible reading. The men continue to teach at the community meeting on a rotating basis.
2. Appoint the first provisional leaders. These work with the church planter to implement the edification activities of the vision statement. In the process they learn how to work within a leadership team. These shepherd's-in-training should be appointed as soon as possible since they set the pace for the other believers. This uncovers potential, but shy leaders, as well as proud, would-be leaders who need to be weeded out. Be prepared to bring those who desire leadership for carnal motives to a place of repentance. Also be prepared to deal with the initial pride which may come out in newly appointed leaders. The appendices 16-19 give some tools to help the church planter in working on the leaders life.

If there are two church planters still involved, one should definitely phase out of the community meetings and start other gathering meetings. He may exploit the social circles of those in the new church or find totally new contacts. Each member of the church should continue to evangelize his or her own social circles. They can also help the second church planter to find new contacts outside of their social circle, visiting them with the church planter. If there is no second church planter, the church planter heading up the new church should train one or two men for evangelism of new social circles and to lead the resulting gathering meetings. These men may be the core of a new church planting team.

As soon as the provisional leaders show themselves to be faithful men, the church planter ordains them as elders. He then moves on and serves as a coach for the most part outside of the church for these new elders. Elder appointment normally marks the end of the REPRODUCTION stage and serves to send off the church planter to start a new church. At least one church planter remains nearby to train the elders until they are able to raise up new churches and elders without his help.

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3. “Discipleship chains” are set up around the new leaders and new believers coming into the fellowship. “Single link chains” all linked to one church planter are a recipe for destruction. This hub model will actually cause the church to become dependant on the church planter and stifle leadership development. Multiple link chains must be set up around one or more of the provisional leaders or elders. All new believers should be disciplined by the ones who bring them in, who are coached by the elders.
 4. As events develop, the leadership team discerns how the Lord desires the church to reproduce. Two common ways are:
 - a. Grow until the group must divide in two. Our experience shows that a group should make plans to divide when it approaches 12 covenant members (excluding small children). This is the most difficult way for a group to reproduce since it traumatizes the entire group. Often it leads to slower reproduction after the first split since it takes time for both groups to reorient themselves. However, if the group does grow and refuses to reproduce, it will become in-grown and exclusive and not be of much value to God for extending His Kingdom.
 - b. Reproduction through penetration of social circles in the group. This will normally happens in one of two ways:
 - (1). A person is saved who has contacts in the area and comes to the church. He begins to evangelize and gather these contacts to hear the gospel. When he needs help either the church planter, (the gatherer) or a couple being trained by the church planter goes and helps with the gathering meeting. He often may need to be challenged and helped to do a lot of the work himself. This will especially be true if the work grows rapidly. Remember: God uses consecrated inadequate vessels all the time (Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1-6). As this gathering group develops it also starts community meetings and covenants. During its “covenanting” stage it will probably have much contact with its “mother” church.
 - (2). The “gathering” church planter (the one on the team who has moved on after the church covenanted) breaks new ground. Someone should help him from newly covenanted churches that he has already helped to start. When gathering meetings start and develop into a church, it already has a relationship with a “mother” house church with which to form a fellowship or network of house churches. Be continually on the lookout for perspective church planters. Don't presume it will take a long time for these to be developed. We call this second method “budding” since it is a bud off of the first church.
 5. Finally, as a new church comes into existence, begin networking the churches together so that the older leaders help the newer leaders, and the resources of one church can help the other. The church planters continue to serve as a resource to the elders while not taking any place of pre-eminence over them. Our Fellowships (networks) of house churches meet monthly for a time of worship and united celebration. The leaders of each house church along with church planters working in the fellowship of churches also meet monthly for prayer, accountability, and encouragement. They form what we call a “Fellowship Overseer Board” (a presbytery of sorts) covenanting together to be on guard for each other and for the churches.

Each house church is autonomous, but not independent, since all are in fellowship with each other. Decisions, which may affect other house churches, are brought to the Fellowship Overseer Board for prayer and consultation. Some events may be organized for all the churches' participation, to further edify the saints or reach the lost. But the Fellowship itself remains loosely organized. Once there are five or six house churches in the fellowship, new fellowships are encouraged to begin as new churches are formed.

Key Principles:

1. Although only God can plant a church (Cf. Mt. 16:18, Ps. 127:1) yet there are certain things man can and needs to do in order to give Him the freedom to plant the church. Acts 14:1, 20:17-35.
2. It is easy to get bogged down so the church planter must continually keep his eye on the next peak and make progress toward it, not being discouraged, but adapting with each new barrier.

Questions for further discussion

1. How do you keep the group continually moving forward?
2. What will happen if you stop moving forward?
3. How would you recognize this?
4. What can you do if stagnation occurs?

Chapter 8

The Man of Peace/ Woman of Honor

Most people think of a church planter as “one who does it all”. He preaches the gospel to unbelievers, baptizes those who follow Jesus, then disciples them into the fullness of Christ, finally organizing them into a church that continues to march forward until the return of Jesus Christ. Some even remain as the pastors for years afterwards.

We define his task differently, keeping in mind the purpose God has for reproduction. In this chapter we will usually refer to the church planter as an evangelist since that is his main activity at this stage. But by evangelist we mean “one who propagates the evangel” rather than limiting it to one who exclusively leads people to Christ. In second Timothy Paul exhorts Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. This is in the context of sorting out the foundations of the church--i.e. A church planting or apostolic task. The task of the evangelist is to incarnate the gospel for unbelievers and then show them how to incarnate it for their people. The evangelist is more of a facilitator than a “hands on” church planter who does it all. Indeed his first disciple is often the one who wins the most people to Christ, baptizes them, and determines the form of the church. This facilitator role is seen in Ephesians 4:16; “evangelist” is listed as one of the gifted men who “quip the saints for works of ministry” as opposed to doing the entire ministry. With this in mind, *the evangelist's first priority in the Gathering Stage is finding a man of peace.* That is he is evangelizing those around whom he can plant a church. The church will go on to evangelize universally. The church planter is to evangelize selectively.

WHAT IS A MAN OF PEACE OR MAN OF HONOR?

Jesus in Luke 10:1-9 instructs the 70 as they go into the towns to look for a “man of peace” This man is already prepared to receive the good news of God's Kingdom. He has a good reputation and has good relationships with many others in the community. This man's home becomes the center of activity for the “evangelist”, from which the evangel penetrates the whole community.

The broader used word for this type of man in the Bible is probably a man of honor. In the Old Testament God commanded that Israel show hospitality to strangers since they were strangers in Egypt. The practice was when a stranger came into the village he would go to the center of town and wait for a “worthy man” or “honorable man” to invite him into his home. If no one in the town did this then this was a dishonor to the town. Therefore the person who stepped forward to show hospitality to strangers was a man of honor. The term “honor” in the Old Testament comes from the word “weight”. It is someone who has weight or influence.

These men or honor usually made up the eldership in the villages of Israel. Obviously if such a man took in the disciples the result would be greater credibility for the message in the village since the man of honor had taken them in and thus placed his honor on them. For a Bible study on the man of peace woman of honor see Appendix 6.

It seems that this became the strategy by which the early apostles penetrated the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. Peter went to the home of Cornelius (Acts 11); Paul preached in the synagogues, then focused on those who were receptive (Acts 14, Lydia, and the Philippian jailer; Acts 18, Priscilla and Aquila, Titus Justus and Crispus). The term “man of peace/honor”, may be a women of peace as well as Lydia in Acts 16. Keep this in mind as you read the rest of this section.

FINDING THE MAN OF HONOR

As we target an area for church planting, we need to be praying that God will bring us into contact with such an honorable man or woman. He may not be prepared quite as dramatically as Cornelius was, but God is at work preparing good soil for receiving the good news. Our constant task is to find that man. Much ongoing prayer needs to be offered up to recognize him. We also need our eyes trained to recognize who has influence in social networks. In the west we tend not to recognize honor. But it is a crucial Biblical value.

A word of caution here especially for younger church planters. Men of honor are usually older men. The exception to this would be where a group of peers is gathered, for instance on a college campus. But in the world men of honor are often older, often difficult to get close to (because they are busy), and not always immediately receptive to the gospel. For younger men the best way to find a man of honor is to meet your peer and encourage them to introduce you to their social networks. Then by following the injunctions in I Timothy 4:12 you will show yourself to be one who will be a good influence on the young men in the group. As you show yourself a good model you will have greater opportunity to share the gospel with the blessing of the man of honor. If you are able to help sons be reconciled to their fathers, and be honorable sons (and daughters) you will indebt the fathers to the gospel. We have found this often results in a hearing for the gospel. Older church planters are usually able to make much quicker progress to getting near a man of honor at the hub of a social network. This is another benefit of working in church planting teams with people of different age on the team.

A man of honor may not look like it at first. Saul dragged Christians out of their homes to jail--not much of a man of peace at first glance. Yet he became the master church planter--the apostle Paul. Jesus said "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and men of violence take it by force". Finding men of peace/honor is not for the fainthearted or weak-kneed. Sometimes these may be men like Cornelius, a professional soldier skilled in killing, but appeared quite gracious to the messengers who came. But it can just as easily be a Saul who killed the messenger of peace (Steven).

MODELING PEACE

God draws men of peace to the Man of peace through His faithful servants who embody His peace. Why is this such an effective strategy? The apostles followed the example of their Lord, the great evangelist Jesus. Jesus was an evangelist sent from God to publish the good news of a New Kingdom. But He didn't come with a letter or book, which detailed the message for scholars to dissect and criticize. *He was the good news!* The message could not be disembodied from the messenger. The good news was that God was reconciling man to himself through the sacrifice of His son, enabling the love of the Father to be experienced and lived out through His children. This good news was embodied in His unique Son, who manifested the Love of the Father for His Son. Jesus further showed how this love was to be lived out visibly in a fallen world, as He loved His disciples. Jesus was an effective evangelist because He embodied the Good News that God's love is available to all who will embrace Him. Those who heard the good news saw it being lived out in His life. The gospel was not primarily a doctrine to be believed, nor a challenge to be answered by a decision, but rather life itself! "He who has the son has the life!" (I John 5:12). The good news is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself in such a way that it could be tangibly seen, as a group of world-hardened believers were transformed into the very image of their loving Savior.

His disciples were also effective evangelists because they embodied this good news of love as well. Compare the life of Peter before the day of Pentecost and afterwards, or the life of the bloodthirsty Saul before and after conversion. The letters of Paul overflows with his deep love for those with whom he shared his life. He weeps over their trials and failures and revels in their successes. It's no wonder that these men were effective

evangelists, for they learned how to live out the Kingdom life before a skeptical world.

This is the exact task of the evangelist. He learns how to live out the life of love that Jesus said would characterize those who would follow Him. We are not talking about a wishy-washy, permissive, sentimental kind of love which the world embraces, but rather that kind of love which shines God's bright light on a perishing world and show a better, though often more painful, way of life (Cf. Philippians 3:8-14!). This love willingly bears all sorts of persecution and suffering, yet never wavers, sacrificing all for the sake of the few who hear the call and follow. If we desire to produce men of peace, we must first be men of peace. Who we are is more important than what we say in drawing men to the Savior.

The very fact that you have been recognized and sent out by a church and received by a team to plant churches shows that you have "honor" or "weight". If you had none, no one would confirm you calling (for more on the calling of a church planter refer to the book Building Effective Church Planting Teams available from the Fellowship of Church Planters).

But the evangelist needs to be prepared to grow and be transformed through the process. Indeed, if he does not he will likely lose "weight". We need to realize that God's plan as we plant church is to be broken down from our own self-reliance and pride, and learn how to depend more on Him. As he multiplies our five loaves and 2 fish, He will indeed be glorified. (Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18)

The message of the church planter may be unattractive at first and even for some time. But his person must be recognized as one who has been touched by the very hand of God. I have often been amazed at Paul's initial reaction to Christianity at the stoning of Steven (Acts 7). After he is converted, however, we often see echoes of Steven's words from his lips. Steven was a man "full of the Holy Spirit". What an impact this dying evangelist had upon the stony heart of Saul, whose very conversion was God's reply to Stephen's final words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them"!

As we pray and try to live out the life of Christ before an unbelieving, skeptical and hostile generation, we will have great opportunity to experience the promise of the Lord:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". (Matthew 5:10).

We will also have many opportunities to explain why we act differently than those in the kingdom of this world. We need to take every such opportunity and turn it into an invitation to follow Christ in His Kingdom. We set an example for those who will eventually follow. With suffering will come a great opportunity for personal growth as we look to the one who first left us the example (1 Peter 2:18-23).

The evangelist relies upon the Lord to enable him to make the gospel known through his life to those the Lord calls. He spends much time in prayer and in listening to the Lord, to learn how he can embody the gospel to these people. He prays that unbelievers will see a message that impacts their lives, not simply their minds. Those who have lived apart from Christ need to be confronted with a life that is so different that repentance is obviously required. They must see that a new radically transformed life is obtainable through Jesus Christ. Having seen it he is willing to sell all that he has to obtain that kingdom (Cf. Matthew 13:44ff).

As evangelists starting a new church, we need to find a person of peace/honor. We will have to develop a number of relationships in the quest to find the one. If we are working cross culturally we will have to learn what is honorable in other cultures. We must get close enough to that person so he can evaluate our life and judge it to be full of "peace and joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). He must see God working in our life, bringing ever deeper surrender as we press upward in God's kingdom (Philippians 3:12-

14). He must see a genuine life of joy amidst the pain and suffering of living in a fallen world. He must be able to see us fall short of God's ideal and yet repent, finding the refreshment that comes from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19). Only as we are vulnerable and transparent, and men of peace and honor ourselves can we expect to draw honorable men to Christ--the ultimate Man of Peace and Honor!

Fishing with nets while looking for a man of peace

It is easy to equate finding men of peace exclusively with friendship evangelism. While this may be effective in some places, we strongly suggest that friendship evangelism be like fishing with a line. If you have a big pond, but don't know where the fish are biting, it is more likely you will catch fish by using a net. Net fishing has been described by some in Frontiers as apostolic or prophetic evangelism. In this type of evangelism an outsider will find a group (or gather one) and boldly preach good news to it. He and his team will then follow up on those who show interest, especially focusing on those who appear to be men and women of peace.

The prophet or apostle may do better to do this out of his hometown, since a prophet is without honor in his own town. Also there may be security issues that put he and his family in danger. But the point is that we are not talking about friendship evangelism here. Friendships can and should arise from these prophetic encounters. But "net events" are not friendship evangelism. They are wide nets, which are designed to catch those whom the Lord is leading. The chances of catching fish in resistant areas using a line approach is minimal, but should be greatly enhanced by using nets.

A good example of a net is the Bible correspondence courses offered in many closed countries. A newspaper advertisement or radio broadcast invite interested ones to write a post office box to get a correspondence course. Those who write can be followed up on individually. This has drawbacks since it usually leads to individual evangelism and conversion and little church planting but it is a good example of a net. Suggestions for improving this net follows below. The following ideas on evangelism using nets came out of a Frontiers conference with several team leaders discussing this issue.

1. We agreed a good picture for evangelism is a funnel with a big net at the top of the funnel to find seekers. This net could be anything from a correspondence course to street preaching, to a concert, to a coffee shop where the gospel was being proclaimed. Those who show some interest could be invited from there to the second layer down the funnel--seminars. These "net events" could be one off ones (like a spontaneous street meeting) or ongoing (like a correspondence course or coffeehouse).

A key to an effective net is a response mechanism whereby those who have an interest can respond in some way. In the correspondence course they can write to a PO box. At a coffeehouse they could be invited to a seminar or Bible study where Christ could be more fully explained to them.

2. This second layer down the funnel could be seminars designed to take those who have some interest and explain how the good news is good news. These could take the form of marriage seminars, child rearing, how to manage finances, how to relate to extended family, any need the Gospel is good news for. Jesus as the way would be much more boldly and specifically shared at these. They could be one-off seminars or a series that run a few weeks. It would depend upon the level of motivation of the audience. Those who show additional interest could be invited to the next level, which would be evangelistic Bible Studies. It is at this level where the church planter would be wise to keep his eyes out for men of honor. Is a person bringing others? Is he influencing others to consider what the Bible is saying? Does he have a concern for others and how the truths may apply to his social network? Affirmatives to any of these may indicate a man of honor.

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3. The next further level down the funnel would be to have evangelistic Bible studies. They would be best in the home of a seeker, preferably a man or women of peace who would draw from their own social network. This will bring “stickiness” to those who come since there would be a loyalty to the host or hostess. These would focus on the person of Christ, probably by looking in detail at a section of the gospels. These studies would probably run a set number of weeks. The duration and subject would depend on the audience. Appendix 7 is an evangelistic Bible Study, which takes a seeker from Genesis to Revelation in 8 studies presenting the gospel in each study.

We should point out at this point that the vehicle we are using focuses on a group as opposed to individuals. Also the centrality of the Word is a real strength (John 10:27). The hope would be for this group to cohesively progress toward Christ through the Word. If a number came to Christ at the same time, they could be formed into a house church and begin a separate meeting for community where the Lord’s table, baptism, worship, prayer, and the word, could be practiced. The gathering meeting could continue of course. In the event only one or two got saved they could either be added to already existing house churches, or, if they were men of peace types, new groups could be gathered around them as new evangelistic studies formed.

4. The bottom of the funnel would be house churches which could be formed around men and women of peace who respond to the gospel. It is expected that members of these house churches would participate in new “net events” as well as be trained to lead in seminars and evangelistic Bible studies. In this way, the house churches would not become stagnant but rather continue a vision for reproducing and filling the land.

The following were some specific thoughts and ideas for net fishing for a specific closed country. Note that some sort of response mechanism is necessary for nets: (whether a response by a card or being able to come to a seminar at an actual date, time, and place.)

1. Using advertisements in local newspapers and magazines, which target those whom God is already drawing to himself. These would have to be carefully drawn up so as to appeal to family people, not the free radicals (leftists) who have been attracted in the past. This would be a matter of careful marketing.

Using a correspondence approach to follow up on these to discern who is responding which could lead to church planting. In this case that means who could you start a Bible study in their home or with a group of friends. Notice the funnel is kept in view.

2. Use a gifted musician who is also a church planter for concerts as a big net. Seminars could be offered at the end of these. Those who are interested could fill out a card. Perhaps even a card could be given to everyone to fill out and the respondent could even request being notified of other concerts being offered. Seminars could be based on the type audience that Geoff draws and interest measured in these response cards.

Another net using this musician would be distributing his tapes, which are scripture, sung to local tunes. A response card could be included for request for concerts, or seminars. Some seminar ideas could be how music plays such a large part in the worship of this people group and how that corresponds to Christianity (as opposed to Islam).

3. A church planter who is gifted in the language and prophecy could be used to give seminars as “net events”. Seminars on how to have a good marriage, child rearing, how to resolve conflicts, keeping harmony in the home, etc. Anything that the Gospels bring as good news would be open season. Perhaps the business this team has started could be broadened to include this type of service. The man having written much that has been published in the press could be quite a draw at meetings of these associations.

He could offer these seminars at these associations.

4. The team could do a broad-based survey focusing on philosophy of life, etc. This could help get an idea of what advertising would be effective. For instance one team leader in another country did such a survey and found that the people love God but dislike religion. So they billed their group as a “non religious community of faith”. The point is the team would need to develop a survey to find out what would be Good News and then do advertising and seminars based on these findings. The response mechanism could be at the end of the survey “would you be interested in attending a seminar on the topic...” these would be one off seminars that could perhaps be occurring monthly so that there is something to invite people too. The goal would be to find those whom God is drawing and get them involved in an ongoing evangelistic study. This would have the advantage of involving the whole team. Seminars specifically for women could be designed as well in case they are the initial respondents. But ways need to be developed to get the men involved (see D above).

Key Principles

1. People exist in social networks because God has created man a social, community being. Genesis 1:26f, 2:18ff.
2. In every social network there are key people, either men or women, who are the key influencers to the social network. Luke 10:5-9
3. The best way to go about planting a church is going after these men or women of peace, bringing them to Christ and through them their social network. Cf. Acts 10; 16:14f, 31ff; 18:5-8
4. Often church planters go after “receptive” people. The problem with this in church planting, especially in resistant areas like the Muslim world, is that the most receptive ones are usually the ones with the least social network. They are looking for a network to be a part of. The problem with this is that they have often alienated themselves from their natural social networks and continue to do so. If you try to gather such a group of “free radicals” you will find that they often repel each other. Such a group usually lasts only as long as the energy of the church planter!
5. Using nets for evangelism will be more effective than line fishing. But one must look for men and women of honor as one evaluates what the net has found.

Questions for further thought

1. How can a church planter identify a man of peace?
2. Are all men of peace alike? In what ways might they be different?
3. Can you think of some examples of men (or women) of peace in the book of Acts?
4. What kind of fishing have you been doing? (Line or net) How effective has it been?
5. What are some nets you could develop?

Chapter 9

Training the Man of Peace/Honor

THE VERTICAL COMPONENT

We have found a man or woman of peace. Let's presume they have responded positively to the gospel (we may hold off from making a determination as to whether they are in the kingdom or not!). Where do we go from here?

First we need to focus on the vertical relationship--his walk with the Lord. Acts 2:37-47 shows the patterns adopted by the first Christian converts. They were told to repent and be baptized, and then they were added to the church. In the Christian community they learned how to love in deed and truth. We have developed a series of studies around these steps of obedience. They appear in the Appendices 1 & 2: Entering the Kingdom & Living in the Kingdom.

The man of peace needs to learn to seek what is pleasing to the Lord by searching His Word and applying God's remedies to life's trials. Normally we guide him to Scripture, which applies to his life. We have developed several study booklets for help at this early stage (Appendices 1, 2, 19). The disciple is encouraged to wrestle before the Lord with how to apply the Scripture to his life. The discipler encourages him and may direct him to different scriptures. But the discipler is not a priest. The discipler rather trusts that to Jesus "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow Me" (John 10:27.) The disciple is taught early that regeneration leads to change. He learns several ways to use God's word to illuminate (reveal) areas of his life that need change, then repent of them, and make restitution where possible. These three R's form a cycle of renewal and are repeated over and over again as the believer grows in Christ: Revelation, Repentance, Restitution (For more on this subject see Chapter 4: Background on Discipling). This subject is covered in depth in a book called Transformational Ministry by Dick Scoggins and available through Fellowship of Church Planters.

THE HORIZONTAL COMPONENT

So now we have one man. How does God build a church around him? It may seem to be an obvious next step to repeat this procedure and find another and another, then tie them together to form a church. The Lord may lead in this way. But if this is the only way we try to build a church it has some design flaws. Such a method extracts the person from the social network in which he was saved and tries to reintegrate him with people whom he has no previous relationship. Our experience shows that extracting a person in such a way and adding him to an existing group of people is difficult and often ends up marginalizing the person until he grows discouraged and reverts to his old way of life. Trying to build new, diverse believers together is even more difficult due to their spiritual immaturity and ingrained carnal ways of dealing with interpersonal difficulties. Often the result is like trying to push two like poles of a magnet together: it takes a lot of work and once the exertion from the church planter is removed, they fly apart anyway! With this in mind we suggest what we have found to be a better way.

From the above section, it should be obvious that incarnating the gospel to one person is no easy task. It takes huge amounts of time, effort and emotional energy. Planting churches by such an effort is going to be slow work at best. If we have to do it a number of times to different people trying to lead them to Christ one at a time it will take a long time--if ever! However, if you try to do it through a man of honor/peace, the task is now much easier!(?)!. As you take him through Acts 2 he sees that there is no church to which he can be added, without extracting him--cutting him off--from his existing circle of family and friends. You point out to him that HE is the solution. God will establish the church through *him*. And this is much easier than doing it

through you.

You are an outsider to his social circle and had to get to know this man over time so that he might see in you the hope of glory, Jesus, the Christ. Now you have a man who is immediately able to incarnate the gospel. He is an insider. He already has a social network of people who know him. So in order to plant churches, the second component of training the man of honor is to focus on his horizontal, human relationships. He now brings Jesus into all his relationships. Your goal is to see Christ formed in him in such a way that every relationship is exposed to the transforming power of the Love of Christ. Every person in his social network has an opportunity to see the gospel incarnated in this person. And it may be the only opportunity they ever get!

Training the man of peace means showing him how to penetrate his social network with the love of Christ (I John 4:7-11). This is not easy, and often we church planters are guilty of going the easy way rather than the godly one. Many times we do not preach the gospel of reconciliation and expect believers to be reconciled to God and man (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-21, Mt. 6:12,15). Often those closest to us are the ones most difficult to love. As we are hurt in the normal course of life, our response is one either of repaying evil with evil, or withdrawing into a protective cocoon. Neither response is Godly. Instead, we should remove the log in our own eye and then try to help our brother with his speck (Matthew 7:1-5).

So we focus on discipling new believers by teaching them how to love their family members, friends and acquaintances in accordance with the Lord Jesus' command. Thoroughly study Jesus' teaching on love in the gospels. The man of Peace needs to learn how to love his wife, his children, his parents, his brothers and sisters, his friends, his boss, etc. He also needs to be taught how to love other Christians (like you and others who may come to Christ through his witness). He needs to learn how to confront life's difficulties and conflicts using Biblical prescriptions rather than those of his culture, which may be ungodly. Often when working cross culturally we try to contextualize the gospel and the church and this is good. But the church will, in many ways, be counter cultural as well. This path will be difficult and painful for both your disciple and yourself. Since he will be making fundamental changes in the way he relates to people, these changes will often be met with intense persecution. You will need to teach your disciple how to meet this with more love. He will need to learn how to rely upon the Lord as he faces suffering and perhaps being isolated from those he loves. You will need to intercede for him before the throne of grace. You will suffer with him, and may even lose him as he succumbs to the temptation to compromise. You too, will need to learn to lean on the One who watched all His disciples abandon Him in His darkest hour. Hopefully, for those who compromise, you will also be able to rejoice in their restoration one day as they apply the lessons you have taught them about repentance early in their Christian life.

As your disciple progresses in his journey several things will happen. First, his faith will grow and deepen as he finds that Jesus is true to His word and "will never leave us or forsake us". Second, he will incarnate the gospel to all those around him in a shorter time than it would have ever been possible for you. Thirdly he will have learned how to present the evangel, as he learns how to "give an account for the hope that is in him" (Hence you have reproduced). Fourthly, if God grants mercy and a church gets started (perhaps in his home), he will likely be your first leader. But more on that in Stages 2 and 3.

Key Principles

1. The man or woman of peace should be honored by the church planter but as much as possible trying to work through the man or woman of peace to reach their social network. Luke 10:5-9
2. One-on-one discipleship needs to start from very early so that it will become a normal part of the shepherding/training of the church.
3. The church planter should utilize the man/woman of peace as often as possible to train them in the skills of shepherding/discipling.

Questions for further thought

1. What components must be incorporated when training the man of peace?
2. What are some practical steps you can take to train this man of peace (think of a specific person)?
3. How would this vary if a man were inside the assembly as opposed to outside the assembly?
4. What are several possible problems that may occur as you commence with the training? (Think especially of the problems of persecution and relational strain he could face.).
5. What are your specific plans to train your man of peace to overcome these problems?

Chapter 10

The Man of Peace as a Gatherer

As we see from the above, reproducing evangelists is a more effective way of church planting than the evangelist doing all the work and remaining the sole “expert”. The evangelist should keep in mind the goal of gathering a group of two or three who will eventually form a church. He should be reinforcing this constantly in the mind of the man of peace. Developing Godly relationships is not primarily for the purpose of harmony (although harmony may result) but for the extension of God’s Kingdom of Love and bringing Glory to Him!

The man of honor needs to be encouraged to explain his new life to others that would ask about “the hope that is in him”. You can teach him the stories of Jesus as He preached the gospel to different people. Focus on stories about people who are most like those of his people group. Pray with him for their hearts to be open as they receive the seed. Coach him as he shares with you his opportunities. If he is a head of a home, help him set up a reading schedule which he can read to his family and share the impact of Christ on himself and his home. If he is illiterate, teach him the stories so he can recite them by rote (illiterate people often have amazing verbal skills). You may use cassette tapes.

One of the first, and perhaps most important lessons he will need is humility. He will need to acknowledge his many failures in the past and present, to those he has hurt. If this is received well, you can help him avoid the temptation to be self-righteous. Of course it helps if you are open with your own failures.

As interest is generated among the social circle of the believer, a gathering meeting can start, perhaps studying the passages or stories on Kingdom living in Matthew or Acts. This can often be started even while the person is still only a seeker and not a believer. He still needs to be taught the principles of the Kingdom of God and can certainly pass them on to those in his social network. The parables of Matthew and Luke are great for this. Sometimes it may be others in his social network that come to Christ first. The man of peace is often not the first one who comes to the Lord. So don’t wait for him to come before you start a gathering meeting.

A gathering meeting should be primarily a group of seekers. It is best if you work behind the scenes with the man of peace to help him share the good news. If he is not a believer you still need to honor him by enabling him to play the influential role with the group. You are a guest in his home and amongst his people. You need to honor him accordingly. *Do not take his place by becoming the center of attention!*

Gathering meetings can start by using a story telling format in informal meetings. The gospel of Matthew has wonderful stories about Jesus, some very short. If more formal meetings are desired an exploratory Bible study format is appropriate. If the man of honor has come to faith, you should equip him to lead such meetings by coaching him before and evaluating afterward. Sometimes it may be appropriate for you lead the meetings. If so be certain you keep it simple so as not to show off your superior knowledge of the Word. Try to work the man of honor in to the discussion as often as possible. If possible alternate teaching week by week between you and he. Avoid setting such a high standard that they despise the other man you are developing. Take opportunities to praise the strengths of your co-worker’s lessons. Try to focus on at most one improvement he can make each time he leads the discussion. Make certain that you are at least as sensitive to the group dynamics as you are to the content being covered. Be especially careful of praise being directed your way. Praise may be good for your ego but it is death for reproduction. Be especially careful if you are “professionally” trained.

As new ones are won to the Lord, encourage the man of peace to begin shepherding them the same way he was shepherded by you (presuming he has come to Christ). Serve as his coach rather than do the discipling yourself. You may need to develop some Bible study materials for him. This is the way our booklets (Many of which appear in the appendices) were developed. Remember to emphasize that the studies are designed to

change a life as opposed to simply inform the mind. The man of peace is being well trained when he sees his disciples reproduce themselves in others. You may not be around for the full training cycle, but he needs to know that this is the goal toward which he must work (For *Discipleship Chains* diagram for 2 Timothy 2:2. See chapter 16).

If the man of peace ends up being alienated by his social network, then extraction should be considered. All is not lost, however, for you have taught him to stand within a perverse generation. He is a trained evangelist, and if there are no other believers around, you might prayerfully consider if God might be calling him to join you for a time on your church planting team. Paul may have picked up some teammates that way (e.g. Luke?). Don't be too quick to do this since sometimes, new believers are rejected by their families initially, but work their way back as they gain respect by showing stability, perseverance and love. Thus encourage the man "in as much as lieth with you, be at peace with all men." Always try to keep a footbridge in place from which relationships can be renewed.

TRANSITION TO THE COVENANTING STAGE

The gathering meeting presents the gospel in the context of creating a community. People attending the gathering meetings are encouraged to consider God's call upon their life through Jesus Christ and how that will impact their relationships with others. Some will begin to show interest in following Christ in the fellowship of His church. At this point this group of "seekers" is encouraged to begin to explore more completely God's plan for His church.

TRANSITION FROM GATHERING MEETINGS TO COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The goal of stage 1 was to get two or three families to decide to follow Christ in the fellowship of His church. This is done by teaching the man of honor to incarnate the gospel to his social circle through a changed life and to relate the stories of Jesus in ways, which attracts people to consider the claims of Christ upon their lives. As some become interested they are gathered into a group which studies kingdom principles from one of the gospels.

In these "gathering meetings", seekers are gathered to study the Word of God. The evangelist often initially leads these. If possible, the man of peace should lead them, or at least be brought along as soon as possible to co-lead with the evangelist. The evangelist is often the catalyst who will cause a group to come together due to his knowledge and character. However, he must keep in mind that other men need to be quickly developed lest the group become dependent on him and despise other men God has called to lead from their midst. The method and content of the following studies is to show the newly gathered believers that Christ has called them into community--to live out his life before a lost world and call others to unite together with them. As this becomes apparent, it is wise to start a second meeting, which we call a community meeting. The focus of the community meeting is to build community, and in stage 2 to write a covenant which will define the expectations of the members of the community.

Key Principles

1. The man/woman of honor should be used to penetrate his social network (as opposed to trying to extract him/her from their social network).
2. Especially if working cross culturally you will learn a great deal from your man or woman of peace by helping him/her to do this.
3. By doing this you will be setting up patterns of reproduction. By failing to do so you are likely to set up a pattern whereby you become the hub of the social network, not only alienating your man of peace but also unable to reproduce or exit.

Questions for further discussion

1. What are your man/woman of honor's strengths and weaknesses?
2. How will these help/hinder them in reproduction?
3. What is your plan for overcoming the weaknesses?
4. How are you implementing this plan?

Chapter 11 Church Covenants

The goal of the covenanting stage is to produce a covenant, which will bind God's people to His expectations for them as a church. The covenant focuses on the interpersonal relationships that God requires of His people. This chapter explains why we use a covenant to define the membership of the church. Each church writes its own covenant. The covenant should focus on relationship, not doctrine. Jesus taught that the defining characteristic of his people would be their love for one another. A quick review of the “one another” verses of the New Testament and of the life of the early church (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32ff) confirm this. Thus, the covenant is a summary of the relational expectations God has for his people's fellowship as the church. The covenant should be “inclusive” that is; any Christian should be able to sign such a covenant. A sample covenant as well as a covenant-signing ceremony appears in Appendices 10 and 11. In Appendix 12, you will find a paper on “Reasons for Breaking a Church Covenant”. In Appendix 9 you will find an extensive study developed by Kitty Halloway developed for taking a group of Muslim background believers through this concept.

Although in reality only Jesus Christ can plant a church, just as only he can save a soul, we baptize people as a response to this personal salvation. In similar fashion the way we recognize a church has come into existence is to have two or three families commit themselves to one another by covenant. In the West we ratify it by signing, since this is consistent with making covenants (contracts) in other spheres of life. Each member signs a personal copy, which he/she keeps. They also sign a common copy, which someone in the church keeps. Often the covenant signing ceremony will be accompanied with baptisms, since we might wait to baptize new believers until the church is ready for birth. The companion booklet Covenanting Together appears in Appendix 9, and is used with new people to prepare them to be added to the community.

THE COVENANTAL BASIS FOR DEFINING THE CHURCH

The church may be defined as a community of believers committed to living out the corporate life of the kingdom before the world and the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:11-3:10). This section addresses how membership in a local church community can be defined using covenants. Some may argue that the church and its membership do not need to be defined, but rather we ought to let the Spirit define it. But the New Testament makes it clear that there were churches in different cities and that these were not buildings, but congregations of people (Acts 14). They knew who they were and were aware of their membership (Cf. I John 2:19, Ephesians 3:6, 4:25, Romans 12:5). The community was so carefully defined that when a believer went from one community to another it was normal for him/her to carry a commendation from his/her former community to the new community (Cf. Romans 16:1,2).

What was the vehicle by which a person became a member of a church in the first century? The way one entered into the community in the early church was baptism. Baptism was a public statement that the initiate had turned from his old life (which involved the worship of particular god's) to embrace a new life (Acts 2:37-41); he had entered into the new covenant with God and His people through Jesus Christ. This testimony thus had two components: a vertical one between the person and God, whereby he disavowed his old god and turned to the true God; and a horizontal component which involved inclusion in a new community, the church. Since baptism was often public, it could lead to persecution. Baptism was an excellent vehicle to define who was and who was not in the community; who was and who was not included in the covenant. It still is in many cultures. Even in those cultures where baptism is a good emblem of covenanting with the community, the principles of covenant commitment which were surely understood in the first century need to be taught.

But today, in Western culture, baptism is seldom understood as having a horizontal component (new relational commitment to the Christian community). Baptism is rather seen as symbolic of a personal decision with only a vertical component (of the individual following Jesus). In churches where it has lost its horizontal component, it no longer defines meaningful membership in the church. There are many people who have been baptized who are not members of any local assembly, nor do they understand why they ought to be.

Perhaps some differences in our modern society contribute to this. In the first century the community to which a person belonged (a guild, mystery religion, synagogue, church, etc.) was the social/welfare network for that person and his family. Today, largely the government takes this role. Thus a person does not depend upon an intimate community in time of need. In planting churches in America have tried in times past to teach the horizontal component of baptism and thus utilize it as the vehicle for defining community, but without success in our independent culture. The Christian culture in America is so influenced by the “individual commitment” understanding of Baptism, that the horizontal component remains hidden for many. Often Christians in other cultures have been heavily influenced by this pietistic type of emphasis on following Christ with little of no understanding of the horizontal component of the covenant. In this case there is a need for an explicit emphasis on covenantal commitment even in cross-cultural church planting situations. So if Baptism is not a good vehicle for defining membership in an assembly in some cultures, what is? We will explore three other vehicles, which have been used historically in defining membership in an assembly: a covenant, a constitution, and articles of faith.

We believe a covenant is the most suitable vehicle in our culture for defining membership in the church. A covenant places the emphasis on the church as an organism of living relationships rather than an institutional organization. This is the obvious emphasis of the book of Acts and the epistles; the New Testament church was a body of believers identified by their deep intimate interpersonal relationships (which neither came nor were maintained with ease as evidenced by the epistles). The relationships that believers enjoyed were based on the relationship that each one shared with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. The relational responsibility among believers is exemplified by Jesus' relationship with his disciples (Cf. John 13, 17), and is defined in the many “one another” verses in the New Testament, as well as in passages such as I Cor. 12, Galatians 5, Colossians 3, Ephesians 4-6.

The relationship believers have with God is a formal covenantal relationship. God establishes His relationship with His people through covenant, and his people often responded to God's covenantal love by entering into covenant with one another (See Covenanting Together, Appendix 9). In our culture, the marriage covenant is the best example of a covenant, which defines a relationship. A marriage covenant establishes the expectations that a husband and wife have in the marriage relationship.

A church covenant can be an excellent way to define the expectations which believers ought to have with one another in a particular assembly, and should be based on God's commands regulating relationships among believers. Thus, a church covenant identifies the expectations of the members of the community, which we call the church. It establishes the fact that to become a part of the

church a believer enters into a **RELATIONSHIP** with the other believers in the assembly. It sets the parameters of the relationship. In our independent thinking culture, it also serves to bind those who would leave the covenant community for spurious reasons, which short-circuit God's plan for sanctification both for the church and the individual. Since the reformation, covenants have often been used to define the membership of churches especially by Anabaptists.

