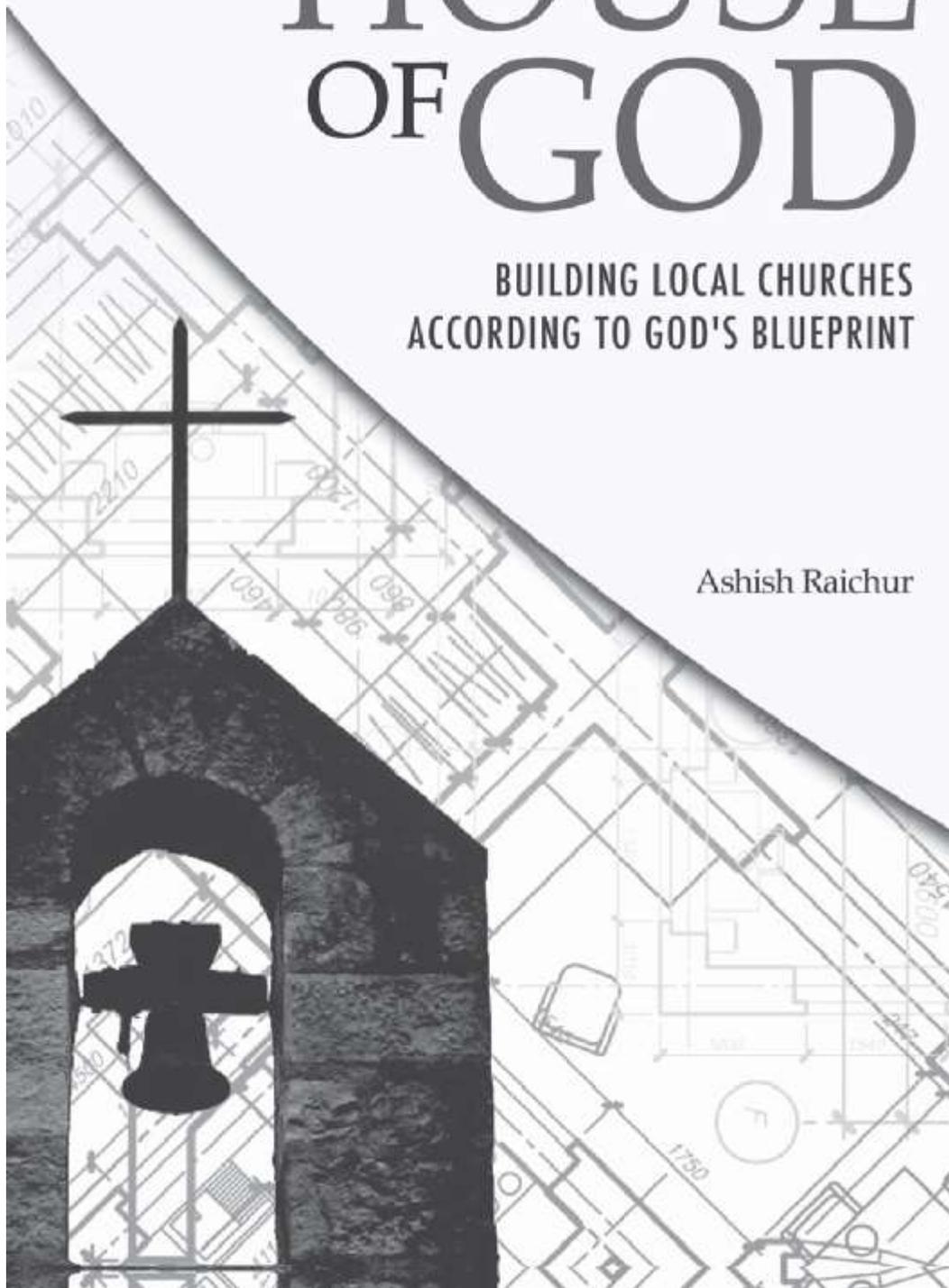


# THE HOUSE OF GOD

BUILDING LOCAL CHURCHES  
ACCORDING TO GOD'S BLUEPRINT

Ashish Raichur



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Produced and distributed by All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, INDIA.

First Edition Printed: March 2014

Revised Digital Version: June 2021

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# **The House of God**

**Building local churches according to God's blueprint**

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Body of Christ, God's people, in our beautiful land of India. Our prayer is that Pastors and all of God's Servants all across our nation, along with believers in their congregations will work together to build local churches according to God's blueprint. When Pastors and believers work together, empowered by the Spirit, to make this happen, our nation will never be the same!

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Blueprint**

A blueprint is a guide for making something. It is a design or pattern that can be followed. When we sit down to build something, we normally draw up a blueprint and then follow the design carefully. A blueprint helps you determine what to do. In this manual, “The House of God,” our goal is to discover God’s blueprint for local churches and local communities of believers. We also share practical ways to build local churches according to God’s blueprint.

Our goal is not to present a set of “methods” and “techniques,” but rather discover what God wants the local church to be. Each one of us will have to make our own journey with God as we develop our local congregations according to God’s blueprint. Each one of us will have to discover our own expression of this blueprint in our local communities. Since God is a creative God, He has many ways and many expressions of His blueprint.

The one common denominator is that we are all pursuing the same blueprint for each local church. The blueprint describes God’s design. It is God’s original intent. It highlights main characteristics. It describes key features. It points to important focus areas. When we follow His blueprint, we know we are moving in the right direction and will eventually arrive at the right destination for our local churches.

### **Your Ministry And God’s Blueprint**

Regardless of what your ministry is inside or in relation to the local church, it is important that what you do is aligned to God’s blueprint for His people. As a pastor or senior pastor your responsibility is to ensure that the local church is growing and developing in all dimensions according to God’s blueprint. As an itinerant evangelist, teacher, prophet, or apostle, whenever you minister to a congregation, your goal is to help impart and increase the congregation in some way according to God’s design for the local church. Whether you serve as a youth pastor, worship leader, in children’s church, in women’s ministry, in men’s ministry, or in small groups, you are working toward establishing God’s blueprint in the lives of His people in that local church.

Follow God’s design closely and you will not go wrong!

Blessings!  
Ashish Raichur

Section One:

# ORIGINS AND PURPOSE



## 1. THE CHURCH—ITS SPIRITUAL AND NATURAL DIMENSIONS

### “I Will Build My Church”

**Matthew 16:15-19**

**15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”**

**16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

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

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

**19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”**

The truth that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, God’s Anointed One), the Son of the living God was given by revelation. The Lord Jesus said that He will build His Church upon this revelation (rock), of who He really is.

Jesus said, *“I will build My Church.”* The Church is God’s idea. Denominations are man-made.

Jesus said, *“I will build My Church.”* The Church is His. No man or denomination can claim ownership of the Church (God’s people).

The “gates” represent the place where access is controlled. In Old Testament times, the gates protected the city. Some city gates were large enough to have rooms that housed soldiers who protected the entrance. Also, it was at the gates that the leaders sat to resolve problems, dispense, and execute justice for people. So, when the Lord Jesus uses the term, *“the gates of hell,”* this essentially represents “power centers” controlled by the devil and his demons. Gates are stationary—we advance to the gates; the gates do not come to us. The Church that Jesus builds will be a powerful Church that will forcefully advance and overthrow the gates (power centers) of hell (demonic powers). Within a local community or in a city, we can readily find demonic power centers—practices, ideas, places, social structures, and so on—that are presently energized and dominated by demonic powers. The Church must advance against these. The powers of darkness will not be able to stop the advancement of the Church that Jesus is building.

Keys represent authority. In Revelation 1:18, the Lord Jesus announces that He has the keys of hell and death. The keys of the Kingdom of heaven refer to the authority of God’s Kingdom. The Church that Jesus is building has Kingdom-authority vested in it. The correct rendering of *“whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose*

*on earth will be loosed in heaven*” is that we bind on earth what has been declared bound in heaven, and we loose on earth what has been declared loosed in heaven. So, with the Kingdom-authority vested in us, we (the Church) enforce here on earth what God has determined in heaven.

The meaning of the word “Church”

Church Gr. *‘ekklesia,’* *‘ek’* = out of, *‘klesis’* = a calling, to call

- Was used among the Greeks for a body of citizens gathered to discuss the affairs of the state.
- As a “gathering” of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose. In its literal sense, the word “Church” simply refers to a gathering together of those who have been called out, for a definite purpose.
- Called—a people who respond to a heavenly call
- Called out—a people who have come out of the world
- Called out to gather—a people who go together, not as individuals
- Called out to gather for a definite purpose—a people with a heavenly purpose

## **The Spiritual Dimensions Of The Church**

There are several things that the Scriptures reveal about the Church. We consider a few aspects of the spiritual dimension of the Church. There will be several other facets of the Church that we will consider, in the section on “God’s Blueprint.”

### **The Church Is Christ’s Body**

**Colossians 1:18,24**

**18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

**24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,**

**Ephesians 1:22-23**

**22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,**

**23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

Spiritually every believer is joined to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). The Holy Spirit has baptized us, (immersed, or joined us) into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Church is Christ’s Body. We are part of Him, united with Him, one with Him.

When someone receives us, they receive Jesus (Matthew 10:40).

When someone hears us, they hear Him. If they reject us, they reject Him (Luke 10:16).

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When someone does us harm, they are harming Christ (Acts 9:5).

Here are a few more aspects of what it means to be His Body.

### **The Church Is Eternal Because Christ the Head Is Eternal**

Since the Church is Christ's Body and Christ is eternal, the Church is also eternal. We will always, forever, be His Body—part of who He is.

The Church is not a temporary arrangement, but an eternal handiwork of God, serving to always point to God's abundant grace.

#### **Ephesians 2:7**

**That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

### **The Church Is Christ's Instrument to Execute His Purposes**

The Body executes what the Head commands, both here in this present age and in the millennium (Daniel 7:18). The Church is an active, dynamic, working entity. We are not to be passive, lifeless, and dormant on the earth. We are here to carry out what the Lord Jesus desires to be done on the earth. So, we must be actively listening to what He is speaking and then pursue to see those things fulfilled. Once we have heard from Him, we must understand that we have the complete authorization and backing of Almighty God to carry it out here on earth. Nothing can stop us.

God could have used angels, or many other things in His creation, but He has chosen to make us people a part of Himself, so that we could do His will here on earth, as it is in heaven.

The Church is the complete representation of Christ

#### **Ephesians 1:23**

**Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

#### **Ephesians 1:23 (MESSAGE BIBLE)**

**The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.**

#### **Ephesians 1:23 (AMPLIFIED BIBLE, CLASSIC EDITION)**

**Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all [for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and Who fills everything everywhere with Himself].**

The Church is the completeness of Christ. The full measure of Christ is revealed through the Church. Through the Church, the Lord Jesus is represented here on earth. He speaks and acts through the Church.

Every part of the Body is filled with His fullness. Christ fills every member with Himself. Each of us being part of the Body reveals Jesus to the world.

### **Every Believer Is a Member of Christ's Body—The Eternal Church**

**1 Corinthians 12:27**

**Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**

Every believer is a part of Christ's Body—the Church. We were brought into Christ's Body by the work of the Holy Spirit, who baptized (immersed, joined) us into one Body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### **Part of the Church Is in Heaven and Part of it Is on Earth**

**Ephesians 3:14-15**

**14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**

Believers who have died and gone to be with the Lord are still part of the Church—the family of God, in heaven. We who are here make up the Church—the family of God, here on earth.