The other two ways mentioned to define community membership (Constitution and Articles of Faith) have serious deficiencies arising from our culture. The traditional *constitution* is borrowed from the corporate world. It defines the church as an organization rather than an organism. As such it defines membership as being part of a corporate institution, with the constitution defining the way in which the institution is run. It may be important for churches to develop constitutions at some point, but not as a vehicle for defining membership. It is not effective in forming the church into a loving community. We have likened a house church to a virus, which needs to mutate rapidly to adapt to changing conditions. A constitution fixes the operation of a church and keeps it from adapting. For this reason we have found constitutions counterproductive not only for defining the membership of the church but also in defining the operations of a house church. We have found that a family conference approach to decision making, using Scripture and led by godly elders is more helpful than constitutions. (for more on this see Appendix 8, Consensus Decision Making).

Using *articles of faith* as a vehicle for defining membership suffers from the same drawback of not treating the church as a living community. In this case the connection with the church is based on a system of belief rather than a commitment to relationship. This has been more common in denominational type churches. Another drawback is that articles of faith rather than distinguishing believers from unbelievers usually serve to distinguish between different types of believers. For example, views on end times, election, predestination, scripture, spiritual gifts, are almost always included with the understanding that "our kind" of Christians are welcome here. What an affront to the unity of relationship, which Christ calls us to have (John 17:21-24)! If a believer is included in God's heavenly church, how can we use such distinctions to exclude him from our local assembly?

For these reasons we have chosen covenants as a suitable vehicle for defining membership in a local assembly. Apart from the Bible it is the most important document in the church, since it sets forth the expectation of members of the community; and the community is the body of Christ.

Key Principles

1. God has saved us covenantally.
2. This covenantal salvation has procured for God a People, not merely a collection of individuals.
3. The best way to express this covenantal salvation is by the people of God entering into a covenant before God to be His people. This is best done using the commands of Christ for His people in the New Testament.
4. A group of people is not a church until they determine to be the church.

Questions for further thought

1. What should be included in the content of a church covenant? What should be avoided?
2. Why is a covenant a good way to define church membership?
3. In what ways are a church covenant and a marriage covenant similar?
4. In what ways do covenants oppose the thinking of our culture?
5. What is the problem with defining church membership with a constitution or articles of faith?

Chapter 12 Meetings Of The House Church

As we move from the gathering stage into the covenanting stage normally we have to add another meeting. We must be conscious of the purpose of meetings, lest we exhaust the people by becoming meeting oriented. The church meets, but the meetings are not the church! We have found it helpful to distinguish between three different types of meetings: Gathering Meetings, Community Meetings, Ministry Meetings. Simply adding meetings may cripple the house church's ability to reproduce and even cause it to crystallize. For this reason we must carefully evaluate our use of meetings.

An example from our hall of shame (which we call our mistakes--of which there have been many) is helpful. Several of our churches started from gathering meetings. But once we made a transition into the covenanting stage, we stopped the gathering meetings. In one case we added a Sunday community meeting and retained a mid-week meeting (which formally was the gathering meeting). Both meetings focused on writing the covenant. The Sunday morning meeting was for worship and teaching about the Biblical basis of covenanting (usually focusing on the "one another" verses of the New Testament). The mid-week meeting was for the actual, prayerful writing of the covenant. Without on-going gathering meetings, evangelistic efforts declined, with a deceleration in church reproduction. Months later when we tried to restart evangelistic efforts, the results were sluggish. The church had crystallized into a self-centered group of naval gazers. (More about dangers of ending gathering meetings later.)

To combat this, we clarified the following purposes for meetings.

SUNDAY MEETINGS

We call Sunday meetings the **COMMUNITY MEETING**. The community may meet on another day, due to peoples' schedules, but try as we may, the Sunday meeting is the traditional meeting day of the church in the west, and we have chosen not to fight this. Often this meeting has two parts: worship and teaching. The Lord's table is often a part of the worship and teaching is on issues relevant to the community. We prepare reading schedules for daily use in the homes, which prepare people for participating in the teaching time. Thus even if a "teaching" does not occur at the community meeting on a particular week; the congregation is learning together through discussion of Scripture in the home. The reading schedule contains a passage of Scripture for each day with a question to start discussion. (For examples see Appendix 5). We encourage interaction by discussing the text first in the home and then at the community meeting. In the home, discussion usually lasts for 3-5 minutes, at a meal or bedtime. Reading lists are for 5 or 7 days each week.

The leaders or church planters develop the reading schedules, as they are needed in the church. As churches reproduce, a pool of reading schedules accumulates and can be revised as needed. Reading schedules must deal with the needs and opportunities of the church community. For instance, in one house church several people had been saved out of cults. The leader decided to use Galatians to teach the basics of the gospel, especially emphasizing salvation by grace and freedom from the law. He developed a 10-week reading schedule with Galatians as the backbone, with other related passages. Each man in the community took turns leading the discussion week by week, including those who had covenanted out of a cult background. The results were excellent.

Other reading schedules we have found useful include the "one another" verses of the Bible, developing Christian relationships (I John), Principles for the Healing of Souls (Romans 3-8), Unity and Conflict,

Studies in the life of Jesus (a Harmony of the Gospels), Kingdom Living (Matthew), etc. Most are 8-12 weeks in duration. Longer reading schedules get bogged down because the needs of the community change quickly. Some may last longer like a life of Christ for 1 year and a year on basic doctrines of the faith but these will be interspersed with studies of a more practical nature. A list of Reading Schedules is available through the Fellowship of Church Planting Teams (our web page is www.fcpt.org).

At the covenanting stage, we use reading schedules focusing on the church (The Church: a monthly devotional guide, Ephesians and Covenanting Together, Appendices 4,3,9).

Although teaching and worship normally make up the meeting, special aspects of edification may take the place of the teaching and/or worship, such as:

Prayer: although this occurs in worship, it may be appropriate to set a whole meeting aside for prayer and intercession during times of crisis.

Decision-making: See chapter 13 on Developing a Covenant.

Planning for the future: See Stage 3, Vision Statements.

Evaluation of community health: We look at our vision statement and evaluate our progress. New ideas can be put forward to help us fulfill God's plan for us. Some meetings may focus on conflict and conflict resolution.

Covenanting: when a new community comes into existence we have a feast along with public signing of the covenant. Other churches may be invited to pray for the new church.

Receiving new members: New members covenant with the church. See Covenanting Ceremony in Appendix 11.

Baptisms: Baptisms are usually performed as part of the community meetings although they can be part of a gathering meeting. After the evangelist baptizes the first group, those who have been baptized might baptize their new converts under supervision of elders or church planters.

Affirmation meetings: The members are encouraged to affirm verbally other members in their gifts and ministries through which they have experienced blessing. The goal is to encourage ministry in the body and the recognition of gifts often not seen. These meetings are usually tremendously uplifting. They are especially effective to encourage the younger members of the church. The members are encouraged to focus on one another, NOT on the evangelist!

Church discipline: Special community meetings are for members only and may be prefaced with much teaching, prayer, fasting, and instruction on church discipline. (See Stage 3, Chapter 19).

The **COMMUNITY MEETING** should vary from week to week and not stagnate into one rote pattern. It should help the group develop into community. Community meetings are for believers, although serious seekers may often come.

GATHERING MEETINGS

It is usually a mistake to end gathering meetings when the group covenants. In many cases new social circles are still being penetrated, and old ones have not yet been fully explored to take captive for the Kingdom each member of the social circle. It ought to be the norm for a church to have a single community meeting but several small gathering meetings led by different members.

These gathering meetings ought to run for a specified duration with a specific topic. For example: 8 studies on the Kingdom from Matthew, 6 studies on Kingdom living from the sermon on the mount, 8 studies from Acts on the growth of the Kingdom, etc. (For an example see 6). This gathering meeting is for unbelievers and thus only those believers who bring their unbelieving friends should come.

Other types of topical Bible studies can be used for gathering as well. Anything that can gather unbelievers and convey the gospel should be considered. Some examples: Biblical Principles of Child Rearing, Biblical Principles for a Healthy Marriage Relationship, Principles for the Healing of Souls, How to be a Man (Women, Teenager), Financial Help in a Crumbling World. Topical studies should be developed using such practical books as James, Ephesians, Proverbs.

Anything that can draw the lost and make the GOSPEL good news is fair game. We need to communicate the good news and not simply give wise advice from the Bible. “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.” Romans 10:17! This requires constantly finding ways to make the Gospel relevant to the fallen world, as Jesus himself did. Remember that gathering meetings are for unbelievers. They should feel comfortable at these meetings!

MINISTRY MEETINGS

MINISTRY MEETINGS, like community meetings, are for believers. These normally occur in mid-week, and are designed to enable the congregation to minister more effectively. Often the men may meet early in the morning before work and the women in the evening (with the men taking care of the children). We find that often men and women need different equipping as they minister differently (See the Chapter on Women leaders). Neither a gathering meeting nor a ministry meeting is for the WHOLE CHURCH. Each member should prayerfully consider how God wants him/her to serve. Some may attend neither gathering or ministry meetings, but do other types of service. We try to avoid a “herding” mentality that everyone needs to come to every meeting.

As the churches multiply and form networks of cooperating churches, some of these Ministry meetings may include members of other churches. For instance, a group of parents might want to study parenting. Others might want to organize for working on music or drama for a fellowship meeting or an evangelistic effort. Men and women will meet occasionally for special leadership training and prayer. Ministry Meetings for prayer should be ongoing. Ministry meetings should be for a specific purpose, last for a specified period, and be evaluated at the close by those who attended, for effectiveness.

We have found it very important to avoid having meeting-centered churches. People get exhausted by meetings, which produce nothing except “program maintenance”. We have found one community meeting per week of the church, with multiple, decentralized ministry and gathering meetings is the most effective way to reproduce. This increases flexibility and helps avoid crystallization, so the churches can move forward as God's Spirit leads.

FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS

All the house churches in a fellowship cluster normally meet together about once a month. It is a good time of celebration, sharing of testimonies, worship, and keeping up old relationships. It is kind a like a family reunion. Fellowship meetings are an encouragement to those house churches going through difficult times. They are also times when a house church and especially new members can realize that God's work is bigger than any house church. They are also excellent times to hear mission reports.

Key Principles

1. The church meets, but the meeting is not the church.
2. Meetings should have a purpose.
3. There will be different types of meetings to fulfill different purposes. Because of the “herding” tendency in Christian community, only those engaged in the purpose of a meeting should be obligated to come.
4. Meetings that are no longer fulfilling their purpose should be discontinued.

Questions for further thought

1. What should be the components included in Community meetings?
2. How can reading schedules be used to develop leaders and enhance community meetings?
3. What are some different approaches churches can take regarding gathering meetings? Who would be the target group in each instance?
4. List some examples of ministry meetings in which a church might engage?

Chapter 13 Producing a Covenant

Producing a covenant is normally the first decision made by the group. For this reason please read Appendix 8 on Consensus Decision Making. For more information on the leaders role in guiding the group through this stage look to Stage III, chapter 16 "Leadership in House Churches".

The covenanting process begins once there are two or three families, which have expressed an interest in following Christ, normally as a result of a gathering meeting. We ask those who have expressed this interest to begin coming to another meeting to explore what it means to be church (Usually this meeting is on Sundays. In Muslim countries it would likely be on Fridays). Our experience shows that we need to strike while the fire is hot. Those who doubt or hesitate can come also, but eventually the reasons for their lack of commitment will be exposed and need to be repented of so that they can obey the Lord by being initiated into God's kingdom (Remember the order in Acts 2:37-41, repent, be baptized, be added). We encourage church planters not to count converts or believers, but kingdom people--those who have gone through all these three steps. Any hesitation in these three basic steps gives cause for hesitation in our assurance that they are in His kingdom. Many refuse to covenant because of past interpersonal scars, which hold them in bondage. We need to exercise compassion as we gently draw them through their pain to healing. But it is only as they find their place in the body that they will find real maturity (Cf. Ephesians 4:11-16).

At the first community meeting we often introduce a reading schedule about the church (Appendices 4 or 5). Normally the meeting consists of a worship time and a teaching time. The men are asked to lead the group in worship and discussion. The format is kept simple enough for a new leader-in-training to handle. The teaching time is usually discussion format with the leader mostly asking good questions and then moderating the discussion. It should not take a lecture format whereby the church planter is the expert and the members merely feeders. The church planter may lead the discussion initially, but the men are expected to take responsibility for all aspects of the Community Meeting as soon as possible. The church planter always leads in a way that inexperienced leaders-in-training can imitate. He will prepare the new leaders as well as debrief with them for ongoing training.

Once the group knows what it means to be church, the group is asked to discern if it is God's will for them to start steps toward covenanting as a church. If two or three families agree, they begin drawing up a covenant, usually based on the "one another" verses of the Bible (See Appendix 9). While they are working on the covenant they are usually going through the booklet Covenanting Together (Appendix 9A) both in their homes and during the teaching time of the community meetings. During the community meeting they discuss the covenant which they are writing. This takes several weeks if it is the first time the group has had this experience.

Often a group hesitates to commit themselves to a covenant. This is a big step--not unlike marriage. In the west covenants are seen as restricting personal freedoms (and they do), and we tend to view restrictions as evil. We liken the three stages of house church development to dating, engagement, and married planning for children because of this cultural barrier. Many of us hesitated to tie the marriage knot because we feared making a mistake. We learned, however, that a relationship does not stand still; it moves forward or it deteriorates. We tell this to a group that is hedging on covenanting. Relationships don't stand still. There will be some that go through the process but still hesitate before "signing on the dotted line". This may unsettle others who are ready but want to wait until everyone is "on board". We encourage the group to "strike while the fire is hot!"

Apart from ongoing gathering (evangelism), the main activity during this second stage is writing the

covenant. This gives great opportunity to expose brokenness as well as build community. **THIS PROCESS IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE GOAL.** Appendix 8, Consensus Decision-Making, focuses on the process of decision making which leads to Unity. The church planter is encouraged to read through this and apply the principles as he goes through the steps. Keep an eye out for:

1. Strengths and weaknesses of the group uncovered by the process. How are their interpersonal skills? What problems do they have in resolving conflicts? How do they avoid conflict? Do they provoke additional conflict? The problems, which are uncovered, are likely to afflict the believers in their home as well as in their relationships in the world. Great shepherding opportunities arise as barriers are exposed. Don't be afraid of them! Welcome them as opportunities to prove the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word! At this stage your leaders may become evident.
2. Your own weaknesses in leading a group through the process. Facing weaknesses is necessary to grow as leaders. Leaders tend to over-control so that the outcome is assured. We find this is a poor way to avoid conflict and lacks dependence upon God. Usually there is a point during the writing the covenant where it looks like the group will dissolve. The church planter must be willing to let this happen. The group itself must "own" the covenant or it is worthless. If the church planter imposes his will on the group by assertion or manipulation, the resulting church will usually resent it and become impotent in the reproductive stage.

Appendix 10 gives a sample covenant. Notice that in accordance with the warning in Chapter 11, it avoids focusing on doctrine and focuses instead on relational expectations. The church planter can veto unwanted particulars in the covenant. But, once again, he should do so by influencing those who are taking the lead in the covenant writing. Often this involves sharing Chapter 11 of this section with them, as a paper.

Once the group has written the covenant and studied what it means to covenant, they set a date for a covenanting ceremony. This ceremony is usually the first official meeting of the community and includes a feast. Individuals sign their personal copy of the covenant. All sign another copy to be retained by a designated member. New members, who covenant later, will sign this as they covenant. Those unwilling to sign with the original group may continue attending. They must understand and are not able to receive all the benefits of community members (e.g. shepherding and other types of care. Often participation in the Lord's Table is restricted to members.

ADDING NEW MEMBERS

During the covenanting stage, new believers come to Christ as the gathering meetings continue. Each new believer must be brought through the initiation steps of *Repentance*, *Baptism*, and being *Added* to the covenant community. As new ones get saved, those who led them to Christ shepherd these new ones through the steps of covenanting. As mentioned above, we developed the booklet Entering the Kingdom for this purpose (Appendix 1). As members are added, they will need further discipleship. Once again the church planter should help other members do this discipling. We set up new discipleship chains for this (See Stage 3, Chapter 15). A signed copy of a Covenant Signing Ceremony for new members is in Appendix 11 of this section.

Key Principles

1. The community itself should write the covenant based on the clear teachings of the responsibilities laid out for the church in the New Covenant (Testament).

2. The church planter needs to allow community dynamics to emerge during the covenant writing exercise.
3. The emerging leaders will show themselves as influencers for the group to follow Christ during this time. The church planter needs to allow this rather than try to control the outcome.
4. This will be a great time to grow in prayer and faith for all!

Questions for Further Discussion

1. What are some problems that can arise when working through a covenant?

2. What benefits are there to struggling through this process?

3. How can you make use of your emerging leaders in this process?

Chapter 14 Reallocating Resources

If two church planters start gathering meetings, one should move on early in the covenanting stage. By moving on, we mean absenting himself from the community meetings, and transferring his discipleship chain to someone in the new congregation. We believe at least two men should jointly oversee the new church. Once one church planter leaves, a new second man needs to take the place of the leaving church planter. This second man is trained to help the remaining church planter and become an elder. In a short time, he will be expected to begin mentoring another man from his discipleship chain to join him in the leadership team. Thus the pattern of reproduction is already in place early in the covenanting stage. When these two new leaders are functioning together, the remaining church planter heading up the work moves on as well (See Withdrawal of church planters and interaction between churches and teams: Stage 3, Chapter 19). Some, fearing for the fragility of the work, will want to keep both church planters in the group. But our experience has shown us that *the longer two church planters remain on the scene, the longer it takes for these patterns of reproducing leaders to be set up*. Better to teach the fledgling group to look to the Lord rather than to church planters.

This reallocation of resources can be a painful time for the group as well as the church planters. The group needs to be prepared for it so that they don't feel abandoned. The pattern of New Testament church leadership (leaders coming from among the congregations) needs to be affirmed, as do the emerging leaders.

The church planter left behind is considered the one "heading up the work" and the one who leaves is considered a "gatherer". Who stays and who goes is decided by who is in the best position to develop discipleship chains for strong leadership. This usually depends on the relationships, which have been developed, rather than giftedness of the church planter. We often find that the church planter with strong evangelistic gifts may have to stay behind to develop the emerging leaders rather than the church planter with strong discipleship gifts. We avoid traumatizing relationships as much as possible since it is usually in the covenanting stage when the sharpest spiritual attacks occur. Often this stage is the watershed for new leaders; they must decide if they are going to suffer for the Lord, or compromise for the sake of comfort. We need strong friendships to carry us over the watershed.

The "gatherer" church planter who leaves will begin new gathering meetings. He may focus on trying to penetrate the social circle of a new convert, working closely with that person and beginning a new discipleship chain with him (See Man of Peace; Stage 1, Chapter 7-9). Or he might penetrate a whole new community by himself doing grass roots evangelism. The gatherer will absent himself from the community meeting, only visiting occasionally to ask for prayer and give reports. When he starts another church, they will network together to form a fellowship (see the section IV Cycle #1 later in this manual). Relationships between the churches need to be strong at least on the leadership level. This is especially true in closed countries where congregations are unable to meet together. Networking brings strength and stability to the house churches. In closed countries it may only be the leaders who network but this will bring stability to the work.

If the gathering church planter has a family, he may find it healthier for the family to remain behind in the original group while he moves on. When a new group enters into the covenant stage, we find this is a good time for the family to rejoin the church planter. Of course this will depend on the situation, the gifts of the wife, the stage of family life, etc. We pray always to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

TERMINATION OF THE COVENANTING STAGE

The covenanting stage closes when the group signs the covenant. This a joyous occasion with feasting and worship. Some may still feel uneasy about entering into covenant, and need to be encouraged to go before the Lord and seek His will. They should not be made to feel guilty nor pressured or resentment will result. Let the pressure come from the Holy Spirit. We have found that there will usually be one or two who draw back at this point. Usually they covenant within a few weeks, but in some cases they turn away, unable to take the final step. When this happens there is, of course, sorrow on the part of the group, which prays for the restoration of these folks.

Key Principles

1. Leadership should always be done in teams.
2. One of the two church planters needs to leave at this stage since the overwhelming focus of the next stage is leadership development.
3. Leaders need to learn by doing, so the church planter is forced to pick new leaders as the other church planter leaves.
4. Leadership in teams must be modeled by doing it. Plural eldership will need to be modeled more than taught, especially where this is foreign to the culture (in my experience it seems to be foreign to most!).

Questions for Further Discussion

1. What is the danger of the church planter remaining in a church too long?
2. What would be some evidences that this has occurred?
3. What would be the consequences of the church planter remaining as the solo leader?

Chapter 15 Developing a Vision

House churches can easily degenerate into self-centered groups of naval gazers, rather than God-centered soldiers of the King. A church is especially vulnerable to this within a few months after covenanting. Covenanting gives the church a clear task to focus on and good community skills are developed during this task. However, shortly after the church may find itself directionless and the members each “doing what is right in his own eyes”. This is a dangerous time since moral can flag, a critical spirit begin to grip the church and “biting and devouring ...(until) you are consumed by one another”. Galatians 5:15

To combat this, we encourage each house church to develop a vision statement. This will help keep the church a pilgrim people on the move toward a common goal. The vision statements tend to be for a 6-month duration and set out measurable goals with definite activities to achieve these goals. (They might choose to have a global statement from which individual vision statements can be written.)

The vision statement below is for a new house church, which needs to develop leadership from scratch. Our vision statements are broken up into two sections: Evangelism and Edification. There should be periodical “health checks” for the congregation to evaluate their progress. As the Lord leads, the vision statement can be altered during the 6-month period. After 6 months a new vision statement should be drawn up.

The evangelism part should be drawn up by the congregation. This involves prayer, seeking what is pleasing to the Lord, as well as times of brainstorming how to make the Gospel good news to the social circles of the members of the church, as well as to seek out new social circles. You might review Consensus Decision-Making (Appendix 8).

The edification part of the vision statement is drawn up by the leadership team. Its purpose is “equipping the saints for the work of ministry”. That is, it should flow from the evangelism purpose, equipping the saints to fulfill God’s purpose for them in reproduction. It may do this directly (e.g. We will have a 10 week study on how Jesus presented the gospel in Matthew), or more indirectly (e.g. We will study how to help those whose marriages have been broken by sin, and target a couple of friends with broken marriages to show them God’s good news for them). The edification portion will also take into account the maturity of the church and target ways of bringing it to completion. For instance, a new church must learn how to recognize leaders and how they are appointed.

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENT (FOR A NEW CHURCH)

Evangelism: This goal is a Reproductive Goal and is the responsibility of the congregation:

In six months we should have added 3 new families to the congregation and plan for a new church. These families will come from intensive evangelism and discipleship from social circles already represented by the member families of the church. These will come from our friends, relatives and coworkers. We will also try to find seekers in Jim's town, to start another gathering there. *Specific activities to achieve the reproductive goal:*

1. We will pray for our friends and relatives, and seek ways to present the gospel to them. We will set aside the first Tuesday of each month for a corporate night of prayer for this.
2. We will have 2 or 3 gathering meetings in members' homes.

3. The members of the church will follow up on those who attend, being sure that they understand the gospel.
4. The church will intensively survey the neighborhood of Jim Jones, to start a gathering meeting at his home with seekers which are found.
5. We will advertise in the local newspaper a series on child rearing, to meet on Wednesday evening at the Smith home for 6 weeks.

Edification: This deals with enabling the congregation to reach its reproduction goal.

We will train the congregation to effectively share the gospel with those of their social circle, to start multiple gathering meetings. This will include training two men to lead an evangelistic Bible study. We will also appoint 2 shepherding deacons so that the church planter will be free to help the evangelism effort. An elder will be appointed toward the end of the 6-month vision period. *Specific activities to achieve this goal:*

1. We will review Entering The Kingdom for five weeks in our community meetings so that all in the congregation can follow up new believers who come in from the gathering meetings.
2. The Bible studies in Matthew will be reviewed at the men's meetings in order to discern who God is calling to lead the gathering meetings. This will be done in the first month, with the gathering meetings scheduled to begin in the second month. The women will meet and pray and strategize on how to reach their social networks.
3. Reading schedules on leadership and shepherding will be used in the community meetings to prepare the church for the appointment of shepherding deacons and later an elder.
4. The men will arrange to rotate leading the teaching, worship, and Lord's table.
5. In the third or fourth month a ministry meeting will be set up to teach Biblical principles for child rearing. Recognizing the possibility of drawing in seekers, we will advertise this. It will be led by the church planter and one other man from the congregation. Wayne Mack's book, Strengthening Your Marriage, Ch. 7 will be used as a basis for this study.

Key Principles

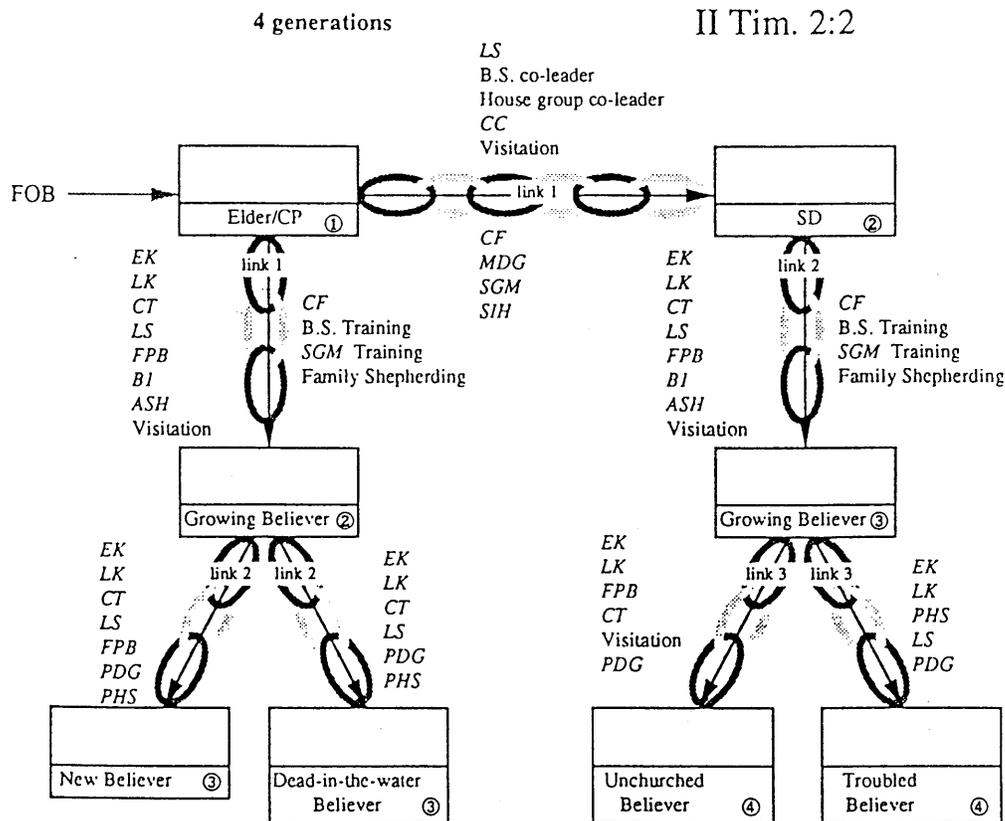
1. Churches with no vision stagnate. Pr. 29:18
2. Just as God has a call for each person (Eph. 2:10), he also has a call for each church. Acts 20:24-27.
3. The church needs to know what its purpose is. Acts 1:1-8.

Questions for further discussion

1. What are the resources God has given to your church?
2. How can He use this in fulfilling His great commission for His church?
3. What would be some immediate goals you could set to follow Him in His call?
4. What would you anticipate would be the barriers?
5. What can you do to help overcome these?

II Timothy 2:2 Discipleship Chains

“The things which you have heard from me ... entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others as well.”



Activity List Menu

One-on-One

- EK* – Entering the Kingdom
- LK* – Living in the Kingdom
- CT* – Covenanting Together
- LS* – Life in the Spirit
- FPB* – Finding your Place in the Body
- B1* – Becoming One
- PDG* – Philippians Devotional Guide

Group Training

- CF* – Crossflame
- MDG* – Monthly Devotional Guide
- SGM* – Small Group Manual
- SIH* – Shepherding in the Home
- PHS* – Principles for the Healing of Souls
- ASH* – Applications of Soul Healing

Chapter 16

Discipleship Chains

Christ called his followers to be “disciples” or learners. We are in that learning process from the moment we come to Christ to the day we die. In this sense we are always in a “discipleship chain”. This is a “chain” which began with Jesus himself, in which an older believer discipled a younger one, who discipled others. We focus on the “output” of the chain in this paper, but it is important for those in leadership to be certain that there is adequate input. This may come often through short-term commitments to a mentor. Marriage enrichment studies, prayer partnerships, studies in a Bible book together, undergoing intense training of a particular type for a stated period of time will all add to the ongoing discipling of a leader. For me it has often meant going to the “ends of the earth” to find someone who can help me in my quest “to press on the high calling in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

But now to the “output” of your discipleship chain. Jesus called his disciples to Him and began to instruct them in the ministries he gave to them. In the same way our discipleship's primary emphasis is “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). The goal should not be simply to impart knowledge, but rather equipping the saints to minister. Therefore theological training alone will not be the vehicle by which we disciple, but rather getting our disciple involved in ministry and then training him theologically as he needs to apply it to his ministry. There will also be training in transformation, as flaws in character become evident as our disciple gets involved in ministry.

THE FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN

For practical application, let us look at discipleship chains in the context of church planting. A church can be planted by anyone (church planter, elder, shepherding deacon, etc), but for the purposes of this chapter we will refer to him as a "church planter". Let us suppose that the church planter is focusing on a new believer through whom he hopes to penetrate that person's social circle and start a house church. Immediately a discipleship chain is formed with the first link between the church planter and the new believer. If that believer is married, then a second link forms between him and his wife.

In this case the believer's training should focus on two areas:

1. **Shepherding his wife.** If she is an unbeliever, he begins to read scripture in the home and share God's plan of salvation and Kingdom living with his wife. Reading schedules can be developed to help a new believer do this. He should be encouraged to read these daily (often at the end of a meal, as a regular discipline), taking 5 minutes or so to discuss the passage. This should not be preaching, but a brief time of exploring the passage. If he has children they need to be involved. Many Bible stories can be used to communicate the basics of the Gospel and a life in the Kingdom. A husband should always be trained to care for his wife and children. This must receive high priority in his discipling. Older believing women should also disciple younger women, but this should not let the husband off the hook! Often marriage counseling is needed to break down barriers which have been built over years. But here also, the church planter should not usurp the place of the husband as head of the home. **THE HUSBAND MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY** to love and care for his wife. This discipleship is ongoing. All leaders need accountability to continue enriching their marriages.

2. Sharing the evangel with those of his social circle. One's social circle includes relatives, friends, co-workers, etc. We are NOT talking about handing them a tract and preaching the "4 spiritual laws" to them. This often begins with a careful, thoughtful presentation of his or her personal testimony as to why his or her life is changing. This can be difficult, especially with relatives and close friends. Hopefully, when the gospel was presented, the new believer learns that salvation brings him into a New Kingdom where life is different. Being translated into God's Kingdom is like moving to a new country. We put off old patterns of life which are not in keeping with the new country and put on new ones (Cf. Eph. 4:17-24, Col. 1:13). This can be quite frightening to people close to the new Christian, but it is the most natural way to convey the gospel. New believers need to be taught how to do this. A study of John 4 or 9, including the cost of following Christ, can be very helpful. A theological treatise on salvation is not usually helpful at this stage; it makes salvation cognitive rather than transformational. That can come later.

For church planting, the goal of evangelism is to start a gathering meeting with those in one's social circle that may be interested, not merely bring one individual to Christ. As the new believer begins the above steps he looks for 2 or 3 people from his social group who will gather to study God's word.

THE SECOND AND THIRD LINKS IN THE CHAIN

At this stage the seeds of disaster are most likely to be sown. As the believer gathers his friends and relatives, HE needs to be encouraged to follow up on these himself, imparting to them the very things HE HAS LEARNED in getting the gathering group going. At this point he should be started in having a family Bible study time (3-5 minutes a day) and in evangelizing his social circle. He teaches these newer ones the same things. The great mistake made at this point is that the church planter follows up the new contacts! As a result, the group becomes a one-link-discipleship-chain-church, i.e. everyone attaches to the church planter and not to one another. He becomes the hub of a wheel. When the hub leaves, the house church will fall, since they will have become dependant on the church planter. The church planter cannot become a hub, which holds it all together, no matter how tempting it is (and it will be)!

Of course some might argue that the church planter can *do a better job* following up the new contacts. That may be true, but what he can't do better is reproduce the disciple. For churches to reproduce, discipleship reproduction must be the primary goal. In order for this to happen, the disciple must be trained to pass on what he has learned at the earliest possible moment. By passing on what he learns to another person, he will learn it better, and will reproduce himself in the process. My experience is that if it is done very early, it happens naturally. The longer you wait, the more likely a new convert will try to excuse himself from the responsibility by looking at his inadequacies rather than the power of Christ! (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:4-6). After a short while it is virtually impossible reverse this passivity!

As soon as a gathering meeting is planned, the new believer must follow up on those he invites. He does this by simply passing on what he has just learned from the church planter. Thus the new ones begin to penetrate THEIR social circles for the gospel. The second link is forged in the chain as your disciple disciples his family and friends. The church planter may do this with the new convert, but he needs to be pushing off as much as possible on the new believer.

If a flood of people come to Christ, then two possibilities present themselves:

1. You sit down with your disciple and prayerfully decide who should shepherd whom. The church planter seeks first to mobilize another person with potential to start a new gathering.

The church planter should not disciple more than 2 people in any one house church. In this way churches made up of 1-link disciple chains can be avoided.

2. If you can't disciple everyone in the above manner, then the ones not being shepherded should become a 3rd link in the chain; i.e. your disciple's disciple is helped to begin working with another new believer, passing on what he has learned from your disciple (once again, likely shepherding his family and evangelizing his social circle).

THREE LINK DISCIPLESHIP CHAINS MUST BE SET UP IF THERE WILL BE REPRODUCTION! The church planter should not leave until this is accomplished. 2 Tim. 2:2 exhorts Timothy to aim for 4-link discipleship chains. 4-link chains will ensure you reproduction of reproducing (think it through!), and thus of churches which plant churches.

DISCIPLESHIP CHAINS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

If discipleship chains are kept up during all stages of house church development, leaders emerge naturally and relationally. Normally, in the latter part of the covenanting stage or shortly after, two of the men will be formally recognized as being the ones God is using to develop the group. The men could be appointed as elders, provisional elders, or shepherding deacons. (For job descriptions and responsibilities see the next chapter as well as Appendices 14&15).

The major difference between these categories of leaders is that elders would be at the beginning of a discipleship chain within a church. (Remember that all of us should be in a discipleship relationship -- and that chain may extend outside of the church. For instance, the church planter should leave once an elder is in place. But he would be available for ongoing help and may remain as a "mentor" of the elder). A provisional elder or shepherding deacon would always be in the second link, accountable to an elder or church planter.

Chains should be set up man to man and woman to woman. The husband will always be involved with his wife, but there are certain things that are appropriate for other women to teach his wife (Cf. Titus 2:3-5). Women's discipleship chains are crucial for the health and survival of the church. We recommend women to be appointed as shepherding deacons at the top of each discipleship chain of women in the church. A women shepherding deacon would, of course, be accountable to her husband or an elder. For more on women's chains see the chapter on women leaders.

Other materials for use with your disciple may be developed as barriers are exposed and thus growth and transformation is required in order to progress to higher stages of Christian growth. See Readiness for Discipleship, Activities Menu for Leadership Development and Caring for the Flock for some things that the Fellowship of Church Planters has developed to help develop leaders (Appendices 16, 17, 18). Leaders should regularly fill out the following 2 Timothy 2:2 diagram to track their discipleship to the 3rd and 4th generation. A concentration of one-link chains around the church planters or elders should be seen as a bad sign!

Key Principles

1. We are called to be reproducers, not just producers.
2. Leaders are especially called to be reproducers (Ephesians 4:11,12)
3. Church Planters are in the Ephesian 4 list and need to be forced to reproduce rather than do the ministry! One way of doing this is by setting up discipleship chains whereby we can see what our disciples are reproducing.

Questions for further thought

1. Find the diagram in the manual on discipleship chains. Fill in the boxes as much as you are able.
2. How much of a danger is there for you becoming the hub?
3. How much of a danger is there for your church to become too fragmented due to the fact that you are not following up effectively on your disciples to track what is happening down the chain?
4. What materials are you developing and using to ensure that solid truth is being used to transform your disciples as opposed to mere human persuasion and influence?

Chapter 17 Leadership in House Churches

Although an “outside” church planter may function as the initial leader of the church, the ultimate goal is to have two local leaders appointed from the group to serve the church and guide it along the path which God has given. Ideally, both of these leaders are elders, but we have found in practice that usually one elder will be training an emerging leader. Both make up the leadership team. Thus the elder-in-training will usually be a provisional elder or shepherding deacon (for descriptions of these, see Appendices 14 & 15). Two questions arise:

1. How do leaders function in a congregation?
2. How does a leadership team function together? This chapter addresses the first question. Chapter 19 addresses the second question.

HOW LEADERS IN HOUSE CHURCHES LEAD

As the Fellowship of Church Planters has seen house churches emerge, we have been forced to rethink our philosophy of leadership within the house church. Using a traditional model of leadership in house churches, we often forced a square peg (traditional leader models) into a round hole (house churches), with devastating results. The peg can be forced into the hole, but not without causing severe damage to both the peg and the hole. Such misguided effort subjects the church to unnecessary trauma. Because we are still exploring the house church for our area, we constantly need to search the Scriptures for all aspects of church life and leadership. We have found that unless we made fundamental changes in our idea of church leaders and their functioning, a house church will not survive.

[This chapter is not written to divide the body of Christ by pitting nontraditional and traditional models of the church against each other. Its purpose is to examine a valid, viable, and biblical model of the church. We do not believe that there is any proscribed church leadership model in the Bible. Indeed if today's traditional churches could enter a time capsule and visit the church of the first three centuries, they would find themselves labeled “nontraditional.”]

To understand house church leadership needs, it helps to mention four levels of identity with the church that Christians in house churches experience. Their first identity is with gathering meetings in small groups, in a home. Their second identity is with a network of these house gatherings meeting together, as independent house churches or home cell groups of one church. The third identity is with several networks meeting together. (The fellowship of churches in central and northern Rhode Island now gathering together on a quarterly basis illustrates this third level.) Their fourth identity is with the universal, worldwide church.

In this chapter we examine leadership for the church as new believers first identify with it, as it gathers for worship in a home. While this identity may be new to those in traditional models of church, the concept of home churches is not new. Throughout the history of Christianity, believers have met for prayer and worship in their own houses and homes of their friends.

THE CHURCH

The New Testament depicts the church as a Christian community made up of “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people” (1 Peter 2:9). An essential feature of this community is the corporate nature of its people. God chooses and covenants not with individual people but with a people collectively, who will bear his name and exist for his purposes. Although we enter the community individually by faith in Jesus Christ, it is nonetheless the corporate church that is God's concern for us in Christ. We are

corporately the church, “the called out ones,” joined together in common fellowship under the New Covenant, under the lordship of Christ himself, who is head of the church. Because he is head, all other parts of the body of Christ function as parts of that body, both sustained by Christ and growing up into him, as Ephesians 4:11-16 teaches. In these verses, the apostle Paul lays the foundation for body ministry. Paul states that the church has received gifts of “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers,” who have been gifted by God to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry.” As the body is equipped for service, its members in turn have the responsibility for ministering to one another. (The “one another” verses in the New Testament, noting carefully who they are written to, help us see this.)

Within this active body, we all, as members of the body, are responsible to function as ministers and priests. All members of the body are gifted to minister according to their gifts and calling. By its very nature, the house church atmosphere enables every member -- man, woman, and child -- to find his or her own niche for ministry. Each functioning member is no more important, nor less, than the next. No matter how “small” a person’s gift seems to be it is vital to the proper functioning and health of that body. As all members of that body supply their unique ministry, the body sees and experiences the fullness of being the earthly body of the living Christ. In the Christian family, each member must be kept in mind. Occasionally, each should have a special time of attention. Each member should also know that the needs of the whole family must be met, for the whole family to stay healthy, grow, and reach out to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord. Because of the small size of a house church, it is necessary to employ everyone. Therefore, this model of church is completely participatory.

LEADERSHIP IN HOUSE CHURCHES

Although the house church requires no professional “clergy,” the church still needs identifiable leaders. Their primary functions are nurture and direction. Leaders are an equal part of the church body. Like any other gifted member they have been gifted to perform a certain function necessary for the health and growth of the body. Leaders in the New Testament are not seen as separate from nor above the other members, but simply as a part of the whole, governed by the same set of rules. Their gifts are part of the Spirit’s work among the whole people. They are not set apart from the rest of the body by “ordination” or laying on of hands, but are recognized for their particular gifts necessary for leading the body in its growth.

Because of their concept of corporate life as the family of God, the New Testament leaders considered themselves not as professionals “ordained” to control the people, but as “gifted” to lead, with one of many gifts of the body. Biblical emphasis is not on their ordination (or authority or title) but on their responsibilities within the body. We ordain elders in our house churches with this understanding. In Ephesians 4 we see the leaders preparing and equipping the church for the work of the ministry of serving one another. So we see leaders not acting separately from the body but functioning as part of the body, doing what they have been called to do. (For more on how leaders facilitate groups see Appendix 8, Consensus Decision Making)

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Let us examine church leadership in the New Testament Epistles. Significantly, the epistles to churches were addressed to the church as a whole and not specifically to the church leaders. The church leaders are not singled out to do what the letter recommends or even to see that someone else carries it out. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians vividly illustrates this.

As Paul rebukes the flagrant sins of some individuals in the body, he aims his heaviest artillery not at the leaders to rectify these problems but at the church for its failure to deal with them. Paul addresses the real issue at stake -- the church as a corporate identity and its role as God's representative in Corinth.

In the instances in Paul's epistles to churches where leaders are mentioned (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 16:16), his purpose is to address the communities' attitude as a whole toward them as leaders. (Christian communities in the days of the apostle also had problems with leadership.) In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, the community as a whole is called upon to "respect those who labor among you, care for you and admonish you." Paul's exhortation, beginning in verse 14 ("And we exhort you, brethren...") is addressed to the body as a whole and not only to the leaders. In 1 Corinthians 16:16, Paul urges the Corinthian body to respect those who labor among them. 1 Peter 5:1-4, specifically addresses leaders; Peter instructs them on their attitudes and responsibility toward the rest of the body. [The word translated "allotted" or "entrusted" in v. 3 is the Greek word *kleros*, from which we get "clergy". From the New Testament perspective, "clergy" and "laity" both refer to the same thing: the whole flock of God.]

These observations do not diminish the role of leaders in the body, but define it. The New Testament describes leaders as part of the whole body, functioning within that body in service to the rest of the body. They are never described as a separate group from the body. In Mark 10:42-45 Christ states that the leaders of his church will not "lord it over" or "exercise authority over" his body. This establishes the basis in the New Testament for the corporate nature of the community of believers, the body of Christ, the family of God. New Testament teaching impresses upon the whole community their responsibility to live and serve as a body.

RELATIONAL BASIS FOR AUTHORITY

As we develop a philosophy of leadership in house churches, we again turn to the New Testament to examine the leadership structure in the earliest congregations. The foundation for the church and its leadership was laid by Christ himself, and the apostles and prophets whom he chose and instructed (Eph. 2:20). We suffer difficulties in church life when we overlook specific biblical instruction. There is no "cookie cutter" pattern in Scripture to model the church after. Each local church has ample latitude to develop its particular structure of church government, as long as it heeds the clear commands and principles in the New Testament.

In dealing with leadership, the apostles were more concerned with the character and life of the men they put into leadership than they were about structures of church governance. We do see two kinds of leadership emerging. On the one hand, we see temporary, itinerant teachers, such as Paul who founded churches and exercised leadership in those churches until local leaders were recognized, trained, and put in place. On the other hand, we see local leadership exercised by permanent elders (in every case in the New Testament the word *elder* is in the plural. The issue of elders' authority at the local level was of little concern to the apostles. They focused attention not on their "authority" but on their role as those who cared for others. Leaders were responsible for coordinating all that was involved in nurturing the flock. Church government and authority were exercised by the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15-20), under the oversight of the elders. Christ's idea of leadership was foreign to the thinking of the world and to the religious leadership of his day. Nonetheless, Christ obviously teaches that leaders will not assume a lordship role or have authority over his sheep. Where, then, does the authority come from? Christ answered this question clearly when he stated, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18; see also Eph. 5:24). Christ himself is the authority in the church. Christ teaches in Matthew 23:8, "You have one Master, and you are all brothers." Here Jesus not only describes his role in the church ("Master") but also teaches the role of the body ("you are all brothers"). He is describing the equality and family affection, which should exist among all believers. Our attention is to be focused on the real issue--the relationships that are created in the New Covenant, relationships that involve servanthood and humility among a brotherhood of equals in the church. This clarifies for us that *authority resides in the church body rather than in the individual elder*.

Scripture emphasizes the importance of leaders fulfilling their God-given responsibilities. In 1 Corinthians

16:16 we see men fulfilling their responsibilities of servanthood – “they had devoted themselves to the service of the saints.” Paul says these men are deserving of the church’s respect or submission. Paul does not command the church to respect them because of any privileged position, but “urges” the people to respect them because of their labor among the church (i.e. carrying out their responsibilities). We also learn that respect is due to “everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.” Respect is for all who labor, whether leaders or not. Respect has to be earned by leaders by fulfilling their responsibilities. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Paul again urges the body to respect the laborers among them because they are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Authority is granted as respect (submission) is given. Respect is given as responsibility is fulfilled. Respect enables authority; authority does not dictate respect. Respect is something that must be earned as a shepherd labors among the flock. Authority is granted to those who earn the respect of their people because of fulfilling their responsibilities. As a shepherd of the flock fulfills his responsibilities, the respect of the flock can be expected--and willingness to grant “authority” over their lives to the leaders. Authority can never be forced on the flock by an authoritarian leadership without contradicting Christ’s teaching. As responsibilities are fulfilled, respect is earned, and then the flock is willing to “obey” and to “submit to their spiritual oversight” (Heb. 13:17), because in this case the servant-leader speaks authoritatively.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

Tension is created by trying to maintain stability on one hand while allowing freedom for a vital body life on the other. How do we avoid leadership that is too authoritarian? How do we maintain the vitality of freedom without being careless theologically?

These two dangers are avoided when each member of the group is given opportunity to fulfill his or her responsibility in the body. This is more rapidly effected in small groups; leaders help members participate fully in those things they have been called and gifted to accomplish. Small groups require more commitment to the body than to the leader. This ensures the survival of the group. No matter what happens to a particular leader, the group will not die if “chain” discipling (2 Timothy 2:2) is being used. If the group is committed to living out sound biblical teaching in the body rather than to the leader, then when a teacher strays from the truth of the Bible, the group can detect and correct the error. As each group is tied closely into a network of churches, it will not follow the bizarre teaching of a poor leader. Non-seminary trained people at the highest levels of leadership have brought about the spiritual development of the members and helped to recover a family atmosphere reminiscent of the early church. This family quality, desired by some for the close relationships, is not without dangers. A group can become “too loose” or “out of control.” A small group can be unstable. It can be lured to drift theologically. There can be “splintering.” There is the danger of conflict with “traditional churches.” We believe that these dangers are outweighed by the advantages: the quality of group life with its strong orientation toward responsibility and commitment, the effective use of non-seminary trained leaders, and the potential for growth. The structure of the church organization is to be left up to the particular church as long as it builds on biblical foundations.

Because the house church creates an atmosphere that resembles family, the leadership should also resemble family. Because of the closeness of the group, the intimacy of relationships, and the frequency of meeting, each family member is able to see, close-up and firsthand, the life of each other member. As those whom God has called to lead emerge, the group sees the man in his life and observes his character. They see his reactions to difficult everyday family situations. As we know, no one knows us better than our own family. There are no masks or walls to hide behind. Because of the exposure of more facets of the life and character of the man, the group can better assess him, in accordance with the biblical principles of leadership in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

CONCLUSION

Governance in New Testament house churches as well as in contemporary house churches is a combination of body control and elder guidance. The body is responsible for decision making, active ministry, shepherding, corporate worship, discipleship, and evangelism. The elders are responsible for leading, keeping the vision alive, oversight, and seeing that proper nurture, teaching, and training is done by themselves or others. (For more on this see chapter 14 [Developing a Vision Statement](#).)

As we have noted, the New Testament gives no “cookie cutter” pattern for producing churches. The Lord allows each church to decide on its own government structures, as long as it is based on Biblical principles and commands.

Key Principles

1. Leaders in house church are most like fathers of extended families. They lead because they are men of honor not because of a title. Hebrews 13:7,17
2. They lead in the way appropriate to the community rather than what is natural to them. Pr. 22:6
3. They lead for the benefit of the community rather than for themselves. Galatians 5:13, Mt. 20:25-28.
4. Leaders most important function is to serve as an example, a pacesetter. I Peter 5:3, I Timothy 4:12
5. Like fathers they will gladly give up position and prestige, even their own lives, for their children. Cf. John 10:11-13.

Questions for further thought

1. Why do your leaders want to lead? Prayerfully review I Corinthians 3:10-4:5.
2. If your leaders are reluctant, why? What can you do to overcome that reluctance? I Peter 5:1-5.
3. How well do your leaders practice Philippians 2:1-4? Especially when there is disagreement?
4. How good an example are they to the flock? What kind of children are they likely to have?

Chapter 18
Women Leaders in House Churches
 by Catherine Scoggins

When we talk about leaders in house churches whether men or women, it should be apparent by now that we are using the term “leader” not in its usual western sense as the head or boss, but rather to designate those whose primary task is shepherding or caring for the flock. A glimpse of Acts 20:28 will show that there is an overseeing component to this, but his does not seem to have been exercised in a dictatorial fashion.

This is in keeping with Jesus teachings:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.”
 Matthew 20:25ff

And again:

“And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.” Matthew 23:10,11.

This is also in keeping with the practice of Paul who, in his letters, urges, exhorts, entreats, etc. in an attempt to get the churches to be faithful to their savior. The leaders being shepherds rather than primary decision makers seems more consistent with the teachings of Jesus and the practice of the early church. The standard practice of leaders serving as the primary decision makers really turns them into priests who alone are able to discern God's will and take initiative. As such they become controllers, stifling initiative on the part of the membership and thwarting the priesthood of all believers. By and large, in house churches, the congregation makes decisions although this may take encouragement and guidance from the leaders.

With this in mind, this chapter will address several questions regarding women leadership in house churches. Please keep in mind that what is shared is merely our experiences. We will not defend our positions but rather merely share them.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE A WOMAN LEADER IN A HOUSE CHURCH?

A woman leader is recognized by her being a leading servant. She has a heart, which looks to help others. She is a good example and a model to other women in the congregation. She is often one who is sought out by others in times of crisis. Her counsel carries weight since it is based on scripture coupled with practical experience. She is faithful in the little things as well as the big things. Good passages are Proverbs 31, I Peter 3:1-6, Ephesians 5:21-33, I Timothy 3:11, to name a few. The scripture abounds with women in the New Testament. Mary, the other women around Jesus, and Priscilla, Phoebe, Dorcas, are a few. Paul's lists abound with women's names (Cf. Romans 16:1-16).

The existing elders or church planters formally recognize our women leaders. This may be by the laying on of hands or some other appropriate mechanism, which clearly marks them out as shepherds to the other woman. Normally we have at least two male leaders and one female in each church. They stand at the top of the discipleship chains.

WHAT DO WOMEN LEADERS DO IN THE CHURCH?

Titus 2:3ff *“..Older women are to be...teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to*

love their husbands, to love their children to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the work of God may not be dishonored.”

This is a good description of what women leaders do in house churches. I have heard the above disparaging called "teaching home economics". But anyone who has tried to shepherd women in the above ways (and other specific commands given to women as well as the general commands given to all believers) knows that this puts women in the forefront of transformational ministry (Romans 12:2). 2 Corinthians 3 discusses this ministry at length and insists that mature, redeemed people are used by the Holy Spirit in such ministry. This is hard work and often discouraging (as 2 Corinthians 4:1ff shows). But it is the most meaningful type of ministry a man or woman can be engaged in. Ones who are going to engage in this ministry have to be very skilled at the word (Cf. 2 Timothy 3:16f).

In our house churches women shepherd women in this way and men shepherd men. We hold to gender lines in this ministry because it is delicate, intense, intimate work, and can allow the evil one a foothold if bonds of love are formed across gender lines. The women's ministry operates separately from, yet interdependently with the men's ministries. The older women are entrusted to discern what the Lord would call them to do to equip the women for works of ministry.

So basically, women leaders do among the women what men leaders do among the men; they shepherd by teaching, training, equipping, empowering and stimulating women to love and good deeds. They draw other women into active participation in the ministry of the church at every level. Women are often more involved and engaged in many ministries such as mercies and hospitality than the men. We have found that women really form the relational cement that holds house churches and fellowships of house churches together. Likewise they can be a corrosive force that tears it apart if the ministry to women flounders or is carried out in ways tainted with pride.

The women's ministries tend to use different tools than the men's ministries in accomplishing this. Although the content may often be the same (like the studies in the appendices) the process varies greatly. The men often use purely cognitive tools, where women leaders function more relationally. They may use group studies, or they may use one on one discipleship or counseling. They may informally draw up beside a woman even spending lengthy times in her home watching her with her children, her husband, etc. giving practical help and guidance. They rely heavily on knowledge of the Word coupled with practical experience gained over the years.

ARE WOMEN LEADERS IMPORTANT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH?

Emphatically yes! Usually over one half of the members of a church are women. We do not believe that men should be shepherding women. Older women are commanded to do so. The rampant immorality arising often from the pastoral counseling chambers of evangelical churches should be enough to show the foolishness of cross-gender shepherding. (We do see cross-gender shepherding happening, of course, as a husband & wife team often work together with other married couples or singles. This was likely Priscilla and Aquila's experience with Apollos and many others -- even Paul?)

Practically a woman can speak with authority both from the Word and experience when she counsels a younger woman on being a godly wife. I am struck by the irony of a male pastor trying to expound authoritatively on a passage such as Ephesians 5:21-23 on how to be a godly wife. Having tried to do so, I can testify that the effort is weak at best. An older, godly woman is far better able to speak with authority on such subjects. So, if only men are leaders, half of the church will either be poorly shepherded or go uncared for.

Beyond this, though, we know that God made woman to complement man (Cf. I Corinthians 11). Man is incomplete in himself to fully grasp the purposes of God. A male only leadership in the church is bound to be unbalanced, normally not giving as much attention to relational issues and ministries such as mercies which are often the heart and soul of a church. Such a church may have a big head since men often are consumed with cognitive issues, but will have a little heart.

In our house churches women have tremendous freedom to exercise their gifts and ministries to other women and the body at large. Men and women's ministries progress in a complementary, interdependent way. Men do not dictate what the women are to do in ministry (realizing they cannot do so effectively) nor do the women dictate to the men. They proceed on parallel paths, influencing one another but not controlling one another. The elders entrust the ministry to the Godly women and don't get involved unless requested or problems arise requiring broader interaction of the body. As a result we seem to have little competition between the sexes in the church.

ARE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN LEADERS?

We try to focus on the freedoms and opportunities that both women and men have. From the above discussion it should be apparent that there are restrictions on women leaders as there are on male leaders. We believe that women should not exercise authority over men. Therefore some activities will be limited. Of course the same is true for male leaders. We do not allow a man to exercise direct spiritual authority over a woman (other than his wife -- and this in a complementary fashion -- not a dictatorial one. Cf. our booklet Becoming One, a guide to corporate identity in the marriage relationship).

Many activities that are normally carried out by men are also done by women in house churches. For instance women may baptize other women whom they lead to the Lord. Often they will officiate at a celebration of the Lord's table with shut ins and the infirm. Of course, since the Lord's table is often more informal in the house church, often shared around a meal, the host and hostess are often quite involved as a team in such a situation. Often wives and husbands function as a leadership team in house churches. Of course, in a house church setting where open discussion is the norm, women are heavily involved in teaching (even though, in most of our house churches, a man may oversee the discussion).

HOW DO WOMEN WORK TOGETHER IN A FELLOWSHIP?

You should keep in mind that fellowships are produced when house churches reproduce and choose to remain connected, usually meeting monthly as a fellowship of the congregations. The leaders of a fellowship also interact for strength and stability. Women generally keep in touch long after the house churches reproduce. There is often a great deal of informal ministry that crosses house church lines. But often formal ministry will cross lines as well. A gifted woman counselor from one house church will often be asked to help with a difficult case in another house church. One-on-one discipleship usually does not end just because a church reproduces but goes on sometimes long after the women are in two different house churches.

Often the women in one house church in the fellowship may be substantially maturer than in other, often-faster growing house churches, and they are looked to for help and ministry. Women church planters often fill this spot in new house church fellowships.

Often the women leaders of the different house churches will meet together monthly for encouragement and edification. During these meetings they will often have extensive prayer times as well as sharing practical needs and difficult shepherding cases for advice from the other women. Obviously maturity respecting

confidentiality is necessary in this group.

Often these meetings will include studies from the Bible for edification of the leaders or equipping them for greater service. They have even invited a man in on occasion! Retreats are also organized. Whatever the women feel would be helpful they do.

They also organize events, special teaching, etc. for the women of the fellowship rather than just the leaders. They do whatever is necessary for the building up of the women so that *“the whole body can be knit together by that which every part supplies”*. (Ephesians 4:16).

Key Principles

1. Women lead women, Men lead men. Both have restrictions.
2. Women leaders should be recognized and appointed.
3. Women are the cement that keeps house churches together. They often spot relational problems long before the male leadership.
4. Women leaders should sustain good communication with the male leadership and should be trusted by them so that their wisdom will be accepted. They are often the eyes and ears of the church.
5. Women shepherds, although they will use a great deal of the same discipling material, will use it differently from men. They will also develop their own material, which is not particularly useful for men (as men will develop some material of their own).

Questions for further thought

1. Go back to your discipleship chain pictures. What do your women’s discipleship chains look like?
2. Do the women leaders know who they are? Does the church? If not, what are the consequences? Which are you already experiencing?
3. Do they feel trusted, supported, listened to? How can you improve communication?

Addendum: by Dick Scoggins

In New England we are often asked “can you have women pastors in your churches?” This is a complicated question and the underlying presuppositions from which it is asked makes it particularly difficult to answer. Because of this I will take a couple of paragraphs to answer it here.

From what we have previously said in this chapter it should be apparent that our answer would be yes, if the question is, “do woman shepherd and care for people in a pastoral way?”. But, of course, that is not really the

question. The real question they are asking usually is “In your churches can you have women pastors that are the same as men pastors?”. That is an entirely different question.

They way the question is asked is based on ability. “**Can** you have women pastors in the same way as you have men pastors?” The answer based on ability would certainly be yes. In fact we have many women who are far more able to pastor then men. But the question is not one of ability, but of propriety. The question is not “can she be a pastor over men” but “should she be a pastor over men”? They answer to each of these questions is quite different just as the answer to the question “can I hit you?” is quite different from “should I hit you?”

The reason I am taking such pains with this issue is because it is so divisive and misunderstood, and the answer depends greatly on our presuppositions and Worldview. In western society we have gone a long way toward giving up absolute truth and settling for relativistic truth. For instance: equality between men and women is considered a given; not merely equality of value before God but equality of roles as well. Anything that smacks of inequality is labeled discrimination and rejected out of hand.

In a society where everything is seen as being permitted, any restrictions on person freedom, especially where there is ability, is seen as “wrong”. Where a person is “able” to excel, and not allowed to, this would be a heinous crime, especially where self actualization is accepted as the highest value. Such philosophy came in the 19th century from Kant, Neitche, Heidegger and Marx and earlier philosophers like Marchiavelli. These philosophies led to the weakening of Christianity in the early 20th century as denomination after protestant denomination defected from traditional Christianity and embraced a philosophy of liberal humanism. In the end the church was so weak it was not able to stand against the logical outcome; relativistic rulers like Hitler and Stalin.

Humanism may be an outdated philosophy, but the underlying presuppositions still lurk under much of western thought. *Could* is not the same as *should*. And the highest value for a Christian is not self-actualization, but glorifying God. The issue is not “can I” but “should I”. Jesus **could** have come down off the cross. He **could** have called a thousand legions of angels to avoid the cross. But the issue was “**should** he”? And the answer to that was “no!”. For the issue for Jesus was what was God the Father’s plan and what would bring His Father Glory! Jesus did not choose the road of self-actualization, but rather self-emptying (Philippians 2:7f). The same needs to be true for us. We need to be very careful as we evaluate our underlying presuppositions as we answer this question (and every question!). We need to let scripture be our guide, and the absolutes of the Bible shape our values, not the philosophies of this world (Colossians 2:8). We need to weigh the whole counsel of God. Passages like Galatians 3:28 cannot be taken as the definitive verse (although it is very important) but must be interpreted in light of the full counsel of God with such verses as I Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:26-36; Ephesians 5:21-33; I Timothy 2:9-15.

For us, we have concluded that God wished to have women pastors over women and men pastors over the church.

Chapter 19

Developing a Leadership Team

In the normal course of working with the men (all of whom we consider potential leaders), barriers are uncovered to their walk with God. These are often in the use of time (e.g. balancing secular work and kingdom work), and shepherding in the home. These barriers must be faced as they come up. The disciple must voluntarily repent and re-prioritize his time and efforts. The men who take these steps serve as models for the others and become the leaders.

We encourage church planters to begin to cultivate men at the gathering stage. In the covenanting stage the men begin to meet together for prayer and instruction with the church planters. You remember that it is at this stage that one of the church planters often withdraws, leaving one church planter behind. We believe that at least two men should be responsible for the flock and work together as a team. This avoids imbalance and the danger of one man rising to unchecked preeminence (e.g. the Diatrophes syndrome, Cf. 3 John 9). The remaining church planter must enlist at least one man to join him in the leadership team. He will choose the man or men who have been faithful in carrying out their God-given assignments in their home and life. This man (or men) is publicly announced to the congregation at the earliest possible time. This is important since he will serve as the congregation's first model. He and the church planter then meet regularly to discuss the needs of the congregation and how to use meeting times to equip the saints to fulfill their vision statement.

This step of recognizing leaders often brings out the carnality of the other men and leads to conflict. This should not be avoided. Rather, the church planter sees this as a great opportunity to expose barriers in these men (pride, selfishness, etc.), so that these men can repent and join the leadership team as soon as possible. The wives of these men often stir up trouble and thus the lack of shepherding in the home is exposed as well, and can be corrected. Often men who are passed over are offended because they see the one selected as little different than themselves. This is not usually true in the case of the church planter, who appears obviously maturer to the other men. The church planter must meet with the men not selected and explain the areas of their character, which need improvement, as well as a plan for them to grow.

As you and your initial leader(s) meet and plan together, you need to encourage their full participation. You need to assure them that God can speak through them just as well as you. Indeed, since they are closer to the congregation, they are likely to discern God's will for it better than you! Keep this in mind as you work with them. You must model humility and teachability. If you cannot persuade them of a particular course of action, then God is probably not speaking through you, but through them. Keep the consensus model of leadership in mind (See Appendix 8). **DO NOT USE YOUR POSITION AS CHURCH PLANTER TO LORD IT OVER THEM.** They will imitate you all too well and lord it over the flock. Be patient and allow yourself to grow in your ability to influence rather than dictate. A good leadership team will cause the men in that team to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. They will learn to respect others and humble themselves (Philippians 2:3).

All leaders should be carefully evaluated as to their home life, and weaknesses in their marriage shored up, since this will be a primary target of the evil one. We have written a booklet [Becoming One: a guide to corporate identity in the marriage relationship](#). (Appendix 19). This is designed to help men become better shepherds in their home. A man's home life exposes his leadership and shepherding flaws. Properly addressed, these can result in great growth for the leader and blessing for the church. *"If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?"* (1 Timothy 3:5)

As soon as possible (at the latest early in the Reproduction stage) other men need to be enlisted in leadership so that the remaining church planter can also move on in his itinerant ministry. As soon as a shepherding

deacon or provisional elder has proved himself to be a faithful man, he should be commended to the congregation for confirmation as an elder. This normally happens as the church planter gives him more and more responsibility for shepherding the sheep and overseeing the meetings. If the house church is in fellowship with other house churches, confirmation should be sought from the leaders of the other house churches as well. The initial elders are appointed by the church planters after confirmation by the congregation. When a fellowship exists, you should refer to the paper in Section III, Cycle 1: Chapter 22 Appointing Elders in House Church Fellowships.

Key Principles

1. Leadership is best when it is worked out in teams. No one man has a corner on the Holy Spirit. The only way to get a godly balance is through team.
2. The church planter is the pacesetter and model in this. He needs to model humility and teachability.
3. Leaders should be exemplary in their own house, practicing team with their wives. This is especially helpful if they have children. Child rearing is an excellent place to practice teamwork.
4. Leaders should have a time of being tested in team before they are formally ordained as elders. (I Timothy 3:6.)

Questions for further thought

1. How good a team player are you? What are your weaknesses?
2. Who can help point these out to you as you draw together a leadership team?
3. What are the strengths of the men on your team?
4. How can God use these strengths in the team to benefit the church?
5. What are ways you can get the team to see and use the benefits each member brings?

Chapter 20

Peacemaking and Corrective Church Discipline

Principles of retaining and restoring relationships abound throughout the New Testament. Most of these go back to Jesus teaching on peacemaking in Matthew 18. When a person has been injured by another member of the church, a series of steps needs to occur to bring about restoration in the relationship. We have summarized these below in what we call a covenant of Forgiveness. If these steps do not bring about the necessary reconciliation, the following steps of church discipline are required.

COVENANT OF FORGIVENESS

In a fallen world of sinful men, relationships need to be fostered and maintained through emphasizing what we call the Covenant of Forgiveness based on Matthew 18. The following summarizes how this covenant is exercised. Regularly practiced, it will lead to constructive resolution of conflict in the home and the church.

I. THE COVENANT DEFINED:

Forgiveness is a promise and thus falls under the category of a covenant. The covenant of forgiveness is practiced between two parties: a villain (the one causing the hurt through sin) and the victim (the one absorbing the pain). Forgiveness is a gracious act (it cannot be forced and is not owed) on the part of the victim toward the villain and is a threefold promise on the part of the victim:

- A. The victim promises not to throw up the crime in the face of the villain in the future.
- B. The victim promises not to talk further about the crime to others. In this case the victim would become the villain.
- C. The victim promises not to rehearse the incident over and over again in his/her mind “nursing the grudge”. This may be the most difficult for someone in this habit. 2 Cor 10:3-5 and Phil. 4:8 show this is possible, although it may take some practice.

II. THE COVENANT EXERCISED:

The Covenant of forgiveness follows the guidelines in Matthew 18:15-21 and 5:23-24. The following example applies it to a marriage relationship. The situation will be that the husband is the villain and his wife the victim. The same scenario would apply to problems between children and parents, members of the body, etc.

The husband has come home late for dinner for the 5th night in a row. Dinner is spoiled, and the wife is in deep distress. The covenant of forgiveness would follow the following steps.

- A. In the likely event that the villain does not know that he is the villain, the victim needs to approach the villain in love. She first removes the logs from her own eye and seeks the good of the villain. (It works better if the villain figures out he is the villain before the victim needs to tell him. But that is no excuse for the victim to nurse the grudge and not approach the villain.). If the villain is in a position of authority over the victim (as in the case of a child) the victim needs to approach the villain with respect (I Timothy 5:1-5).
- B. The Villain, hopefully, sees his villainy from this revelatory experience and takes full responsibility for his crime. There is no place for blame shifting, or excusing his actions based on the sin of another.

THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR SIN! We are responsible to act righteously and also REACT righteously (Cf. Romans 12:17-21). If the villain refuses the light, or excuses or justifies the action, the relationship suffers. In many cases it is necessary to take the next steps in Mt. 18. At any rate, the restitution will be more extensive when the villain does come to repentance. The villain, with humility, says "I WAS WRONG FOR....." NOT "I am sorry". His sorrow or lack of it is not the point, but rather a judgement upon his actions/attitudes. Confession is agreeing with the judge on the judgement. The victim needs to hear this agreement.

- C. When the villain sees his crime and takes responsibility for it he also lets the victim cross examine him in order to test the genuineness of the repentance (this is part of restitution). For instance, suppose the wife reproves the husband for his lateness in coming home for dinner. He immediately says, "I was wrong for coming home late". But as he has done this 4 nights in a row, she presses him further asking if he understands the disruption and pain it causes her when he does this. At this point she is appealing for a repentance which includes attitude, not simply words. The villain will submit to this if he is humbly repentant and desires to grow through this experience.
- D. After submitting to the cross examination and seeing the sincerity of the repentance, the victim, filled with the Holy Spirit and in full knowledge of the great forgiveness God has granted to her, says: "I FORGIVE YOU", this making the covenant with all the above promises. In the process she absorbs the penalty for the crime.
- E. The Villain then seeks from the Lord what restitution is required on his part. In this case he might suggest that if he is going to be more than 15 minutes late, he will find a phone and call his wife. He will do this as soon as it is apparent that he will be late, and not put it off to the last moment.

The result of the covenant of forgiveness should be reconciliation, that is, a restored relationship. It must be practiced often in marriage and in the home by all parties, since there will be many opportunities to sin. Failure to be reconciled (even if not in this exact form) results in resentment, bitterness, and fragmentation in the relationships of the family and the church. Without the regular exercise of this covenant of forgiveness, it will be difficult to instill further steps in church discipline.

Questions for Discussing the Covenant of Forgiveness

1. When have you had reason to exercise the covenant of forgiveness?
2. What promises are made by a victim when forgiveness is granted?
3. What are the responsibilities of the victim? The villain?
4. What barriers can short-circuit this process?
5. What will be the end of result of this covenant?

III. CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE: FURTHER STEPS.

Corrective church discipline refers to action taken by an assembly or member of an assembly to maintain the purity and love of that community. In Matthew 18:15-21 Jesus lists the steps for corrective discipline. First one member approaches another brother or sister. Then he brings another witness. Finally, the church excludes an unrepentant brother or sister. Every Step of the above is church discipline. Excluding the member is merely the final step done when the erring brother refuses to listen. It is done for the restoration of the brother and the protection of the body.

IV. WHY CHURCHES FAIL TO EXERCISE CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Many churches throughout the world today fail to carry out their responsibilities regarding church discipline. These churches ignore the clear instructions given in God's Word on this topic. There are many reasons why this is so:

- A. **Some Are Apathetic** - They do not shepherd their sheep and therefore are unaware of habitual sin that may enter into the life of one or more of its members. In fact, some churches are so lax in the area of shepherding that they do not know who is a member and who is not a member. Sheep wander in and out like a revolving door. The shepherds of these flocks need to be sobered up to the fact that they will give an account before God for their respective flocks. (I Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-31, Hebrews 13:17)
- B. **Some Believe It Is "Unloving"** - They believe the church is to be "all loving" and therefore never "judge" a brother or a sister. They feel their responsibility is to keep a "loving arm" around the members at all times and eventually God will bring them around. This type of thinking distorts the biblical definition of love. For Godly love does not allow a wayward brother or sister to continue on in their sin. He saves us *from* our sin (Matthew 1:21). God does not allow for this and neither should the church. (I John 3:6-9; I Cor. 5:12-13; Galatians 6:1)
- C. **Some Believe It Is "Harsh"** - It is a cruel thing to confront someone about their sin. After all doesn't the Bible say "He who is without sin, cast the first stone...?" Doesn't this tell us not to confront others about their sin? Even in the above-mentioned passage this is not the case. For Jesus himself went on to tell the woman caught in adultery; "Go now and leave your life of sin." Though confronting someone about his or her sin may be a difficult thing to do, it certainly instructs us to approach our brother when he is caught in a sin for the purpose of helping him, not hurting him. Matthew 18:15; Matthew 7:3-5; Galatians 6:1)
- D. **Some Fail To Discipline Out Of Fear** - What will the other members of the church think of such action? If some don't like this they may leave or divide the church. Why rock the boat? This thinking is erroneous and a compromise to the Scriptures. In fact, failure to discipline will do more harm to the church than good. Christ himself rebukes the church of Thyatira for not disciplining as it should have (Rev. 2:20-21). The apostle Paul also refutes this type of thinking; reminding the Corinthians that a little sin will eventually infect the whole church (I Cor. 5:6-8).

- E. **Some Fail To Discipline Because Of Unbelief** - They think they know better than God how to handle the matter. Putting a person out of the assembly and shunning the ones who have sinned is not the answer. They know a better way, a more “loving, gentle” way to deal with the problem. Yet, Proverbs 3:5-6 clearly teaches us to trust God in everything. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. He is the one who knows the best way to deal with His children. It is therefore our responsibility to believe Him and trust Him even in the matters that seem difficult for us.
- F. **Some Discipline Behind Closed Doors** - Some churches attempt to discipline wayward members, but not bring it before the church. They feel that the “leaders” need to handle these matters and that the church is not “mature” enough to handle such things. Matters like this will only upset them and confuse them. Unfortunately, a church misses out on many blessings by adhering to this type of thinking. The church at Jerusalem was struck with fear and learned a tremendous lesson through the discipline of Annanias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). God will use church discipline to not only sanctify the wayward believer, but also to purify the church. Paul certainly expected the entire church at Corinth to join in disciplining the wayward brother (I Corinthians 5).

V. DISCIPLINE DEFINED AND SUPPORTED

A. Definitions

1. Church discipline has been defined as: “The due exercise of that authority and power which the Lord Christ, in and by His Word, hath granted unto the church, for its continuance, increase and preservation in purity, order and holiness according to His appointment.” (John Owen)
2. By church discipline we are referring to any action taken by an assembly or member of an assembly to maintain the purity and love of that community. Church discipline therefore, takes place constantly in the life of a church. Excluding the member is merely the final step.

B. Scriptural Background and Support

1. Old Testament Examples
 - a. Exodus 32:19-35 - Israelites were disciplined because of idolatry
 - b. Leviticus 10:1-3 - Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, slain for offering “unauthorized fire”
 - c. Numbers 16:1-35 - Korah disciplined for rebellion
 - d. I Cor. 10:1-13 - These things occurred as examples and warnings for us.
2. Christ himself sanctioned church discipline. (Matthew 18:15-20) In fact He became angry with a church for its failure to exercise discipline. (Revelation 2:20-21)
3. The Apostle Paul condoned the practice and gave instruction on the topic on numerous occasions. (I Cor. 5:4-5,11; I Tim. 1:19-20; Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17; I Tim. 5:19-20)

VI. PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE (1)

Biblical discipline is an expression of love. Therefore it can never be contrasted with love (e.g. by asking, “should we show love or should we exercise discipline?”) The biblical opposite of discipline is neglect, which is an expression of hatred. Therefore, the most unloving thing a church can do is “nothing.” Neglect of a wayward believer will undoubtedly bring about his demise and perhaps the destruction of the church.

“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”

Proverbs 13:24

“The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son...If you are not disciplined...then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.”

Hebrews 12:6-8

Biblical discipline does not include harshness, provoking the offending party to anger or acting out of personal irritation. Nor is it to be used by church leadership to suppress opposition or differing viewpoints. (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:19,21)

VII. RESULTS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

When a church carries out discipline as it ought, it will bring about the following results:

- A. **Safeguards Purity In The Church** - Our God is a Holy God who has called a people to Himself to be holy, blameless, without stain or wrinkle (I Cor. 5:6-7; I Peter 1:16; Eph. 5:27). Removing the little bit of leaven ensures that the church will remain pure as God wants her to be. In fact, God put some in the church of Corinth to death for coming to the table of the Lord in an unworthy manner. If the church will not take steps to ensure purity, God will take matters into His own hands (I Cor. 11:27-32).
- B. **Sets An Example For The Other Members:** When Annanias and Saphira were struck down by God for their lying, “fear seized all who heard what had happened” (Acts 5:5). Salvation by grace was not a license to sin. In fact, the forgiven sinner has a greater responsibility to live a holy life by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:9-13). When God disciplines one of the members, it is a sobering reminder to the others of their responsibility as children of God (I Peter 1:15-16). An Elder who is disciplined also serves as a warning to the rest of the assembly (I Tim. 5:19-20).
- C. **Safeguards The Testimony/Reputation Of The Church** - The Church is to be a light in a dark world. It is to be an example and witness of the Lord Jesus Christ to the lost. If we allow sin to enter in and remain, we become ineffective and useless in our efforts. In fact, certain radio and television “ministries” have made a mockery out of the Gospel due to their conduct. Great shame has come upon the church because of such action. Therefore, the church must protect its testimony by dealing with such matters swiftly and completely. (Mt. 5:13-16; I Cor. 5:1,13; I Tim. 4:16)

- D. **Brings The Offending Party To Repentance And Restoration** - The goal of church discipline is to bring the wayward member back to a place of fruitfulness for God. When the offending party is removed from the church he loses the protection and care of the body as well as the privilege of fellowship and the Lord's Supper. The hope here is to bring a sense of loss and pain to the person so that he will repent of his ways and be restored. Such a person must repent of the sin(s) that led to his dismissal before restoration can occur. Fruit of a changed heart must be visible. This will call for proper restitution to be made. The congregation must then forgive and receive back the one who confesses and renounces his sin. (Pr. 28:13; Mt. 7:16-20; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 17:3-4; Acts 26:20)

VIII. REASONS FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Over the ages there has been much debate over what sins merit church discipline. Certainly, some areas are open to question while others seem quite clear according to the Scriptures. Therefore, the discussion in this paper will be restricted to those passages in the Bible which give clear and specific teaching. The passages list those sins, which when practiced, characterize the unregenerate or unbelievers. There is a stiff warning associated to those who continue in these sins.