### **The Natural Dimensions Of The Church**

**1 Timothy 3:14-15**

**14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;  
15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy who oversees the church at Ephesus. In referring to the local community of believers at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul uses the same terminology that is used to refer to the spiritual Body of Christ. He calls the local church as the *"house of God"* and the *"church of the living God."*

The local church is the natural expression of the spiritual Church.

The local church is called *"the house of God"*

The term *"household of God"* or *"household of faith"* is used for both the local church and the spiritual Church as we see in Ephesians 2:19 and in Galatians 6:10.

**Ephesians 2:19**

**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**

**Galatians 6:10**

**Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

The term “house” or “household” refers to a family. We will discuss more about this when we explore the local church as the family of God in the section on “God’s Blueprint.”

**The Local Church Is Called “The Church of the Living God”**

Both the spiritual Body of Christ and the local church are referred to as the Church of the living God. So many things that are said of the spiritual Church are applicable directly to the local church.

**The Local Church Is the Physical Expression of the Spiritual Body of Christ in a Certain Geographical Area**

We can therefore state confidently that the local church is a physical expression of the spiritual Body of Christ in a certain area. I am sure that when the Lord Jesus looks at a certain region, He does not look or pay attention to our denominations, name tags, and other things that we use to identify ourselves here on this earth. He sees all of us who are washed in His blood as His people. As the Lord see us, in a city (or in a region), there is one Church—the citywide church, comprising of all believers from all local churches. Serving the Church in the city (or in a region) are many local churches, ministers, and ministries. God allocates to each of us our specific roles, callings, and spheres of influence. We are part of what God wants to accomplish in and through His Church in the city. Each local church and those who are part of that local church have their respective functions in and toward the citywide church.

**The Local Church in a Certain Area Is Made Up of Members of the Eternal Church**

The local church is made up of believers who are all part of the spiritual Body of Christ, the eternal Church.

**The Local Church in a Certain Area Is Christ’s Instrument in That Area to Execute Christ’s Purposes**

As stated about the spiritual Body, the local church in a certain area, region, or city is Christ’s instrument to carry out His purposes for that region and beyond. We become His hands, feet, and voice in that region. Hence, every local church should see itself on a

heavenly assignment. We have a responsibility toward God and toward our community and beyond, to do what Jesus wants done.

### **The Local Church in a Certain Area Is Christ's Representation of Himself in That Area**

People in a certain region or area should be able to look at the local community of believers, the local church, and see Jesus. As His Body, we are Christ's expression to them. We are channels of His love and blessing to people around us.

### **The Local Church in a Certain Place Is the Family of God in That Place**

The local church is the place where we live together as sons and daughters of God—as the family of God. It is in the local community of believers, however small or large, that we build meaningful relationships, serve one another, care for each other, and nurture each other into Christlikeness.

### **Why Should You Be Part Of A Local Church?**

While it is true that a believer could be part of any local church, we must also understand the importance of being committed to a local church.

It is within a local church that you and I live out our membership in Christ's spiritual Body—the Church. It is one thing to belong to a spiritual Body, where a place, function, call, anointing, and gifting has been assigned to each of us as individuals. We must live all that out in the natural world for it to be of any value. The local church is a microcosm within which we actually and practically live out the place and function the Lord has given us in His Body. As the Lord determines, some of us may have a role that extends across many local churches and perhaps even in regions nationally and globally.

Bodily parts do not float around but stay together. The local church (E.g., church at Corinth) is compared to the human body. Each believer is like a part of the body. If we use this analogy to draw some practical thoughts, one very obvious inference is that bodily parts do not float around. They are "fixed," i.e., "committed" to one physical body. Yes, we do understand that in some situations, bodily parts can be transplanted. But the norm is that body parts do not float around. In like manner, it is biblical to emphasize that believers need to be committed to a local body of believers, small or big.

Many things in the Christian life happen in the context of community—of being together, growing together and working together. Just as in the human body, each part needs the other for the overall survival and growth of the body, so also in the local church we need each other if all of us are going to grow, mature, develop, and be fruitful for the Kingdom

## The House of God

of God. Our primary dependence is on the Lord Himself. In addition, He has determined that we also supply strength and nourishment to each other.

Character is developed as we sharpen each other.

Maturity happens as we learn from each other.

Our journey into our lives' calling happens not in isolation, but as others help us move into it.

New wine is found in the cluster (Isaiah 65:8). A single grape by itself produces some juice. But when a cluster is pressed together, we have more wine.

God's anointing and commanded blessing is released among a community of people, brethren who are dwelling in unity (Psalm 133:1-3).

We need to be planted if we are going to thrive. *"Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God"* (Psalm 92:13).

## 2. THE PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH—ITS MISSION, MESSAGE, METHODS

### Mission

#### Matthew 28:18-20

**18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

**19** 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,

**20** teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

In the Great Commission, the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to make disciples of all nations. He told them that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. However, He did not give them the exact methodology other than to go preach and teach.

As we look into the book of Acts, we see God’s strategy unfold. With the preaching of the Gospel, people are brought to faith in Christ. Then communities of believers, called churches are established to consolidate, disciple, and multiply what has started. So, the carrying out of the Great Commission results in the establishing of local churches.

The local church is God’s strategy for world evangelization and discipleship. The primary mission of the local church is world evangelization and discipleship through the eventual planting of local churches—communities of believers in every evangelized region.

### Message

#### The Gospel

We are to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the message of the cross of Jesus Christ—the work that He completed and the salvation, healing, deliverance, and redemption that is ours because of what He did.

#### 1 Corinthians 1:17-24

**17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

**18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

**19** For it is written: “I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND BRING TO NOTHING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRUDENT.”

**20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?**

**21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.**

**22 For Jews REQUEST a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;**

**23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,**

**24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

The Apostle Paul made it clear that his primary assignment was to preach the Gospel, which is the message of the cross of Christ. Regardless of what our audience desire— “a sign” or “wisdom” — our message remains the same. We preach Christ crucified. Though some may stumble at it, and others may find it foolishness, the message of the cross is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

### **The Whole Counsel of God**

As ministers, we are to teach and proclaim the whole counsel of God. We are to teach “sound doctrine” which includes teaching people how to live life in a manner that is worthy of bearing the name of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 20:20-21,27**

**20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,**

**21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**

**1 Timothy 4:6,16**

**6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

**16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**

### **Guarding Against Every Wind of Doctrine**

As part of our preaching and teaching we need to ensure that believers are protected and preserved from strange doctrines and erroneous philosophies of man.

We amplify truth to overcome error. We do not overcome error just by explaining the error, but by explaining the truth. When people understand truth, they will be able to identify error and stay away from it.

**Ephesians 4:14-15**

**14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,**

**15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.**

**1 Timothy 6:3-5**

**3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,**

**4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,**

**5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**

## **Methods**

The methods we use must be aligned to the standards and directives set forth in the Word of God. We cannot use carnal means to proclaim the Gospel and establish the local church.

### **Pure**

The methods we use must be pure before God and man. We must not use deceit or manipulation, to achieve our objectives.

We must be pure in the way we communicate God's Word. We do it with sincerity and as doing it before God. We do not use the Word of God to serve our own agendas or for our personal benefit.

**2 Corinthians 2:17**

**For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.**

**2 Corinthians 4:1-2**

**1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.**

**2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

We must be careful in the way we conduct ourselves in ministry, so that no disrepute will be brought to the ministry. But in all our conduct, we show that we are ministers of God.

**2 Corinthians 6:3-4**

**3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.**

**4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,**

Here is an example of how careful we ought to be in the way we do things in ministry. Titus was ready to go to Corinth to collect money from the Corinthians to help with the needs of the believers at Jerusalem and Judea. However, Paul sent along with Titus another brother, who not only had a good reputation but was also selected by the

churches to travel along with Titus to carry the finances over. Paul explains that he did this, to avoid any blame that they (Paul or Titus) would take any money for themselves. He was ensuring that he was right not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men.

**2 Corinthians 8:18-21**

**18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,  
19 and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,  
20 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—  
21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

**Not Offensive, Yet Without Compromise**

Our methods in ministry and our preaching must not intentionally offend people. Our objective is to point people to the truth in the person of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. We do not compromise the truth but speak it in love. We cannot do anything more, if people are still offended by the truth, even when it is spoken in love.

**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**

**32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,  
33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.**

**In Demonstration of the Spirit and Power**

Christian ministry is really the work of God's Spirit through His people. It is therefore supernatural. The power of God working through us will result in signs, wonders, and miracles taking place. This is how the Lord Jesus did ministry and this is how He taught His disciples to do ministry. The early Church, which represent to us the kind of Church that Jesus began to build, continued to minister in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

**1 Corinthians 2:4-5**

**4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,  
5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

**1 Corinthians 4:20**

**For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.**

While it is true that today we have modern tools, methodologies and have come up with many organizational skills, and techniques for ministry—these can never and should never be a substitute for ministering in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

## **Spirit Directed**

The plan, strategies, and methods used by the local church in ministry must be directed by the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts depicts this for us so clearly. While the believers went about doing what they knew they had to do, we see the Holy Spirit giving them specific directions, at times altering their plans, and thus being the ultimate Director of what was being done. Even so today, as we plan, strategize, and execute, we must remain yielded to the leading and directives of the Spirit of God.

### **Acts 8:29**

**Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."**

### **Acts 11:12**

**Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.**

### **Acts 16:6-10**

**6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.**

**7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.**

**8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.**

**9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."**

**10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**

## **Strategic**

The local church must be strategic in its methods. To be strategic means to move with God, in step and in time with Him, and aligned to His leading, so that we are positioned at the right time, at the right place, doing the right thing to minister to people. God always works purposefully and in due season.

- Purposeful—doing the right thing that God wants done.
- Timely—doing it at the right time.
- Adaptable—changing our approach, as directed by God. Different methods for different kinds of people.
- Well planned—having foresight and foreknowledge of things and being prepared.
- Well executed—doing things with excellence so that God is glorified.

## **Relevant**

God communicates with us in ways we can understand. He speaks our language. So also, the local church must speak to people in its community and to people it is reaching in ways that are relevant to them today.

### **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

**19** For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;  
**20** and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;  
**21** to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;  
**22** to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.  
**23** Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

- We must be relevant without compromising the message.
- We must use methods and means that help people understand and apply the message.
- We must remain sensitive to the culture without being controlled by the culture. God is greater than the culture.

### 3. THE GOVERNMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

#### The Evolution Of Local Church Government And Structure

When the Lord Jesus delivered the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations, He only instructed His followers to wait in Jerusalem to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to be endowed with power to be His witnesses. Luke records that during those 40 days between His resurrection and ascension, the Lord Jesus appeared and spoke to His disciples about “*things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). We do not have a record of what these things were. It appears that He did not speak to them at that time about strategies on how they were going to carry out the Great Commission or about establishing of local churches in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Hence, the Jerusalem Church was birthed seemingly without clear directions on what its government and structure ought to be. What we do see unfolding in the book of Acts, is that as time progressed, the government and structure of the local church evolved and developed, with a few clearly identifiable roles. Beyond this, the New Testament does not necessarily prescribe a specific governmental structure or necessary roles, titles, and positions.