- A. **I Cor. 5:11-13:** *“But now I am writing that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside. Expel the wicked man from among you.”*
- B. **I Cor. 6:9-10:** *“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*
- C. **Galatians 5:19-21:** *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*
- D. **Ephesians 5:3-7:** *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them”.*
- E. **Revelations 21:8:** *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*
- F. **Revelations 22:15:** *“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”*

IX. IMPLEMENTING CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Steps of church discipline

1. Matthew 18: 15-18: *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*
2. The steps involved*
 - a. One on One shepherding
 - b. Take two or three for additional witnesses and to give confirmation and warning
 - c. Tell it to the church
 - d. Expulsion and handing the person over to Satan

* - Each step is to be handled carefully and prayerfully. Each case is unique and should be handled on its own merits. The goal is to bring repentance and restoration. The church's responsibility is to forgive and receive back the repentant one.

B. Response of the Church (2)

The response of the church depends on the response of the disciplined individual.

1. A person who is disciplined and leaves the assembly - Such a person must be treated as an outsider or an unbeliever (Mt. 18:17). This person should lose all the benefits of being in the body. Such a person does not have true fellowship with God, and therefore should not have the privilege of enjoying fellowship with God's people (I John 1:6-7). The only contact with these individuals should be for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. However, if the person becomes factious and divisive, there should be no contact with them to protect the flock (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10-11). The offending party must repent and show evidence of repentance prior to being restored to the body (Luke 3:8).
2. A person who is disciplined but who does not want to leave the assembly - This is a "so called brother." A person who does not want to repent of his sin, yet retain the privileges of God's people. Such a person is dangerous, since they represent "old yeast." This person can infect the entire assembly if left unchecked. The Bible tells us to remove the "old yeast," that we may be a new batch without yeast (I Cor. 5:6-7). The Lord instructs an assembly to treat very severely someone who maintains their sin and at the same time professes to be a "brother." He is to be expelled from the church. With such a man we are not even to eat (I Cor. 5:11-13). He should be put out for the protection of the purity of the church and to protect the testimony of the church. In fact, Paul instructs the church to hand such a man over to Satan, so that his flesh may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord (I Cor. 5:5, I Tim. 1:20). The hope is for God to deal with the offender in such a way so as to bring him back to repentance.
2. A person who is under discipline for being unruly - In some cases, an assembly may need to censure the behavior of a brother or sister. If such a person is unruly or living a disorderly life, he is not to be associated with. The purpose of this was so that the offending party might feel shame and come to his senses. He was not to be expelled from the church like the sinning brother referred to in I Cor. 5. The offense here is not as flagrant and therefore does not call for expulsion from the church. If this discipline moves the brother to further sin, ultimate church discipline could then follow. (II Thessalonians 3:6-15)

4. **Discipline of Non-Members** - In some cases it is appropriate to discipline non-members. A “so-called brother” who disrupts an assembly by his conduct or teaching may be “marked out” for the protection of the church. Such a person does not have to be an “official” member of the church to be marked out. Regular attenders, who may not have committed themselves to the assembly fall into this category. It may also be appropriate to “mark out” some radio preachers, TV evangelists or self-proclaimed teachers. The discipline here is geared more for the protection of the flock. False teachers and divisive people are to be avoided. (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11)

X. PROBLEMS THAT SHORT CIRCUIT THE EFFECTS OF DISCIPLINE

- A. **A church fails to persevere in discipline** - The church “caves in” and allows the offender back prior to their fully repenting and making proper restitution (Acts 26:20). They begin to question whether or not they have done the right thing and fail to allow the discipline to have its full effect on the person's life.
- B. **Churches fail to cooperate with other sister churches** - A member who is disciplined from one church is gladly received in another church prior to the person repenting. They fail to look into the background of the new-member and find out why they left their prior assembly. I recommend that the elders require letters of commendation or at least make a telephone call to the prior church before receiving transferring members.
- C. **Relationships in the body are not strong enough to affect the offending member** - Perhaps that person was never fully integrated or shepherded into the life of the assembly. In such cases the discipline will not be as powerful. The person will not sense a great loss of fellowship since they never had such fellowship to begin with.
- D. **Certain members don't stand firm in the discipline** - Although the church as a whole stands firm, certain members refuse to stand by the discipline. They continue to fellowship with the offending person and therefore do not allow the discipline to take its full affect. In cases like this, the members who rebel against the discipline must also be warned. If they do not cooperate, discipline may also need to be administered against them.

Key Principles

1. A church must discipline or it is likely not a church.
2. There are a variety of different disciplines, which fit particular problems one finds in the church.

3. The processes laid down in scripture must be scrupulously followed for discipline to be effective.
4. Discipline is not for the purpose of controlling the flock by the leaders or getting rid of troublemakers, but for the protection of the body and the holiness of the members.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do churches fail to exercise corrective discipline? Would any of these tend to prevent you from initiating discipline?
2. What is the purpose of discipline?
3. What will be the result when discipline is exercised properly?
4. When should a church administer discipline? Is there any discipline, which needs to occur in your congregation?
5. How should the church treat the one under discipline?

Chapter 21

Withdrawal of the Church Planter

The church planter constantly reminds the leaders and the congregation that his calling is itinerant; he will be moving on once the church is complete and an elder has been appointed (Cf. Titus 1:5). He keeps lowering his profile in the congregation as other opportunities for house churches appear in the area. He absents himself from the community meetings so that the new leaders can be tested. He coaches the new leaders from behind the scenes as they shepherd the sheep. In the reproducing stage, the church planter confines his ministry to the new leaders. They care for the shepherding needs of the flock. The paper Caring for the Flock (Appendix 18) helps them do this.

The church planter, in all stages, maintains close proximity to a new church until a network of at least three house churches and three elders has been established. (More on this in the Section III.)

The church planter constantly keeps in mind that he is itinerant and must move on. God will use the leaders He has ordained in the church to lead the church. But the question comes up as to how church planters interact with churches they have left when they are still in the same proximity.

HOW TEAMS AND HOUSE CHURCHES INTERACT

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship between house church fellowships and teams of local church planters. As with foreign missionaries relating to newly established national churches, the relationship has potential for conflict. But it is also a mutually beneficial union through which large areas can be reached with the gospel. We will point out the dangers in the interaction between itinerant church planters and local elders, as well as the way to a fruitful interaction between them.

Church planters must keep in mind one overriding principle: the goal of the team is to establish local churches which take responsibility for reaching their own town or city for the kingdom of God. This entails three phases in church planting: Establishment, Disengagement, and Coaching.

ESTABLISHMENT PHASE

In the Establishment phase the church planters are usually highly visible. They do much of the teaching and influence the decisions. The two members of the church planting team usually serve as the initial leadership. They start one or more “gathering” meetings, which eventually become a network or fellowship of house churches. A “gathering” meeting is for evangelism; 2 or 3 families embrace the savior to become a church. Once these families have been united in Christ, they draw up a covenant to define their relationship to one another in the house church as well as their relationship to other emerging house churches in the cluster. The goal is to establish clusters of house churches, which network together for strength and stability (We call such a cluster a house church fellowship).

As the church begins to work on its covenant, the church planters seek men whom God has called to shepherd his church and begin to train them to lead. At this stage the church planters profile begins to diminish in the house church as more responsibility is given to the emerging leaders for running meetings, discipling new believers, decision making, planning, etc. As other house churches covenant to form a house church fellowship, the emerging leaders network together. We call this the Fellowship Overseer Board. This can be compared to the more traditional “presbytery”. The church planters laboring in the emerging network also serve on this board, but should not take positions of responsibility (e.g. moderator, financial officer, etc). The emerging leaders need to take responsibility for these things. Once a Fellowship Overseer Board has been

formed, the church planters enter a Disengagement Phase.

DISENGAGEMENT PHASE

This phase begins when three or more house churches have come into existence close enough to form a house church fellowship. At least two male leaders have been recognized in each house church, and they have begun meeting together on a regular basis for fellowship, counsel, and encouragement. (That is, a fellowship overseer board has been formalized). The leaders may be designated as “shepherding deacons” or provisional elders. Mature women may also be recognized as “shepherding deacons” with the responsibility for shepherding the women. These leaders shepherd the members of house church in which they are members. Usually at this point, if two CP’s were involved in the start up, one will have moved on to other gatherings, leaving the other behind.

The role of the remaining church planter continues to diminish as he takes a lower profile, helping sparingly as he trains the emerging leaders. He will likely not attend all the church meetings, dividing his time between this house church and new gatherings (either in this fellowship or elsewhere). He may rejoin the other church planter who had worked with him. This enables the new leaders to take responsibility and avoids the temptation for the church planter to allow the group to become dependent on him.

This Disengagement phase ends with the appointment of two or more elders in the churches of the fellowship. At this point the church planter will still likely be serving with the fellowship overseer board, but arranges for the new elders to take over as the coaches and trainers of other leaders not yet ready for eldership in the other house churches. Once elders are ordained in the Fellowship, their place as overseers with authority over the house churches must be affirmed publicly. The church planter at this point should no longer see himself as the one who is responsible before God to care for the churches of this fellowship. Rather, the new elders should see that as their responsibility. They should train other emerging elders so each church can be adequately shepherded. They also should train leaders for additional churches growing out of the already existing churches. The fellowship itself should take the initiative to penetrate its geographical region with the gospel by establishing new house churches. It is likely that the original church planting team will still be of help, as it moves on to penetrate new areas.

COACHING PHASE

The church planters have disengaged and may now be working on the geographical periphery of the Fellowship, perhaps in gatherings that can be nuclei of new Fellowships. If these new gatherings are part of the existing fellowship, the church planters should make it clear that they are serving at the invitation of the new leaders. They may continue to serve on the fellowship overseer board since they will once again be the initial leaders of emerging churches, but should have no more say than the others. As itinerants, they should not occupy a position of primary responsibility within the board. They serve as a resource to the new leaders of the house churches and should make themselves available to help in any way they can. This help includes special training for individual leaders, counseling, trouble shooting, special teaching for the churches, etc. In every case, however, the church planter should not merely do the ministry (e.g. marriage counseling of a troubled member) but equip others for it (e.g. Go with one of the elders and do the marriage counseling, letting him take over. He may, in turn, train a shepherding deacon who can train still others.).

If the church planter has moved on to another territory and is no longer serving with the fellowship overseer board, he will still be concerned that the work flourish and reproduce and should thus keep up relationships so that he can remain a resource. He might attend the board meetings as a guest or come back for short periods as a coach. If that particular church planter is not available, he might encourage the leaders to ask another church

planter for help.

OBSERVATIONS

Although house church fellowships will usually begin as house churches from different communities networking together, the goal is to have house church fellowships in each community or neighborhood. That is, each community will have 2 or more house churches whose goal will be the continued penetration of their area for the kingdom; new house churches continue to emerge and become part of that network. When two or more house churches exist in a single community, the church planter should see this as a Community Fellowship, and encourage the leaders to focus on that particular community, even rearranging the Fellowship as needed (e.g. group peripheral house churches into a new fellowship). The church planter should confine his church planting efforts to peripheral areas, leaving the new churches to penetrate their own community. He can still coach them.

Our experience shows that teams of local church planters and house church fellowships create a creative tension. We should keep the groups relating to one another creatively. Church planters by nature tend to look outside to the fields and push for more evangelism and church planting (gathering meetings). Elders (and leaders of house churches) tend to look inside the church and see a need for more discipleship and training (ministry meetings). **BOTH ARE NEEDED.** As church planters work with fellowships, these two needs must be regularly reviewed and debated to maintain a healthy balance. Sometimes the fellowship overseer board needs encouragement from the church planter to reap the harvest, and sometimes the elders need to encourage the church planter to allow healthy consolidation to take place (Both, of course, do this in love under the direction of the Holy Spirit). It is healthy for the two groups to remain in close relationship to influence one another and thus find what is pleasing to the Lord. God has used this dynamic greatly in Rhode Island to bring about growth and change.

Key Principles

1. A Church Planter's authority is temporary and thus once elders are appointed he needs to exit.
2. The church planter and the team can still have a valuable service to the church, but needs to do so in a way that does not undermine the authority of the elders.
3. The nature of the different call of church planter and elder will lead to tensions in the relationship. These tensions should be used creatively and not corrosively.

Questions for further thought

1. How would you characterize your relationship with your leaders?
2. How would they characterize it?
3. Are you a permissive father? A harsh disciplinarian? A doting father? What will be the results?
4. Where are you likely to err in the exiting? Leave to early? Leave to late? Leave, but like an in-law who is always putting their nose into it?

**SECTION III
REPRODUCTION CYCLES
OF HOUSE CHURCHES**

SUGGESTED READING

Coleman, Robert; The Great Commission Lifestyle; Revell
Clinton, Robert; Connecting; Nav Press
Davis, Ron; Mentoring; Nelson
Evans, Glen; The Adversary;
Jordan, Bernard; Mentoring, The Missing Link; Zoe Ministries
Hay, Alex; New Testament Order for Church and Missionary; NT Missionary union
Scoggins, Dick; Patterson, George; Church Multiplication Guide;
Webster, Richard; Tearing Down Strongholds; Campus Evangelical Fellowship

Overview Reproduction Cycles

This manual assumes that the Church Planter is trying to start a network of reproducing House Churches. The first cycle of life starts a house church with indigenous, local leadership. Now the vision expands and leads to reproduction. This part of the manual deals with the next three reproduction cycles. The second house church will create a fellowship with the other existing house church. We call a network of from two to six house churches a FELLOWSHIP. Normally the fellowships would meet as a larger congregation once a month. We consider a mature fellowship as one having NO LESS than three house churches in it. Our experience has shown that stand-alone house churches, or a fellowship of only two house churches stagnate and even resist reproduction. Therefore we would urge the team to remain “on site” until three house churches exist which have a vision for reproduction.

The previous section of the manual outlines how a house church reproduces and will not be repeated in this section. It does take about 3 reproductions in our experience before the reproductive ethos is understood and embraced. This section will focus on how the house churches network together.

We have found that it is better for a house church to aggressively have as a vision, penetrating whole new social circles, rather than just adding to their number one at a time. Certainly the latter should be happening, but the church needs to be on the lookout for new social networks to penetrate to begin a network of churches. Usually this has been facilitated by the example of the team. You remember that one member of the team left after the covenanting stage. He has been spreading his nets, trying to find a man of peace and getting a new gathering meeting going in a new home.

In the case of a church doing this, the members are encouraged to keep a lookout in their social networks for a cohesive group with which they could start a Bible. As the people come to Christ through this Bible study, they believers may begin to meet on a Sunday evening to write a covenant. The couple, who started this study would be encouraged to “bud” from the original church, perhaps even taking another or two to get this new house church started. We have found this better than just waiting until the house church outgrows the home. When this happens, the house church has to be divided resulting in trauma that may kill the vision for further reproduction. The budding method is more gradual with loyalties and relationship taking place slowly over time so that the trauma is dramatically reduced.

CYCLE #1 REPRODUCING TO FORM A HOUSE CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Chapter 22 Forming a Fellowship Overseer Board

Chapter 23 Appointing New Elders in House Church Fellowships

CYCLE #2 REPRODUCING A HOUSE CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Chapter 24 Reproducing a Fellowship and Focusing on a Town House Church Fellowship
(focusing on a single city or town).

CYCLE #3 DEVELOPING AND SENDING CHURCH PLANTING TEAMS

Chapter 25 A Fellowship of Church Planting Teams

REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE #1
Chapter 22
Forming a Fellowship Overseer Board

Leaders of nearby house churches must network together for strength and stability. We do this by forming a Fellowship Overseer Board. This is set up for as soon as a house church reproduces. Any church planters working in the fellowship start by serving with the FOB but should not take any formal position on the board (e.g. Moderator, clerk, etc.). Their goal is to exit as soon as possible, so their role is to make sure the group of leaders learns to function as a team.

Each leader in the house church is expected to be working to reproduce himself (new leaders) for new churches, which will be formed. He does this by continually mentoring at least one potential leader in his house church (See chapters 15-17). These new leaders join the Fellowship Overseer Board as new churches come into existence. As a result, each new member of the board will have been personally mentored by another FOB member. The goal is to assure quality leadership through mentoring relationships with more mature leaders. This chapter outlines how one of our Fellowship Overseer Boards functions.

INTERACTION AMONG LEADERS IN A FELLOWSHIP: *East Providence Fellowship Of House Churches*

I. INTRODUCTION

A fellowship of house churches is a network of from 2 to 6 house churches, which see and embrace the need to be in fellowship with one another. They express that desire formally, normally through their individual church covenant. Churches outside the fellowship can join the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches by making the request to the Fellowship Overseer Board. After consulting with each of the churches in the Fellowship, the outside church may be accepted into the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches.

The leaders of each house church meet together at least monthly on a board known as the Fellowship Overseers Board. What should be the interaction of leaders in the house church fellowship? There are two extremes of leader interaction, both of which we reject:

- A. The leaders are seen as leading each particular house church and have no accountability to each other. Any interaction would then be voluntary. The FOB could meet for prayer, mutual encouragement, counsel, etc. But there would be no binding decisions or accountability among them. They would be solely responsible for the house church of which they are the leaders.

In this scenario the house church is seen as completely independent. It needs no help in accomplishing the task God has given to it and has all the resources necessary. We believe that this is not a healthy or Biblical definition of the church. Such “lone” house churches seldom survive over a long period of time, and we have never seen one reproduce. We rather see the individual house church as vibrant and versatile, yet also quite vulnerable and volatile. Networking can bring strength and stability to the individual house churches in the fellowship and to their leaders.

- B. The other extreme of leadership interaction is that the Fellowship Overseers as a group are the leaders of the churches. All decisions for the house churches would have to be made by the FOB.

In this scenario, the house church is not a real church in itself. It is simply a part of the church, another “small group”, and is becomes dependant on the Fellowship Overseers to discern what God's will for them. We believe this loss of autonomy eliminates the tremendous flexibility we have found

in the house church model. It sets up a bureaucracy, which quenches the free movement of the Spirit. It also leads to greater centralization over time. Further, the FOB becomes a committee where no one ones the decisions. So initiative is not only quenched in the churches but also in the leadership.

CONCLUSION

The model we have found to be more beneficial looks something like a cross section of the above two extremes. We believe that the house church is a true church, and as such has autonomy and responsibility to discern God's call upon them as a community of Christ. We must note however, that although the house church has its own particular calling as a church as its primary focus, it also cooperates in love with other churches in its area as well as in other parts of the world. House churches in the Bible were interested in one another, cooperated by sharing resources and personnel with one another, and were ready to help when there were needs, even at great sacrifice (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Therefore, although the house church is a church, it also normally exists in a community of churches with a healthy interdependence. This is true of all churches, of course, not just house churches or those in our immediate fellowship. As such, we help other churches as well as house church fellowships in any way possible. We will endeavor to model this healthy, mutual interdependence in the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches.

II. LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

With this mutual interdependence in mind, let us review the leadership structure of the house churches. Then we will attempt to find a working structure for the Fellowship Overseer Board, which will serve as a balance between the above two extremes. We begin with the commitment to have at least two men responsible for guiding each house church.

- A. The ideal situation (though often impractical) is to have at least two elders responsible for the oversight of a house church. Elders are men who have been trained by other leaders and confirmed by the congregation in which they serve. The two (or more) together form the leadership team of the individual house church. Although they may not be equal in ability or experience, they function as a team and therefore must seek corporate unity among themselves when guiding the assembly.

These elders must keep seeking men to be trained for leadership for future expansion. Sometimes God blesses an assembly with more than two elders. In this case it is likely that God has a special plan for this assembly, to establish new congregations, help other congregations that are short of leadership, or commission some of these elders for itinerant church planting.

- B. In some cases there may be only one elder in a house church. This elder should be training a deacon for help in shepherding and guiding the flock (see *Shepherding Deacon*: Appendix 14). In the unlikely case that there is an elder and no shepherding deacon available, the elder should seek the counsel of other elders or church planters as he guides the house church, in order to maintain team leadership and avoid an independent (and often destructive) spirit. If this danger exists, or if the situation persists, the church should place itself directly under the authority of another house church or members of a church planting team.
- C. On occasion there may be a house church with no elders. In this case the leaders of that particular house church will be shepherding deacons, accountable to an elder of another house church or a church planter. Upon completion of training, their mentor(s) will recommend one or more of the shepherding deacons in the congregation for ordination to eldership. If there are not at least two men available and willing to serve as shepherding deacons, the church should consider disbanding or

placing itself directly under the authority of another assembly.

III. INTERACTION AMONG LEADERS OF THE HOUSE CHURCHES

The leaders of each house church and the church planters working with that fellowship serve on the fellowship overseers' board. Several questions occur as the fellowship expands through the establishment of new house churches: How does this board expand? What is its function? What are its limits?

A. How does the board expand?

1. The Fellowship Overseers Board should start with at least two male CP's working in the fellowship. As they train men for leadership they would recommend to the board that these men be included on the board. The Fellowship Overseers Board would accept their confirmation through prayer and by asking questions clarifying the readiness of each individual to be included on the board.
2. When an elder is appointed to leadership, he then mentors new men, and sponsors these new leaders for service on the board when they are proven. The Fellowship Overseers Board will receive the new men upon confirmation.
3. As new house churches are established through the activities of the existing house churches, the leaders will likely be either church planters, elders or shepherding deacons who have been trained in the above fashion. Thus they will either already be on the board or as explained above.
4. When a new fellowship is formed, the Fellowship Overseers Board should be established immediately, consisting of some of those who have already served on the FOB of the previous fellowship. Thus all Fellowship Overseers are brought on to the board by personal mentoring and personal recommendation of an already existing leader. This guards the quality of leadership in the house churches and the FOB.

B. The Overseers depend on one another for several things:

1. *Personal Accountability.* A covenant between the overseers helps define accountability. A model covenant appears at the end of this paper based on the covenant between church planters on the team.
2. *Corporate Accountability.* We understand that God primarily directs His church through the congregation. However, an individual house church does not exist in a vacuum, but rather in an extended network with other assemblies. Therefore each house church realizes that some of its decisions may directly affect other assemblies. When facing a decision, which might affect other house churches in the fellowship, the leaders should seek the counsel of the FOB. In some cases the decision may have to be held in abeyance until the FOB can pray and seek God's face for the fellowship of churches.
3. A house church may request the board or its representatives to help in an internal house church matter which it cannot handle. This is likely if the problem involves the leaders of a house church. In this case the representative(s) of the FOB help sort out the facts and responsibilities so that the house church can see clearly what to do, thus protecting its autonomy. A good

example of this is found in I Corinthians 5. In some cases specific recommendations may be made by the representatives such as: removing a leader, bringing the congregation under the auspices of another assembly for a time, dissolving the house church, etc. If the congregation is unwilling to comply, the representatives bring the recommendations back to the board for advice, counsel, or action.

4. Such a decision by the board might cause a house church to leave the fellowship. The church should be cautioned to proceed with great care (see Appendix 12 Reasons for Breaking the Church Covenant for help on this). Such a congregation should immediately seek fellowship with other assemblies for protection and strength. If the church is unresponsive it may be asked to leave the fellowship under discipline.

C. Board Decision Making: The board meets monthly for the purpose of prayer, encouragement, giving and receiving updates and counsel, and making decisions. It may meet more often as the need arises. FOB decisions are required in the following cases:

1. To appoint board officers such as moderator, financial secretary, and clerk. These appointments will be reviewed annually.
2. To receive new board members.
3. To dismiss board members for disciplinary reasons (and notify and warn the affected congregation).
4. To authorize fellowship expenditures. This in the case where there is a common purse. This is not always the case in our fellowships.
5. To determine if an overseer should be financially supported and set the support levels.
6. To define new policies or policy changes, which will affect other house, churches (e.g. mode of baptism).
7. To coordinate fellowship-wide activities such as fellowship seminars, courses, evangelistic events, etc.

SAMPLE COVENANT OF THE FELLOWSHIP OVERSEERS

The purpose of the Fellowship Overseers Board is to aid and strengthen existing house churches in the (Specify Network). The FOB exists to foster accountability, shepherding, and interaction of the leaders of the (Specify Network of Fellowship).

We, as leaders of specific house churches, realize that we need to be accountable to each other since we are not infallible or invulnerable to the devil's schemes.

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you an overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:28-30

With this in mind we covenant to be on guard for each other in brotherly love.

SPECIFICALLY WE COVENANT:

To shepherd one another by being on the alert for any sin or activity of the flesh by which the Adversary could influence the working of our churches. In the event of any such activity, we will approach the brother in the spirit of Matthew 18.

Recognizing that leaders may often sincerely and sharply disagree, we covenant to strive to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

WE COVENANT:

To strive to understand one another, seeking to accept differing views, to be slow to take offense, but always ready to forgive, securing reconciliation without delay when offenses and misunderstandings occur among us.

WE ALSO COVENANT:

To maintain the Christian disciplines of prayer, scripture reading, public assembly and fellowship. To encourage the same on the part of the other overseers and our families.

WE FURTHER COVENANT:

To actively and diligently encourage our congregation to grow in its relationship to the other churches in the network. To diligently pray for the effective ministry of the (Specify Network or Fellowship), for our particular house church, and for the establishment of new local churches.

In the event that we believe the Holy Spirit is directing us to change our calling (e.g. move geographically, stepping down from eldership) we will discuss this with our immediate leadership team as well as with the FOB. In the event we do leave we will endeavor to place ourselves under the protection of another church as soon as possible.

Key Principles

1. There should be plural leadership in churches.
2. Leaders need to keep watch over each other since they are not infallible.
3. House churches should not be independent, but networked and interdependent.

Questions for further discussion

1. Why is it important to have networking for leaders? What would be some of the consequences of having no interaction?
2. What are the advantages of the structure presented here? What are the weaknesses?
3. How good a team player are you? How will this affect the leadership structure you set up?
4. How can team leadership positively affect the congregation? Can you see any negatives?

Chapter 23

Appointing New Elders in House Church Fellowships

Since each house church functions within a fellowship, when a church appoints new elders it will affect the other churches. As a result, the churches normally seek the counsel of the FOB when appointing new elders (as do the church planters when working in a new congregation in the fellowship).

This chapter deals with the question of how to appoint elders in fellowships of house churches. In the initial stage, church planters work with prospective leaders, and when these men have been proven, recommend them to the congregation for ordination. However, this procedure obviously must be modified to involve the other churches in the fellowship once the church planter has exited.

In an active fellowship with a Fellowship Overseers Board, leaders are normally developed by being mentored by an already existing leader on the board (see “Activities List”, Appendix 17). This can be an official designation (usually the future leader will be designated as a “shepherding deacon”) or it could be unofficial, as part of the normal work of discipleship, but with leadership included in his training.

We hold to the principle that the church ordains, but in our case we define the church as either the individual house congregation or the fellowship of house churches. Which is involved in ordaining, and what place does the mentor play? The board? We suggest including both as follows:

1. We believe that a primary responsibility of leaders is to recognize and train other leaders. Not all leaders may be reproductive leaders, but some should be (Cf. Ephesians 4:11f). With this in mind, the mentor should be the one to initiate the procedure for ordination. Others might encourage him to begin the steps, but he should be the one who recognizes when the time is ripe. He could begin the procedure with either of the following steps (both need to be taken, but the order may differ depending on circumstances).
 - a. The mentor could bring the matter to the house church for prayer and consideration.
 - b. The mentor could bring the matter to the Fellowship Overseers Board for prayer and consideration.

In either of the above cases the mentor seeks confirmation of a calling for eldership for the shepherding deacon in question.

2. If the response is positive from both the board and the church, then the person being considered should see this as a leading of the Lord. The man might still refuse on Biblical grounds, but needs to do so with great care, realizing he may be disobedient to God's call upon his life, since others have confirmed this call.
3. If the above steps have been taken and are positive, then the house church can move toward ordination. We recommend that the ordination be a Fellowship event. All the ordained elders in the fellowship (and any church planters) participate in the laying on of hands.

Key Principles:

1. Leaders (mentors) are responsible to recognize and train leaders.
2. The board acts as an advisory board for further confirmation.
3. The congregation is finally responsible to confirm the calling of a man to be an elder.

For Further discussion

1. Study through the book of acts and see what practices you can glean from the early church?
2. What principles may undergird these practices?
3. How many second generation of elders do we see being raised up? Why might this be? How does it cloud the way elders raise up new elders?
4. There has been a lot of controversy around whether apostles are always necessary to ordain elders. What do you think about this? Defend your answer.
5. Develop a time/event line for ordination of your elders. What events need to happen in order for them to be ready? What do you need to do to prepare them? What is the time frame for these steps.

REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE #2**Chapter 24****Reproducing a Fellowship and focusing on starting a town intensive HCF**

Once two house churches have formed a house church fellowship, they continue to evangelize, disciple and reproduce to form new house churches which are added to the fellowship. Once again, until there are three house churches and at least three elders, the church planters' task is probably not done. Normally these are born in nearby communities, as new social circles are touched by the house church fellowship. We have found that 3 or 4 house churches networking together make an ideal sized fellowship. They can easily find a hall for their monthly meeting, at reasonable cost. A fellowship of this size will have an FOB consisting of 5-10 leaders. This size allows for different perspectives, yet is intimate enough for relationships to deepen and misunderstandings to be bridged.

Once the fellowship grows to 5 or 6 churches, the logistics become much more complicated. Administrative and maintenance activities begin to drain the vitality of the fellowship and the leaders. The size of the FOB begins to be problematic and the group often degenerates to a committee with no one taking responsibility or initiative. For this reason, we encourage a fellowship to begin planning to reproduce a new fellowship when a 5th church is reproduced. Normally the next church that reproduces is encouraged to couple with its new daughter church to form a new fellowship, perhaps taking a third church along for stability (a three-stranded chord is not easily broken). This often happens in the geographic periphery of an existing fellowship.

When a house church reproduces within a town we encourage them to begin a Community Intensive House Church Fellowship. Ideally each house church fellowship will eventually be in individual towns. They can cooperate as well with the larger churches in the town. Often this will happen with the maturest church in the previous fellowship, so it actually takes the nucleus out of an existing fellowship. This regrouping requires a great deal of adjustment by the remaining churches in the older fellowship. This chapter traces such a development in the life of the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches. It begins with the vision.

DEVELOPING A VISION IN A HOUSE CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

As a fellowship of house churches continues to grow, it needs to develop a vision, which focuses intensely on a particular town as well as the outlying areas. Thus House Church Fellowships need to develop a vision for church planting by the entire fellowship (as opposed to simply church by church). This enables each house church to gain insight into its place in the plan of God to saturate the area with the gospel. The leaders prayerfully evaluate goals, opportunities (and needs), and provisions. As the vision is shared with the existing churches, there may be an exchange of resources as people feel they can be better used in pioneer works. Sometimes such a vision results in closing down a house church to redistribute resources to other house churches to penetrate new geographical areas.

The following Fellowship Vision Statement was written with these things in mind. When it was written the Fellowship consisted of 5 churches, 3 clustered closely in East Providence and one in Providence, and one in a more distant suburb. None of these churches was growing substantially. Shortly after adopting the vision, the Providence church took itself out of existence, distributing its members to the other three churches.

They, in turn, started a new church in a nearby town as well as targeting a new area in East Providence. The result was invigorating; rapid growth in all the new house churches of the fellowship. The other 2 churches in the outlying areas each showed reproductive potential and were encouraged to separate into a new fellowship.

FELLOWSHIP VISION (an example)
East Providence Fellowship of House Churches

When a house church begins, its goal is simple: reproduce in order to form a cluster of house churches which can network together. Often this is non-directional; i.e. the church follows up on whatever new believers God might add to the church trying to see if God might nucleate a new house church. Our experience is that this usually leads to extensive church planting; i.e. these contacts often come from nearby towns, and new churches are usually planted in the surrounding towns.

However, once a fellowship is formed, it needs to evaluate God's goals for them both from an extensive perspective (constantly moving out to penetrate new communities), as well as from an intensive perspective (e.g. intensively focusing on a particular community, reproducing house churches in a single town to form a town intensive house church fellowship, THCF).

Thus the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches should have a two-fold goal: Extensively expanding and establishing new house churches in every surrounding town where God would provide believers who desire to be involved in house churches, and Intensively penetrating East Providence, establishing new house churches which would become a THCF. The former would lead to new fellowships of house churches, the latter to building up the existing house churches in East Providence and starting some new ones. There will be opportunities both intensively and extensively, and God's will should prayerfully be sought based on receptivity of a particular area, burden on the part of members to start new churches, desire of people to network to try such an effort. We have seen such efforts begin in Warren, North Kingstown, etc. New efforts should be encouraged to intensively reproduce in East Providence.

Provisions are usually people (often leaders), and can come from any of the churches in the fellowship. The church planting team can also be approached to provide help. They would best be used in extensive works, although they could provide training for intensive house church planting. Obviously, communication must be fostered to assess opportunities as well as provisions. This should happen fairly regularly at FOB meetings. The opportunities can then be brought back to the participating churches for prayer for guidance as to God's provision. This could certainly be a part of the Fellowship meetings where all the churches can be exposed to and updated on the vision.

The result of this would be developing vision in which all the churches in the fellowship share. Church planting should go on extensively and intensively as God directs. The ultimate goal should be THCF in all towns that have a sufficient population.

IMPLEMENTATION (grows out of Vision Statement)
East Providence Fellowship of House Churches

Intensive House Church Reproduction: EPFHC, having had a house church presence in the community for several years recognizes the responsibility to seek to penetrate this town with the gospel and reproduce house churches here. The Riverside House Church takes responsibility for initiating this and requests help from the other house churches who either have people living in East Providence or resources which can help in establishing a house church fellowship made up of house churches in East Providence Networks (A Community House Church Fellowship). We would hope that by the end of 1992 EPFHC could be a house church fellowship intensive to the town of East Providence.

An initial gathering effort is planned for the Nodine's neighborhood. Mark and Misty need another family to network with to help in evangelism and gathering efforts. Additional families would enable a house church to be formed while endeavoring to penetrate this neighborhood (and perhaps Vivian's).

Extensive House Church Reproduction: EPFHC recognizes it's ongoing responsibility to follow up on new believers added through contacts outside the town of East Providence, and establish house churches in new towns. This will parallel the establishment of other Community Fellowships (in addition to EPFHC), as other house churches become rooted in the town in which they exist and see their need to intensively penetrate their town. The house churches outside of the town of East Providence (Warwick, Assonet, 9th Street, ex-Wickenden St.) will continue to pursue extensive house church planting. As God leads, some from Riverside (especially those living outside East Providence) may be engaged in these efforts as well. Presently there are several areas of potential gatherings:

1. Warren: at the Morrell home. Jon and Sherri Neuner helping.
2. 4th Street (Prov): at the Leung home. Helpers needed.
3. Pawtucket (Federal St): Dean with help from the team.

Other gatherings are occurring more geographically distinct under the oversight of the team. These are likely to form new Fellowships ASAP:

1. Assonet HC: gathering in Assonet and Milford MA.
2. North Kingstown: gathering in Coventry (Brocks, Mark C.)

REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE #3

Chapter 25

Developing and sending out church planting teams

Many avenues exist for churches to train and send missionaries. We encourage the churches to keep the vision for missions in front of the congregations. Also a local team of church planters working in harmony with existing fellowships of house churches offers unique opportunities for training and sending missionaries. Almost half the world is closed to missions, and does not allow any type of traditional church structure to exist within its borders. The house church model, however, offers great opportunities to reach these countries for Christ and enable the church to fulfill its mandate to preach the gospel to every creature.

We encourage the house churches to keep an eye out for people with an interest in church planting, and cooperate with other house churches in putting together church planting teams to penetrate new areas. In order to encourage this, the Fellowship of Church Planters, after reproducing a second team, established the Fellowship of Church Planting Teams. This is a loose confederation of church planting teams, which interface for strength, stability and mutual edification. It facilitates coaching, training, and ongoing accountability between the team coordinators. As we have spread we have become the Fellowship of Church Planters International.

The house churches continue to implement the vision to recruit, equip and send men to the teams. We expect that this will lead more and more to sending teams to other parts of the world. This chapter gives a summary of the Fellowship of Church Planting International. FCPI works in cooperation with already existing missions, such as Frontiers, to facilitate the training, sending and ongoing help to teams in the field. As you read through the chapter you will see that we have implemented many house church principles in starting church planting teams. For more on this subject please order the book **Building Effective Church Planting Teams**, by Dick Scoggins, available through the Fellowship of Church Planters. (At the time of this revision, the house churches of RI in cooperation with the Fellowship of Church Planting teams has trained over 38 missionaries who are presently serving overseas planting house churches.)

Fellowship of Church Planters International

Statement of Purpose

The Fellowship of Church Planters exists to help churches fulfill the great commission by training, reproducing, and networking church planting teams which plant reproducing clusters of house churches. FCP teams are encouraged to have multiple affiliations as FCP desires to bless other churches and mission organizations.

Fellowship of Church Planters core values

The Fellowship of Church Planters is committed to:

1. Plant reproducing, linked networks of semi-autonomous house fellowships (churches).
2. Network teams and churches to share resources and training.
3. Inculcate within the teams and churches a great commission vision. This will be seen by teams and churches training and sending interns and teams to the unreached world.
4. Have church leaders and church planters, which will be, in the majority, bi-vocational.
5. Train church leaders and teams using a relational, mentoring approach.

Description of Fellowship of Church Planters

FCP is modeled after the practices we find in the New Testament where Paul planted churches using teams. He often worked out of a center such as Ephesus for a time. He would reproduce teams from that center and eventually his team would leave as well. There seems to be no central governing organ or organization for the first century missionary endeavors. FCP attempts to do the same, perhaps in modern terms best thought of like the Internet which has no central control. FCP consists of multiple **church planting centers** but no central governing organs. Each Church Planting Center will include a church planting team(s)-planting networks of cooperating house fellowships with ordained leaders.

New teams will affiliate with FCP by covenanting for mentoring with an existing FCP team leader from one of the Development Centers. The mentor will designate the new team either as a ***Church Planting Development Center***, or a ***Church Planting Pioneer Center***.

Once a team has ordained indigenous elders in a network of house churches the churches will be independent of the team. The churches and team(s) may cooperate as partners in further church planting efforts and sending out new teams of church planters to other areas.