Our approach therefore is to understand what the New Testament presents for the functioning of the local church and then use God-given wisdom to define a government and structure that best implements what the New Testament presents. I believe each local church should have the freedom to implement church government and structure in a manner that best suits its functioning. Later, in this book, we share some of the ways we have implemented government and structure, and lessons we have learned. We share these simply to pass on our learning, and not as something that has to be copied entirely. Our underlying premise is that whatever government and structure we use for the local church, it must successfully implement God’s Blueprint for the local church.

#### First Local Church—The Church At Jerusalem

- There was only one Church in Jerusalem and hence it was one local church which was also the citywide church.
- There were a 120 people on the day of Pentecost who recognized the 12 apostles of the Lamb, as their leaders. Pentecost happens around AD 30.
- Peter seems to be the initial leader, or at least one of the main leaders, having preached the inaugural message on the day of Pentecost and thereafter being the focus of attention of the religious leaders in the city. Peter later moves out to Judea and James takes over the leadership of the Jerusalem church.

- Later, as time progresses, in Acts 15 (AD 49) at the First Council in Jerusalem, we see the Apostle James as the primary leader of the Jerusalem church delivering the final decision.
- Paul also meets with James personally when he comes to Jerusalem (Acts 21:8) and addresses James first, as the primary leader in his epistle (Galatians 2:9).

## Emergence Of Deacons

Subsequent to the 12 apostles who were in leadership at the inception of the Jerusalem church, the first role we see emerging is that of “deacons.”

### Acts 6:1-6

**1** Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

**2** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

**3** Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

**4** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

**5** And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

**6** whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Seven men were selected to help with the daily distribution of food. These seven men were selected because they met the following criteria:

- Honest report,
- Full of the Holy Spirit,
- Full of wisdom,
- Took responsibility for daily distribution of the food.

It is quite interesting that such high spiritual requirements would be made for men who were going to do something as routine and mundane as distributing food each day.

While we know that these seven men were not called “deacons” at this point in Acts 6, we recognize that the role they played eventually came to be called “deacons.” In his epistles to the various churches: Rome (written about AD 60), Philippi (written about AD 64), and to Timothy (written about AD 67), the Apostle Paul recognizes the role of “deacons.” In his pastoral epistle to Timothy, Paul recognizes the role of a “deacon” as part of the local church government and outlines the requirement for deacons in 1 Timothy 3.

Deacon Gr. *‘diakonos’* = helper, servant, attendant, one who carries out the orders of another. These are primarily leaders attending to administrative matters of the local

church. Their role most likely covers the office areas of “helps” and “administrations” given in 1 Corinthians 12:28.

**Romans 16:1-2**

**1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,  
2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.**

Phoebe was a servant (Gr. *‘diakonos’*) of the local church at Cenchrea. Women can be deacons too. She was responsible for certain administrative matters (business) of the church, and in doing so, was a great help (assistant) to many people.

**Philippians 1:1**

**Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:**

Paul greets the believers in Philippi and addresses those in leadership—bishops and deacons.

**1 Timothy 3:8-13**

**8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,  
9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.  
10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.  
11 Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.  
12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.  
13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

Deacons were to adhere to godly standards like spiritual leaders in the local church.

**Deacons Can Engage in Spiritual Ministry**

Some of the deacons were also involved in spiritual ministry. Stephen worked signs and wonders (Acts 6:8) and Philip later planted a church in Samaria.

Deacons can be involved in both administrative work as well as in spiritual ministry. We must not restrict deacons only to administration and helps. As God empowers them, we must also permit them to engage in spiritual ministry.

**New Churches Raised**

As we progress in the book of Acts, we see the increased persecution in Jerusalem which causes believers to scatter out of the city. Consequently, new churches are raised in various places:

Acts 8 (AD 32)—Philip, a deacon was used by God to preach the Gospel with signs and wonders, and to plant a local church in Samaria.

Acts 9:31-32 (AD 37-45)—Churches were raised up in other regions like Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Lydda.

Acts 11:19-27 (AD 45)—A local church is raised up at Antioch. There were two cities with this name, one situated in Pisidia in Asia Minor (see Acts 13:14); the other, referred to here, was situated on the Orontes River, and was for a long time the capital of Syria.

All these new local churches were planted by ordinary believers who went about preaching Jesus and doing signs and wonders in His name. It reveals several important facts:

- Believers, and not just the apostles, in the Jerusalem church were equipped and practiced preaching the Gospel and working signs and wonders.
- Churches can be planted without an apostle or prophet. God can use anyone to plant a local church in a place. The Holy Spirit uses ordinary saints and deacons to start local churches. On the other hand, just because God uses someone to start one or more local churches, it does not make that person an apostle.

## Emergence Of Elders

### Elders at Jerusalem

In Acts chapter 11 (AD 46), we see the leaders at Jerusalem referred to as “elders.” *“This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:30). The “elders” included not only the apostles but other spiritual leaders like Barnabas, and prophets like Agabus (Acts 11:27-28) and others who had been raised up by this time at the Church in Jerusalem.

### Appointing New Elders

During their first missionary journey (AD 47-48), Paul and Barnabas return to the communities of new believers in various places and appoint elders.

#### Acts 14:21-23

**21** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

**22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

**23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Ordain (Gr. *'cheirotoneo'*) means to elect to office, or to vote, by stretching out or elevating the hand, so the word simply means “to elect, appoint, or designate to any office.” The word here refers simply to an “election” or “appointment” of the elders. These “elders” were selected from among the community itself. It is obvious that at that point these “elders” were young believers themselves, but perhaps were “older” in age, and showed signs of spiritual maturity. It also seems to indicate, by the use of the word “ordain,” that there was a general consensus among the people as to who these elders should be. The appointing of elders was with prayer and fasting, and hence was a spiritual exercise rather than a purely administrative appointing.

Elders (Gr. *'presbuteros'*). The Gr. *'presbus'* means elderly; older, a senior, elder of age.

The word “elder” comes from the Greek *'presbuteros'* from which we get the word “presbyter” which is used in some churches these days. In its original sense, the presbyter refers to a spiritual leader and can be used for anyone in spiritual leadership.

### **Apostles and Elders—One Leadership Team**

Later in the First Council at Jerusalem (AD 49), we see the apostles along with the elders at Jerusalem deliberating over the problem of whether the Gentile believer had to be circumcised as per the Law of Moses.

#### **Acts 15:1-2,6,22**

**1** And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

**2** Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this QUESTION.

**6** Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

**22** Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

This indicates to us that there were many more spiritual leaders at Jerusalem who had been raised up and functioning as leaders in Jerusalem. The apostles and elders came together to discuss this serious matter, indicating that these new leaders were recognized and respected for their leadership. The Church in Jerusalem as well as the new churches being raised elsewhere recognized the leadership of both the apostles as well as the elders (Acts 16:4).

## Elders at Ephesus

Later, in Acts 20, the Apostle Paul calls for the elders from Ephesus to meet with him at Miletus, where Paul had stopped, while on his way to Jerusalem. Paul recounts his two years of ministry at Ephesus and gives his final words to these leaders.

**Acts 20:17,28**

**17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.**

**28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

The word “overseers” comes from the Greek *‘episkopos’* which is also translated “bishop” (1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25).

So, the elders or presbyters were also referred to as overseers or bishops. They were to “feed” (Gr. *‘poimaino’*) means to tend as a shepherd, from which we get the word pastor (Ephesians 4:11 Gr. *‘poimen’*).

The New Testament uses the terms bishop, elder, presbyter, and overseer interchangeably (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4). All of them were to spiritually feed or “pastor” God’s people. The elders along with the apostles were involved in the teaching and spiritual ministry of the local church.

People in the five-fold office were also referred to as elders (E.g., prophets Judas and Silas, Acts 15:27,32), but not every elder was considered part of the five-fold office.

The role of an “elder” (presbyter, bishop, overseer) had to do with three important things:

- Spiritual maturity—set a godly example of the Christian life.
- Spiritual ministry—labor in Word and doctrine.
- Spiritual oversight—guard the sheep.

## Emergence Of Ministry Teams In The Local Church

Although the Church in Jerusalem began with the 12 apostles in leadership, not long after that we see both “apostles” and “elders” in leadership at the Jerusalem church. They served the people together as a leadership team.

Similarly, in the church at Antioch, Barnabas was the first leader appointed there, and he got Paul to join him (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas and Paul taught the Word at the newly planted church. Then in Acts 13:1 in about two years, we see three more people becoming part of this team of prophets and teachers (or prophetic teachers) at the local church. So, there were five elders at the church in Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and

Saul. This was a multi-cultural team that was serving the local church at Antioch. Barnabas was an ex-Levitical priest, Saul was highly educated in Judaism, Manaen was brought up in the courts of King Herod, Lucius was from Cyrene, north of Libya.

## **Emergence Of Senior Leaders Or Pastors**

As the New Testament church matures, we see senior leaders or pastors emerging out of the elders who were solely responsible for the local church.

As we have already pointed out, in Acts 11 (AD 46) the Church in Jerusalem has a team of elders or spiritual leaders. This included the apostles as well as other spiritual leaders. We then notice that among them, the Apostle James becomes the senior or primary leader. In Acts 15, we see James as the primary leader at the Church in Jerusalem and he is the one who makes the final decision at the First Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. Paul also meets with James personally when he comes to Jerusalem (Acts 21:8) and addresses James first, as the primary leader in his epistle (Galatians 2:9).

Timothy is appointed as “pastor” of the local church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Timothy was to appoint bishops and deacons in the church (1 Timothy 3:1). Timothy is given leadership over the elders (1 Timothy 5:1,17,19).

The closing book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation was written around AD 96. In Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus addresses His messages to the angel or messenger (singular) of each local church. This implies that there was one individual responsible for each local church being addressed. It was the “angel” of each local church that was held in the right hand of Jesus (Revelation 1:16,20).

### **Revelation 2:1**

**To the angel** (Gr. *‘angelos’* = messenger) **at the church at Ephesus.**

The Greek word *‘angelos’* simply means “messenger” and can be used either for an angel or a human person as messenger. It is quite obvious that the Lord Jesus could not be addressing an angelic being, for several reasons. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we see an angel being put in charge of a local church or churches. The specific instructions and warnings given to each church, can only be applicable to human persons and not to an angelic being. Hence it is safe to state that the Lord Jesus was addressing each message to the primary leader (senior leader) of the local church in each region.

So, the local church at Ephesus progressed from having elders (Acts 20:17) to having a senior leader (Revelation 2:1) in a place of leadership and responsibility of that local church.

The primary authority in a local church is the senior leader who is responsible both to feed and guide the local church. The Lord Jesus will hold the senior leader responsible for all that happens in the local church. The senior leader could himself be in any five-fold function, that is, be an apostle, pastor, or a combination of these, as the Lord has called him or her. Hence the senior leader may also be referred to as pastor, senior pastor, and so on. In a local church, elders, deacons, and other five-fold ministries co-exist and function together, under the leadership of the senior leader.