A Church Planting Pioneer Center

A Pioneer Center would be one in which there is either no team or no network of house churches. Pioneer Centers are promoted as priority areas to send fully trained interns and commissioned church planters trained in Development Centers. Pioneer Centers would normally arise when a church, team, or prospective team leader* approaches an existing FCP team leader for mentoring. The mentor for a Pioneer Center will develop a timetable for getting a team functioning and then enabling the team to plant a network of churches thus becoming a Development Center. Once the Pioneer Center becomes a Development center, it would be expected to actively seek to start or help other pioneer centers. This may happen by the team leader becoming a new mentor to a pioneer center (A team leader would officially be designated a mentor with FCP when he is mentoring 3 teams. To insure quality training we recommend a mentor be training no more than 5 team leaders.) The team itself reproducing and sending a new team to start a new pioneer center. The team may cooperate with other groups to train interns and church planters to go to other existing pioneer centers.

*In cases where teams or churches have dual affiliation (such as FCP teams, which are also in Frontiers,) the mentor is responsible to work within the existing structures to help the team or churches.

A Church Planting Development Center

A minimum requirement for a Development Center for Church Planting would be:

1. At least one network of interacting house churches (at least 3 home fellowships)
2. A functioning church planting team (consisting of at least two church planters or church planting families).

A Development Center not only plants churches, but is committed to training new church planters, sending out new teams and linking local churches to churches in other areas. A mentor working with a Development Center will help them develop targets for reproducing churches, training interns, recruiting potential church planters in their network(s) of churches, and sending them to new teams. The goal of this is to keep the team and churches focused not only on their local church planting efforts, but also on the unreached world..

Ongoing training for mentors and TL's.

Mentors will engage in training new TL's one-on-one by visiting them at least yearly. They will have ongoing interaction (at least monthly) through email reports as the team leaders report progress and barriers to the church planting task. Manuals like House Church Planting in Networks and Building Effective Church Planting Teams have been developed for ongoing training.

Mentoring coordinators will be responsible to set up annual, regional meetings of FCP Team Leaders and mentors can get ongoing training including working with case studies in a collegial environment. (At the time of this writing FCPI has 4 Development Centers in 3 countries and 6 Pioneer centers in another 4 countries.)

International Network of home fellowships

The house churches are not only networked locally, but also should be linked to house churches in other cities and countries through FCP teams. This should be explicit in their church covenants specifying which churches they are linked with. Teams need to encourage churches to link with other churches using their own relationships with other teams and churches, church planters sent out by the house churches to other teams, interns trained in that network of house churches now serving with other teams, ongoing communication and greetings between these churches as team members visit, elders and members visiting linked fellowships, invitations to leaders and members from linked fellowships to visit their fellowships.

Teams should encourage the relationships to be international as well as national and include links to teams working in unreached areas. Once again there would be no central headquarters (hence no denomination) but rather relationships would develop with the natural moving of the Spirit as He brings teams, church planters, leaders, and interns together through the years.

HOW FCPT CAN HELP

If you have a burden to be involved but need help, this can be arranged through contacting the extension coordinator (EC). The following are some possible scenarios:

- A. A group of individuals may desire to begin a house church with a reproductive vision, but none of the individuals involved sees himself called to the itinerant ministry of church planter.

Possible aid:

1. A church planter could be sent to work with this group until it gets to the point where it can reproduce spontaneously. Then he and the churches would prayerfully discern whether he should remain and perhaps try to set up a local CP team which could facilitate church planting in other surrounding areas, or return to the team sending team.
2. FCPT could coach the group from a distance, making coaching visits as needed.

- B. An individual who believes God has called him to church planting desires to begin plant churches, eventually forming a local team of church planters for the task. Possible help:

1. He could serve an internship (from a few weeks to several months) with a FCPT team, learning

directly from our experience here. Then he could return to his area. Some from the team or churches here might return with him to form a team. Ongoing coaching might be available. This internship approach has also been used by ones who are going overseas with mission agencies.

2. He could simply begin church planting while being in touch with the team by mail. Coaching trips could be arranged as needed.

C. An already existing church planting team desires to ally their efforts with FCP for strength, stability and mutual encouragement. In this case they could immediately petition to join the Fellowship of Church Planting teams. Such affiliation does not jeopardize their involvement with denominational or mission organizations, since the purpose of the Fellowship is not to control, but rather to share resources.

There may be other ways FCPI could help. Our desire is to be flexible in the pursuit of the goal. For more information write:

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Email: jim@fcpt.org

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APPENDICES
SECTION I
FOUNDATION STUDIES

Appendix 1
Entering the Kingdom of God

This booklet is designed for new believers or older ones who may not be familiar with the commands of Christ and the apostolic teaching on them regarding entering God's kingdom. The study focuses on obedience from Matthew 28:19,20:

“As you go, make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The study is “basic” because it focuses on the basics of what it means to enter the Kingdom of God. These are found in Peter's instructions to the first converts in Acts 2:32-47. It is designed to get a person grounded in his/her faith and integrated into a local body. These studies are arranged in an order, which is normally easy to follow and are designed to last approximately 6 weeks. The companion booklet Living in the Kingdom is designed to build upon the foundation this booklet establishes. These two booklets together are designed for disciples who desire a “primer” which will lead into a longer-term discipleship relationship. For those unequipped to enter into a longer-term discipling relationship, we hope these studies will still enable them to ground new believers in the faith, establishing a foundation which can be built on by others in the church.

THE STUDIES CAN BE USED IN A COUPLE OF WAYS:

1. We recommended that you use the questions in this booklet as a guide to discuss the recommended passages. You should prepare by praying that the Lord would speak to the new believer through His word. Continue in prayer during the discussion time. Using this method, the new believer needs no preparation, although you might ask him to read the passage in preparation. Remember: The questions in the booklet are to be used to start discussion rather than a rigid study to which you should adhere. **BE FLEXIBLE.**
2. A second way to use the booklet is to give it (sell it) to the new believer. He/she is asked answer the questions in preparation for when you meet to review the relevant portion. Once again when you get together be flexible and be willing to dig. This approach may be preferred with an older believer.

The least preferred way is to give the new believer the booklet to work through on his own with no help or follow up. We hope that this booklet will be helpful to those desiring to obey our Lord's command to “make disciples of the nations.”

All booklets available through
FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCH PLANTERS
25 Enterprise Center
Newport, Rhode Island 02842-5201
Email Address: LucyK@afsi.net

STUDY #1
Faith

Read Acts 2:32-37.

1. Faith is only as good as the object in which faith is placed. The object of our faith is Jesus who is the Christ. What did the people of Israel do to Jesus?

2. Why did this happen to him?

3. How did God respond?

4. What did this show about Jesus?

5. Did these people believe? How do you know? (What was their response?)

6. What is the response to Jesus that God is looking for on the part of us?

7. What has been your response?

STUDY #2
Repentance

Entering the Kingdom of God begins with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said that he came that we might have an abundant life (John 10:10). But the Bible teaches that we are born sinful, cut off from God. Jesus Christ died to pay for that sin and rose from the dead in order to continue a living relationship with those who will come to him by faith. The abundant life consists of living in relationship with our Lord and God. The first step in entering the Kingdom of God is REPENTANCE. In Acts 2:38, Peter gives this as the first instruction to those who were “pierced to the heart”.

This study will look at the conversion of the Apostle Paul as he entered the Kingdom of God.

Read Acts 9:1-22.

1. What was Saul’s (the apostle Paul’s original name) life like before he became a follower of Jesus?
2. In what ways did his life change?
3. What caused the change?
4. One of the first signs that a person has truly met Jesus is repentance: a realization that one has missed the mark and not lived as God would have wanted him to. What is the evidence that Paul repented of his life? (See vs. 20-30).
5. Have you repented?
6. Once a person has entered the kingdom of God, he begins a new life, which will be progressive, involving daily, ongoing repentance as God reveals things which are not pleasing to him. When we sin we are to confess our sins (I John 1:9). Have a time of confession for particular sins, which might be getting in the way of your relationship with the Lord.

STUDY #4
Growing Together

- I. Read Acts 2:41-47. The new believers were added to what became known as the church. This study will focus on what a church is. There is much misunderstanding about what a church is because of the traditions in which we have been raised in a “Christian” society, so we encourage you to approach this with an open mind.
- A. What were the activities of the early church as seen in these verses?

 - B. How will these things help encourage your faithful walk with the Lord?

 - C. How important is meeting together with the believers? (cf. Hebrews 10:23-25)
- II. Read Ephesians 4:11-16
- A. How do believers grow?

 - B. How important are other members of the body in your growth?

 - C. What is the consequence of neglecting the ministry of the body to you? see Vs 14.

 - D. How would you define membership in the church (v. 16, also Acts 2:41)?

 - E. What are the benefits of having leadership to coordinate and oversee the activities of the body (Vs 11, 12)? See also Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28,29.

 - F. Do you find the lack of emphasis on ceremony or buildings or clergy in the early church surprising? Why do you suppose there is so little about these things in the New Testament?

STUDY #5
Church Life: Corporate Worship

- I. Worship: Read John 4:20-24
- A. What constitutes true worship of God?
 - B. What does it mean to worship in Spirit? In Truth?
 - C. Worship ought to occur in private all week long and then corporately as we meet together with the rest of the church. Read Acts 2:42-47. What elements of corporate worship do you see in these verses?
 - D. What did people do in the “community” meetings of the early church? (I Corinthians 14:26)
 - E. What part do you need to take in healthy meetings of the body?
- II. The Lords supper is an important part of corporate worship. Acts 2:42.
For background, read Luke 22:19,20 and I Corinthians 11:17-34.
- A. What are the purposes for coming together at the Lord's supper?
 - B. What do believers need to watch out for as they assemble together to “break bread”?
 - C. In what ways is the Lord’s supper important to the life of the church?

STUDY #6
The Word of God

- I. Learning the teachings of Christ was important to the early church (Cf. Acts 2:42).
Read John 8:31-36.
- A. If you are a true believer, the Holy Spirit will give you a hunger for God's word. Where is the apostles' teaching (mentioned in Acts 2:42) found?

 - B. What is the difference between merely reading or hearing the word and "holding to the truth" (as one version translated Jn. 8:31)? Or being "devoted" to the teachings (Acts 2:42)? How did it affect their lives?

 - C. What are some ways you can read the Bible so that it brings about change in your life?
- II. Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17, and Romans 12:1,2.
- A. What is God's plan for our lives?

 - B. What tool is He going to use? What is our responsibility?

 - C. Do you have a regular plan of daily Bible study? If not, may we suggest studying one book at a time. Set up a regular time and place where you can take about 10-15 minutes to read and pray each day. (Start with the New Testament and become familiar with it before working with the Old Testament).

The Fellowship of Church Planters has a 30-day study guide through the book of Philippians which you might use as a starting point in learning how to read the Bible in a way that it transforms our lives.

Appendix 2
Living in the Kingdom

Matthew 22:37,39,40 states:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and You shall love your neighbor as yourself". On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

This booklet is designed for new believers and others who may not be familiar with Jesus' commands regarding our responsibilities to others in His Kingdom.

The studies are arranged in an easy-to-follow order and are designed to last approximately six weeks. It is impossible, in such a short time, to cover all the truths necessary to sustain a vital walk with the Lord in the fellowship of His church. However, it is hoped that these two booklets will form a sort of "spiritual boot camp" from which a disciple can build. We trust that additional follow up will be provided by those in the body who are more mature and can help these new ones overcome the barriers to love.

The studies can be used in several ways:

1. We recommended that you use the questions in this booklet as a guide to discuss the recommended passages. You should prepare by praying that the Lord would speak to the new believer through His word. Continue in prayer during the discussion time. Using this method, the new believer needs no preparation, although you might ask him to read the passage in preparation. Remember: The questions in the booklet are to be used to start discussion rather than be seen as a rigid study to which you should adhere. **Flexibility is encouraged.**
2. A second way this can be used is for you to give the booklet to the new believer. He/she is asked answer the questions in preparation for the time when you two will get together to study the relevant portion. Once again when you get together be flexible and be willing to dig. This approach may be preferred with an older believer.
3. The least preferred way is for you to give the new believer the booklet to work through on his own with no help or follow up.

We hope that this booklet will be helpful to those desiring to obey our Lord's command to "make disciples of the nations".

STUDY #1
Meaning and Cost of Discipleship

1. Read Matthew 28:19,20. Jesus' disciples are commanded to make disciples of all the nations. What are they instructed to do with these disciples?

2. Read the following passages and note what Jesus calls His disciples to do.
 - a. Matthew 11:28-30

 - b. Mark 2:14

 - c. Luke 17:7-10

 - d. John 17:20-24

3. Read Luke 6:40. What is the result of discipleship?

4. Read Matthew 16:24-26. What is the cost of discipleship?

5. Have you counted the cost of entering the Kingdom of God? Of course the benefits far outweigh the cost. Cf. Matthew 13:44. What might answering the call of God to His Kingdom cost you?

STUDY #2
Church Life: Ministry

The early believers understood that Jesus had called them out to be a unique people for His name (I Peter 2:9,10). This unique people were called his church (Ephesians 1:22) and they met regularly in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:20, Hebrews 10:25)

Read Acts 2:42-47.

1. What are the four key activities in which these early believers engaged (v. 42)?
2. Fellowship was more than “going to church”. The root meaning of the word comes from a word meaning “to share”. What are some of the ways early Christians shared with (served) each other in the church? (Those who served are called ministers, what they were doing are called ministries).
3. Has God called you to be a minister? (See Ephesians 4:12,16)
4. What are some ways you can help meet the needs of the body? (See Romans 12:3-13)
5. In which of these areas might you have a desire to share?
 - a. Do you need further equipping in order to be able to serve?
 - b. How can you get it?
6. Prayer: Everyone should be involved in the ministry of prayer in serving others. Read John 14:12-14; 16:23-27.
 - a. What is prayer?
 1. What are some reasons why we pray?
 2. Are there any restrictions on God's promise to answer our prayers? See James 4:1-4. What are they?
 - b. Jesus prayed privately as well as with others (corporately).
 1. What are some benefits of corporate prayer?
 2. What are some benefits of private prayer?

- c. Some people find it helpful to actually construct a prayer list to remind them of prayer needs. If you desire to do this you can do it one of two ways:
 - 1. Use the above list to pray for yourself and others allowing the Holy Spirit to focus your prayers on those for whom He wishes you to pray.
 - 2. Make a list of people who need your prayers and list SPECIFIC needs for which you can pray for each one. Keep the list of above needs in mind.

STUDY #3
Forgiveness

The church is populated with people who sin. Normally when someone sins against us they hurt us. We often react in one of two ways: we either “blow up” or “clam up”. Neither of these responses is biblically appropriate. If we are going to live in harmony with the others in God's Kingdom we need to learn how to forgive. Read Ephesians 4:26-32.

1. Is rage sinful? In Ephesians 4:31, which sinful responses listed could be considered as “Blowing Up”?
 2. Which of these responses would be “Clamming Up”?
 3. What is the proper response to being hurt?
 4. How long do we have to get rid of our anger?
- II. Ephesians 4:32. Sometimes when we are sinned against we find it very difficult to forgive. Read Matthew 18:15-34.
- A. When we see someone sin what should we do about it? (See also Matthew 7:1-5). Why?
 - B. Suppose they don't listen? What should we do then?
 - C. Who should the confrontation benefit?
 - D. What should our attitude be?
 - E. What does it mean to forgive? See verses 27 and 30.
 - F. Why should we forgive?
 - G. Should we forgive even if the offender refuses to repent?
 - H. What are the consequences of not forgiving? (See also Mt. 6:12-15)
(See appendix on the Covenant of Forgiveness)

STUDY #4
Giving

- I. In Acts 2:42-47 we see that the early church was a giving church. Read Luke 21:1-4. Notice that giving is a form of worship to God. All should be involved in giving.
- A. Why was this widow commended by Jesus?
 - B. How did this widow give to God?
 - C. How can you give to God?
 - D. Do you see giving as an act of worship? Is God pleased with this aspect of your worship to Him? If not, what can you do about it?
 - E. What does your giving show about your heart? CF Matthew 6:19-21.
- II. Read II Corinthians 9:6-15.
- A. What should our attitude be in giving? If we don't have this attitude, what is the problem? (See Matthew 6:19-24,33.)
 - B. What are some of the principles we learn about giving here? (See also I Corinthians 16:1,2)
 - C. What are some of the promises given?
- III. Read Philippians 4:15-19.
- A. How does giving affect our account in heaven?
 - B. What is the promise that Paul gives to those who give generously (verse 19)?
 - C. Notice in verse 18 that giving is an act of worship. What are some of the problems if we don't give?

STUDY #5
Witnessing

Our ministry to the world is largely living out the life of Christ in such a way that they can be drawn to him. This is called a witness.

Read Luke 24:44-48

1. What are the disciples witnesses of?

 2. How important is it to know WHO Jesus is? See John 8:24.

 3. Look at Peter's presentation of the Gospel in Acts 4:8-12. Notice how he emphasizes the person of Christ. What does he say about who Christ is?

 4. He also speaks of Christ's passion (death and resurrection) and His pardon (forgiveness of sins). What does he say about each?
- II. Read Acts 1:8, 4:29-31, and 8:4.
- A. Who are to be the witnesses?

 - B. How was their witness received?

 - C. How did they prepare themselves for witnessing?

 - D. How is your witness? Is there anything preventing you from telling others about the person of Jesus Christ?

 - E. List some names of people God would have you witness to. You can share your testimony of how you came to know Jesus and who He is! Begin praying for yourself that God would grant you boldness to preach. (Acts 4:29).

STUDY #6

Suffering

From the above studies it should be obvious that living in the kingdom will involve some suffering. Paul and Barnabas strengthened the early churches by:

“Encouraging them in the faith, saying 'through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God.’ Acts 14:22

- I. Read Acts 12:1-5 and John 15:18-16:4
 - A. What did Jesus prophesy would be the consequence of standing for Him?

 - B. Have you experienced any persecution for your stand for Christ? Where and when might you expect it?

 - C. It is important to recognize that persecution and suffering are a consequence of spiritual warfare in high places (Ephesians 6:10-12). What might the devil try to accomplish against you through trials and persecution?

- II. God's purpose in trials: Read Romans 5:1-5 and I Peter 1:6-9.
 - A. What are some of God's purposes in suffering?

 - B. How should we respond to persecution and suffering?

 - C. What are the areas in your life where you are experiencing trials (marriage, children, job, relationships, finances)?

 - D. What has your response been thus far? Is God pleased? For an example, see Rom. 12:16-21.

COVENANT OF FORGIVENESS

The covenant of forgiveness is necessary in a fallen world when conflict often leads to a constantly deteriorating cycle of destruction and fragmentation. The following summarizes the steps in dealing with such problems. Forgiveness is a promise and thus falls under the category of a covenant. The covenant of forgiveness is practiced between two parties: a villain (the one causing the hurt through sin) and the victim (the one absorbing the pain). Forgiveness is a gracious act (it cannot be forced and is not owed) on the part of the victim toward the villain and is a threefold promise:

1. A promise the victim will not throw up the crime in the face of the villain in the future in order to gain some advantage.
2. A promise that the victim will not be talking about the crime to others and thus injure them. In this case the victim now becomes the villain and must exercise the villain's part.
3. A promise that the victim will not rehearse the incident over and over again in their mind thus "nursing the grudge". This perhaps is the most difficult thing to do for someone in this habit. However a review of 2 Cor. 10:3-5 and Phil. 4:8 will show that this is possible although it may take some practice.

THERE ARE 5 STEPS TO BE PRAYERFULLY FOLLOWED:

1. *CONFRONTATION*: The victim needs to approach the villain in love, having the logs removed from his own eye and seeking the good of the villain (Mt. 7:1-5). If the villain is in a position of authority over the victim (as in the case of children approaching parents) the victim needs to approach the person with an attitude of respect (I Timothy 5:1-5).
2. *REPENTANCE*: The Villain sees his sin from this revelatory experience and takes full responsibility for his crime. There is no place for blame shifting, or excusing his actions based on the sin of another. **THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR SIN!** We are responsible to act righteously and also **REACT** righteously (Cf. Romans 12:17-21). The correct response for the villain is repentance toward God and confession toward the victim. The correct confession is "I was wrong for.....".
3. *RECOURSE*: If the villain refuses the light, or excuses or justifies his actions, the victim needs to take the next steps in Matthew 18. He should seek out an objective brother to go with him who can also mediate if it is merely a matter of misunderstanding.
4. *FORGIVENESS*: Upon seeing the sincere humility of the villain, the victim, filled with the Holy Spirit and in full knowledge of the great forgiveness God has granted to him when he deserved only condemnation (Mt. 18:22-34), says: **I FORGIVE YOU**, thus making the covenant. In the process the victim absorbs the penalty and pain of the crime.
5. *RESTITUTION*: The Villain should seek from the Lord what restitution is required on his part and implement the plan. The result of the covenant of forgiveness should be reconciliation in the relationship. Failure to do forgive may result in resentment, bitterness, and fragmentation in the relationships of the family, the church, and ultimately with the Lord. Practiced regularly it will transform relationships.

Appendix 3
Sample "Gathering" Bible Study on Ephesians

Study #1 Ephesians 1:1-14

1. Who authors the church?
2. What is God's plan?
3. What are God's provisions for the church?
4. Why has God done so much for us? Why has he blessed us?
5. Where is our inheritance? Have we already obtained it?
6. What is our obligation?

Study #2 Ephesians 1:15-23

1. What was characteristic of the Ephesian saints?
2. For what did Paul pray for them?
3. Why did he pray these things?
4. What did the Ephesians need to know about Jesus? Why?
5. What is God's plan? (22)
6. How does this fact that God's plan is tied up with his corporate body affect our interpretation of v. 18,19?
7. Why does interpreting these verses corporately rather than individually have a much different application? What is the application?
8. What affects should a proper understanding of Lordship have on His church and us?
9. How should these truths affect us as we try to determine His will for us as to whether we ought to start a church or not?

Study #3 Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Last week we focused on the power of God directed toward His church. What were the Characteristics of the members of the church before we were saved?
2. What did God do? How did He do it? What is the meaning of 2:6? CF 1:20!
3. How do we exercise this authority?
4. What is the result? 2:10
5. What does this mean for us? How does one know he is truly a Christian?

Study #4 Ephesians 2:11-22

1. How are the uncircumcised described?
2. What has God done to them?
3. Why is this such a big deal?
4. What is the result? Practically?
5. What are the implications for today?
6. How has God ordered the building? Why is this so hard to swallow?

Write a list based on Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, answering the question: "Who am I and what do I have in Christ?"

Study #5 Ephesians 3:1-13

1. Review truths in 2:11-22 (15,16,17,18,19, 20-22)
2. What is the great mystery?
3. Why is this mystery so important?
4. Why is this a mystery?
5. What problems did it cause in the early church?
6. According to v. 6 what is the plan of the mystery?
7. Paul is stressing “positional” unity based on our new position in Christ. How does it produce practical unity as we push forward in developing a church?
8. What is the purpose of the mystery?
9. What was the eternal purpose as carried out in Jesus Christ?
10. What is the supreme purpose of the church?
11. How can we manifest the manifold wisdom of God?
12. What was Paul's response to the mystery?
13. What should our response be?

Study #6 Ephesians 3:14-22

1. What was Paul concerned about? (13) compare verse 1.
2. For what does Paul pray?
3. What is the purpose of the prayer?
4. How did Paul expect the prayer to be answered?
5. What would be the result of the prayer being answered?
6. Could a “lone ranger” believer answer this prayer?
7. How does the answering of this prayer fulfill God's purpose for the church (Compare v. 10)
8. How would Paul pray for us?

Study #7 Ephesians 4:1-6

1. What is our calling?
2. What is the manner in which we are to walk?
3. Why is this appropriate? compare 3:13-18
4. What is the basis of this unity? 4-7
5. How are we to do this? 2
6. How hard is this? 3

Study #8 Ephesians 4:7-16

1. What is this grace spoken of?(7) See v 8.
2. How are these gifts of grace manifested (11)?
3. What is the purpose of the gifts spoken of in Vs 11?
4. What is the aim toward which they are to work?
5. Practically, how will this happen?
6. What would prohibit this from happening?
7. What would be the result of this not happening?
8. Why is a church (a local manifestation of Christ's body) necessary for this to happen?

Study #9 Ephesians 4:17-24

1. Describe the walk of an unbelieving gentile. How do we see this today?
2. Why do they act this way?
3. What is the result of this kind of living? What is the only way out?
4. If you are “in Christ” what is true about you?
5. How is it that we are able to change so fundamentally?
6. What is involved in renewing of the mind? (Rom 12:2)?
7. What do we need to be doing to have our mind renewed?

Study #10 Ephesians 4:25-5:2

1. What things do we need to lay aside from the old self?
2. What needs to happen in order to accomplish this? (20,21,23)
3. What is the alternative? (27,30)
4. What will be the consequences in the body if we do not put on the new self, especially in the areas mentioned here?
5. How will this happen? (4:15,16)
6. What should be the pattern of our life? (5:1,2)

Study #11 Ephesians 5:3-14

1. What remnants of the old self (3-5) are to be put off here?
2. How critical is it that these things be put off?
3. What is the devil's scheme to keep us from putting these things off? How is it we could be deceived?
4. What is to be our attitude instead?
5. What are to be our actions?
6. What are the consequences of not acting?

Study #12 Ephesians 5:15-21

1. Why is it important to make the most of the time?
2. What does it mean to make the most of the time?
3. How can we make the most of the time?
4. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?
5. What are the responses to being filled with the Spirit?
6. What is the evidence that one is NOT filled with the spirit? Why is this important to know (I Jn. 4:1,6)?

Study #13 Ephesians 5:22-32

1. What exhortation do we find repeated in the context of this teaching on marriage (5:18;4:3)?
2. What is the exhortation to wives? Meaning?
3. How could husbands abuse this?
4. What must husbands do so that their wives can submit voluntarily?
5. How might wives misuse this to their advantage?
6. What are some practical ways wives and husbands can carry out these exhortations?
7. Why should they carry them out?
8. What are the consequences of NOT carrying them out?

Study #14 Ephesians 6:1-4

1. Context: Unity through submission
2. Who are the children? 5:31
3. What does obedience include? Limits?
4. What does it mean?
5. What is the promise? Principle?
6. What does this teach us about authority?
Why submit?
Remember Ps 100:3,5
In Heb. 13:17 Who submits to whom? Why?
Why is our culture so opposed to this?

Study # 15 Ephesians 6:5-9

1. What are slaves to do?
2. Who would these slaves correspond to in today's society?
3. By application, how are we to serve our employers today? When? I Pet 2:18f
4. What does Paul exhort masters (today's employers) to do? Why?
5. What is the alternative?
6. What should a mistreated Christian employee do if he can't handle a bad situation any longer?

Study #16 Ephesians 6:10-17

1. What are we to do?
2. How are we to do it? (note all "you's" are plural here) How does this affect the translation?
3. In what ways can the body stand firm together? Where are your weaknesses and how can others help?
4. Against whom do we stand? What are some of his schemes?
5. What is the alternative to not standing firm together?

Study #17 Ephesians 6:18-24

1. What does it mean to pray "in the Spirit"?
2. For whom should we pray?
3. For what should we pray?
4. How can we improve our prayer life? VS 21. Between churches?

Appendix 4
Monthly Devotional Guide: The Church

This devotional guide is a topical study on the church. Five weeks of guided devotions focus on such topics as defining the church, the leadership of the church, men and women's roles, membership in the church and dangers to the church. This last section (dangers) is expanded upon in the Monthly Devotional Guide on Spiritual Warfare. This is recommended if you desire further study on this topic (available from Fellowship of Church Planters).

These guides are made available from the Fellowship of Church Planters. Additional copies can be obtained by contacting:

WEEK #1 DEFINING THE CHURCH

This week we will define what is a church. Each day as you read the assigned passages look for the following:

1. What is the church?
2. Who makes it up?
3. What are God's plans for her?
4. What activities happened and for what purposes?

DAY 1. Matthew 16:16-20

Revelation 19:7-9

DAY 2. Revelation 1:12-20

DAY 3. Ephesians 1:19-2:7

Ephesians 3:8-12

DAY 4. Hebrews 2:9-15

I Peter 2:4-10

DAY 5. Acts 2:42-47

I Corinthians 12:12-27

DAY 6. Acts 4:32-37

Hebrews 10:23-25

DAY 7. Ephesians 4:11-16

Ephesians 5:23-27,32

THE CHURCH: WEEK #2
Leadership In The Church

This week we will study how God desires order in the church and how He has provided leaders to coordinate activities. Read each day's assigned verses and write what you learn from each regarding how a good church functions. The following questions may help:

1. Who are the officers of the church?
2. What are their responsibilities?
3. Are there any restrictions on men and women with respect to leadership?

DAY 1 Matthew 20:25-28

 Hebrews 13:7-17

DAY 2. Acts 13:1-4

 Ephesians 4:11,12

 Philippians 1:1

DAY 3. Acts 15:4-11

 I Peter 5:1-5

DAY 4. Acts 20:17-35

 I Timothy 5:17-20

DAY 5. I Timothy 3:1-7

 Titus 1:5-9

DAY 6. I Timothy 3:8-13

 Acts 6:1-6

DAY 7. I Timothy 2:11-14

THE CHURCH: WEEK #3
The Role of Men and Women

This week we will look at scriptures dealing with the role and ministry of men and women in the New Testament Church. Each day read the passage and write what you learn about men and women, their roles, responsibilities and restrictions. The following questions may help:

1. What ministries should women have in the church?
2. Are there any restrictions to ministry? Why?
3. What are the restrictions of male ministry? Why?
4. Should women have a role in the decision making process of the church? How?

Day 1: I Corinthians 11:3-15

Day 2: I Timothy 2:11-15

Day 3: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 4: Genesis 3:14-19

Day 5: I Corinthians 14:26-36

Day 6: Titus 2:3-5

Day 7: I Timothy 5:3-16

THE CHURCH: WEEK #4
Membership In The Church

This week we will study what it means to be a member of an assembly, and what its activities are. You will need to look back to week #1 for a complete list of the activities since those verses are not repeated here. Read the verses each day and write what you learn about membership and activities of an assembly.

DAY 1:I Corinthians 12:1-14

Matthew 28:19,20

DAY 2:Romans 12:3-8

I Peter 4:10,11

DAY 3:Galatians 6:1-10

Acts 4:31

DAY 4:Philippians 2:1-8

I Corinthians 16:1,2

II Corinthians 9:6,7

DAY 5:Ephesians 4:1-6

I Corinthians 11:23-30

DAY 6:John 17:8-23

John 13:34,35

DAY 7:Look over this study and the verses on church activities in Week #1, and list the responsibilities of the members of a church.

THE CHURCH: WEEK #5
Dangers To The Church

This week we will study the dangers, things Satan uses, to try to seduce the church. We will use the letters to the seven churches of Asia for the backbone of our study, with other related verses. Study the verses for each day and write the dangers.

DAY 1: Revelation 2:1-7 *Ephesus*

Acts 20:28-31

DAY 2: Revelation 2:8-11 *Smyrna*

I John 4:1-6

DAY 3: Revelation 2:12-17 *Pergamun*

II Corinthians 11:1-4; 13-15

DAY 4: Revelation 2:18-29 *Thyatira*

I Corinthians 5:3-13

DAY 5: Revelation 3:1-6 *Sardis*

I John 2:15-19

DAY 6: Revelation 3:7-13 *Philadelphia*

II Peter 2:1-3; 10-22

DAY 7: Revelation 3:14-22 *Laodicea*

Matthew 18:15-20

Which church do you think is most like ours? What does this say to us about what we should be on guard for? What does it say to you? The Monthly Devotional Guide on Warfare treats this subject more extensively. This Guide is available through the Fellowship of Church Planters at the address at the front of this manual.

Appendix 5
Studies in Acts on the Church

Week #1 Take a few minutes each day and read the following passages with your family. The passages refer to the church and can give insight into what we will be needing to do in the weeks ahead. Come next week prepared to give your thoughts on what will be needed for us to function as a church.

Day 1 Acts 2:40-47: What are the ongoing activities of this first congregation? What are some ways this will happen with us? Who will be involved in the activities?

Day 2 Acts 16:13-16; 30-34 We know that a church was started in Philippi. Where do you suppose it met? What happened when it grew?

Day 3 Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1:1,2 (Philemon lived in the town of Colosseae). Where did these churches meet? What happened in Colossae when they outgrew a home? What are some things we should be doing?

Day 4 Hebrews 10:23-25 How important is it for the saints to meet together? What is the purpose of the meetings? What are some specific ways you can be involved in this?

Day 5 Ephesians 4:11-16 Repeat the question above.

Week #2 This week we will be studying the individuals role in this growth. Some of the passages were read last week, but this week it will be viewed from a different perspective.

Day 1 I Corinthians 12:4-11; 14:12
What has God given to the church through his spirit? What is the purpose of these gifts? What is necessary for the church to be healthy? (Cf. Ephesians 4:16)

Day 2 I Corinthians 12:12-18 How is the church like body? In what way are the believers like members? Who determines what gifts we receive?

Day 3 I Corinthians 12:19-31 How does the fact we are different bring strength to the body? What is the danger in our differences? What gifts has God given for the equipping of the saints? (Cf. Ephesians 4:11,12)

Day 4 I Peter 4:10,11 In what sense are the gifts God has given to us a stewardship? How are they to be used (See day #1)? In which of the two broad categories (v.11) might your gifts lie? How might you be used to build up the church?

Day 5 Romans 12:3-8 What are some things that would limit the exercise of our gifts? Do these excuse our not using our gifts? Look at the list of gifts here how could each one be used to minister in our body? Where might you fit in?

Week #3 This week we will learn principles in discerning the will of God. Spend some time with your family discussing the passages each day. Ultimately we hope that these principles will help us to determine if it is God's will for us to move forward toward becoming a church. There are really 2 questions, which need to be answered?

1. Is God leading us to start another house church?
2. If so, is God leading our family to part of this?

I. If the Spirit of God is going to speak to you it is necessary that you be under His complete control. Look at the following passages to see what they teach about being led by the Spirit.

Day 1 Romans 8:5-14 What is the evidence that one is being led by the Spirit? What would prevent the Spirit from leading you? What should be done with barriers? (See I John 1:9)

Day 2 Galatians 5:13-24 What are the two forces at work in the believers life? What determines which will have control? Where does the abundant life lie? Are you living it?

Day 3 Galatians 5:25-6:10 What are some responsibilities for those who are “walking by the Spirit”? What will prevent us from being led by the spirit? What are some subtle ways we sow to the flesh?

II. The Scripture also has much other help when trying to make decisions of this nature.

Day 4 Luke 14:25-35 What are the principles regarding decision-making laid out here? How will being part of a new church affect you and your family? What will be the benefits?

Day 5 Acts 13:1-4 How did the Holy Spirit speak to Saul and Barnabas? What are some ways group decisions can help us reach decisions as individuals and as a family? How about in this particular decision?

By the way, was this call a new revelation to Saul? (See Acts 9:11-18) Why did Saul wait until this time of confirmation before he left (A period of several year from the time of his conversion)?

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION: Have a time to reflect on the last 4 days readings. Have an open time of sharing your encouragement's and concerns. Now take these to the Lord and seek the directing of His Spirit. Come Sunday prepared to share how the Lord has directed. Be open to his further direction through the meeting.

Week #4 The next couple of weeks we will be looking at the experience of the early church in the book of Acts. We are not trying to repeat that experience, but rather get a feel of what was important to the early church. Hopefully this can help us as we move toward fulfilling God's plan for us.

Day 1 Acts 1:1-11 What did Jesus tell his disciples to do? How difficult was this task? What did they need? What was their response? (12)

Day 2 Acts 1:12-14 What did they do while they waited as Jesus told them (Vs 4)? Who was involved? How diligently were they engaged in this activity? How about you and your family?

Day 3 Acts 2:1-13 What was the result of the obedience of the disciples (1:4)? What was the result of them being "filled with the Holy Spirit?"

Day 4 Acts 4:1-22 How do you see Peter changed now that he has received the Holy Spirit? (Compare him with how he acted at Jesus trial). What were the results of his bold witness? What is the cost of evangelism?

Day 5 Acts 4:23-31 Do you notice anything striking about the believers prayer (especially Vs 29)? How do we pray when in affliction? What was the result of their prayer? What was the result of their being "filled with the Holy Spirit?"

WEEK #5

Day 1 Acts 4:32-37 How were the believers involved in one another's lives? What would be some things that would prevent this kind of intimate involvement today? What could we do about these things?

Day 2 Acts 5:1-11 How does this incident display the seriousness of a walk with God? What was the result of this "discipline" on the believers?

Day 3 Acts 6:1-6 What was the problem here? Who noticed it? How was it resolved? Who help resolve the problems we will face?

Day 4 Acts 8:1-4 What happened to the faithful saints? How did God use this to extend His church? Who preached? Are you?

Day 5 Acts 8:9-24 Why did Simon respond to the message? What did Peter say to Him? Why was he so harsh? What motivates you to follow the savior?

Week #6 This week we will be looking at the celebration of the Lord's table and then at Ephesians to begin to lay a groundwork for covenanting as a new congregation. Try to set up a regular time where you, as a family, can look at the passages of scripture and discuss the questions (You may have to simplify the questions for younger children). Come Sunday prepared to share what you have learned.

Day 1 Luke 22:14-23 What did Jesus say the bread and the cup symbolized in this, the first Lord's supper? What is the significance of the Lord's supper being instituted on the Passover feast (a memorial feast commemorating God delivering Israel out of Egypt)?

Day 2 I Corinthians 5:6-8 Why don't most Christians celebrate the Passover feast? What is our responsibility now that our Passover has been sacrificed?

Day 3 I Corinthians 10:14-22 What do we need to be careful of as we partake of the bread and the cup of the Lord? How can we prepare our families and ourselves as we ready ourselves to partake of the Lord's table?

Day 4 I Corinthians 11:17-32 What were some of the ways the Corinthian church was violating the Lord's table? What were the consequences? Are there any steps you need to take before you can partake of the Lord's table?

Day 5 John 13:3-17 Why did Jesus wash his disciples feet at the Passover meal? In what way was this action symbolic? In what way was it an example? As you prepare to partake of the Lord's table are you following his example?

Appendix 6
Bible Study on Man/Woman of peace

I. Finding “worthy men” (“men of peace/honor”) note: “man” is used in the generic sense, and includes women.

Jesus’ work in this world is to build His Church (Matt. 16:18); and He commanded his followers to participate with Him in this work (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; etc.). One question which arises, as we participate with God in His work of calling people into His Kingdom and establishing them in churches, is who should we focus on, in our evangelistic and discipling efforts? Who should we invest our time with? What kind of people does God use to establish His Church (especially in new areas)? This study attempts to address these questions from the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles.