## **Five-Fold Ministers And Team Ministry**

One of the outstanding features we see in the book of Acts is team ministry—where the apostles, elders, and those in the five-fold ministry all worked together for the strengthening of the local church as well as for the advancement of the Kingdom, through planting and nurturing new churches.

The Church at Antioch is an interesting case study and here are some important lessons we can draw from the Antioch church:

- The local church is the place where ministries are to be birthed, equipped, and released.
- All ministries, five-fold ministries and others need to be rooted in a local church for spiritual refreshing and accountability.
- All ministers, pastors, elders, deacons, other five-fold ministries, and other believers co-exist and function together in a local church, complementing, supporting, and enriching the local body, without competing, with each other.
- The calling and ministry of some people will require them to go out to the world or to the Body of Christ at large, whereas others may be called to minister within their local church body.

## **Different Forms Of Church Structure**

### **The Clerical System**

- Mainline traditional denominations, e.g., Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and so on.
- Distinction between the clergy and laity. Most of the work is done by the clergy.
- The local parish clergy are under the control of the hierarchical structure above them.
- Local parish clergy get moved across parishes.
- Usually there is a three-fold order: Bishops, priests, deacons.

### **The Elders System**

- Led by a group of elders
- Has shown reasonable success in establishing good local churches.
- Cooperative leadership, in some cases may cause difficulty in casting a single vision in which case, progress could become sluggish or stifled. However, when there is unity and consensus, team leadership becomes powerful.

### **Independent Local Churches**

- Led by individual pastors with pastoral teams.
- Plenty of room for vision, creativity, and growth.
- However, danger of totalitarianism/dictatorial leadership, which can be very harmful.
- Failure in proper succession in some cases, which can leave years of hard work in ruins.

### **Network of Churches**

- Assemblies of God, Vineyard, New Life Churches, many others.
- There are different ways how each network is organized. Overall a useful model.
- In some cases, there is the danger of too much control, abuse, competition among churches within the network.

### **Apostolic Networks**

- Network of churches relating to an apostle.
- Has the benefit of multiplying a single vision and focusing geographically.
- Danger of becoming man-focused.
- Danger of authoritarianism.
- In some cases, emphasis on “covenant-relationships” (other than what we already have in Christ) leads to cultic tendencies.

### **House Churches**

- Dissatisfaction with large churches (or) inability to meet in large settings.
- Has benefits of close relationships, care, and nurture.
- Lack of accountability and support if not connected to a larger overseeing network. However, this requires a lot of effort in overseeing numerous house churches.
- Due to limited resources, inability to accomplish in a larger context and impact society in a big way.

### **Cell-Based Churches**

- Have been highly successful in growing large congregations and still maintaining a strong sense of community. Perhaps one of the best structures.
- Difficult to implement in some contexts due to drastic shift in mindsets that is required, or due to work cultures.
- Danger of splinter groups forming and tearing away from the main congregation has caused some pastors to stay away from adopting this structure.

### **Mega Churches**

- Successful churches soon evolve into “mega churches” with congregations of 2000+ people (Could be denominational or Independent churches).
- Common element among mega churches: They are led by a strong teacher or preacher who is also a strong visionary and organizationally good. Pastoral element becomes less practiced and less important to the senior leader and is often delegated to the team.
- Can have major impact within the community and nationwide. Can engage media, have national attention, do a lot more for domestic, and world missions.
- Mega churches are not inherently bad or dangerous. The same problems affect both small congregations and mega churches (E.g., moral failure of leader, misuse of funds, and so on). However, because of their visibility, any failure or problem in a mega church gets media attention and public criticism, while failures in small congregations go unnoticed by public.

### **Multisite Churches**

- One church with many locations in a city. Some are across cities.
- Provides geographical access to many people.
- Gives opportunity for many more people to serve and more leaders are raised.
- Provides a way for congregations to engage in missions easily—by planting more sites, through a well-established local church model.
- Provides the advantage of shared resources, shared learning.

There are pros and cons, strengths, and weaknesses for each model. There is no perfect structure. Whatever form of church structure we have or use, we must be aware of and leverage the strengths. We must also be aware of the potential dangers and guard ourselves against them.

## Reformation In Church Structure

### New Wineskins Needed

**Luke 5:37-38**

**37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.**

**38 But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.**

The Lord Jesus presented a simple and yet important truth here: new wine requires new wineskin.

Since the 1400s, the Body of Christ has seen three major restorative moves of God:

- Reformation of theology starting with Martin Luther. This changed our knowledge of God.
- Reformation of spirituality starting in the 18 Century. This changed our experience of God.
- Reformation of structure. Since the last 30+ years. This changed how we ministered to one another and the world.

As the Lord Jesus continues to build His Church and bring it to a place of maturity, we must adapt ourselves—our local church government and structure to follow along with what He is doing.

### Equipping the Saints

Christ's intent is that every believer does the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Much of the old order (wineskin) of church government and structure could not allow for this to happen. In the reformation of church structure, we are witnessing a new way of doing church, where every believer can be involved in doing the work of the ministry, and the church develops into the blueprint Christ has given to us in Scripture.

The wineskins (government and structure) of our local churches should stand ready to grow and expand, as we receive the great outpouring of God's Spirit and extend His Kingdom. This means that as a local church journeys with God, and as God deals differently in different seasons, our wineskins (government and structure) will need to adapt to these.

### **Pursuing God's Blueprint**

As we will see in the next section, the Scriptures reveal God's blueprint for the local church. Regardless of what form, government, and structure that a local church or denomination wishes to pursue, our primary objective should be to carry out what Christ intended for the church. The blueprint that we will explore in the next section captures this for us.

### **Denominational, Non-Denominational, Independent, Apostolic**

Regardless of the structure or affiliation of local churches, we must learn to respect and work across denominations.

We must not look down on people because of their denomination or other church affiliation. The real question is, "Are they truly part of God's Kingdom and walking in Him?"

We must encourage each church or denomination to pursue God's blueprint for the local church.

## 4. STAGES OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Just as a human being develops from a baby to a toddler, to a playful child, a teenager, a young adult, then into an adult, and on into the senior years, so also local churches go through stages of growth and development.

We will look at the Jerusalem church and the Antioch church to observe some milestones in these local churches as they developed, and then discuss a commonly recognized growth pattern for local churches from their inception and thereafter.

### Case Study: The Jerusalem Church

- Born during the feast of Pentecost.
- Started in a powerful way, grew very quickly through signs and wonders.
- Focus was on small group meetings in houses and they also met together in the temple.
- Everything in the church was initially handled by the apostles—even though there were thousands in the local church.
- Deacons were appointed later to handle food administration. These deacons also were strong in the Spirit and were involved in ministry.
- Multiplication came about because of persecution.
- Initially, the apostles remained in Jerusalem although other believers and the deacons dispersed.
- Some of the expansion was directly orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.
- After some years, the Jerusalem church had elders who were part of the leadership.
- Prophetic ministry teams were sent from the Jerusalem church to minister at other locations.
- Seemed to cope well with rapid growth initially. Used small group meetings effectively during rapid growth.
- Maintained a good balance between mighty manifestations and strong teaching to establish believers.
- Established a strong sense of community and sharing of things.
- Resolved internal conflicts well.
- Apostles remained in Jerusalem to keep the primary base strong.
- Apostles and elders resolved doctrinal issues well.
- Seemed a little slow to raise up second and third lines of leadership. Perhaps too focused on key leadership (apostles).
- Apostles did not seem to get too involved with new churches directly.

## Case Study: The Antioch Church

- Started by believers who were scattered from Jerusalem due to persecution.
- Established through supernatural demonstrations.
- Received the leader (Barnabas) sent from Jerusalem to strengthen them. Barnabas became the first “pastor” of the church in Antioch.
- Welcomed another leader (Paul) brought in by Barnabas to strengthen them.
- New believers were disciplined through teaching.
- Identified with Christ. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch.
- Received prophetic ministry (Agabus from Jerusalem). They allowed other ministries to come into the church and impart into the life of the church.
- Involved in social work—sent relief to Jerusalem church.
- Saw the emergence of more leaders and the development of ministry teams in about two years.
- Leaders were in fellowship with one another and ministered to the Lord.
- Involved in missions—sent out apostolic teams to pioneer new churches. They released their senior leaders into apostolic ministry.
- Became an apostolic mission base for apostles and prophets, and missionary teams (Acts 15:36).
- Disagreement between the two key leaders, Paul, and Barnabas, caused these leaders not only to part company, but perhaps even distance themselves from the Antioch church (Acts 15:35-41). We do not hear of them returning for any length of time to Antioch, until Paul visits much later (Acts 18:22). The church seemed to have continued, but without its two main leaders. Not much is mentioned about the Antioch church after that.

## Stages Of Growth

The local church should not stagnate, or else it will become a breeding ground for the wrong kinds of things, just as stagnant water becomes a breeding place for diseases.

There are several stages of growth and development that a local church normally goes through if it continues to progress into higher realms. In his book, “Apostolic Strategies Affecting Nations,” Dr. Jonathan David outlines several stages that a church usually progresses through. We have adapted key points from this:

### Pioneering Stage

- The church planting team and leaders establish commitment to a territory where the Lord has sent them.
- Laying the groundwork through prayer, intercession, reaching out, building bridges with the community that is being reached.

- It is the foundation-laying stage. You are going down, instead of going up. But a strong and deep foundation is necessary for future growth. Typically, the higher you are going to build, the deeper you must dig to lay the foundation.

### **Administrative / Organizational / Structural Stage**

- As the congregation begins to grow, establish well-defined systems and processes to serve the people.
- Assign roles and functions for various ministries that the Lord releases in your midst. Establish godly standards and guidelines for your ministry team so that new members who come in uphold these values.
- Do now what you will do even after you have increased in numbers. Put processes in place when you have 50 people in attendance, which you will maintain when you have grown to 500 people or 5000 people.
- New ministries can be birthed by the Spirit in one of two ways: (a) The Lord gives a vision of what needs to be done, and as you declare that vision, God stirs up people who will step into it and carry it out (b) The Lord may raise or send people with certain gifts and callings, and you recognize these and create opportunities for them to function, and a new ministry (or ministries) are birthed.

### **Pastoral Team Stage / Team Ministry / Senior Pastor Stage**

- Establish a leadership team to carry out several areas of the ministry.
- The founding pastor moves into a senior pastor role providing overall vision and direction for growth and expansion.
- Continuously create room and opportunity for developing leaders who understand and are committed to the vision God has given. Spend time nurturing new leaders.
- The more trust you give, the more faithful your leaders will be.

### **Equipping Stage / Building Stage / Trainer Stage**

- Focus on equipping the saints so that the entire church is mobilized into ministry. It is no longer just the leaders doing the ministry, but everyone is involved.
- Emphasis on supernatural ministry and moving everyone into the realm of signs and wonders, and the prophetic.
- The senior pastor focuses on equipping and imparting, while much of the pastoral/care ministry is provided by others in the pastoral team.
- The church begins to penetrate the community and catches a vision for missions.
- Believers are ministering to one another and to the world.

### **Apostolic Function Stage**

- Establish an apostolic mindset. Outward-focused rather than a focus on internal care. All other processes in place to continue to equip the saints.
- The senior pastor and others have more time to go out and gain new territory for the Kingdom of God.
- The church begins to actively reproduce itself in regions beyond.
- Believers have an apostolic mindset and are ready to sacrifice, go to new places and extend God's Kingdom in other regions.
- The local church becomes more of a "missions-base" rather than a spiritual nursery.

### **Leading A Congregation Through Various Stages**

As pastors, we need a lot of wisdom, anointing, and grace to lead our congregations (local church) through various transitions. Change is necessary. Only then can the church grow and mature. As pastors or senior leaders, we will have to change, so also the congregation. As leaders we will have to move from a purely pastoral caregiver role toward apostolic leadership. Our congregations will have to move from being people who come purely to be cared for and nurtured, to becoming an apostolic people who have a militant and pioneering spirit to go out and take new ground for God's Kingdom. Going through these changes is not easy, but it is necessary if the local church is to truly be "salt and light" in the community and beyond.

Here are a few pointers that will be helpful as we make this journey.

#### **Constantly Move People Forward**

Point people to where they should go. We tend to get comfortable with where we are and like to "settle" down there. However, to make progress, we have to be willing to let go of the here and now and keep journeying into what is next. So as leaders we need to constantly remind people that there are new levels to move up to and new realms in God for us to press into.

#### **Bridging Across Two Levels**

Minister to people at their spiritual level and stretch them to the next level. We must be intentional about stretching people spiritually to the next level. So, our teaching and preaching must stretch their spiritual capacity. We begin by feeding a baby with only milk. But then we slowly introduce semi-solid (mashed up) food, and then solid food, and so on. Similarly, we need to take God's people into deeper levels of truth, higher realms in the Spirit, higher realms in worship, prayer, and intercession, and into more aggressive

movement for the advancement of God's Kingdom. We cannot jump from step one to step ten. So, we climb slowly, yet steadily, step by step.

### **Leading Change**

When we know it is time to transition, we must step up as leaders to help the congregation to change. We need to exercise a lot of patience as we go through the process of transition. We may face different reactions from different sets of people in the congregation. Sometimes people do not like change. Sometimes people do not see the need for change. Sometimes people feel they are not ready for change. We need to patiently show them from the Word where God wants His people to go and what God wants His people to become. Help people see that we are moving into God's purposes. Change always requires taking risks. Help people prepare for change.

### **Right People in the Right Place at the Right Time**

Sometimes for change to happen, we may need to change leadership of a certain ministry area. Perhaps the present leader has reached his or her ceiling and is unable or unwilling to move things up to the next level. We must be able to recognize this and with much grace, and wisdom, make room for a new leader to take responsibility for that area of ministry, so that things can move up to new levels.

### **Adapting to the Challenges of New Levels**

Each time you transition into a new level of growth, there will be new kinds of challenges. Be ready. If you as a leader have been preparing yourself, you will be able to rise to these challenges. Tap into God's wisdom, as well as draw from the counsel of other mature and experienced ministers of God. For example, if you move your congregation into becoming more prophetic, to hear from God, do and speak what God is saying, we could have some people who go off on a tangent with this truth. They may use the "God told me" phrase for everything, become unwilling to listen to instruction from the Word or godly counsel. People may not test prophecy and could end up in trouble. So, there will be challenges with this transition. However, this should not keep us from pressing into the realm of the prophetic, learning to hear God accurately and moving with what the Spirit is saying.

Overall, leading a local church through various stages of growth and development is challenging, but also extremely exciting. To look back and see where we were and to where God has brought us, always fills our hearts with so much gratitude, and awe toward the Lord! And then to envision the future and to press into it, is a great adventure!

## 5. WHAT MAKES A STRONG LOCAL CHURCH

Before we focus on becoming a large congregation, we must focus on being a strong local church. We must build strength into the local church body. A strong local church will naturally grow and have impact and influence on its community, and in regions beyond. If all we have is large numbers of people, who remain as babies, then we only have a large nursery that constantly needs our attention to have their needs met. However, if we have a congregation of people who are strong, they can go out and do much for the Kingdom of God. We become a strong army, extending God's Kingdom.

Here are some important characteristics of a strong local church:

### **A Church Where There Is Strong Leadership With A God-Given Vision**

It is important to have a God-given vision of what the Lord wants to do in and through the local church, and what the Lord wants the local church to become. Without this vision, we are unproductive (Proverbs 29:18). We keep going around in circles or may wander aimlessly not knowing where to go.

The vision begins with the leader. If the leader has no clear vision, then it is just like the blind leading the blind. *"And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch"* (Matthew 15:14). As a leader, we must communicate the vision clearly to people, so that people can know where God is leading all of us, align ourselves to the vision, and begin to work toward it. We must keep repeating the vision as people tend to forget it.

In addition to a clear vision from God, we also need strong leadership who have the courage, perseverance, and discipline to lead people into fulfilling that vision. Leadership is important. If the shepherd fails, the sheep are scattered (Zechariah 13:7). A good, godly leader can take people into God's best for their lives, while an erroneous leader can lead people into destruction. *"For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed"* (Isaiah 9:16).

### **A Church Where There Is A Balanced Emphasis On The Word And Spirit**

We are strengthened by the Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God builds us up (Acts 20:32). God strengthens us by His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16). We need to steadily nurture people in the Word of God and in their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

As we do this, there are five focus areas where we need to strengthen the local congregation: (1) Evangelism (2) Discipleship (3) Prayer and Worship (4) Fellowship and (5) Equipping for ministry

### **Evangelism**

We equip God's people to share the Gospel and win others to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The local church should continually reach out to the unsaved in many ways.

### **Discipleship**

A disciple is one who has been trained to be Christlike in character, conduct, and service. So, we teach people how to live the Word of God in everyday life, addressing all areas of life, faith, and conduct.

### **Prayer and Worship**

As a congregation we must continuously increase in prayer and worship. Prayer and worship create an atmosphere for spiritual ministry as we gather. God speaks in the midst of a worshipping and praying congregation. Through prayer and worship, we change the spiritual atmosphere over our city.

### **Fellowship**

Fellowship is simply living out in daily life the relationship we have as sons and daughters of God. We are part of the same family and we live this out in real practical ways by caring for one another, supporting, helping, and nurturing one another.

### **Equipping for Ministry**

Every member must be fully equipped, activated, and released to fulfill their calling. We begin by helping believers understand that each one has a place and function in the Body of Christ. Every believer is a minister. We then show them how to discover their gifts and grace and provide opportunities for them to serve inside or outside the church.

We must equip believers in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. We must encourage believers to impact the community and other regions. We need to empower them and release them to do this. We must send ministers out and reproduce what God is doing in our midst.

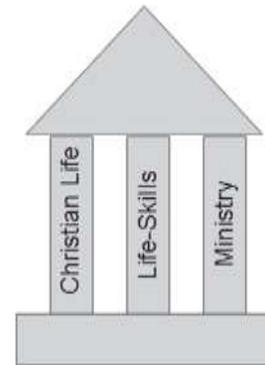
## Preparing For Pulpit Ministry

Keeping the above five areas in mind, we must take our ministry from the pulpit very seriously. Each opportunity we have, to stand behind the pulpit to minister God's Word and the work of His Holy Spirit, must be done with a definite purpose. We are not just filling up time in a Sunday service or a weekly service. Each time we minister, we are nurturing people in one of these five areas.

I like to balance the teaching and preaching of God's Word across three areas:

- **Christian Life:** teaching people how to live the Christian life, e.g., developing disciplines of prayer, reading God's Word, walk of faith, authority, who we are in Christ, and similar topics.
- **Life Skills:** teaching people how to live God's Word in daily life situations, e.g., school, college, making decisions, marriage, career, family, handling finances, and other similar topics.
- **Ministry:** teaching people how to minister and serve others with the anointing of God and the gifts of the Spirit.

I keep a watch on what we preach and teach from the pulpit to make sure that we are giving sufficient time to develop God's people in all these three areas.



God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and so I seek inspiration not just for one sermon, but for the entire year. I try to have a plan for the year or ensuing years of where the church should go and prepare to take people there. I usually draw up a plan on what topics we will be teaching or preaching for the year and prepare the Sunday sermons accordingly, to take people where God wants us to go as a local church.

In Bangalore, while we are one church, we have many congregations that meet at different locations. Since we need to coordinate across many church locations in our city, and across various departments (worship, performing arts, audio and video, media, and so on), we usually prepare sermon topics or titles two to three months in advance and let the teams know what is coming up, so that all of us can prepare toward that. We do all this being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We remain open and yielded to any unexpected change the Lord desires to bring and are free to move in the directions the Lord is leading us.

## **A Church Where People Are Of One Heart And One Mind**

### **1 Corinthians 1:10**

**Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

### **Mark 3:25**

**And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.**

One of the most destructive things that can happen to any local church is disunity and division. When there is any kind of strife that causes the local church to become divided internally, it weakens the Body, causes a lot of wasted time and effort, people get hurt, and the church begins to fall apart.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to speak the same thing, to be of the same mind, to flow together in perfect unison, and to ensure that there are no divisions among them. I believe that this is possible, otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have required this of the believers.

As pastors and leaders, we must teach people to be of one heart and one mind. Teach people to be Kingdom-minded and do things with pure motives and for the glory of the Lord. Constantly encourage people to work in teams, to work together, and to combine each other's strengths. We celebrate the success of teams and create a culture of teamwork. If we sense any kind of cliques or divisive groups forming, we must immediately address that and get people to eliminate such tendencies.

A lot depends on the pastor or leader. If the pastor or leader himself (or herself) is insecure, puts people down, is divisive in nature, works by manipulation, operates by a "divide and rule" approach, backbites, controls, slanders people, the local church will be a reflection of this. In a case like this, change must begin in the heart of the leader, or else the local church will continue to be a breeding ground for division and strife. However, if we as leaders are secure in who we are, have a clean heart, operate with integrity, without partiality, and do things with a good spirit, people will catch on and replicate the same in the congregation.

## **A Church That Is Equipping And Releasing People Into Their God-Appointed Function**

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

**11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

**12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**

One of the objectives of each of the five-fold ministry gifts is “*for the equipping of the saints*” so that saints can do the work of the ministry. God does not desire for people to remain as spiritual babies. New believers need to be disciplined and then equipped to become ministers of God. Eventually, many of them will grow into becoming leaders in the house of God. A strong local church will be intentionally moving people along this growth path.

I like to picture it as a roadmap with these four stages. My goal is to continuously move people along in their development, nurture people through teaching and preaching, create opportunities, give responsibilities, so that they can serve and grow into their calling.

Some may serve within the local church; some may serve God outside the local church and some others will have ministry both inside and outside the local church. Either way, our goal is to gradually get everyone to discover what God has planned for them and to fulfill His calling as ministers. We constantly emphasize that “every believer is a minister.” We try to create a culture where everyone is serving the Lord in whatever way they can.

## **A Church That Is Relevant To The World It Is In**

### **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

**19** For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;  
**20** and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;  
**21** to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;  
**22** to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.  
**23** Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

God speaks in the language of the people whom He is speaking to. The Apostle Paul, in describing how he went about ministry essentially sums it up saying, “*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*” I like how the Message Bible renders these verses: “*Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life*” (Vs 19-22). In other words, Paul attempted to communicate in a way that the people whom he was trying to reach would understand the Gospel, and also see it in him.