Week 1 “Worthy men (women) / Men (women) of peace”

Day 1 Matthew 10:11-14; Luke 10:2, 5-12, 16

- * What kind of person does Jesus tell his disciples to look for as they go out to advance His Kingdom? Why? (cf. Matthew 28:18-20)
- * What is a “worthy man (woman) / man (woman) of peace” like (what characteristics)?

Day 2 Matthew 10:32-33, 37-40

- * What are some characteristics of a “worthy man (woman)” (cf. Matt. 16:24-26)?
- * How do “worthy men (women)” respond to Jesus’ disciples as they preach His Word? How do they respond to Jesus? how do they respond to persecution?

Day 3 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

- * What are some characteristics of “worthy men (women)”?
- * How do “worthy men (women)” respond to Jesus and the Good News of the Kingdom?
- * How do they differ from other people in their response to the Word of God?

Day 4 Luke 7:1-10

- * Was the Centurion a “worthy man” (man of peace)?
- * How did the people view him?
- * How did he respond to Jesus? How did Jesus respond to him?
Luke 14:25-33
- * Were all of the people traveling with Jesus, “men (women) of peace”?
- * What kind of people was Jesus looking for? What kind of response did he desire?
Matthew 13:53-58
- * Were the people of Jesus’ hometown “worthy”? Why or why not?

Day 5 Luke 19:1-10

- * Is Zacchaeus an example of a “man of peace”? Why / how?
- * How did he respond to Jesus?
Matthew 19:16-29
- * Was the rich young man “worthy”? Why or why not?
- * How did he differ from Zacchaeus in his response to Jesus?
- * What does it mean (require) to be “worthy” of Jesus?

Week 2 Examples of “Worthy men/women” (Men/women of Peace)

Consider whether the following people represent “worthy men (women)” (men/women of peace). Think about the following questions:

- * What were they like before they met Jesus?
- * How did they respond to Jesus’ disciples (i.e., those who were preaching the Good News)?
- * How did they respond to Jesus?
- * What did they do after they believed? Did they contribute to the spread of the Kingdom/the building of the Church? How?

Day 1 Acts 2:36-47 Those who responded to Peter's message
Acts 5:1-14 Ananias & Sapphira

Day 2 Acts 8:9-24 Simon the Sorcerer
Acts 8:26-39 Ethiopian Official

Day 3 Acts 10:1-48 Cornelius
Acts 13:6-12 Bar-Jesus (Elymus), the Proconsul

Day 4 Acts 16:13-15, 40 Lydia
Acts 16:29-34 Philippian jailer
Acts 17:4-7 Jason
Acts 18:1-4, 26 Priscilla & Aquila (Romans 16:3-5)
Acts 18:7-8 Titius Justus, Crispus (1 Cor. 1:14)

Day 5 1 Corinthians 16:15-18 Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16)
1 Thessalonians 1:4-9; 2:13-14 the church of the Thessalonians

Day 6 Philemon 1-25 Philemon, Archippus (v. 2), Onesimus (v. 16)

See also John 3:1-10; 7:50-51; 19:38-42 Nicodemus
John 4:4-30, 39-42 Samaritan woman
John 5:1-15 the invalid by the pool
John 6:60-71 the crowd of “disciples” (v. 66); the Twelve; Judas
John 7:1-5 Jesus' brothers
John 9 the blind man
John 10:22-39 the Jews in the temple area
John 12:1-11 Lazarus, Mary and Martha

Week 3 Evangelizing “Worthy men (women)”

As you consider the following passages, and in light of the previous studies on “worthy men (women) / men (women) of peace,” think about the following questions:

- * How did Jesus “evangelize”? Did he try to make it “easy” for people, or “hard”? Why?
- * How should we “evangelize”?
- * What are we offering people? On what terms? What are we calling them to/from?
- * Can we evangelize in a way that tests people to see if they are “worthy men of peace”? How?

Day 1 Matt. 4:17-23 (cf. Lk. 8:1)

Day 2 Matt. 11:27-30 (cf. Jn. 7:37-38); Lk. 4:18-19

Day 3 Matt. 7:13-14, 24-27 (cf. Lk. 13:23-27); Matt. 19:16-21

Day 4 Luke 9:18-26 (cf. Matt. 16:13-26)

Day 5 Luke 9:57-62; John 6:60-69 (cf. Jn. 6:37-39, 44; 10:26-27)

Application

Jesus was very clear in giving his disciples instructions about the kind of people with whom they should invest their time and energy, as they went out as His servants to work with Him for the advancement of the Kingdom of God (through the establishment of churches). As you reflect on the work you are doing, consider the following questions:

- a. Are we focusing our evangelistic efforts on finding “worthy men (women) / men (women) of peace”? What kind of people do we spend time with? What are some of the likely characteristics of “worthy men (women) / men (women) of peace” in the culture within which we are working? Are we focusing your evangelistic efforts on this kind of men and women?
- b. Are we evangelizing in the way that Jesus did? Are we calling people to follow Jesus as wholly committed disciples? Are we evangelizing in a way that is likely to test people to find those who are “worthy” of Jesus?

II. Discipling “worthy men” (men of peace/honor) note “A man” is used in the generic sense, and includes women)

Once someone has entered the Kingdom (embraced Christ), what do we do then? Who should we focus our discipling efforts on? What is discipling? Toward what end should we disciple someone? How can we disciple a “worthy man (woman)” to be the kind of person Jesus wants him (her) to be?

In looking at the following passages of Scripture, consider these questions:

- A. What is Jesus' purpose for his disciples?
- B. What does it mean for a person to be a disciple of Jesus? What are the characteristics of a disciple of Jesus?
What must a disciple of Jesus be? what must he do?
- C. What does it mean to "disciple" someone in Christ? What do we need to do? To what end?
- D. What are some of the principles of discipleship/discipling?
- E. What is "reproduction" (bearing fruit)? What is the relationship between reproduction and discipling? Who needs to reproduce? How? What is the significance of reproduction, in God's work?

Training objectives for disciples:

- (1) Live as obedient disciple of Jesus, embodying & displaying the Good News
 - * Love God with whole heart
 - * Become man/woman of the Word
 - * Live transformed life
 - * Love others
- (2) Bring Jesus to others / others to Jesus -- penetrate social circle with the Gospel
- (3) Disciple others who believe (pass on what he is learning)
- (4) (For some) look after others in church context (shepherd, lead)

Week One

Day 1 Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 1:17

Day 2 The call to obedience, to whole-hearted discipleship
Matt. 7:21-24; 12:48-50; 10:32-33, 37-39; 16:24-25 (e.g., Lk. 9:57-62; 14:25-33)

Day 3 The call to follow Jesus' example, live a transformed life (importance. of the Word)
John 10:27; 13:15-17; 8:12; 8:31-36

Day 4 The call to live a life of repentance and transformation, learning to love God & others
Acts 26:17-20; Eph. 2:1-10; 4:22-24; Matt. 22:36-40 (cf. Jn. 13:34-35)

Day 5 The call to bear fruit, through abiding in Jesus & His Word
John 15:1-8, 16; Luke 8:15

Week Two

Day 1 The call to minister with Jesus, to spread His Kingdom
Mark 3:13-15; Matt. 9:35-10:1, 5-8; 12:28-30; John 4:34-36; 17:18; 20:21

Day 2 Examples -- John 1:40-46; Acts 4:18-20, 33; 5:28-29, 42; 8:4-5; 11:19-21; Phil. 1:5

Day 3 The call to bear fruit by discipling others - 2 Timothy 2:2; Matt. 25:14-30

Day 4 Discipleship in the Church context - Acts 2:36-47 (cf. 11:20-26; 14:21-23)
In what context does God mean for disciples of Jesus to grow and develop as they follow him? What is the significance of the Church for followers of Jesus?

Day 5 Discipleship in the Church context

Eph. 1:22-23; 2:17-22; 3:10; 4:12; 5:29; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 14:12, 26

In what context does God mean for disciples of Jesus to grow and develop as they follow him? What is the significance of the Church for followers of Jesus?

Week Three

As you study the following passages, consider these questions:

- * In their ministry, how did Timothy and Titus demonstrate the qualities of "faithful men"?
- * On what kind of person did Paul exhort Timothy to focus his discipling efforts? why?
- * What are some of the characteristics of "faithful men (women)"?
- * What makes such men (women) the kind through whom Jesus can build His Church?
- * How do "faithful men (women)" differ from people who are not "faithful men"?
- * What should we be aiming at in discipling "faithful men (women)"?
- * How can we know if someone is a "faithful man (woman)" or not?
- * What kind of qualities are necessary in those who will provide leadership to the Church?

Day 1 2 Timothy 2:2 (cf. Matthew 28:18-20)
1 Tim. 4:11-13; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:2

Day 2 1 Timothy 3:1-15 (for contrast see 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Jude 3-19)

Day 3 1 Timothy 5:1-16

Day 4 Titus 1:5-9 (for contrast see Titus 1:10-16)

Day 5 Titus 2:1-3:2

Application

Jesus was very clear in giving his disciples instructions about the kind of people with whom they should invest their time and energy, as they went out as His servants to work with Him for the advancement of the Kingdom of God (through the establishment of churches). As you reflect on the work you are doing, consider the following questions:

Are you focusing your discipling efforts on "men (women) of peace / worthy men (women) / faithful men (women)," who are committed disciples of Jesus, experiencing the life-transforming power of the Gospel, faithfully living in obedience to all that they learn, passing on the life and teachings of Jesus to others around them? I.E., are you investing in the kind of men and women through whom Jesus can build His church?

Specific studies which may be used in discipling new believers:

- * Entering the Kingdom & Living in the Kingdom
- * Life in the Spirit
- * Marriage & Parenting
- * Evangelism

Appendix 7
A Christian Worldview
(An evangelistic Bible study)

Study #1 God, Man and Creation

This series of studies we will try to get an understanding of the plan of God for mankind. This first study will look at God the creator and man, His ultimate creation. In it we will see how God loved and provided for Adam and Eve. We can get of glimpse from the garden experience of the plan God had before Man rejected that plan in Genesis 3.

I. Genesis 1:24-31; 2:7-9, 15-17 CREATION

1. How is mankind distinct from the other animals God created? What does it mean that they are created in the image of God? What are some ways in which man is like God?
2. How did God relate to Adam and Eve?
3. How did God provide for Adam and Eve?
4. What restrictions did he place on Adam and Eve?

II. Genesis 2:18-25 The First Marriage

1. What insights does this more detailed account of Eve's creation give as to God's plan for the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage?
2. What were some of the purposes of uniting man and woman?
3. What was the relationship between Adam and Eve in the garden?

III. CONCLUSION:

1. What was God's summary of His creation (His Kingdom in the garden)? (1:31)
2. What was Good about creation as He intended it?
3. What is God's desire for mankind? (Matthew 22:37-39)
4. Are you experiencing the blessings of God's Kingdom?

**Study #2 Christian Worldview
The Fall**

In Genesis 3 tragedy strikes as man rejects the provisions of God and goes his and her own way with horrific consequences.

I. Genesis 3:1-24

1. Who was the serpent? (Cf. Revelations 12:9, John 8:44)
2. What was the temptation?
3. Why was it wrong to eat of the fruit?
4. How did their disobedience affect their relationship with each other?
5. How did their relationship affect their relationship with God?
6. What were the consequences of their disobedience?
7. Did God give them any hope?

II. Genesis 4:1-8

1. What were the consequences of the fall in the next generation?
2. What motivates such horrible activity of a man against his brother? (Cf. James 4:1,2)

III. CONCLUSION:

1. How does the story of Adam and Eve help explain the problems in our world today?
2. Do you think God is pleased with what we have done with His creation?
3. 3:8,9. God pursues you as He did Adam and Eve. Where are you?

**Study #3 Christian Worldview
God pursues Man (Old Testament)**

The rest of the Bible is a story of God's rescue story for man, the re-establishment of His Kingdom, in the Old Testament through Israel and in the New Testament through local, visible communities living out His love for one another. This study will focus on God's pursuit of establishing His Kingdom in the Old Testament. Use your table of contents in your Bible to find the different books.

I. Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-7,18; 17:1-8

1. What were some of the covenant promises to Abraham?
2. What did Abraham have to do?
3. What was God's purpose in choosing Abraham and his offspring (the nation of Israel) to be His People? (12:3)
4. How does this fit in with the plan he had for his first people Adam and Eve (Cf. Genesis 1:28)?

II. The rest of the Old Testament needs to be understood as God keeping and revealing further his plan to gain for himself a covenant people.

1. Exodus 2:23-3:12
 - A. How did Israel respond to bondage?
 - B. Why did God respond to Israel?
 - C. What was His plan for Moses?
 - D. What did He desire from His people? Cf. Deuteronomy 10:12-11:1
2. Psalm 106 This song recounts God's faithfulness to Israel throughout several events in Israel's history.
 - A. How did God provide for His people?
 - B. In what ways did God's people fail to live up to the covenant?
 - C. What did they do when problems came upon them due to their disobedience?
 - D. How did God respond to their repentance?

CONCLUSION

What has been your response to God's seeking you?

Study #4
God's solution to the sin Problem

Man's sin is a problem if we are going to be in relationship to a Holy God. This week we will look at how God dealt with this problem in the Old Testament. We will see how this points to Jesus as the sole and final solution for the problem of sin.

1. Psalm 14:1-3 How does God see man? What evidence do you see of this?
2. Isaiah 24:4-6 What are the consequences of man's sin? Do you see evidence of this?
3. Isaiah 59:1,2 What are the consequences of man's sin with respect to God? What is man's problem? How bad is it?
4. Leviticus 16:15-19; 29-34; 17:11
 - A. According to Deuteronomy 24:16 what is the consequences of sin?
 - B. What is God's solution for sin under the old covenant?
 - C. How does the life of an animal substitute for the life of a man in the Old Testament sacrificial system? Cf. Hebrews 9:18-22.
 - D. Do you think that the life of an animal is an equal substitute for the life of a man?

Conclusions:

1. Hebrews 10:1-4 Are the sacrifices under the old covenant really effective at solving the problem?
2. What is the full solution to the sin problem (Heb. 10:9-14)?
3. Have you received forgiveness for your Sin?

Study #5
The Messiah and the New Covenant

This week we will look at the New Covenant whereby forgiveness and relationship with God is established through Jesus Christ and His shed blood.

1. Read Isaiah 53:1-12
 - A. Who is this passage talking about? (Cf. Acts 8:29-35)
 - B. What did men do to Him?
 - C. What evidence can you find in this passage that God received him as a sacrifice?
 - D. What was the consequence for those who would rely on that sacrifice for their sin?

 2. Matthew 1:18-25
 - A. What supernatural events surrounded the birth of Jesus?
 - B. What was special about his name?
 - C. What was the purpose of his life? (Matthew 20:28)
 - D. How does this fit with the prophecy of Isaiah about 700 years before his birth?

 3. Matthew 27:45-54
 - A. What supernatural events surrounded the death of Jesus?
 - B. Why did he have to die?
 - C. What was the purpose of his life? (John 10:10-18)
- CONCLUSION: John 5:19-29
- A. Have you passed out of death into life? (v. 24)
 - B. If not, why not?

Study #6
Entering the Kingdom of God

In this study we will look at how one enters into the life of the Kingdom.

1. John 10:1-16, 25-28.

- A. How does Jesus describe himself here?
- B. How are we described?
- C. What does the thief offer the sheep?
- D. What does the Good Shepherd offer the sheep?
- E. What is the distinguishing mark of Jesus' sheep (v. 27)?

2. Matthew 7:13-27

- A. How many gates are there and how many ways?
- B. What is the end of each?
- C. How do you know which one you are on?
- D. What might the storms symbolize (vs. 25,27)?
- E. Which house stands?
- F. What is the difference between the two?

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Have you heard the voice of the shepherd? Are you following?
- 2. Will your house (life) stand up to the storms of life?

Study #7
Kingdom Communities

As in the Old Testament God's plan is that salvation should result in a Kingdom, a people which exist for His Name. This study will look at the New Communities of the Kingdom.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:10-21

- A. What motivated Paul to preach the gospel?
- B. Who was Paul living for?
- C. How did this affect him? (Cf. 11:23-28)
- D. What does it mean that God “reconciled us to himself through Christ” (5:18)?
- E. What impact did this have on Paul? Has it had an impact on you?

2. Acts 4:32-37

- A. Describe what life in this Kingdom community was like?
- B. Is this different from what you see in the world? How?
- C. What is necessary to have this kind of community?
- D. Is this God’s desire? Cf. John 13:34,35.

3. Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:23-25

- A. Is there danger to those who are in Christ? What is it?
- B. What has God provided to offset the danger?
- C. How can others help you in this way?
- D. How can you help others?

CONCLUSION: 1 Peter 2:1-5,9,10

- A. Are you part of God’s people?
- B. Does God want you to participate in His community?
- C. Are you?

Study #8
The End of All Things

This week we will look at where all of history is headed and see how this should affect the way we live.

1. 2 Peter 3:3-18

- A. What will be the end of this world? (10)
- B. What do unbelievers think about this? (3-7)
- C. Why do they think this?
- D. What should Christians think? Why?
- E. How should Christian's lives reflect this thinking?

2. Revelation 22:1-21 The apostle John is recounting a vision he had of the new heaven and new earth (which begins with Revelation 21:1).

- A. What has happened to the curse of Genesis 3 after the fall? (3)
- B. What about the restriction on eating of the tree of life? (14)
- C. What attracts you about this picture?
- D. What are we who are in the Kingdom to be doing until He comes? (17)

CONCLUSION:

- A. Are you living for the hope of God's Kingdom, crying out daily "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" ? Matthew 6:10
- B. Do the activities of your life reflect this hope?
- C. Are you inviting others to join you in this hope?

Is there any other way to salvation? Cf. John 14:6; Acts 14:12

Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making is a powerful tool for building group unity and choosing wise and creative courses of action. This paper explores this decision making process, to discover the benefits of consensus, and its ability to develop strong groups.

THE MODEL OF DECISION MAKING

What is consensus decision-making? Consensus is different from other methods of decision making because it stresses the co-operative development of a decision with group members working together rather than competing against each other. This decision making model can be used for any group whether it is congregational, elder, or cell size. It works especially well if all members are similar in maturity level and need to embrace the decision which needs to be made. The goal of consensus is itself a decision that is consented to by every member of the group. The key word is “consented”. Full consent does not necessarily mean full satisfaction with the outcome; in fact total satisfaction is rare. The decision, however, must be acceptable enough so that all agree to support the group in choosing it. The consensus model, in allowing the group to make a decision, expects every member to participate in carrying out that decision. This allows the group to embrace it for their own and take responsibility for its completion. Consensus represents the highest participation and involvement from the most people. It differs from all other forms of decision making. It does not allow the person who gets the most voters on his side to “win”. If someone wins, then someone also loses. This hardly insures complete group participation to carry out the decision. When all possible options have not been explored, time may be saved but the decision will suffer from lack of support and may even be sabotaged by the “losers”. Consensus allows everyone's ideas to be heard no matter how innovative or creative they may or may not be.

A BRIEF STUDY

For a good Biblical example of group decision making by consensus read Acts 15 to find in which verse(s) they followed these guidelines:

They explained the history of the debate in detail in order to base their discussion on fact, not feeling.
verses _____

They remained silent while another talked _____

They let godly elders give them suggestions _____

They looked to Scripture for help _____

They allowed “the whole church” to help decide _____

They heeded to guidance of the Holy Spirit _____

Both “sides” gave into a degree, to arrive at an acceptable solution _____

CONSENSUS BUILDS TRUST

Consensus decision making works best when the participants know they belong to the group, and the group belongs to them. This group solidarity develops out of mutual trust and respect. As trust and respect grow within the group, members feel free to express opinions and feelings, and to disagree without fear. Mutual caring enables all to sense they are being a functional part of the group. We must set aside time to plan activities that build trusting relationships and cultivate a sense of community. Trust takes time to build. It usually develops only after group members have shared activities together, to increase their mutual understanding, caring, and respect. Group members do not have to be always in agreement to trust one another. They must know, however, that despite differences other members will respect them, be fair with them, and care about their feelings. As good communication takes place between the members, the better they will know each other and develop the trust necessary for consensus. When each member willingly develops good listening and communication skills, there will be less misunderstanding, hurt feelings, and broken meetings.

Members' ability and willingness to take responsibility for group decisions contributes strongly to group cohesiveness. Taking responsibility means that each member cooperates in creating procedures, supporting each other, defining goals, evaluating progress, and completing the task. It is important that each member knows that he influences the group. A cohesive group does not appear overnight. It develops slowly with every activity contributing to its sense of identity. The cohesiveness of the group depends on open communication, cooperation, and mutual trust and respect.

Consensus requires an atmosphere of cooperation and support. We help members to trust each other, care about each other's needs, and avoid competing to "win" a decision. Believing in such values is easier than acting on them. Even groups that encourage members to act in open, trusting ways, and to express their feelings, encounter false trust. Individuals "act" trusting because they feel pressured to do so in order to be accepted, but deep down the feeling of trust isn't there yet.

Each member of the group must take the group seriously. This involves more than accepting responsibilities and defining goals. It requires mutual care and respect. Members commit to the group when they feel they are making important contributions, not just being led or dragged along. Every member must be active in the group's decisions and strategic plans. Members must sense that responsibilities are shared and participation in group tasks is balanced, in order for them to develop a healthy dependency upon one another.

Weak or inexperienced pastors or elders may fear loss of position or power, and therefore lead like little dictators. Members of their groups feel secure only by agreeing with them on every minor point. Such groups seldom allow consensus decision making; if we force it on them prematurely, the meeting degenerates into a mere grip session at best and a bitter power contest at worst. If this starts to happen, we must postpone the decision making process to spend a few more weeks building trust and relationship, perhaps helping the weak leader to find another ministry for which he is better equipped.

CONFLICT AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Conflict is a natural, healthy part of any group's progress. In fact, conflict spurs people on to clearer thinking, better understanding and greater creativity. If there is little conflict in your group, then you should be suspicious. Members may be holding back their real thoughts and feelings because they are afraid that expressing disagreement might be destructive to them or the group. Suppressed ideas and feelings can smolder and erupt in the future in the form of blocking decisions. Although consensus decisions may entail intense and heated disagreement, behind the conflict is an assumption of cooperation. People are committed to working together to meet everyone's needs as best as possible. This mutually supportive process, including the conflict

builds unity and a strong, active group.

ADVANTAGES OF CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

1. Quality of the decision. Since the decision must be acceptable to a variety of people, they will examine it carefully for workability, desirability, and integrity.
2. Creativity. Rather than the quick choice by the favored few, a decision, which meets everyone's needs, requires the group to consider a wider variety of proposals. Often imaginative and creative options are discovered.
3. Commitment and satisfaction. The struggle to meet consensus requires more intense involvement from group members. In majority rule, dissenting group members are forced to commit to the decision by contract. In consensus, commitment arises from involvement as well as from satisfaction.
4. Fostering values and skills. Consensus enables people to consider and demonstrate such values as respect for others' opinions, responsibility for the group, and cooperation. It also imparts group communication skills. These values and skills carry over into other ministries.

CAN YOUR GROUP USE CONSENSUS?

Using consensus is not easy. Consensus assumes certain communication skills and positive attitudes from the group as a whole as well as the individual members. Since many people have long learned a competitive attitude and expect the same from others, it is difficult but not impossible to switch to a cooperative approach and to trust others also to do so. There is no single correct procedure for doing consensus. Learning consensus is a never-ending process. We are always struggling to do better, to see our mistakes, and to learn from them. Consensus is a cooperative struggle in which we help each other to be more understanding, open, caring and effective members of the family of God.

Certain conditions are necessary in order for your group to support consensus.

1. Unity of purpose. There should be a basic core of agreement within and about the group. All members must recognize this unifying base as a common starting place.
2. Equal opportunity for all members to express their opinions. Leaders should lead by example rather than by edict ("servant leaders" as explained by Jesus in Matthew 20:25, rather than those who dictate: "Do as I say because I'm over you in the organization!") Seniority, larger financial contributions, assertiveness, etc. are not prerequisites for leadership in Scripture, but those spiritual qualities found in Titus 1:5!
3. Autonomy of the group from outside, arbitrary control. A group cannot use consensus within its own sphere operations if controlled by a structure that does not recognize the process.
4. Time. Developing an effective consensus group requires time spent on group processing and relationships between group members, as well as time spent making decisions.
5. A willingness in the group to work hard on the process. The way group members work together to reach decisions is important and needs attention. Members of the group must be willing and able to

spend group time discussing the process itself.

6. A willingness in the group to attend to attitudes. Consensus works well when group members work cooperatively and when they feel they are able to trust one another. This involves a commitment by individuals to examine their attitudes and be open to criticism and change. Such trust and cooperation requires a caring community, which supports the development of these attitudes.
7. A willingness in the group to learn and practice skills for participation and communication.

ATTITUDES THAT IMPEDE CONSENSUS

Individuals are exposed to a variety of attitudes and values from which they shape their outlook on human relationships and group interaction. Many of these attitudes impede cooperative decision-making. Competition is encouraged in the American society where individuals determine their own worth in terms of how much better or stronger than the next person they are. In group dynamics, we often see this competition as members try to achieve their own goals at the expense of other members. Competition fosters distrust and inequality as members strive to outdo each other in performance, power, and prestige. It leads to a focus on other members' weakness rather than their strengths. Lack of interest in others within the group hinders consensus. Most people are trained to view work performance and social responsibility in a very individualistic way. They tend to think a person's role in a group meeting consists of his contributing of ideas, skills, experience and insights and that is where their responsibility ends. This seriously affects members' commitment to working out problems and conflict. It causes people to put their personal needs ahead of the needs of the group instead of struggling through the often difficult process necessary for conflict resolution.

Another product of this culture's emphasis on individualism is the tendency to think of the ideas put forth in the group as the speaker's property. This attitude not only results in speakers expecting credit for their suggestions (and being offended when they don't get it), but it also means that the speakers are attached to their ideas and any criticisms or suggested changes are perceived as a personal affront to themselves. Feelings of ownership can lead group members to argue defensively for their ideas, rather than being open to improvements or other suggestions.

People are taught that conflict is dangerous and socially unacceptable. They learn to fear conflict, to suppress it as long as possible, and if it does emerge, to smooth it over as quickly as possible. By in large, people avoid conflict at all cost. A typical response to disagreement is to try to resolve it as quickly as possible by compromise. By reaching a settlement at some point halfway between the two sides, participants may bring a rapid end to the argument. But by neglecting to explore and develop the concerns expressed, they may miss an opportunity to discover innovative and more satisfactory solutions to the conflict.

Many people have learned to be passive when facing issues. They rely on authorities or experts to do the thinking and to make the decisions. In doing this they lose power over many important aspects of their life. Listening to expert advice is an important tool in good consensus decision making, but this process must be balanced by the active involvement of all group members. Passive members must be encouraged to participate or else they deprive the group of information from a variety of viewpoints. Members who are not actively participating may later fail to take responsibility for changing bad decisions. Even when good decisions are made, members who have not actively participated may not understand or be willing to implement the decisions. Consensus decision making involves a high level of involvement and responsibility from all its participants, to operate properly.

ATTITUDES THAT SUPPORT CONSENSUS

A group benefits when its members expect each other to cooperate rather than compete. In a cooperative group, members perceive themselves as having mutual goals. They share information and resources, providing mutual support and suggestions. Participants make diverse contributions to the group according to individual talents and abilities. When a group works cooperatively, members tend to like and trust one another. There is a high level of acceptance of and appreciation for individual differences, and a willingness to see issues from another's point of view. Whereas competition tries to make me a winner and you a loser, cooperation makes both of us a winner. Working cooperatively helps group members to recognize that there is not always a single right solution. When group members realize that no single choice is right, nor are all other choices wrong, they become more open to hear other points of view.

For effective consensus, group members must strive for trust in one another. When you trust other members in your group, you will not conceal or distort information, nor avoid stating facts, ideas, conclusions or feelings that might make you vulnerable to the others. You won't be defensive about attempts of other members to influence you, but will respond to suggestions, even when you don't agree. When you trust other members, you can depend on them to abide by agreements and carry out tasks competently.

An idea that develops in a group that uses consensus is considered the property of the whole group, not just the individual who first articulated it. Group ownership of ideas acknowledges that new concepts are developed through the process of members responding to previous contributions from other members. By considering ideas the property of the whole group, no matter whose mouth it comes out of, all members feel involved in the decision. When there is criticism, it is addressed to the idea, not the person. Members then will be open to modification of the idea without feeling personally attacked. We must avoid attachment to our own ideas. We also discipline ourselves continually to cooperate and trust others enough to listen and care. Members can help one another when everyone welcomes changes in attitude and behavior. The group must work on building a more cohesive and supportive climate where people feel safe about trusting one another and sharing deeply.

Feelings are important in the group. They affect how members interact with one another and how they approach decisions. A group that recognizes the importance of feelings and their expression will enjoy a clearer understanding of its own interactions. By discussing emotional as well as logical factors in making decisions, the group will more easily reach agreements that are satisfactory to all.

Conflict itself is neither good nor bad. It reveals disagreement. Conflict can be handled competitively so that one side wins or loses, or it can be handled cooperatively so that the whole group benefits from the exchange of opinions and the process of working out the conflict.

Every person has unique knowledge, perspectives, experiences and abilities. No one can know in advance the value of what an individual will contribute at a particular time. The contribution may be a feeling of calmness or patience that helps the group perform its task more effectively. It may be a practical solution to a perplexing problem. What counts is tapping the resources of the group. By expecting and encouraging participation from every member, the group fosters in each person a sense of competency and responsibility, and develops knowledge and the ability to play an active role.

Members enjoy working together and contribute more if they feel they each have an equal opportunity in decision making. This equality cannot occur if certain individuals demand to be heeded because they possess more information, have more experience, better communication skills, or higher standing among group members. A commitment to sharing power means that the group is alert to and confronts members who exert more influence than is appropriate.

Consensus works when people recognize that they absolutely need one another. Group members practice values and learn skills which foster better relationships on both interpersonal and community levels. Consensus demands that members be sensitive, caring, responsible, and fair with one another. A firm foundation of trust can then be built, for interaction toward consensus.

PROCESS FOR CONSENSUS

PREPARING FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- A. An agenda is agreed upon at the beginning of the meeting so members know what they will talk about and in what order.
- B. A coordinator facilitates the discussion making it easy for the group to do its work. He is not in charge of the group but assists the members to discuss pertinent information. He introduces an item from the agenda or calls on someone else to introduce it. This introduction should include:
 - 1. A clear definition of the area being discussed.
 - 2. A clear statement of what has to be decided. Exactly what needs must be filled or what problem must be solved by the decision? This statement should be precise enough to have a limiting effect: members should know what they are not talking about.Example:
 - Vague---“We want to solve the problem of schools closing.”
 - Specific---“Today we have to think of a way to raise money to keep the school open next year.”
- C. Background information is provided by the person who introduced the topic and by other members who have information. Other relevant information may be added later as needed.

Appendix 9
Establishing the Church by “one anothering”
by C. Holloway

Goal of whole series: To cause the group of believers to: Establish their identity as a community. Become committed to involvement in each other” lives. Experience God through the community. Enjoy and benefit from regular group meetings with all members actively participating. Begin developing new attitudes, values and habits in communication and conflict resolution with each other.

Assumptions: these studies will be taught in a group setting, using discussion and interaction (i.e. not just by lecture), to (MB) believers who already base their faith on Jesus’ death on the cross for their sakes.

Approach A is designed for the one who will lead the study, or for a group of believers with the Bible in their language. Assumptions include that they will be able to explore the context of the verses mentioned during the study, and will be able to discern implications of concepts referred to in the extracted verses. They may also have familiarity with overall themes and repeated concepts in Scripture. The verses in this approach will be referred to by address. Users of this approach will be expected to read through the listed verses and glean the relevant concepts.

Approach B is designed for a group of believers with no full Bible in their language, and minimal exposure to the Bible’s teachings. Assumptions include that they are from non-Biblically-based cultures, will be unable to explore the context of the verses, and thus will be unable to discern implicit information or interpret the significance of the extracted verses on their own. They also are not familiar with repeated and overall themes in Scripture. So much more needs to be made explicit and taught clearly to them before discussions will be meaningful. Ideally, for this group, paraphrases of the verses will be written out. These handouts will be the main source of information for the studies.

Methodology: Different cultures teach/impart truths differently--some prefer stories and anecdotes drawn from true life experiences, some need to act out situations, some need graphic presentation, some understand more abstract logic to teach concepts, some learn best from a living examples with interpretation. Everyone needs repetition to grasp new concepts.

The methods used in presentation will end up being a substantial part of the message, so these concepts must taught be using methods that will involve the believers in discerning, owning and obeying the truth even as they are hearing the message. Each lesson should end with time of prayer and practical application of the truths learned. Subsequent lessons should reinforce truths previously learned. Those doing the teaching are the ones who can discern the best methods. The pages that follow are Approach A: merely an outline of the basic principles, with supporting Scripture references and suggested discussion questions. My hope is that it is written in such a way that leaders can grasp the scope, and then shape it for their “audience”, i.e. write their own Approach B.

Contents:

Community of Believers, lesson 1: We are members of one Family.

Community of Believers, lesson 2: We are the Body of Christ.

Community of Believers, lesson 3: Jesus’ command to us: Love one another.

Practical Love, part 1: Do Good to one another.

Practical Love, part 2: Confess your sins to one another. Pray for one another.

Practical Love, part 3: Forgive one another. Live in peace with one another.

Practical Love, part 4: Our speech with and about each other.

Practical Love, part 5: Be good examples to one another.

Practical Love, part 6: Meet together. Resist the enemy.

Community of Believers, lesson 1: We are members of one Family.

When we put our faith in Jesus, we belong to a new family. We become members of a new family, the family of God.

1. Eph 2.19; Titus 3.3-7; Gal 3.22-25; Gal 4.3, 8 ; Eph 2.4-5

What were we, and who did we belong to before starting this life of faith in Jesus the Messiah?

2. Gal 3.26-27, Gal 4.4-7; Eph 1.13-14; Eph 2.8-9; Eph 1.4-8; Jn 1.12-13, I Pet 1.3-5

By whose initiative, whose choice, did we become part of this new family?

What must a person do to become part of this new family?

3. Rom 8.14-16 ; Gal 4.6

What changes in us and links us to our Father because of this spiritual rebirth?

4. Matt 7.9-11; Lk 11.9-13; I Pet 2.2; Heb 12.5-13;

What is God's attitude towards us?

In which ways does God treat us as a good father would treat his children?

What type of food does He provide?

What does He use to train us to become more like Him?

5. I Pet 1.14-17; Eph 5.1-2; Philip 2.15-16

How does God want His dearly loved children to relate to Him?

What does it mean to be holy, pure, and blameless? Is it following a set of rules, or referring to the orientation of our heart and resulting lifestyle?

6. Gal 5.13-14; Heb 13.1; I Pet 1.22

How should we relate to our brothers and sisters in this family?

What is freedom/license?

7. Eph 1.11-12; Eph 2.19-22; Titus 2.11-14; I Pet 2.9-10

Why has God chosen each of us to become part of His family?

What are other names for this new community of faith we belong to?

The verses above were chosen to give a range of ways to expand and reinforce the “family” metaphor. Of course, there are hundreds of ways to branch out from these. Only go into as much detail as is necessary to give them the picture of believers as one family under the Fatherhood of God.

Community of Believers, lesson 2: We are the Body of Christ.

The family of believers operates in ways similar to a human body.

1. Eph 4.4-6
What links us together as parts of one body?

2. Eph.4.11-16; Col. 1.18-19; Eph. 1.22-23; Eph. 4.15; Eph. 5.29-30
Who is the head of the body?
What function does the head of the body serve?
Who are the supporting ligaments?

3. Eph 4.7, 11-16; Rom 12.3-8; I Pet 4.10-11; I Cor 12.12-27; Eph 4.16; Heb 13.17
In what way is each of us believers like a different part of the one body?
For what purpose has God given us each a different role or skill within the body?
In what ways do we members belong to each other and need each other?
How should the different parts treat each other?

4. Now we are vitally connected to Jesus, through His Spirit in us. And we are vitally linked to one another through this same Spirit.
Col. 1.21
Previously, what characterized our relationship with God?
Titus 1.3b
What characterized our relationships, before, with fellow humans?
Jn 15.1-17
What is necessary for both of these types of vital links (to the Father, and to our brothers and sisters in Christ) to remain intact and healthy?

5. I Cor 5.14-21; Jn 17.20; Matt 28.18-20
What motivates us as Jesus' body?
What is the job of this body in the world?

Community of Believers, lesson 3: Jesus' command to us: Love one another

Jesus has chosen each of us to belong to His family, to be part of His body, because He loves us. His priority command for us, to show our love for him in return, is for us to love fellow believers in the same way that he has loved us.

1. I Jn 4.7; I Jn 3.1, 16; Eph 5.1-2

How has God demonstrated His love for us?

2. I Jn 2.3-6; 3.10; Jn 15.9-10

How can we show that we love him in return?

What is the proof that we really know God, that we are truly His children, that we have eternal life?

3. I Jn 4.19-21; I Jn 2.9-11; I Jn 3.16-18

What motivates us to act in love for one another?

What types of actions does this loving require?

Why are these actions proof of our love for God?

4. These next verses all reveal aspects of what will happen to a group of believers as they increase in their love for one another.

I Jn 3.21-24, Jn 15.9-17 What will happen to their prayer life together?

I Jn 4.11-12, Jn 15.8; Jn 17.20-26 Which invisible thing will become visible for them and those around them?

2 Thess. 1.3-4, Col. 1.9-12 What will happen to them as they go through difficult trials and persecution?

Eph 3.17-19 What will happen to their understanding of who God is and what His will is?

Eph 4.14-16 What will happen to them when Satan and people try to deceive them?

Phil 1.9-11 What will happen to their efforts to do good and to become more like God?

Col. 2.2-3 What will happen to their sense of identity as a community? What will happen to their understanding of who Jesus is?

Philemon 1.4-7 What effect will they have on each other (if they act as Philemon did)?

Phil 1.27-28 What will happen to their fear?

5. Now the big question is: How can we obey this command to love? What does it mean, in practical terms, to love one another? The definition of love that we already understand from our culture may give us some hints, but it will not be complete. God's Word alone can supply the true definition of love in action. This definition is the focus of the next 6 lessons.

Practical Love, part 1: Do Good to one another

Part of loving one another entails choosing to serve and do good to one another.

1. Jn 13.1,3-5,12-17.

What did Jesus do for his disciples in this story?

Why did he do this? Was it something they needed?

What lessons did Jesus teach through this example of service?

4. Gal 6.7-10; Gal 5.13; Phil 2.3-4

What are we 'free' from in Christ?

What are we to use our freedom to do?

What does it mean to sow to the Spirit?

How would you know that someone considers your needs important?

2. Matt 25.31-46

Who is being cared for in this story?

What types of needs are being cared for?

As we serve one another in the family of faith, whom are we really serving and doing good to?