The world around us is changing. While we do not change the Gospel message, we have to adapt how we communicate the Gospel to people, so that people in our world can understand and receive the message. The local church has to be relevant in the community that it is in. We also need to address real-life situations and challenges that people are facing, from the Word of God. We have to help people know how to apply the Word and the things of God in their world.

If we are not relevant, people will not be able to understand what we are communicating. We will be preaching the eternal truth of God's Word, but if it is not in the language of the people, they may not understand what is being given to them.

Being relevant also means that we keep changing and adapting the way we communicate to present times. The message does not change. But how we communicate, the methods we use to communicate keeps changing with the times in which we live.

## **A Church That Is Raising Up Leaders**

**Galatians 2:9**

**And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.**

Leaders are pillars in the house of God. A large house or building will require many pillars. This means that we will need many leaders to build a strong local church.

Raising good leaders takes time. It also requires that we as senior pastors or senior leaders have a heart for nurturing leaders around us. We must not be insecure. We need to provide room and opportunity for others to rise. We should be willing to let go of some of our responsibilities and areas of work so that others can have the opportunity to take them up. We should watch over leaders, be patient with their mistakes, correct lovingly, and cheer them on in their growth. There will be some heartache and pain in the process of raising leaders. Not every person is going to turn out as they should. But it is worth all the effort. The more leaders a local church has, the stronger it will be. The more leaders a local church has, the more it can do as a Body.

## **A Church That Is Able To Establish Continuity**

**2 Timothy 2:1-2**

**1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**

**2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**

As senior leaders or senior pastors, we must remember that we are not permanent. A time will come when we will have to move on, either to a new mission field that the Lord takes us to, or over to His eternal glory. It is important to start thinking and planning for our departure. We must continuously raise up those after us, looking at one, two, or even three generations (decades) after us. So for example, if a senior leader is presently in his 40s (about 40 years of age), in addition to leaders who are older than him or his peers, he should also be nurturing those who are in their 30s, 20s and some who are still in their teenage years. Of course, many of the leaders we raise may grow, mature, and move on, perhaps to things outside the local church. We never know and we do not control people's lives, and their future. However, we are doing our part to ensure continuity by constantly nurturing younger leaders. God may choose one of them to take our place when it is time for us to move on. Ideally, we need to work with those about 20 to 25 years younger than us and start nurturing them, as they would be the likely age group from among which God would raise up the next leadership, who would then carry the baton for coming generations.

**Judges 2:7-11**

**7 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.**

**8 Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old.**

**9 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.**

**10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.**

**11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals.**

It is important that while we are still here that we impact as many generations as possible after us, so that the work of the Lord will continue long after we are gone. Otherwise a generation may arise who have no idea of the early days and what the Lord has done in history. Hence, it is important that we create a culture of nurturing young leaders, so that everyone understands the need to do this and is actively doing so. We must also leave an inheritance to bless succeeding generations. We need to leave behind the main teachings, the central truths, an understanding of the calling, and mantle on the local church, so that generations that come after us can easily grasp these things and stay aligned to these. One good way to do this is to record the preaching and teaching and keep it accessible to all. Another way is to put these down in print so that those who come after us can read and learn from what the Lord has imparted to us.

I realize that most pastors would tend to look to having their own children continue the work of the ministry. This is fine, if they have been genuinely called, anointed, and gifted by God to do so. However, if God has called, anointed, and gifted them for something else, e.g., business or some other vocation, it would be very wrong to force them to continue the ministry, just because we want to keep things within the family.

## 6. CHURCH GROWTH PRINCIPLES

God desires for all of us to be fruitful. The Father is glorified when we are fruitful (John 15:8). One aspect in which the local church must be fruitful is in continuously winning people to the Lord and growing in numbers. Millions of people live in and around most cities and towns. It would be very unjust to be content with keeping the Gospel of Jesus Christ to ourselves, so that we can remain a “small and cozy” local church. We do injustice to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the price He paid, and the commission He left us with, if we do not preach the Gospel and keep bringing new people into the Kingdom of God and assimilating them into local church congregations.

Church growth results from a healthy combination of spiritual and natural efforts. There are things we must do in the spiritual realm and things we need to do in organizing ourselves in the natural. While God will work in diverse and unique ways through each of us, there are some common principles we can apply as we work toward winning souls and seeing the local church grow.

David Yonggi Cho is co-founder and the senior pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) in South Korea. In 1958, he started the church using a discarded military tent with only five members. Within 30 years, the number of the members of the church increased up to 800,000. YFGC is the largest church in the world and in Christian history.

Through the books he has written and through his teaching in church growth seminars, Yonggi Cho shares key principles that the Lord taught him and which he used, to experience church growth. We outline these key principles here.

### **Have A Vision Of A Large Growing Church**

Church growth starts in your heart. Start with the vision in your own heart. Vision and dreams are the foundation for church growth. The church is built in your heart. Show me your vision for your church, and I will show you your future church. The church grows through your visions and dreams.

Vision is powerful because it is the language of the Holy Spirit. You must see your church in your spirit clearly and the Holy Spirit will cause that to be realized in reality. Visions and dreams are the language of the Holy Spirit to communicate with the spirit.

When you embrace the vision, the vision will embrace you. It is not you that makes the vision, but it is the vision that makes you. When you have the Holy-Spirit-inspired vision in your heart, then the vision is going to make you. The vision will change you. The vision will help you.

What you can see, you can handle. God calls things that are not as though they are (Romans 4:17).

What you can see, you can have. God told Abraham, the land which you can see, I will give to you (Genesis 13:14-18)

God is like a limitless reservoir. If you connect to this reservoir with a little pipe, all you have is a little drip. If you connect to this reservoir with a huge pipe, you will have rushing rivers of water. That pipe is your visions and dreams that you connect to God with.

The fourth dimension is the spiritual realm where the Triune God dwells. So, let the Holy Spirit teach you the language of the Holy Spirit—the language of dreams and visions. Then keep those visions. Keep those dreams. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Obey His leading in your life. Live in God's visions and dreams. Think in terms of miracles. The school of Andrew invites us to listen to God's vision, to think in terms of possibility, to give what we have with faith and let the Lord do the rest.

### **Have A Strong Burning Desire For A Large Growing Church**

You must have a burning desire and zeal to see your church grow.

Your desire gives power to the vision, and your vision increases your desire.

When you have desire, you will pray day-in day-out, and you will work tirelessly.

### **Engage In Continuous Prayer And Spiritual Warfare**

Pray to have revival.

Prayer breaks the power of satan and brings the presence of the Holy Spirit. You must bind the strongman, so that you can bring people out of his grip. Through prayer we bind satan and his evil forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit

We must be a praying church. We must enjoy praying. We must never consider it a burden to pray.

The longer we pray, the deeper we can experience the spiritual union with the Holy Spirit.

The power of prayer makes it easier to evangelize and to preach the Gospel.

### **Maintain Strong Faith In God**

You must be determined to stand in faith to see the vision fulfilled. Faith is the substance of things we hope for, and the evidence of things we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

You may not feel faith—faith is not an emotion. Faith is a choice. You choose to believe. You already have a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). Do not worry about the size of your faith (Matthew 17:20).

You must speak your faith. Call things that do not exist as though they did (Romans 4:17).

You will face many difficulties during church growth. We must stand on the Word of God and trust God.

### **Have Close Fellowship With The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church. The Holy Spirit builds the Church.

We must have a deep communion with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). He is our Senior Partner. We must depend on Him. We are called to develop an intimate and personal relationship with Him.

When we have the presence of the Holy Spirit, we will see the miracles of Jesus. We must recognize, cultivate, and allow the Holy Spirit to manifest His gifts in the church.

First, we must develop our fellowship with the Holy Spirit by spending time with the Holy Spirit, to listen to Him and share our feelings and thoughts.

Secondly, we must develop a partnership with the Holy Spirit in all our activities. It is the Holy Spirit who is our Senior Partner. We are only His junior partners. Our responsibility is to listen to our Senior Partner. The vision must come from Him. We only implement His plan.

Thirdly, we should facilitate the transportation of the Holy Spirit to bring the love and grace of God to us, and to take our prayers and supplications to God.

Finally, we should always remember that we are united with the Holy Spirit. We are no longer individuals apart from the Holy Spirit.

Four-step process of incubation (or birthing) of vision given by the Holy Spirit:

- First, incubation must be done in the context of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit and in faith. incubation must also be done in faith.
- Secondly, we should ask clear-cut objectives. We must ask specifically and definitely.
- Thirdly, pray for assurance.
- Fourthly, when we are assured, we must give thanks to God and positively proclaim everything through our mouth.

Church growth does not depend on our human capabilities and strategy. Church growth is more than a series of ideas, principles, and techniques. Since the Church belongs to the Holy Spirit, a church can only grow if the vision comes from the Holy Spirit.

### **Preach To Demonstrate God’s Power, Meet Needs And Release Blessings**

Your preaching must bring heaven to earth. Your preaching must meet people’s needs right now through Jesus Christ. We must preach and minister forgiveness, healing, casting out devils, feeding the hungry—everything that represents the Kingdom of God.

God wants us to be successful and prosperous in spirit, soul, and body. Successful life or prosperity means the three-fold blessings: spiritual blessings, material blessings, and blessings in health.

Understand the difference between prosperity and greed. Prosperity is God’s blessing to His children to meet their needs, to glorify God and to bless others. Greed is a characteristic of the devil.

### **Equip And Engage Believers In Ministry**

We cannot save people using a fishing rod, we need to use a net. Thus, we must use the “laity”—all believers in our congregation.

Cell system at YFGC started in 1964 and provided opportunity for every believer to be involved. Train the laity (believers) to win souls and take care of people. The cell system is a cobweb of love.

As senior pastor, Yonggi Cho’s focus is on prayer and ministering the Word, all his associate pastors watch over the cell leaders in their area. The cell leaders visit homes and take care of people. The people love one another, win souls, and take care of each other.

Sutrisna Widjaja of the East Asian Pastoral Institute, summarizes the following in his thesis: *“The Concept of the Church According to David Yonggi Cho:”*

The Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) can accommodate up to 75,000 people in each of the seven services on Sundays. Their worship services are prayerful, joyful, well-prepared, relevant, and life-transforming. At the YFGC, the whole church is organized around the “cell system.” The cell system is the foundation and the main program of the church. All departments and activities are to help the cell system work better. The physical church building is a kind of training center, but the ministry of the church takes place mainly outside the church building. The church is out there in houses, apartment buildings, offices, and factories. The worship service is a time of celebration together, but most actual ministries happen in the cell groups. The church building can be destroyed, the pastor can be replaced, but the cell groups will remain the strength of the church.

For the YFGC, the message of salvation from Jesus Christ is experienced in a concrete way in the cell groups. A cell group is a church in the spirit of the New Testament church (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35). It is a church of five to ten families which meets weekly from house to house. It provides a Christian community where people can experience a concrete Christian culture. They know one another and, provide emotional and spiritual bonding as well. In their cell, Christians learn to love, to support, to care, and to nurture one another. When somebody is in need, many will help immediately. When another is sick, they will pray earnestly. Many healings occur. The cell system provides a concrete experience of salvation and blessings in everyday life. The cell system provides a community where Christians help one another to become more mature Christians. Many people receive Jesus Christ personally for the first time in their cell. The cell helps its members to know Jesus Christ deeper, to have a more personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, and to live as a church. Spiritual growth is supported through Bible studies, prayer meetings, and fellowships.

The cell system is also a means for evangelization. The members are eager to share their faith and invite others to receive Jesus Christ. Many new believers come to know Jesus Christ through the witnesses of the members of the cell. The cell system is a kind of “a big fishing net” to catch new believers. It is easy to evangelize people who know one another. It is also easy to nurture new believers afterward. The YFGC, of course, sometimes holds evangelistic crusades. But Cho is still convinced that: “Our church, however, carries out evangelism primarily through the home cell group system. Each cell group becomes a nucleus of revival in its neighborhood, because the cell group is where real life is to be found in that neighborhood. When a home cell meeting is full of life, and when people are happy and sharing their faith and witnessing to what the Lord has done in their lives, other people are drawn to them. Unbelievers become curious. They want to know why this little group of Christians is so joyful when all around them there are so many troubles ... such groups become magnets in their neighborhoods.”

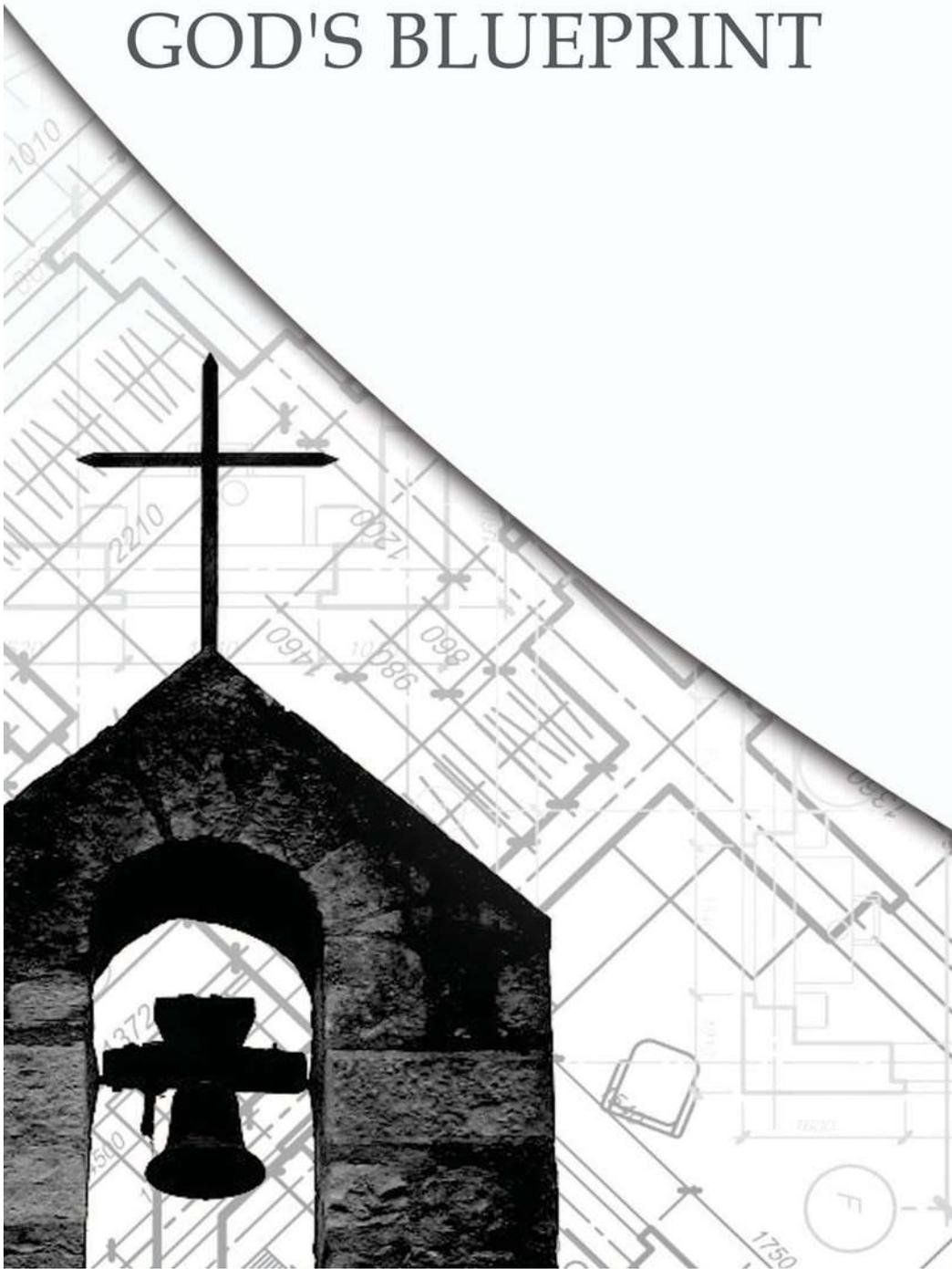
In conclusion, we can say that church growth is only a “by product.” When the church really becomes the church of the Holy Spirit which develops an intimate communion with the Holy Spirit; when the church is a praying church and a fourth-dimensional church; when the church takes care of the needs of the people; when the church becomes the church of spiritual blessings, material blessings, and blessings in health; and when the church is a “lay-people-and-cell-system-centered” church, the church will certainly grow.

### **Short List Of Books By David Yonggi Cho**

1. The Fourth Dimension (Vol. 1): The Key to Putting Your Faith to Work for a Successful Life
2. The Fourth Dimension (Vol. 2): More Secrets for a Successful Faith Life
3. The Holy Spirit, My Senior Partner: Understanding the Holy Spirit and His Gifts
4. More Than Numbers: Principles of Church Growth
5. Prayer, Key to Revival
6. Prayer that Brings Revival

Section Two:

# GOD'S BLUEPRINT



## **7. GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH**

### **Ten Perspectives For A Single Blueprint**

The New Testament contains several “pictures” or “images” of what God perceives the local church to be. We identify ten pictures of the local church contained in the New Testament, which we discuss in this section. Some of these have their origins in the Old Testament. Collectively we refer to these as God’s blueprint for the local church.

A blueprint is a guide for making something. It is a design or pattern that can be followed. When we get ready to build something, we normally start with a blueprint. A blueprint helps you determine what to do.

The blueprint, we will discover, describes God’s design for the local church. It is God’s original intent. It highlights main characteristics. It describes key features. It points to important focus areas. When we follow His blueprint, we know we are moving in the right direction and will eventually arrive at the right destination for our local churches.

Our goal is to develop our local church congregation in each of these ten areas. We will have to find our own expression of this blueprint in our local communities. Since God is a creative God, He has many ways and many expressions of His blueprint. Hence, it is not about following one set of methods or one set of techniques. Rather it is about working with God to see how He wants to have each of these ten facets developed in our local church congregations.

### **Your Ministry And God’s Blueprint**

Regardless of what your ministry is inside or in relation to the local church, it is important that what you are doing is aligned to God’s blueprint for His people. As a pastor or senior pastor, your responsibility is to ensure that the local church is growing and developing in all dimensions according to God’s blueprint. As an itinerant evangelist, teacher, prophet, or apostle, whenever you minister to a congregation, your goal is to help impart and increase the congregation in some way according to God’s design for the local church. Whether you serve as a youth pastor, worship leader, in children’s church, in women’s ministry, in men’s ministry, in small groups, or in any other way, you are working toward establishing God’s blueprint in the lives of His people in your local church.

## **Be Careful How You Build And What You Build With**

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**

**10** According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

**11** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**12** Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,  
**13** each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

**14** If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

**15** If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (MESSAGE BIBLE)**

**10** Using the gift God gave me as a good architect, I designed blueprints; Apollos is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation!

**11** Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ.

**12** Take particular care in picking out your building materials.

**13** Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing.

**14** If your work passes inspection, fine;

**15** if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won't be torn out; you'll survive—but just barely.

In simple terms, the Apostle Paul states that we have all been given a common foundation or blueprint. But each of us must be careful how we build and what we build with. How we build is important. We can build according to man-made ideas or we can build according to God's blueprint. We can follow our own carnal reasoning, or we can be directed by the Spirit. Similarly, what we build with is also very important. If we build the house of God with what is of the Spirit and the Word, then we will have a work that will be approved by heaven. If we build the house of God with the things of the earth, fleshly wisdom, clever marketing, and similar things, these will not withstand heaven's test.

So, our emphasis in this section is for us to build according to God's blueprint and to build by the Spirit and the Word.

## 8. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE BODY OF CHRIST

**Colossians 1:18**

**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

The Church is His Body—the Body of Christ.

### **As His Body, Our Life And Identity Flows From Him**

Church is primarily those who we are in relation to Him. Without our relation to Him, there is no Church. A body without the head can no longer live and function. Out of our relation to Him, we then relate to one another and to the world.

**Acts 17:28**

**For in Him we live and move and have our being,**

Both individually and collectively we need to pursue intimacy with Him.

Our identity flows from Him. Who we are in Christ is who we really are! Our identity is not in our denomination, some doctrine, some peculiar way of doing things or some other earthly thing. We are His Body and hence we carry His name alone.

### **As His Body, We Represent Jesus, We Reveal Jesus**

**Ephesians 1:22-23**

**22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

The Church is the fullness (completeness) of Christ. The Church is the complete representation of Christ. Both individually and collectively—Christ is to be seen and accurately portrayed by the Church to the world. We “represent” Him to the world.

The Apostle John uses the phrase “as He,” about seven times, in his first epistle, 1 John.

- Walk in light, **as He** is Light (1:7),
- Walk, **as He** walked (2:6),
- See Him, **as He** is (3:2),
- Purify ourselves, **as He** is pure (3:3),

- Practice righteousness, **as He** is righteous (3:7),
- Love, **as He** loved and commanded us to love (3:23),
- **As He** is, so are we in this world (4:17).

Simply put, Christ is our standard, our model, our pattern. To represent Him accurately, we must follow Him closely.

Our ability to represent Him comes from the fact that He fills each of us with Himself. Christ fills every member with Himself.

**Colossians 2:9-10**

**9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;**

**10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

We are made complete in Him. This is positional truth. Positional truth means that this is a reality in the spiritual realm—but we need to let it translate into becoming a reality in daily life through our walk with God. That is why Paul desired for the Galatians for “*Christ to be formed*” in them (Galatians 4:19).

Christ fills me with Himself. However, in daily life, I need to let Him “fill me”—reign in me, moment by moment in every area of life. He empowers me to do this.

The Father made Christ as head over all things for the Church. The Body carries the same authority as the Head (Matthew 28:18). We have authority vested in us as His Body to represent Him here on earth.

## **As His Body, We Are His Hands And Feet. We Do His Will**

The Church is the instrument to execute Christ’s purposes. The Body executes what the Head commands. We are to listen to Him and then move—execute—what He speaks. We must go where He directs us to go. We must do what He directs us to do.

**Matthew 10:40**

**He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.**

Jesus sees Himself extended through us.