3. James 2.14-16; Jn 14.23-24; Eph 2.8-9

What is our salvation based on?

Why do we do good to one another?

Practical Love, part 2: Confess sins to one another, Pray for one another

Part of loving one another entails being transparent about our struggles with sin, confessing our sins and praying for one another's spiritual growth.

1. Although we are newly born in Jesus, we aren't perfect yet.
I Jn 1.5-10
How many believers still struggle with sin?
What should be our response to our sinfulness?

2. I Jn 1.5-10; Gal 6.2; Eph 6.18
What must we be willing to admit to one another?
How can we show love to one another, as we each struggle to be freed from habitual sin?

3. Gal 6.1
Who should take the initiative to help a believer who is trapped in sin?
What must he be careful about as he does this?

4. Matthew 7.1-5
Why was the first brother unable to adequately help the second one?
What are the wooden beam and speck of sawdust exemplifying?
What must we do first before trying to help our brother with his problem?

5. James 5.13-16
In what circumstances should we pray for one another?
Why do we need the prayers of one another?

6. It is difficult to admit personal weaknesses and sins to people you don't trust. To obey this command, what can we do to build trust with one another? (Set ground rules for confidentiality in group)

Practical Love, part 3: Forgive one another, Live in peace with one another

Part of loving one another entails forgiving wrongs done to us by other believers, and learning to resolve conflicts we have with one another.

1. Lk 7.36-37

What is this woman doing to Jesus?

What is motivating her to do this?

In what ways have you experienced the forgiveness of God?

How can you demonstrate to God your love and gratitude?

2. Matt 18.21-25

What type of sin was the first official forgiven of? Was it a debt he could repay?

What should have motivated him to forgive his fellow servant?

How many times must we forgive our fellow believers when they wrong us, or when they owe us an unpayable debt?

Why must we choose to act in this way?

3. Eph 4.2-3, 32; Col. 3.12-15

How does God view us, now that we have put our faith in Jesus?

Which ways of demonstrating love and gratitude for God's forgiveness of our sin are highlighted in these verses?

“Living in peace” does not mean that to live without ever any problems coming up between us. It means that when problems come, they are resolved, and wiped from hearts, and peace is restored. We need to learn how to resolve conflicts, clear up misunderstandings, and forgive one another, because we will have conflicts, misunderstandings, and we will offend and hurt one another.

4. Matt 5.23-24

In what circumstances should you stop your praying?

What should you do in this case to demonstrate love for God?

5. Matt 5.21-22; Matt 6.12, 14-15; Gal 5.14-15; Eph 4.26-27; Eph 4.30-32

If we choose to not forgive someone who has wronged us, if we instead continue to hold anger and resentment against them, what will be the consequences?

6. Matt 18.15-17

What steps are given in these verse for resolving conflicts and wrongs between believers?

[When problems arise between believers, is ignoring the conflict an option? is revenging the wrong that has been done an option? is harboring resentment or anger an option?]

Practical Love, part 4: Our Speech with and about Each Other

Part of loving one another entails speaking truthfully in love to and about each other.

1. The tongue is a powerful tool. (James 3.5-6,9-10) We must make God the Lord of our thoughts and our speech. We must use our tongue to bring honor to Him, all the time, but especially when we spend time with one another. This doesn't just refer to how we speak about God, but also how we speak about and to one another.

2. James 1.26; Matt 15.17-20
How do our tongues (what we say about others) affect our ability to please God with our lives?

3. Eph 4.14-15, Eph 4.25; Col. 3.9
What does it mean to speak truth to one another? 'in love'?
What does it mean to speak the truth not in love?
What might motivate someone to speak truth in love to another person?
What does it mean 'to lie' to another?
What might motivate someone to lie to another person?
What happens to the body of Christ, the community of believers, when we lie to one another?
What happens to the body of Christ when we speak the truth to one another in love?

4. Realize that we have extra resources, now that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, to give people more than human encouragement--we can help them link with hope, joy, strength from God Himself.
Heb 3.13 ; Eph 4.29 ; I Pet 2.1 ; Col. 3.8
What does it mean to encourage someone?
What does it mean to build someone else up?
What might motivate someone to encourage or build another up?
What does it mean to provoke or slander someone?
What might motivate someone to provoke or slander another?

5. I Cor 4.5; Heb 4.12-13
Who knows our motives?
Positive motives honor God and result in behavior that honors God. Negative motives are attitudes that every believer should want to purge from his heart. These attitudes are sinful, do not reflect values pleasing to God, and result in behavior that destroys others. These need to be confessed, turned away from, and transformed into attitudes that please the Lord.

6. Phil 2.12-13
What two ways does God help us to obey His commands?

Practical Love, part 5: Be good examples to one another

Part of loving one another entails encouraging one another to live holy lifestyles.

1. Rom 12.1-2

Our actions and lifestyle, at home, work, play, school, with friends, around town, affect the community of believers as well as the nonbelievers we brush up against. Which parts of our lives should be used to serve God now that we belong to Him?

What should we offer to God?

How will this affect our behavior in all areas of life?

2. James 4.1-3; Rom 13.10-13; Eph 4.23

Where does evil behavior come from?

Rom 13.10-13; Eph 5.3-7; Col. 3.5-10; Gal 5.19-21; Phil 2.3

What types of behaviors spring from our sinful nature?

I Jn 1.5-6; Heb 10.26; Heb 12.15; Rom 14.13; Heb 3.12-13

If we continue to sin purposely, what will be the consequence?

What effect can sinful habits have on our hearts?

What effect can our encouragement of each other have?

Rom 6.11-14

Why should we resist sin?

3. Heb 10.24; Heb 12.12-14; I Jn 1.5,7; Eph 5.8-10

What behavior should we encourage in each other?

How can we do this?

Why should we do this?

What does it mean to be “holy”

What does it mean to walk “in the light”, or live “as children of light”?

4. Jn 3.19-21

What is the light?

What does the light make visible? Why do those who do good come to the light?

5. I Pet 1.13-15; Rom 8.5-7 (Rom 13.14); Gal 5.16 (Gal 6.8); Matt 5.8; Col. 3.2

Behavior springs from our heart motives. Holy behavior springs from a holy heart. How can we make our hearts holy?

Practical Love, part 6: Meet together, Resist the Enemy

The last aspect of loving each other covered in these studies entails choosing to meet together, and helping each other to resist the Enemy.

1. Eph 6.10-18; I Peter 5:8-10; 2 Cor 10.3-5

Who will oppose us as we try to obey God's ways?

What protection and weapons does God supply the family of believers? (Notice that the armor of God described here is being given to a gathering of believers.)

In what ways does this Opposition attack God's people? (Notice, which parts of our bodies the armor, is designed to protect)

In what ways can we resist Satan?

How is a group, supplied with God's resources, better able to resist these attacks than a lone believer?

2. Col. 3.16-17; Eph 5.19-20; Heb 10.25; I Cor 14.26; I Cor 12.7-10; I Pet 4.10-11

What is the purpose of meeting with other believers?

Describe what believers' group meetings should be like.

Why should every believer be an active participant in these meetings?

Appendix 9A
Covenanting Together

This study booklet is designed for believers in Jesus Christ who are considering becoming a covenant member of a church and desire to know what it means to enter into a covenant with other believers. By and large Americans have little understanding about what it means to become a partaker together with other believers in God's New Covenant and then entering into covenant with other believers to carry out God's will. We are an independent people and try to redefine Christianity in such a way as to make allowance for this independence. This study is an attempt to explain covenanting from a Biblical perspective so that we may let the Word of God, rather than our cultural perspective, shape our thinking.

There are four studies in the booklet. The first gives us an understanding of what it means to enter into a covenant from an Old Testament perspective. The second study focuses on the New covenant. The third study focuses on the consequences of us entering into the New Covenant together with other believers. The last study is really not a study but rather a guide for introspection as you consider entering into the covenant of the church. You will need to obtain a copy of the church covenant from one of the leaders.

L. Berkhof in his book *Systematic Theology* has written "...the response of those who share the covenant blessings will be one of true, faithful, trustful, consecrated, and devoted love. To the general promise "I will be thy God," man responds by saying "I will belong to thy people," and by casting his lot with the people of God."⁽¹⁾ We hope that these studies will bring understanding in the vital area of what it means to participate together in the covenantal life of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:18,19). *Systematic Theology*, L. Berkhof, page 277.

STUDY #1: COVENANTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The purpose of this first study is to understand the meaning and purpose of covenants in the Old Testament. As we get a Biblical perspective of covenants we will understand what makes up a covenant, how binding they were (even when unwise), the consequences of breaking one. As we understand the Biblical view of covenants as presented in the Old Testament we can gain a better understanding of what it means to participate in the New Covenant and why we covenant together with the church of God.

I. Our God is a covenantal God. “A covenant is like a treaty. It established the terms of relationship between two parties. It said how the two intended to relate to each other...The essence of the covenant was the (formal) relationship it established”(1).

A. There were two types of covenants in old testament times:

1. Between God and man. We could refer to this as a vertical covenant since it is made between a superior being (the creator) and an inferior being (his creatures). An example of this would be the covenant God made with Noah after the flood (Genesis 9:8-17). This type of covenant is also called a testament (Hence the Old and New Testaments).
2. Between a man and his fellow man. We could call this a horizontal covenant since it is between two (or more) of God's creature. An example of this would be the covenant between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:43-55). A modern example would be such as a marriage covenant.
3. In many cases a vertical covenant between God and man requires a horizontal response as we will see below.

B. Read Genesis 15:1-21. This is sometimes called the Abrahamic Covenant.

1. Is this covenant vertical or horizontal? Why do you say this?
2. With whom was the relationship established? (vs. 1, 18).
3. What is the relationship established by this covenant? (vs. 1,7). (See also Exodus 2:23ff; 6:2-8, Leviticus 26:9ff).
4. Are there any escape clauses (whereby the contract is made void)? Will God ever forget His covenant? (Ps 89:34, Daniel 9:4).
5. What attribute(s) of God is displayed by his being a covenant keeping God?

C. Read Joshua 24:14-28

1. Is this a covenant vertical or horizontal?
2. What is included in this covenant? (promises, obligations).
3. Is this an appropriate response to God's covenant? How does it allow His people to reflect His invisible attributes?

D. Read Joshua 9:15-20

1. Who are the participants in this covenant?
2. How wise was it? (v.14)
3. How binding was it? Why? How was this horizontal covenant binding in the vertical sense? (v.19).

E. Read Jeremiah 34:8-22

1. Who were the participants?
2. How binding was it? What were the consequences of breaking the covenant?
3. If our God is a covenant keeping God, what should be our response to Him toward our covenantal obligations?

II. FOR FURTHER THOUGHT: A marriage covenant is an example of a covenant we enter into today. How serious is such a covenant? Are there any escape clauses? What are some other covenants we enter into (any agreement)? How serious do you take your covenantal obligations. Have a time of prayer that you will be a covenant keeper and thus reflect the attributes of your God.

(1) Lois Barrett, Building the House Church, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa. c. 1986 pg. 30

STUDY #2: THE NEW COVENANT

Last week we studied various types of covenants in the Old Testament. We learned what covenants were, how binding they were even when unwise, and what the consequences were of breaking covenants. We need to keep these concepts in mind as we study this week on the New Covenant. Remember the ultimate objective of these studies is to understand what it means to enter into covenant with the church.

- I. Read Hebrews 2:1-3. The book of Hebrews contains many such warnings (Cf.4:1,2; 6:4-9; 10:26-31).
 - A. Why were these warnings so appropriate especially when addresses to Hebrews?

 - B. What would these warnings say to us as God's covenant people?

- II. Read Hebrews 8:6-13
 - A. What was the first covenant? (see study #1).

 - B. What is the New Covenant? What relationship is established? (v.10).

 - C. How is the relationship different from that established in the Old Testament (covenant)? How is this effected (See John 14:15-26)?

 - D. Both covenants are based on forgiveness (v. 13) and require a sacrifice. How is the New Covenant superior (9:28-10:4)?

 - E. How should we view being a partaker of this covenant? (See warning verses in I above).

- III. Turn to the book of Galatians:
 - A. How does one become a partaker of this covenant? (See Galatians 3:7, 13f, 22, 24).

 - B. What is the impact of this New Covenant on the life of a believer? (Cf. 5:13, 16, 22-24)

 - C. Have you partaken of the covenant? How do you know? What are the implications for your life?

STUDY #3: COVENANTING TOGETHER

In our first study we learned about covenants and especially how grave it was to be included in God's covenant as well as to enter into covenant before God with others. Last week we learned that God's New Testament (covenant) is to be viewed with equal sobriety. This week we will study what the impact of the New Testament should be on our relationships with others who have entered with us into this New Testament of love and grace.

I. Read Ephesians 2:11-3:21

- A. What has God accomplished in Christ between those who have been saved (included in the covenant of grace)? See 2:13,14,15,16,18,19,21,22; 3:6

- B. Should our invisible vertical covenant with God be reflected in our visible horizontal relationships with others? (Eph. 2:19,3:6). How? Cf. John 13:34,35; 17:20-23.

- C. Where should this visible relationship be manifested? (Eph. 3:10).

II. Read I John 4:7-5:3 (see also 3:10-18).

- A. How does this portion of scripture connect the vertical relationship we have with God with the horizontal relationship we have with other believers? (Cf. 4:10,11).

- B. What are some specific elements of God's invisible relationship with us which ought to be reflected in our visible relationships with one another? (In addition you might look at Hebrews 10:19-25). What are some of the advantages of establishing a formal relationship with other believers by covenant? (See also Hebrews 13:17).

- C. Is it appropriate to formalize this relationship with the people of God (i.e. through a formal covenant before God)? (Cf. Study #1; also II Chronicles 34:29-32; Nehemiah 9:1-3,38) This is what we do with a church covenant.

One writer has said of the church covenant "We acknowledge that God, not we, set the terms of this covenant. Our (church) covenant, then is our response to God's covenant and our attempt to express our understanding of that covenant and its implications (for us as partakers together of His covenant)".

- D. How is a church covenant similar to a marriage covenant? How serious is such a covenant? Any escape clauses? How binding is our relationship with God's people?

- E. Go through the covenant (at the end of the booklet or ask for one from your leader). Examine the specific elements, which attempt to summarize our responsibilities to others. Is there anything you think is unbiblical in this covenant? (List any questions you may have).

TIME OF PRAYER FOR COVENANTING

- I. Plan to set aside at least one hour of concentrated time to focus your attention on the Lord in prayer and the study of His Word. How is God leading you? As you pray try to determine if God would have you covenant with this body or another. From your study of the Word you now understand that when you

were saved God entered into covenant with you. But He has also entered into covenant with others as well. Thus you have become a partaker together of Christ with all those who call upon His name. This corporate salvation is appropriately reflected as we covenant with other believers endeavoring to reflect His relationship with us in our relationship with His people. The question to discern, then, is if The Lord is leading me to covenant with this group of saints or another.

- II. If the Spirit of God is going to speak to you it is necessary that you be under His complete control.
- A. Therefore begin your time with prayer asking God to expose anything in you that might prevent the Spirit of God from acting freely and especially anything the previous 3 studies may have exposed (wrong attitudes, selfishness, lack of obedience in any area, fear, rebellion, mistrust etc). Have a thorough time of confession and cleansing so that the Holy Spirit has full reign in your life. (See I John 1:9).
1. Where might my flesh tend to get in the way of my discerning the will of the Spirit? (See Galatians 5:17)
 2. Have a time of prayer for protection against your flesh controlling this time of prayer and study.
- B. After this, review your studies on Covenanting. The Holy Spirit uses the Word in guiding us. Pray as you review. You might ask the following questions:
1. Do I really understand what it means to covenant together? If not, what questions do I need to have answered (list these specifically and then seek counsel from older believers.
 2. If I am hesitant is it because of rebellion? mistrust? fear? Be open with the Lord as you take these to Him. (You might also share this with the church so they can help you.)
 3. Is there any known, continued pattern of willful sin in my life, which I need to take care of as I enter into covenant? (see Hebrews 10:26-31).
 4. Is there anything that might indicate that He might be leading me not to covenant with this group?
 5. If I don't covenant with this group where should I covenant?
- C. What would God have me to do? Where would my flesh tend to hold me back? Have a time of committing yourself to the Lord (See Romans 12:1).
1. If you have additional questions which need answering before you can enter into covenant be sure to see an elder or other mature believer as soon as possible.
 2. If you determine that the Lord is not leading you to covenant with us be certain to answer #5 above and begin immediately taking steps to covenant with them.

Appendix 10

Wickenden St. House Church Covenant

Responding to and reflecting God's covenant that he has made with His people through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:16f, Jeremiah 31:31-34), we covenant with one another to be the church known as "the Wickenden St. House Church". This is a binding commitment that by the grace of God each member will faithfully uphold. As baptized believers in Jesus Christ, we realize that the purpose of God for believers is carried out through his divine plan, the Church, as reflected by local assemblies. This local assembly exists so that "the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 3:10), specifically by worshipping God, edifying the believers, and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. We commit to love one another (I John 4:7) by:

- Building up one another (Ephesians 4:29),*
- Encouraging one another (Hebrews 3:13),*
- Serving one another (I Peter 4:10),*
- Praying for one another (Ephesians 6:18),*
- Exhorting one another (Hebrews 10:24),*
- Rebuking and correcting one another (II Timothy 4:2),*
- When necessary, disciplining one another (Matthew 18:15-17),*
- Bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2),*
- Forgiving one another (Colossians 3:13),*
- Doing nothing that would cause a brother to stumble (Rm. 14:13),*
- Maintaining unity with one another (Ephesians 4:3),*
- Obedying God's word (John 14:23),*
- Meeting together regularly for fellowship and breaking of bread (Hebrews 10:25, Acts 2:42),*
- Contributing financially to the church (II Cor. 8:1-5, 9:7) and the relief of the poor (Gal. 2:10),*
- Submitting to our leaders (Hebrews 13:17).*

II. As a corporate body,

A. We commit to love those outside the church (Luke 10:27-37) by: Evangelizing (Mt. 28:19-20)

B. Also, we commit to love other churches (Acts 11:22-30):

Resolving to be joined in fellowship with other churches in the East Providence Fellowship of House Churches, we as a church commit to uphold the other churches in our immediate fellowship.

III. In our personal lives, we commit to love God (I John 4:19) by:

Having personal and family Bible study, worship, and prayer (Deut. 6:4-9),

Being a witness for Christ to friends, family and acquaintances (Acts 1:8),

Walking Righteously (Proverbs 4:23-27),

Being exemplary in our behavior (I Peter 2:12), and

Avoiding the appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22).

Finally if God removes us from this assembly, we commit to unite as soon as possible with another church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant. Amen.

Appendix 11

Covenant Signing Ceremony

- I. Feast (possibly including the Lord's supper)
- II. Introduction to service: Acts 2:37-42 (Or another suitable passage). Since the inception of the church people have come to Christ through faith, evidenced by repentance and Baptism and are added to the church. Tonight we continue this pattern by receiving these into the membership of the East Providence Christian Fellowship. These have testified publicly to their faith by baptism and now desire to unite with us.
 - A. Introduction of guest(s) of honor (covenant signers)
 1. Introduction of each one by name
 2. Testimony by the mentor in behalf of covenantor. The mentor is the one who has led the person through the "Covenanting Together" studies. The testimony ought to include why the mentor believes this person is truly saved, as well as the candidate's fitness for membership in East Providence Christian Fellowship.
- III. The ceremony
 - A. Reading of the covenant (by one of the covenantors or a leader)
 1. Covenantors will respond to the following questions:
 - a.Q1: *Do you believe that this covenant represents the will of God for you in relationship with the other covenant members of the East Providence Christian Fellowship? (I do).*
 - b.Q2: *Will you commit yourself before God to submit to the spirit and intent of this covenant as a member of the East Providence Christian Fellowship? (I Will)*
 - B. Signing of the covenant by the covenantors. The new covenant members sign personal copies of the covenant, which they will keep, as well as the book of the covenant, which will remain in the possession of the church.
 1. Commitment of congregation to covenantors:
 - a..Q1: *Congregation: Do you receive (NAME) into the covenant membership of the East Providence Christian Fellowship? (We Do)*
 - b.Q2: *Will you recommit yourself before God to submit to the spirit and intent of the covenant with the covenant members of the East Providence Christian Fellowship? (I Will).*
 - C. Laying on of hands by the leaders and prayer (Candidates kneeling)
 1. EXPLANATION FOR LAYING ON OF HANDS: In the early church the leaders often laid hands on new members as they entered into the body. This is rich in symbolism. It shows:
 - a. Identification of the whole body with the new believers through the leaders as representative of the body.
 - b. The submission of the new members to those whom God has paced in authority over them (Hebrews 13:17).

Appendix 12**Breaking The Church Covenant**

In the booklet, Covenanting Together, the basic premise is that a church comes into existence when the people of God covenant together to be His people and reflect His image to an unbelieving world. The nature of this and any other covenant is that it is a binding agreement establishing a relationship between men which is reflective of God's relationship with man, therefore not to be broken. But is it ever appropriate to break covenant and leave a particular church? We believe that the covenant agreement is sacred and unbreakable, similar to a marriage covenant. By and large, the reasons why people leave churches are petty and usually selfish. However, there are some good reasons for which it might be God's will for him or her to leave a church.

1. The first reason would be if God were clearly leading the person to move geographically. Once again we emphasize that it is God's leading and not merely the materialistic, career-climbing motives which reflect the worldly values of success and prestige rather than the value of community which guides those in the Kingdom of God. But we all agree that God may lead someone elsewhere; to another location where a person could give greater glory to God. This move may be attached to attending college or a job, the need to care for aging parents, or other family considerations, or even a change of calling (like becoming a church planter). God's leading to move ought to be confirmed by other Christians, including close friends and leaders in the church, in order to be certain that it is not merely a move motivated by the values of the world system. Ultimately each one of us will stand before God to give an account of such a move (Romans 14:4f,23). It is to the individual that the Holy Spirit will most likely reveal His will. Therefore, elders ought not to lord it over the flock by demanding final authority over the individual. This goes against the normal flow of God's leading.
2. Another reason to leave a church is because of doctrinal impurity. Some teachers violate the fundamentals of the faith and lead others into corrupt living. We must discern, of course, between critical doctrines and peripheral ones. The trinity, for example, is a critical doctrine; how often one should celebrate the Lord's supper is peripheral. Seeing the differences is no easy matter. It becomes clouded by our own subjective opinions and perspectives. Therefore, any dissenter should carefully weigh the doctrine with the counsel of others. He or she ought to seek wisdom from the leaders of the church and make every effort to listen to their counsel. If the leaders' counsel seems insufficient, then, before jumping to conclusions, they ought to seek out counsel from others church bodies or Bible teachers. One must be very careful before judging a church as doctrinally impure, since one day he will stand before God and give an account for his own position. He must be very careful in judging Christ's bride. While attempting to test the spirits he may receive counsel from the leaders of his church to leave. He then would be free to leave attempting to maintain peace. If he receives counsel from others to leave, then he must weigh this together with everything he knows before the Lord to make the decision.
3. Apostasy. A person may leave a church because the church ceases to follow Christ. The church rebels against God's clear command. An example of this is failure to exercise church discipline. Many churches refuse to give corrective discipline to unruly members thus guarding the purity of the congregation. The guidelines for this are clear in Matthew 18 and applied in I Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2. An apostate church no longer recognizes the authority of Christ, but rather becomes a social club where people stay or leave for any whim. Once again the steps in #2 above should be followed so that there is opportunity for the church to repent. Jay Adams outlines these steps for a rebellious church very clearly in his book Handbook for Church Discipline.
4. A fourth reason a person might leave the church is for conscience's sake. For instance, if a member of a peace-oriented Mennonite church became persuaded that he should go to war, he might break covenant with the church and become a member of another church, which would allow him to fulfill his patriotic duty. Conscience

may be the most common reason why people leave a church. But it is valid only in very particular cases. Scripture clearly addresses this in I Corinthians 8 and Romans 14 and 15. We commend these to the reader as guidelines from acting on his conscience. A person sins against his conscience when he truly believes that something is wrong and does it anyway. Paul spoke against Christians callously encouraging others to sin against their own conscience, for example eating meat which was sacrificed to idols. Paul exhorted the church not to split into two congregations (one that eats meat and another that eats vegetables), but that they should accept one another (Romans 14:1, 15:7). Paul encouraged differences, personal convictions and personal preferences to exist along side one another within the congregation. Each man should be fully convinced in his own mind (Romans 14:5) and recognize that there are certain things that he might not be permitted to do which another believer might have freedom in Christ to do. The church ought not to be divided by personal preferences because one person becomes offended at another where no offense is given. In one incident, a person came to me deeply offended that some of the men in the church would swim where women were swimming also. The person desired me to enforce segregated swimming for the church. One can imagine the result if this personal preference were enforced, and allowance made for everyone else's personal preference. There are many "grey" areas where the Bible leaves it to our personal convictions; e.g. movies, dancing, smoking. The church ought not to exceed what is written (1 Cor. 4:6), and needs to encourage Christians to from convictions, and in the case of differing convictions, to accept one another in the Lord. It is not appropriate for churches to devise rules where God gives none, nor is it appropriate for people to leave the church if the church won't go along with their particular preference. The command is to accept one another and to work through any conflicts that may arise from different convictions, so that holiness may result for all.

We think a person should leave the church if he is forced to sin against his own conscience. For example, if a person was persuaded that for him, going to movies was wrong, but the church required that he go to a particular movie, thus sinning against his own conscience, then in this situation, the person ought to leave that congregation. Another example is if a person believes before God that he ought to do something and the leaders arbitrarily forbid him (See #1 and #2 above for clarification). In this case it may be wise after much prayer and to humbly leave the church.

A person considering leaving should carefully evaluate his motives. Often out of pride a person leaves a church, because the congregation will not go along with his particular moral or doctrinal views. By leaving, he violates God's command in Scripture to accept one another. Scriptures and church history, relate no other reasons why a person should leave a church. There are many nice-sounding reasons, such as lack of good teaching, unlovingness on the part of the congregation or pastor, which merely give excuses for violating covenant agreements. The steps above are designed to guard a person from making a judgmental decision while a "log remains in his own eye". If these procedures are followed, healing can result for the church and members will be strengthened to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. With this in mind, the overriding constraint in deciding to leave should be the love of Christ. If a person is persuaded that he can love the brethren better by leaving, then he or she might do so.

APPENDICES
SECTION II
STAGE 3

 Appendix 13

Measurable Ministry Objectives for the Reproducing Church

If the goal of reproduction at every level (disciples, leaders, congregations, networks of congregations, church planters and church planting teams) is to be achieved, then we must keep moving forward in all our efforts.

With this in mind, the Fellowship of Church Planters (FCP) has established an evaluation process that uses Measurable Ministry Objectives (MMO's). MMO's are targets or goals that need to be achieved within a certain time frame. We would liken this to archery where a bow and arrow is used to hit a target. The goal or objective in archery is to hit the target. There are a number of activities that will enable you to achieve this goal. The ultimate goal is to hit the middle of the target. They are not soft targets or objectives that are easily achieved or nonessential but objectives that are God sized so that our dependence is upon the One who supplies the power, strength, and direction necessary to fulfill the goal. Jesus in *Matthew 10* gives the twelve a MMO and then sends them out "...go rather to the lost sheep of Israel" Jesus not only gives them a objective to achieve but also gives them some activities that will help them achieve their target. "...preach as you go, saying 'The kingdom of God is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons'" Jesus, as He sent them out, set a pattern for such activity in the future. The Apostle Paul continued in this pattern as he labored to extend the kingdom.

MMO's are to be written. I liken these MMO's to educational behavioral objectives (BO) which state the expected behavior of students at the end of a given teaching unit. As a Physical education teacher, an example of my BO for the students could be playing a basketball game by the end of the unit. The activities that would help achieve this BO would be shooting, dribbling, passing skills. So also with the MMO's of a church reproduction effort. An MMO might be to have a covenantal community established at the end of a given period of time. The activities list would be developed and utilized in order to achieve the MMO. Some of these activities can be found in the Church Reproduction Checklist. This checklist is by no means exhaustive but provides a foundation.

MMO's can be given for a church. Example: "We will have an evangelistic Bible study in a house within the next six months". They can also be for individuals on a team. Example: "I will share the Gospel with five new people a week". MMO's can be written for individual growth in character. Example: "I will have my week organized in terms of work, study time, evangelism and discipleship by Sunday evening and track progress on use of time during the week". MMO's can also be used to track growth in character relating to family. Example: "I will create a family missions statement with my wife, develop behavioral expectations for my children around these, and implement a system of rewards and discipline reinforcing these". All of the above reflect real hard targets of teams and team members on the FCP. MMO's are strategic in nature, that is what are we going to do directionally. Whereas activities are tactical in nature, that is how are we going to get there. MMO's strive to extend the kingdom by establishing the church. MMO's should be reproductive in their scope. Most MMO's must not have administrative tasks in mind. These administrative tasks consume too much time, energy, and effort that is taken away from the mission of the church to reproduce herself. MMO's should be three to six months in length for short term and one year in length for long term.

MMO's are written with three areas in mind:

1. Personal: Developing the vertical relationship with God as well as the horizontal relationship with family, team and ones God has called you to minister to.
2. Church: Developing a strategy for effective church planting. (see papers on Covenant of Team Understanding (COTU) and Strategy Paper in the book Building Effective Church Planting Teams available from the Fellowship of Church Planters)

3. Church planting: Getting the hard work done of planting the church.

For more help in setting MMO's for #1 and #2 above, we would encourage the reader to refer to appendix 20 in the Manual for House Church Planting in Networks. Setting MMO's for #3 begins by assessing where you are in your church reproduction and where you need to be. A Church Reproduction Checklist using the three stages of church development is an effective evaluation tool. Evaluation is an important if the work is to go forward. This checklist has been devised to help in this procedure. Evaluation must be on a regular basis in order for the MMO's to be effectively reached. Our experience has been that weekly or monthly evaluation is sufficient with a final evaluation at completion of allotted time for MMO's.

Because of the need to cut down on administration, a simple evaluation form is used. This form includes:

1. What are your present MMO's?
2. What activities are you engaged in to attain MMO's?
3. What progress or successes have you experienced?
4. What barriers have you encountered?
5. What are the next steps (activities) you need to take in order to overcome these barriers?

We have found that reviewing these evaluation questions helps facilitate church accountability, interaction, brainstorming, support, and prayer.

Appendix 14

Shepherding Deacon and Member of FOB

Shepherding Deacon

A shepherding deacon shepherds as he receives training to become a godlier shepherd. The leader (elder or church planter) of a group should recognize those men who are shepherding the flock. Since a great deal of informal shepherding can (and should) go on, the designated leader himself must be shepherding the flock to recognize who else is also caring for the sheep. He needs a sensitive eye for group dynamics, to note who are exercising true spiritual leadership, and encourage them. A shepherding deacon should be easy to recognize; he will already be shepherding, encouraging the weak, comforting the sick, and warning the unruly. He is then trained in the Scriptures (to use the Word to teach, correct, reprove, and train) and in discipleship (to be a faithful, obedient man who can teach others also).

This man who is already shepherding should be brought into a shepherding team to give him more accountability and protect him. Satan attacks those who are making positive contributions to the kingdom. A man who is shepherding the flock will be exposed in a greater way to the attacks of the evil one, and for his protection needs a higher level of accountability, to protect him from all sorts of dangers.

The requirements of a shepherding deacon are listed in 1 Timothy 3. When evaluating a man, however, we are not looking for men who “have it all together” and are spotless. Rather, we are looking for men who are faithful in the little things that they have been given, and thus can be used in greater things. It is not required of a man that he be found perfect, but that he be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). Jesus said that the Father would one day speak to those with whom he is pleased, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” not “good and perfect servant.” The shepherding deacon is trained to impart his own faithfulness to others.

Member of the Fellowship Overseers Board

The shepherding deacon may also serve as a member of the Fellowship Overseer Board (See Chapter 22). In this case, he has been seen to be faithful in his house church, and has also been seen to be faithful in the larger fellowship. The requirement, faithfulness, is the same. His sphere of responsibility has widened to include the entire fellowship of house churches. The members of the fellowship overseer board share responsibility for the fellowship as a whole--consequently a member of the board should have evidenced concern and care for the other churches in the fellowship.

Again, we are not looking for perfection, but faithfulness. A man ought to look at himself soberly, with clear judgement, seeing himself as God sees him, and be willing to be used in any way that God sees appropriate. Faithfulness in little things towards the fellowship will be evidenced by an attitude that we are not independent churches but interdependent congregations, using other church's resources and offering our own resources for use. The leader responsible for a new shepherding deacon's house church should see evidence of his consistency and an openness to God's Spirit to be used in whatever way God wants.

A primary reason for incorporating a man into the fellowship overseer board is for his own protection. If he is being faithful on a fellowship-wide level, he is exposed to much more attack from Satan, and ought to be roped in that much tighter. Of course, on the board he will be exposed to more possibilities for the flesh to manifest itself, but these are God-given opportunities for the shepherds to guard one another, respond humbly to mutual exhortation, and develop deeper fellowship with Christ.

Appendix 15
Provisional Elder Job Description

Often church planters move too slowly in getting men into eldership. The problem appears to be two-fold. First, the men and the churches have too high a view of eldership. A traditional concept of church leadership construes “apt to teach” as being capable of preaching in a pulpit. In addition, the only elders that our folks know have been elders for some time. Hence, the standard grows with these men, and the others (new converts, recently unshipwrecked believers) never seem to catch up.

Second, the men have too low a view of themselves. This is due partly to the comparison mentioned above, and also by the fact that most of the responsible men we would consider elder material are sensitive to their own shortcomings and are struggling to improve the quality of their own spiritual walk. Even so, there comes a time in a man's spiritual life when it is necessary for him to take on additional responsibility, or he will grow stale and fall into a rut of inactivity. One way out of this dilemma is to appoint men as provisional elders. A provisional elder is appointed by, and works closely with, a church planter. He is expected to move on to regular eldership after a specified period of time. During the provisional period the man examines himself, the church evaluates him, and the church planter observes him, looking for ways to encourage him and watching out for specific tendencies of the flesh which need to be guarded against as he goes on to eldership.

The church planter has the responsibility to recognize who will serve as provisional elders. One of the primary responsibilities of leaders is to recognize other leaders. In selecting such men, the church planter seeks the opinion of other leaders, especially from his team. Unilateral decisions are to be avoided, but ultimately, the responsibility for the decision rests with the church planter. This decision will be made easier if those being considered have already been serving as shepherding deacons. But sometimes it is wise to skip this step and appoint a man immediately as a provisional elder. This often happens because a certain dynamic is desired in the leadership team being formed. For example if a younger man shows a great skill in teaching, but an older man with great wisdom is also going to be part of the leadership team, for the protection of the younger man and the congregation, it may be wise to appoint the older man to be a provisional elder and the younger man to a shepherding deacon.

A provisional elder should be a responsible man who possesses the standard biblical disciplines. He should be temperate, self-controlled, hospitable, preferably married (with a good marriage relationship), and he should have well-behaved children. He ought to have undergone a level of testing commensurate with his Christian experience and relative to the group he would expect to shepherd. Difficulties with extended family over his conversion; raising his children in a godly manner; difficulties with an employer over ethical standards in the workplace; even frustration with his own spiritual walk, desiring it to be better than it currently is, are all types of testing that the church planters should look for in evaluating the man. *The test itself does not reveal the character of the man, but rather how he bears up under it.* We are looking for men of character. Appointing a man as a provisional elder effectively states that we believe him to be faithful, and that his pre-Christian and post-Christian experiences show this.

In Paul's instructions to Titus and Timothy regarding elders, he does not tell them to look for exceptional teaching gifts, nor does he require extensive experience in the faith (except that he be not a novice--e.g. untested!) It is very important, however, that the man have a hospitable spirit. In the exercise of hospitality many other important character qualities will be exhibited.

Provisional elders should serve for a designated time. We do not put them into a perpetual holding pattern, where they always fall just short of the (ever-increasing) requirements for eldership. We have a standard period of three months to a year (the term to be determined in advance, although it could change as the Lord leads). At the end of this time the congregation considers the man for ordination. The man is not ordained if problems require special

shepherding attention; these may require him to relinquish his position. This expectation that a provision elder will eventually become an elder is one of the major differences between him and a shepherding deacon. A shepherding deacon may remain that way indefinitely (e.g. in the case of a woman since she is not to be an elder).

Normally, a provisional elder comes from among the shepherding deacons who are serving on the fellowship overseer board, and is confirmed in his calling by those men. We expect the fellowship overseer board to apply occasional correction and exhortation. Crucial to the man's spiritual development is how he responds to such correction. As an elder, he will need to interact intensively with other leaders. Serving with them on the board provides opportunity for this.

Certainly we will make mistakes as we put men into provisional eldership. Since church planters appoint them, however, church planters can just as easily remove them. Confirmation should be sought from the church, the sub-team, the other leaders in the fellowship, and other leaders as appropriate.

We aim to appoint men who will eventually be able to serve faithfully as elders in God's church. Clearly, a decision to appoint a man as a provisional elder is a weighty step, and needs to be made with much prayer, circumspection, and thoughtful consideration by both the man and the church planters as they seek the leading of the Holy Spirit. But we need to step out in appointing provisional elders and not be frozen by fear of making a mistake.

Appendix 16
Readiness in Discipleship

When discipling believers we find we must consider their *readiness* as we lead them from one level of growth to another. Perhaps this is reflected in Jesus' words:

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth;..." John 16:12,13

The Holy Spirit has an agenda for each disciple; a good shepherd works in cooperation with this agenda. As a result, any discipling plan must have a great deal of flexibility. A rigid discipleship program presses the disciple into a mold, rather than helping him to apply truth in such a way as to be transformed by the renewing of his mind (Cf. Ephesians 4:20-24). Such internalization of truth enables the disciple to apply these principles to a wide variety of circumstances. His growth can move beyond his discipler, and he can more easily pass on these truths to others.

With this in mind, we have revised the discipleship materials, which we have developed into a menu format. These are available from the Fellowship of Church Planters upon request. The materials appear in the next Appendix as an "Activities List". There are two major divisions in this list:

1. The first group of activities focus on grounding the disciple in the faith. Three areas of concern are: His/her personal walk, corporate walk in the body, and where appropriate, walk in the home.
2. The second group of activities focus on the disciple passing on what he/she has learned to a new believer. Once again these deal with ones personal walk, church walk and family walk.

The "Activities List" serves as a menu from which a shepherd should prayerfully select those activities which correspond to the maturity level of the particular disciple with whom he/she is working. This list should not be looked upon as a rigid program to work through, at the end of which the disciple is seen as "mature". Some activities may be irrelevant and others far beyond the readiness of the disciple. Nor should the first section be seen as a prerequisite before the disciple begins to pass on what he/she has learned. Indeed, whatever a person has truly grasped, he/she should be encouraged to pass on. The survey "Your Pilgrimage" is designed to give the shepherd insight into where one might begin in the activities list.

As the shepherd works with a disciple, we hope that the "Activities List" will serve to encourage progress and reproduction through flexible, Spirit-guided discipleship.

Appendix 17
Reproducing Disciples: Activities List

Personal Discipleship: The disciple will become grounded in the faith and begin the path of healing and transformation. (The disciple will complete these activities with oversight from the shepherd.)

1. Individual Activities. *GOAL*--The shepherd uses the studies as tools to determine the maturity of the believer and help him or her sustain a walk of healing and transformation.

The believer should:

- Complete “Your Pilgrimage” survey;
- Complete Spiritual Life Studies (SLS);
- Learn Entering the Kingdom (EK); and Living in the Kingdom (LK);
- Complete Covenanting Together (CT), become a member
- Complete Finding Your Place in the Body (FPB);
- Be praying for the Lost and know how to communicate the basics of the gospel;
- Be sharing the gospel;
- Monthly Devotional Guide (MDG): Evangelism month, discipleship month; and
- Map out a pattern of regular, meaningful Bible study.

2. Group Activities. *GOAL*--The disciple will bond with the house church and begin to minister there. After bonding with the house church, the believer should:

- Find a place of ministry in the house church and
- Pray for another person to work with.
- Monthly Devotional Guide: shepherding month, church month

3. Family Activities. *GOAL*--The disciple will learn how to invest in his or her home and develop a family identity with spouse, children.

Activities should include:

- Prayer with spouse;
- Working through the booklet Becoming One (BC1) with spouse;
- Setting family goals and developing values;
- Having family devotions and prayer together;
- Working through Shepherding in the Home (SIH) with spouse;
- Ongoing evaluation and encouragement of husband, wife, and children, tailoring Shepherding to needs; and
- With teens possibly working through A life Worth Living (LWL).

Reproducing Disciples: The disciple passes on what he/she has learned in such a way that a younger believer will begin to grow. (The shepherd now acts as a coach/mentor to the disciple as he/she works with a still newer believer. The shepherd takes into account the maturity and giftedness of the disciple when considering which of the following activities to encourage. The disciple should begin the process of reproduction before he/she has completed the activities in **personal discipleship**.)

1. Individual Activities. *GOAL*--Using one-on-one meetings, the disciple will be able to ground a younger believer in the faith and start him/her on the road to healing and transformation.

The disciple should:

- Take someone through Entering or Living in the Kingdom
- Shepherd someone into the church, using Covenanting Together
- Take someone through a Spiritual Life Study and Finding Your Place in the Body;
- Encourage someone who has been through the above to use it with someone new;

Go through Monthly Devotional Guide: Spiritual Warfare, Leadership and

Help someone set up a plan for personal Bible Study

Booklets for help: Philippians Devotional Guide (PDG).

2. Group Activities: *GOAL*--The disciple will be able to encourage a newer believer to bond and begin to serve in the body.

Activities include:

Showing hospitality, which leads to bonding;

Following up evangelistic fruit, shepherding new believers into membership and bonding;

Helping others bond to the house church; and

Helping new members find place of service in the church

Books and booklets for help: Finding Your Place; Counseling course; Inside Out, Larry Crabb; Men Made New, John Stott; Small Groups Manual; Building the House Church, Lois Barrett; The Shepherds Guidebook, Ralph Neighbor.

3. Family Activities. *GOAL*--The disciple will be able to help the younger believer begin to get his/her home ordered according to Biblical principles.

The disciple should:

Follow up on a younger believer with a family;

Help in improving communication in this family (BC1);

Help the person to get started in regular family devotions;

Help the person shepherd his wife, children (SIH).

Booklets for help: Becoming 1, Shepherding in the Home

Appendix 18
Caring for the Flock

There is a great deal of misunderstanding of what shepherding means, since we have so little contact with shepherds. A modern analogy would be that of an athletic coach. There is much in common between coaching an athletic team and pastoring a church.

The coach cares for his charges in such a way as to achieve a goal; namely, winning the game. This care is exercised in two ways. The first is instruction. He teaches what the team and each individual player need to know by having chalkboard sessions in a classroom setting. Then he oversees what actually goes on in the field as he puts his charges through drills designed to enable them to carry out their appointed tasks. He will often first demonstrate these himself and then coach them as they go through the particular motions. Both instruction and oversight need to be given to accomplish the goal.

The same is true in the church. In most cases we tend to err on one side or the other, giving much instruction and little oversight, or much oversight and little instruction. A careful balance must be maintained. We will see these two elements as we look at the various types of people who need shepherding in the church.

FOUR TYPES OF PEOPLE

To help prioritize the needs of the sheep, our experience has shown it helpful to distinguish between four categories of believers: *growing* believers, *new* believers, *dead-in-the-water* believers, and *troubled* believers. The most critical person to be shepherded to maintain the health of the church is the *growing* believer. Acts 20:28 makes this clear where Paul says “be on guard for yourselves,” meaning the other elders. Elders should be exemplary growing believers. They will be bearing fruit and thus will sooner or later become a focus of spiritual attack. If not carefully shepherded, elders are likely to become casualties of the war. Properly shepherded, they can be strengthened through the attacks, thus learning how to prepare others for leadership.

But shepherding *growing* believers often, in practice, receives lowest priority. Shepherds spend most of their time shepherding *troubled* believers. “The squeaky wheel gets the grease”. This is shortsighted and destructive. Unless the shepherds of the church are growing, the church will begin to struggle and eventually stagnate. Elders, deacons, and other growing believers must receive top priority for shepherding.

HOW DO WE SHEPHERD GROWING BELIEVERS?

1. The best way is simply to spend time with them.

Jesus spent most of his time with growing believers (His disciples) and He called them to “be with him”. It is important to have a developing relationship with growing believers so that you can be there in good times as well as in bad times. Growing believers often withdraw during times of struggle and too often we let them go. When they fail, they go completely underground and often, because we respect their privacy, we will not go after them. Privacy does not have as high a value biblically as we place on it in our Western culture. We need to go after them when they fail and encourage them, so that more can be learned from failure than from success.

2. Help them learn how to study the Bible on their own.

Most new believers rely on a survey method. They simply read or passage then wait for God to “speak to them”. But what happens once a person has surveyed the Bible four or five times? Growing believers need to determine what God is trying to teach them in their life and then study a book of the Bible with that particular theme, or use a concordance, Bible dictionary or topical index (e.g. Nave's), and dig out relevant verses for a topical study. This

greatly enhances their hunger for the Word, and encourages direct application to their lives.

3. Focus their prayer life.

I don't think we are ever really comfortable with our level of praying. We ought to keep growing in our prayer life. We ought to be praying regularly with another growing Christian and in this way learn from them as well as instruct them how to pray. We must be careful that prayer does not become routine and ceremonial but is an actual meeting with God in daily communion. We need to show a person how his prayer life reflects how he views God. Some of the best growth in my walk with the Lord has come as other Christians have been willing to point out how my prayer life reveals flaws in my view of God. It is especially important to teach people how to resist the evil one through prayer.

4. Involve them in ongoing discipleship.

Growing Christians need to be involved in on-going discipleship, facing barriers to spiritual progress as they arise, evaluating them, and learning how to overcome them. Elders need to think of what caused them to grow and evaluate their spiritual growth, and share this with growing believers in the congregation. They should also keep a list of helpful books.

5. Growing believers need “coaching” in working with newer believers.

Leaders should be taking growing believers with them as they minister to others. Jesus took his disciples with Him so that they would learn by His example how to minister. We need to take growing believers with us on evangelistic visitation, hospital visits, shepherding visits, counseling appointments, group Bible studies, etc. A good rule of thumb is for leaders to do as little as possible by themselves.

As opportunities develop, growing believers ought to be encouraged to take the lead in some of these ministries. The leader can then critique the growing believer afterwards and shore up his methods. This will uncover destructive priorities in the growing believer's life. Many growing Christians are stunted in their growth because of “busy-ness”, coupled with an inability to prioritize to do those things that are the most important. Both the leader and the growing Christian will be required to make good use of their time. Jesus called busy people to follow Him. It requires more than just a few adjustments to their schedule.

SHEPHERDING NEW BELIEVERS

The second kind of believer to shepherd is the *new* believer. New believers, like babies, often grow without being told to or without quite knowing how. Therefore, much of what was said above for growing believers can be applied to new believers. But we must add the following:

A good plan is to take one of the growing Christians you are working with and get them to shepherd new believers using the above concepts. This will keep you from getting over-extended. It will also lead to the establishment of discipleship chains

(See Stage 3, chapter 2).

1. Never assume anything about the new believers progress or knowledge.

Remember how it was for you when you were a new believer. Avoid spiritual lingo, which is not clearly understood by the new believer (and maybe not even by you!). Be careful that you clearly define any spiritual terms that you use.

2. Get them started immediately in the Word.

Remember that the Holy Spirit can teach them during the hours when you are not around. If they are good readers, get them to start surveying the entire Bible. Many Christians have not even read through the Bible. Encourage new believers to read through it as quickly as possible.

New believers may find certain parts of the Bible boring. Even though Chronicles may fascinate you, they may not be. Therefore surveying the Bible does not mean one reads it cover to cover. A better way to survey the Bible is to break it up into sections. (Usually we recommend 5 sections) They read one chapter from each section each day (or five chapters a day, which, for an average reader, takes 20 to 25 minutes). The Old Testament can be broken up into three sections: History (Genesis to Esther), the poets (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon) and the prophets (Isaiah to Malachi). The New Testament can conveniently be broken up into two sections: the Histories (the Gospels plus Acts) and the Writings (Romans through Revelation). Reading one chapter a day from each of these sections will enable a person to read through the Bible in a year. If a person finishes one section ahead of the others, he may start that section over again.

3. Have the new believer incorporate prayer with his reading.

I often encourage them to use the five sections and employ a bookmark with prayer requests on each one. This enables him to pray after each section of reading and keeps the prayer times short. Long prayer times for new believers often become discouraging because it is hard to keep their minds focused for long periods of time.

4. Encourage regular fellowship.

New believers need to know why the church is relevant to their well being. Don't assume that they understand the importance of the church in God's plan. Our society values independence, not corporate inter-dependence. As they get involved in a house church they will recognize that the church is a home base where they experience fellowship, developing shared values, shared goals, and a shared sense of purpose. New believers soon enough find out how out of step they are with the world, and may begin to wonder if they themselves are crazy. Without a good home base, they will soon be led to compromise their faith with the world.

5. Encourage service.

New Testament believers were not encouraged to sit and soak in the Word for a few years before serving, but rather were expected to utilize their spiritual gifts immediately. Certainly we all are growing. However, we should not wait until we are grown before we serve. Much growth comes through service as we learn of the power of Jesus "on the job". Encourage new believers to serve others in the assembly as well as unbelievers, as God burdens them. Do not get too caught up in spiritual gifts, since this often becomes self-centered. Rather, get them to focus on the ministry of the body.

SHEPHERDING THE DEAD-IN-THE-WATER CHRISTIAN

The third kind of person to shepherd is the *dead-in-the-water* Christian. He is the one who is bearing no fruit, even though he may be faithful in attendance, and often takes up his shepherds time and energy.

1. The first thing the dead-in-the-water Christian may need is time.

That is, time being exposed to a growing Christian. The enthusiasm and excitement of a growing Christian

walking a supernatural walk is often enough to motivate a dead-in-the-water Christian to break the cycle of passivity. I have often found that in talking to dead-in-the-water Christians, all they need is the encouragement of a growing Christian spending a little time with them.

2. Try to find out what is keeping them from bearing fruit.

Often it is ignorance that they ought to be bearing fruit. John 15:8 shows that fruit bearing is the proof of discipleship. One who is not bearing fruit, and doesn't see any need for it after he has been made aware of it, ought to be challenged as to whether or not he is saved.

3. John 15:7 reveals that the problem may be lack of prayer or abiding in the Word.

4. What went wrong?

Often a dead-in-the-water Christian was bearing fruit at one time but somewhere along the line got discouraged or had a failure and withdrew. Success is a very high value in our society and we don't accept failure easily. We need to teach people that God values our conformation to the image of Christ and this often involves apparent failures. We need to teach these believers to be God-centered rather than self-centered.

5. Often hidden rebellion is the problem.

The passive, dead-in-the-water believer has learned to cover up his rebellion in a way that makes it un-offensive. When rebellion is exposed it needs to be pointed out that God looks on the heart and is deeply offended by his rebellious children.

Some questions you might ask to dead-in-the-water Christians are:

Have you ever been fruitful?

If so, in what areas?

What caused you to cease bearing fruit?

What burdens do you have?

What needs do you see in the church?

What is your prayer life like?

What specifically do you pray for?

We will take our solution to caring for dead-in-the-water Christians from 1 Thessalonians 5:14. We need to be very careful to determine what kind of person we are dealing with.

- A. If he is *ignorant*, we might use John 15:1-8, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Also, encourage a growing believer to spend time with a comatose one, actually taking him out in ministry with him.
- B. If he *does not pray*, encourage him to find a prayer partner. Share practical ways God has dealt with you in your times of prayerlessness.
- C. If he is *rebellious* or unwilling to serve. Use Galatians 5:13,14 to show them that self-centeredness keeps them from serving the Lord. If necessary, an unruly brother may need to be admonished. Passivity cannot be tolerated any more than active rebellion. Both are equally sinful, even though passivity is more often tolerated in our churches. You might study

Galatians 5:13-17.

- D. If he is *fatigued*. Encourage the one that is tired out from ministry and perhaps has taken time off and is now finding it difficult to get back into things. Give lots of encouragement but also give practical help and training. The reason for burnout is often that a person is in over his head and relies on fleshly methods rather than spiritual ones. Especially encourage him to recruit others to minister with him. Often a prideful independence leads to burnout. Encourage him to get back into ministry with another growing believer you recommend. You might think of others in the church who have similar or complementary gifts and who can give further training and encouragement to the burned out brother. Encourage interaction and then follow up on it.

SHEPHERDING THE TROUBLED BELIEVER

The fourth kind of person who needs shepherding is the *spiritually troubled* believer. This person is in deep waters because of sin either in his actions or in his attitudes. I encourage a careful study of Ephesians 4:20-24. Sometimes new believers may fall into this category but often it is older believers, including ones who were at one time growing.

A careful study of Ephesians 4:20-24 and Romans 12:2 helps our work with these people. A critical point in both of these passages is that the troubled believer needs a renewed mind. Whenever a person is spiritually troubled, it is because of sin in his life. It may be active sin (wrong actions) or it may be sin that is hidden in wrong attitudes. Often there is a wrong view of God (especially who He is and what He has done in His atoning work) and a wrong view of man. Man is oftentimes elevated and it is thought that God deals very unfairly with us.

When shepherding a troubled believer, we must keep two things in mind about God. First, God is God (Psalm 100:3). He is sovereign. He has absolute power. He can do all things and all things are working according to His plan. We are accountable to Him; He is not accountable to us. Secondly, God is good (Psalm 100:5). God's word restores reality, perspective and truth. Perspective of God can be restored as we pray God's Word back to Him.

A troubled believer's perspective about himself also needs to be restored. He is sinful, deceitful, evil and helpless. He is not weak but wretched (Romans 7). A man walking after the flesh often blames everyone else, including God, for his problems. A mind must be undeceived. We need to turn on the lights. A person is accountable to God not only for his actions but also his reactions. His reactions often expose sinful, hidden attitudes. Many times we are sinned against but we are responsible to live righteously and not to sin in return (I Peter 2:18-23).

Healing for spiritually troubled believers begins with repentance. He must have a change of mind and heart about self, about God and about others. He needs to humbly accept the grace of God who forgives his sin and then walk in accordance with God's revealed will in His word. Usually some form of follow-up will be necessary. Once again, you might use a growing Christian to shepherd a troubled one out of the shadows and into the glorious light.

The shepherding that ought to be taking place in the church is extensive. But without it, the church will cease to become an organism and shortly become an organization. The shepherding of growing Christians is most critical. Without them, there will be far too much work for the elders of the church.

Appendix 19
Becoming One

This booklet is designed for couples who desire to find God's plan in marriage. It especially targets God's purposes in marriage and then lays a foundation whereby this purpose can begin to be accomplished.

The first two studies focus on the *unity*, or the corporate identity God desires in marriage.

The next two studies focus on *barriers to this unity*.

The last two studies focus on vehicles for achieving unity.

The studies are designed to be done by both the husband and wife together. They may then meet with a support group or individually with shepherds for accountability and help. Leading questions are provided in the studies to generate discussion. The studies should begin and end with prayer as only God brings supernatural unity. Usually the final question leads naturally into prayer. Pray together out loud.

Becoming One
STUDY #1 FALLING OUT

I. Read Genesis 2:18-25.

A. Why did God institute marriage?

B. What is the significance of the fact that Eve was taken out of Adam (vs. 21)?

1. What is Adam's view of Eve (Vs 23)? In what way would this have affected the way he treated her?

2. Compare this with Ephesians 5:28,29. What do you learn from the comparison?

C. Try to describe what Adam and Eve's relationship was like in the garden before the fall. You might include their communication, time together, sex life, and cooperation in the tasks God gave them.

II. Read Genesis 3:1-24.

- A. In what ways was the relationship between Adam and Eve affected by the fall?

- B. The curse of God fundamentally altered the harmonious relationship between man and woman, indeed between all men and women (See Genesis 4:8). What effects of the curse do we see today?

- C. Man's struggle with woman and visa versa is an age-old struggle, stemming from disobedience to God and His plan. Through the ages, man has attempted to regain that perfect oneness using his own ability. This has been the focus of much great romantic literature. Look at Genesis 3:15 and compare this with I John 3:8. What is God's solution to this disunity? Are you willing to commit to God's solution no matter what the cost? Have a time of prayer committing yourself to the Lord and to His plan for your marriage.

Becoming One

STUDY #2 CORPORATE IDENTITY (TWO BECOME ONE)

I. God's purpose in creating Eve and instituting marriage was to complete man. Although some men and women may remain single, God's plan for man is still that he/she become complete not in themselves, but as they become part of another. We call this becoming part of another "corporate identity". In an age and culture which is characterized by "radical individualism" (as Chuck Colson calls it) the call to a corporate life and identity may at first sound foreign and unfamiliar. Yet the New Testament clearly calls us to a corporate life, both in His body as well as in the home. This must cause nothing less than a radical overhaul of our present Worldview if we are to "find what is pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8-10).

A. Examine Galatians 2:20. Try to define each of the "I's" used in the verse.

1. What is Paul saying about his life and Christ's life?
2. What do you suppose this means in practice? (You might look at 2 Corinthians 5:15, and Romans 14:7,8 for examples).

B. Look up the following verses and write what you learn about developing a corporate identity (some refer to developing it with a spouse, others with the body of Christ).

Ephesians 5:22,23

Ephesians 5:28-30

Ephesians 2:11-16

Ephesians 4:1-3

Ephesians 4:25

I Peter 3:7

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

I Corinthians 12:26,27

- C. The New Testament puts forth the new life in Christ as a life, which is shared between us and Christ as well as us and His people (Church). The Greek work *koinonia* can be translated “share” or “fellowship” by which we understand the deep bonds established by the work of the cross. This Fellowship (corporate bonding by which a new identity comes about) is one of the themes of the book to the Philippians. A cursory reading shows the deep relationship Paul shared with this church. In Philippians 2:1-3 he appeals to them for greater unity (Even this Godly church was struggling with interpersonal relationships--Cf. 4:2). When two or more individuals come together there will be differing values, goals, motives etc.

Take a few minutes to reflect on where you and you wife differ in goals and values. What are a few of these?

- D. In order to develop corporate unity, there needs to be a supernatural molding of the individuals together to form a new, corporate man (Cf. Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31-33, 2:15). This can only be done “in Christ”. Values and goals are two areas where God needs to work to make the two one.

Make a list of goals and values which need to be reviewed in your home in order that the two will become one. Don’t focus on resolving differences now; that will be the theme of a later lesson. Just try to draw up the list. A few suggestions are given to get you started. They may or may not apply to you.

GOALS (PURPOSES)

Develop strong corporate identity in marriage
Raise Godly children
Developing deepening sexual relationship

VALUES

Importance of family
Type and place of ministry (Each person, family as a whole)
Use of home
How money is spent
Use of time
Lifestyle
Entertainment
Manners
Personal hygiene

- E. Look at Philippians 2:2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being completely united) how would you rate your corporate unity with your spouse? How well have you become one?
- F. Developing a corporate identity is much like sanctification, a lifetime activity. So don't get discouraged. The next studies will be helpful in continuing in your corporate growth together. Have a time of prayer that you will be willing to be open to growth toward greater unity no matter what the cost.

STUDY #3 BARRIERS (PART I)

- I. Just as sanctification requires repentance, growing in corporate identity requires us first to detect things which stand in the way, so that we can turn from them and press on to the unity which the Holy Spirit desires us to have (Ephesians 4:1-3). This study on barriers will focus on understanding and appreciating the inequities in relationship.
- A. Let's look first at our relationship with our risen Christ. Jesus is Lord, God, Sovereign king, invisible, all knowing, all powerful, etc.
1. Looking at the above descriptions of Christ, how are we different from him?
 2. How does the fact that He is Lord and we are His servants bring inequity (radical, unchangeable differences) to our relationship with him? (Cf. John 15:9-11)
 3. How does this relationship restrict us?
 4. Do the inequities and restrictions in this relationship ever frustrate you, disturb you, or make you angry? Explain.
- B. In our American culture we are trained from early on that all men are created equal and free. It is a powerful value. This often causes us to judge any inequity in relationships as "unfair". Inequity and restrictions within relationships are seen as "bad". However, we have seen above that our relationship to Christ is inequitable by nature and carries with it restrictions. We may neglect to look at these from His viewpoint.
1. Can you think of any inequities or restrictions, which would look different when, viewed from Jesus' perspective?
 2. One area is that we are often called to obey Him without fully understanding why He commands us to do something (a walk of faith). How do you respond when commanded to follow without fully knowing why?
- C. The Roles of Husband and wife are also by nature inequitable though complementary.
1. Can you think of any obvious inequities in the relationship based on the nature of man and woman? (A look at Genesis 2:18-24 (Cf. I Corinthians 11:3,7-9) and Genesis 3:16-19 may help you get started with inequities stemming from creation and the fall.)
 2. Look at Ephesians 5:21-33, I Peter 3:1-7, and Titus 2:3-5. Make a list of the different Roles of Husband and wife.

HUSBAND'S ROLE

WIFE'S ROLE

3. The way each couple works out these roles in the marriage will vary from couple to couple. Never the less, there are distinct, God-given roles for husband and wife. The husband/wife relationship is inherently inequitable yet complementary. How are the elements of these roles complementary and essential in the home?

4. God has created us in particular ways to bring glory to His name. His commands are not burdensome (I John 5:3) but rather designed with our true nature in mind. When we surrender ourselves to Christ, he places a new nature in us which desires to seek His will. The tension is that our old flesh is still very much alive and seeks to serve self rather than deny self to serve God. The flesh is deceptive and easily led by the devil (Ephesians 4:22). It must be countered by taking our stand on God's word against our previous ways of thinking. For the believer, regeneration is followed by an ongoing process of repentance and renewing of the mind (Ephesians 4:22-24) leading to a transformed life (Romans 12:2).

Not accepting God's guidelines will result in frustration and, ultimately, alienation. Have you accepted God's role (restrictions) in your own life? Have a time of prayer for repentance and/or commitment to God's plan for you as a husband or wife. Pray that He will continue the process of renewing your mind through His Word and His Spirit, so that you will grow in your understanding, faith, and commitment to do what pleases Him.

Becoming One
STUDY #4 BARRIERS (PART II)
The Flesh

- I. You have probably found that simply knowing the truth does not always enable you to obey it (Him). What is the problem?
- A. Look at Romans 8:5-8, and Galatians 5:16,17. What is the problem? How deep is it? (Romans 7:14-25 probes this.)
- B. Look at Galatians 5:13-17. Who is the flesh interested in serving? Who is the Spirit interested in serving?
1. When the flesh is in control, what results? (Look at vs. 15,19-21,26). In what areas is the flesh evident in your marriage?
 2. What is the solution? (Cf. Vs 24, Matthew 16:24,25, Luke 13:3)
- B. The solution is simply (though not easily) to become God centered rather than “me” centered. By our own strength this is impossible. The flesh causes fragmentation and chaos both in our relationships and in our own being. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to deliver us from these patterns of destruction through repentance and renewing of the mind (Romans 8:12-14; Romans 12:2).
1. When the Spirit is in control, what results (Galatians 5:22,23)?
 2. In what areas have you seen the ministry of the Spirit working in your marriage, bringing greater unity and harmony?
- II. Attempting to develop a corporate identity with your spouse (or the church) will always be resisted by your flesh. The tendency for the flesh to create barriers is especially likely when differing goals and values lie at the root of the problems. Often the marriage becomes a battle ground between two wills to see whose will prevails. Or quiet manipulation behind the scenes may serve to determine whose values and goals take precedence.
- A. What are the recurring problems in your relationship?

- B. How do you respond when this problem(s) comes up in your marriage? (Next study we will begin to examine positive patterns of communication, which can help in overcoming conflicts.)
- C. What differing goals or values might underlie this conflict?
- D. The solution to this chaos begins when each person in the relationship realizes that God's will (not ours) needs to prevail. (This can be especially difficult if each has learned how to carefully wrap their goals and values in the garb of Godliness--the heart is desperately wicked!). Indeed God has brought the two persons together with all their differences to form something new and beautiful!
1. Look at Genesis 2:20-23. The words of vs. 23 were literally true! How would that affect the way Adam interacted with his wife in terms of seeking what was best for them when there was conflict?
 2. Look at Ephesians 5:28,29 in light of the last question. How should this affect the way we interact with our spouses?
- E. Once a couple has realized that the good of the corporate whole is what is far more important than the individual good (indeed this usually costs the individual), then the two can repent from their self-centeredness (deny self) and begin to set their minds on finding what is best for the corporate man.
1. You may need to have a time of repentance before God and acknowledge where you have sought your own will and not His (the good of the corporate unit as revealed by God). Look at your answer to II #2 above.
 2. You may need to go to your spouse and make restitution as well (Cf. Matthew 5:23,24).
 3. What does John 12:24,25 promise for those willing to die to themselves? Praise Him for the faith to believe such a truth!

Becoming One
STUDY #5 COMMUNICATION

- I. It goes without saying that good communication is required for relational unity and corporate identity. Only communication, which promotes deepening, ongoing understanding enables two individuals to re-examine long held values and goals in order to realize God’s purposes in their life. This study will look to learning and evaluating good communication. The next study will look at communication in the midst of conflict.
- A. Good Communication skills grow out of our relationship with our Lord. Since our horizontal relationships (with other, visible people) are connected to our relationship with the Lord (Cf. Matthew 25:31-46), let us begin our evaluation of our communication skills by looking at our vertical relationship with Him.
1. Good communication requires regular time together (Cf. John 1:39-43). Do you take regular time to talk with the Lord? Honestly evaluate your prayer life.
 2. Good communication requires good listening (I Corinthians 2:11-13). We listen to God when we read His word. The New Testament reveals the teachings and words He shared with the apostles. We also need to listen as the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the particular real-life situations in which we find ourselves. A good listener will find himself sensitive to the Spirit's convictions and encouragement's as he walks in the world. He needs regular times of study, confession, repentance and rejoicing as the Spirit leads him in the ongoing task of sanctification. How good a listener are you?
 3. Relationships require much work. When we stop working on them they stop growing. What are your weaknesses in your relationship with the Lord? Ask your spouse to help you evaluate your walk with the Lord (esp. looking at “B” above).
 4. The Bible teaches that the basis of our fellowship with one another is our relationship with Christ (Cf. I John 1:3). Do you and your spouse have a regular time of Bible reading and prayer together?
- B. If our relationship with our spouse is to deepen and grow, we must work on our relational skills in our marriage, which is the most important of our horizontal relationships. The following are elements necessary in good communication. Look up the verses and evaluate yourself in each area, then ask your spouse to evaluate you.
1. Time together (see A above).
 2. Listening (Proverbs 18:13, James 1:19)
 3. Openness and honesty (Ephesians 4:25)
 4. A receptive, understanding attitude (I Peter 3:7)
 5. Asking good Questions
 6. Getting beyond yourself to understand the other (Phil. 2:1-4, Eph. 4:1-3)
 7. Self-Control (Ephesians 4:26,27)
 8. Careful selection of words, tone of voice, etc. (Eph. 4:29, Proverbs 12:18)
 9. A charitable and patient spirit (Eph. 4:31,32)
- C. Good communication requires you to be vulnerable in the relationship. Pain as well as joy

awaits those who commit themselves to corporate unity. Fear and self-protection are real barriers, which often have to be repented of and overcome with the help of God's Spirit. Commit yourselves in prayer to this corporate path.

- D. Because vulnerability is required in a relationship, and we are all sinners, hurt will occur. Therefore forgiveness is essential in maintaining a healthy relationship. Look at Matthew 18:21-35.
1. For the Christian, what is the size of his/her debt with God?
 2. What has God done about this debt? How did He do it? What did it cost him?
 3. How does the size of this debt with God compare with the debts others have incurred against us?
 4. What should we do about these debts? Why?
 5. What does this mean in practice? (Think about what it means for God to forgive us.)
- E. Does it mean that we are to be permissive with each other's sin? (Look at Matt. 18:15-20)
- F. How should we confront one another and for what purpose?
One way to work this out in practice in marriage is to exercise a Covenant of Forgiveness. It works something like this:
- Step 1: The villain comes to the victim and confesses that he/she has done something wrong. He/she takes full responsibility for the action and humbly requests forgiveness. For example: "Honey I was wrong to get angry with you and lose my temper this evening." (No excuses!) If other restitution is required, offered it! (See Mt. 5:23,24).
- Step 2: The victim says "I forgive you" thus canceling the debt and letting the villain off the hook. The victim thus promises no longer to nurse a grudge by going over the injury in her mind (2 Cor. 10:5), telling others to gain sympathy, or throwing it in the villains face at a later date.
- Alternative to Step 1: If the villain does not approach the victim as specified in Step 1, then the victim follows the steps in Matthew 18:15-20 confronting the villain.
- G. Evaluate how well you are doing this in your marriage.

Becoming One
STUDY #6 COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT

I. When two sinners live under the same roof, conflict is inevitable. Dealt with properly, this suffering can bring about tremendous change and transformation in their lives. Conflict handled improperly, however, leads to withdrawal, fragmentation, mistrust and a progressive deterioration in the marriage relationship. Once again, different couples will handle conflict in different ways. This study will focus on how to handle conflict in ways, which will lead to transformation of the individuals and lead to deepening unity. Unfortunately, the only way to learn the lessons is by practice. Therefore, although this study may help you by simply reviewing it, the best way to learn these lessons is to go back to Study #4 section II and begin to work through areas of conflict in your marriage.

A. STEPS TO RESOLVING CONFLICT:

1. Define the problem. What underlies the problem? Does it arise from different opinions, convictions, values, goals? Some possible passages, which might help: Romans 14, I Cor. 8,.
2. Define your contribution to the problem (especially if it is an ongoing one).
 - a. Have you sinned against your spouse (in thought, word or deed)?
 - (1) Sins can be actions of omission as well as commission (e.g. the silent treatment is as sinful as cursing).
 - (2) Be especially careful in evaluating your words (Matthew 12:34-37). Beware of verbal overkill “you always, never”” Such exaggeration violates the law of speaking the truth on to another.
 - (3) Beware of justifying your reactions due to your spouse's sinful actions. You are accountable to God for your actions as well as your reactions (Cf. I Peter 2:18-23).
 - b. Is your flesh keeping you from seeing clearly? It might help to look over study #4. If so, have a time of confession and, if necessary, make restitution to your spouse. See Mt 7:1-5, 5:23,24.
3. Have a time of prayer and meditation praising the Lord for His plan and asking Him to give you clarity of sight. Ask Him also to show you what qualities He may be trying to develop through this situation. Thank Him for giving a partner who is able to re-shape and re-mold you even though it is painful. You might look at Hebrews 12:1-11 for some encouragement.
4. Plan times together when you can talk about the problem. Explore the things, which may be underlying this particular conflict (see #1 above).
 - a. Be certain your eye is clear and you have gone through the above steps so you can receive the full benefit of what the Lord has in store.
 - b. Open with a time of prayer acknowledging that all that will transpire in the discussion is done before Him. **THEN BE SENSITIVE TO HIS PRESENCE.** Times of prayer (for guidance, confession, repentance etc.) may help as you

- talk.
- c. Try to understand what the other person is saying. Saying it back to them is most helpful in understanding what the other person is saying.
 - d. Try to understand what may be motivating your spouse. Fear? Self-protection? Flesh? Bitterness over past hurts? etc.
 - e. Put your thoughts on the table openly and honestly, but also compassionately.
 - f. Evaluate everything in the light of God's word. If you are uncertain about what the Lord says about the problem, ask your shepherd or discipler, or study it from your Bible.
 - (1) Use a concordance or topical Bible to look up relevant passages and prayerfully study them.
 - (2) Go to a wise believer to ask advice and Biblical guidance.
5. If the underlying cause of the problem is different goals or values, which the two of you hold, but are allowed by Scripture, then this is a great opportunity to form a new corporate value or goal.
- a. Values are things, which must be embraced and thus must be done consciously and voluntarily.
 - b. It usually takes some time for this to happen, and therefore it may be necessary to plan a temporary solution until both come to an agreement. The temporary solution should graciously avoid all unnecessary offense (e.g. "I am not certain it is important how I hold my fork, honey, but I will talk to some Christians I really respect. Until I reach some conclusion, however, I will hold my fork according to your values".)
6. In the event persistent efforts do not resolve your conflicts, ask a wise brother to mediate between the two of you (I Corinthians 6:1-8). This "marriage counselor" should be a mature believer which both trust. If none can be agreed on by the couple, then ask an elder to recommend a counselor, and agree beforehand to work with him, whoever it is.

Paul says wisely to those who marry "such will have much trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you". I Cor 7:28. The single person would be wise to heed this counsel. For those of us who are married, we have no other choice then to give ourselves joyfully to this caldron of sanctification. May God grant us the grace to be conformed to His image in our marriage.

**APPENDICES
SECTION III
CYCLES**

Appendix 20

Church Reproduction Checklist

This checklist is a tool to help evaluate the forward progress of the church as she moves toward establishing new churches in her local area. This evaluation has been broken into three stages that coincide with the stages of development in the house church (See Overview in back). It should be used as a evaluative tool for church reproduction and can be changed to meet the current needs of the church. This checklist can be used for church wide evaluation as well as used by older leaders to determine where emerging leaders need training.

For each item in the checklist, place the number, which most nearly reflects your level of competence. Use the following numbering scheme:

- 0 = cannot or have not done this task
- 1 = learning to do this task
- 2 = have done this task adequately
- 3 = can help others learn to do this task
- 4 = have helped others to do this task

CATEGORIZING THE CHURCH

We encourage church leadership to evaluate the stage at which your church is operating as well as the progress the she is making if you are going to effectively reproduce. The following two criteria can be used as a start:

- I. Church Stages: Churches can be rated according to what stage they are working in as they plant new communities, thus saturating their area with the Gospel.

- Stage 1. Gathering
- Stage 2. Establishing the Community
- Stage 3. Reproducing the Community

- II. Church Progress:

- G: Growing-- that is making regular progress either within the stages or from one stage to the next.
- N: New Church Attempt-- just getting started.
- S: Stuck-- that is stuck at some stage with no progress in months.
- T: Troubled Reproduction-- probably it would be good here to distinguish between chronic versus acute troubles.

STAGE 1: GATHERING

What the Established church needs to do:

- _____ Develop an adequate prayer for evangelism and reproduction
- _____ Recruit a team of members who desire to begin a new work
- _____ Develop a set of Measurable Ministry Objectives concerning reproduction
- _____ Resolve conflicts arising within the team members
- _____ Develop relationships with target persons (local neighborhood targeted)

Evangelism

- _____ Bring Good News into these relationships
- _____ See a sympathy for the gospel develop in these friends
- _____ Start a gathering meeting among family and friends
- _____ Lead those interested into following Jesus
- _____ Become familiar with God's plan for the extension of the Kingdom in Acts
- _____ Baptize them
- _____ Prayerfully evaluate these friends for starting other gathering meetings

Disciple a Seeker/Believer to:

- _____ Learn Bible stories which will impact life practices from Old and New Testaments
- _____ Use a plan for personal Bible study
- _____ Repent of known sin and develop new patterns of life (Proverbs, Ephesians 4-6)
- _____ Live out Christ's life in the extended family (e.g. Matthew 5-7)
- _____ Develop godly patterns in marriage including resolving conflict, forgiveness, and reconciliation
- _____ Develop godly patterns of child rearing

STAGE 2: COVENANTING THE NEW COMMUNITY

- _____ Begin community meetings
- _____ The believers understand how the "one another" verses defines community.
- _____ The older believers take responsibility for writing a covenant, which defines community
- _____ Begin to identify disciple's gifts and calling in the community
- _____ Implement godly patterns of conflict resolution
- _____ The community covenants
- _____ The community celebrates the Lord's Supper

Leadership Development

- _____ Perspective leaders have baptized new believers
- _____ Perspective leaders are discipling new believers (discipleship chains)
- _____ Female members shepherd women in Titus 2:3-5 skills
- _____ Older women leaders teach newer women Titus 2 skills
- _____ Older men take responsibility for community meetings
- _____ Older men are presiding at the Lord's Supper
- _____ Older men functioning as shepherds
- _____ Begin to identify disciple's gifts and calling in the community
- _____ Understand the place of suffering in the Christian life (I Peter)

Peacemaking Skills exercised by the community

- _____ Forbearing and forgiving
- _____ Confronting, exhorting, reproving erring members
- _____ Shunning and disfellowshipping those persisting in sin

STAGE 3: REPRODUCING THE COMMUNITY

- _____ Intense teaching on reproducing communities
- _____ Community embraces goal of reproducing
- _____ Members begin to look for new men/women of peace around whom to start another community
- _____ New leaders character developed in context of marriage
- _____ Team leadership concepts taught and implemented
- _____ Discerning the will of the Lord by leaders and community, taught and practiced
- _____ Leaders place in conflict and peacemaking within the community, taught and practiced (Peacemaking, Stage 3)
- _____ Emerging leaders ordained by mother congregation
- _____ Leaders begin discipling new leaders
- _____ Women leaders recognized
- _____ Leaders of the communities start meeting regularly forming an FOB
- _____ Leaders initiate shepherding which leads to church discipline cases
- _____ Peacemaking skills between communities and leaders of different communities exercised
- _____ Vision includes recognizing, training and sending church planting teams to other cities & countries