**John 20:21**

**So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”**

Jesus has passed on His mission to us and sent us into the world. We must penetrate all spheres of society and take our place everywhere to execute what Jesus desires to be

done, there. The best way to impart this is to model it. When believers see other believers being Christ's hands and feet in the world, they will also do the same.

## **As His Body, We Are In Relationship With One Another**

We are connected to each other, we supply to (serve) each other and we need each other.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul explains many important truths on being the Body of Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

**12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

**13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.**

**14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.**

**15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?**

**16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?**

**17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?**

**18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.**

**19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?**

**20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.**

**21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."**

**22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.**

**23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,**

**24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,**

**25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.**

**26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

**27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**

A. The Body has many members (12:12,14)

We are different in terms of role and function in the Body. We are not all same.

B. Each one of us is a member of the Body (12:27). None of us is "not needed."

C. We are not independent. We need each other (12:15-16)

D. There are diverse functions in the Body (12:17)

All of us do not have the same function. Let us learn to appreciate and celebrate each one's gifting and function.

E. God has placed each one where He saw it best for us and as He was pleased (12:18)

Let us recognize our place and enjoy whatever role and function Christ has given us. Let us not be envious of somebody else's gift, role, and function.

F. It takes many of us—all of us—to make up the whole (12:19-20)

Understand that the Body is not complete without all of us. We are an important part of the local church body. Hence, we need to stay connected and we must contribute to the Body.

G. We can never claim independence (12:21)

Recognize that others have been placed around you to give into your life and you have been placed around them to give into their lives. I need others and others need me.

H. God gives greater honor to what seems to have less honor (12:22-24)

What seems weaker, is necessary and hence is particularly important. What seems hidden receives greater honor and hence must not be treated lightly.

I. God does not want any division or strife in His Body, but that we demonstrate mutual love and care for one another (12:25-26).

## **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

### **As His Body, Our Life and Identity Flows from Him**

- Teach believers to always see their identity in Jesus and not in their denomination or local church name.
- Ensure that everything we do as a local church flows out of a place of relationship and intimacy with Him. Without the head, the body is lifeless. In everything, put intimacy with Jesus as necessary and foundational.

### **As His Body, We Represent Jesus, We Reveal Jesus**

- Get believers to focus on revealing Jesus by demonstrating His love, compassion, forgiveness, power, and authority, wherever they go.

### **As His Body, We Are His Hands and Feet. We Do His Will**

- The Body executes what the Head commands. Teach believers to listen to His directives and then in real, practical ways, go out and do what He desires, in the world.
- We start by doing what He has already commanded in Scripture. In addition, we do specific things that He speaks to us as a local church.

### **As His Body, We Are in Relationship With One Another**

- Encourage all believers to find their role and function in the local church body.
- Develop a strong sense of “teamwork.” All of us are important on the team. We need each other for the team (the local church body) to function.

## **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

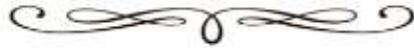
### **Challenge of Culture and Social Backgrounds**

Some local churches may have people who come from varied cultural and social backgrounds. Sometimes, people find it difficult to cut across these differences and come together as one Body, with one heart and one mind. It takes time for this to happen. As a senior pastor or leader, be sensitive to where things are. People tend to stay within groups they are comfortable with. Hence, constantly encourage people to step out of their own groups and interact with others. Encourage the Kingdom-culture. Do not promote any one culture, social or language group over another. Treat everyone equally. In every area of ministry, ensure that all people are given equal opportunity.

### **Misapplication of Being One Body**

Sometimes people misapply this truth of being one Body. They have no commitment to a single local church, but just float around different local churches in town according to their own fancy. Some may even “float around” across local churches for other reasons such as to network and gain contacts, to promote their own ministry and so on. Whenever you come across such people, share with them the importance of being committed to one local church body. Help them to get the picture that body parts do not float around but remain attached to a single body.

## REFLECTION



1. How do we balance the fact that we belong to one local church and yet collectively belong to one Body of Christ?
2. As leaders, how do we carry out a vision for our own local church body that we are leading, as well as be part of a bigger vision that serves the citywide church and works toward reaching the city?

## 9. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE FAMILY OF GOD

### The House Of God—A Spiritual House

In several places in Scripture, the term “house of God” or “household” is used to refer to both the corporate Body of Christ as well as to the local church.

**Galatians 6:10**

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

**Ephesians 2:19**

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

**1 Timothy 3:15**

But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

**1 Peter 2:5**

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The word “house” in Greek is *‘oikos’* and simply refers to a dwelling, by implication a family. We are a family, the family of God. Since, we are all born of God as believers, born spiritually as sons and daughters of God, we belong to the same family of God (John 1:12; 1 John 5:1). Spiritually, we are a family.

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the family or the Master of the house.

**Matthew 10:25**

It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!

“Master of the house” Greek *‘oikodespotes’* = the head of a family, householder.

**Hebrews 3:5-6**

**5** And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward,

**6** but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

The Lord Jesus is like a Son over His own house, in contrast to being a servant as Moses was. Hence, as a Son, He deserves glory in His house, just as the one who built the house is superior to the house itself (Hebrews 3:3). And we are His house. We are His family.

## **Three Important Implications Of The Local Church Being A Family**

### **A Proper Way to Conduct Yourself in the Family**

As Paul stated in 1 Timothy 3:15, we must learn how to conduct ourselves in the house of God, that is, as part of the family of God. God's people need to be taught and trained on how to behave as part of the family of God. There are things we must do and things we must not do. If each one shuns discipline, despises God-appointed boundaries, and does whatever they please, the house of God will be a place of chaos, rebellion, and confusion!

### **Boundaries Between the Natural and the Spiritual**

#### **2 Thessalonians 3:6-16**

**6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.**

**7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;**

**8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,**

**9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.**

**10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**

**11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.**

**12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in QUIETNESS and eat their own bread.**

**13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.**

**14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.**

**15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.**

**16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.**

The Apostle Paul was very clear in his instructions to believers in Thessalonica about how they had to conduct themselves and what would be considered disorderly behavior.

We must walk wisely as we balance and draw a clear line of demarcation between being a spiritual family and each of our natural earthly families. For example, someone cannot say, "I am your spiritual brother, so I can move into your house and live there." Or someone cannot say, "I am your sister in the Lord, and therefore I have a spiritual claim to all your natural inheritance." Someone cannot claim to be your spiritual father or spiritual mother and therefore dictate how you live your life, whom you marry, what job

you do, what you eat, what clothes you wear, and so on. They can counsel you and give you advice, but they should not live your life for you. You are still responsible for your natural earthly life. Being part of God's spiritual family does not permit the crossing of natural family boundaries.

### **A Family has Culture, Values, Purposes and Dreams**

Every household or family has certain culture as defined by its values, purposes, and dreams. Usually, the head of the household has an important say in what goes on inside the house, and hence defines the culture.

Similarly, a local church has its own distinctive culture defined by its values, purposes, and dreams. The culture between two local churches can be quite different (or could be very similar). Typically, it is the senior pastor and the leadership team that create the culture of the local church. They define the values, purposes, and dreams of the local church community.

Culture is important, because it helps people understand each other and shows what is the accepted way of doing things in a certain environment.

### **Our Culture, Values, Purposes, Dreams At APC**

At All Peoples Church (APC), here in Bangalore, we have a well-defined family culture. Our values, purposes and dreams are clear.

Our Culture:

- Casual, contemporary, creative,
- Everyone is a minister,
- Word-based, Spirit-led,
- Spiritual, yet practical,
- Active, energetic, dynamic.

Our Values:

- Integrity,
- Excellence,
- Staying on the leading edge of what God is doing,
- Opportunity for everyone,
- Unity and cohesiveness,
- Relationships.

Our Purposes:

- Glorify and exalt the name of Jesus—APC is not the work of a man, a denomination, or an organization. But it is the work of the Lord, by His Spirit, through His people.
- Make an impact—to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore, a voice to the nation of India, and to the nations. Win souls and make disciples everywhere, anytime.
- Equip every believer—bring every believer to maturity, equip, and release them for ministry. At APC, every believer is a minister.

Our Dreams:

- Raise up five strong churches, each with over 50,000 people in Bangalore, with each church having a powerful impact on all strata of society.
- Raise up several churches across this nation—in cities, towns, and villages, gathering many thousands into God’s Kingdom and discipling them.
- Go into other nations—impacting various regions of the world with the Gospel, by raising up churches, Bible colleges, and making a difference in the lives of people for the Kingdom of God.

### **Three Important Family Practices In A Local Church**

In a family, there are certain things that are practiced often and are held important. For example, a family may always have their meals (breakfast, dinner) together. A family may practice having devotion time together every evening. A family may practice going together every Sunday to church. A family may practice making Sunday lunch a special event for everyone, perhaps by going out to eat at a nice restaurant. These are things the family will do regularly and may even go without saying that this is to be done. It happens by default.

Similarly, because the local church is a family, there are certain practices that we should pursue consistently and make them as “default” in the way we live out our family lives. Here are a few:

#### **Walk in Brotherly Love**

**1 Thessalonians 4:9-10**

**9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;**

**10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.**

The Apostle Paul recognizes that the believers at Thessalonica were indeed walking in brotherly love, and he encouraged them to increase more and more. We can keep growing in brotherly love, the love we walk in because we belong to the family of God.

We walk in brotherly love by being kind to each other and giving preference to one another (Romans 12:9-10). We walk in brotherly love by doing good to those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). We walk in brotherly love by supporting the weak and restoring the fallen (Romans 15:1-2; Galatians 6:1-2).

### **Keep the Unity and Fellowship of the Spirit**

#### **Ephesians 4:3**

**Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

“Endeavoring” Greek *‘spoudazo’* = to use speed, that is, to make effort, be prompt or earnest; do (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavor, labor, study.

Make every effort to maintain the unity (oneness, togetherness) which the Holy Spirit brings, by strengthening our ties, our being joined together (the bond) by doing those things that promote peace (harmony, quietness, rest) amongst us.

We practice keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We cut out things that bring division and strife because division weakens us. *“And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand”* (Mark 3:25).

Cut out gossip, grumbling, and murmuring about one another. *“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”* (James 5:9).

We do not do anything out of selfish ambition and for self-promotion. *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself”* (Philippians 2:3).

When one person shares some information that is personal and private, we do not go and talk about it to others! *“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends”* (Proverbs 17:9).

Each one may have their own opinions, but when a decision is made, we have all got to learn to flow together by becoming *“likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, and one mind”* (Philippians 2:2).

## **Everyone Works**

Typically, in a family, everyone has some responsibility in the running of the house, other than little children, of course. Similarly, in the house of God, all of us, part of the local church family, understand that we have something to do. We rise up and do our parts for the functioning of the house of God.

There is work to be done in the house and each one has been assigned some work to do (Mark 13:34).

All of us are looking not to be served, but to serve. *“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Matthew 20:28).

### **Galatians 6:2-5**

**2 Bear one another’s burdens (weight, load), and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

**3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**

**4 But let each one examine his own work (effort, toil, as in an occupation), and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.**

**5 For each one shall bear his own load (task, service).**

There are some areas we are to help one another and some areas we are to be responsible for, as individuals. We help one another in carrying things that weigh us down. These could be challenges in life, struggles, difficult situations, and such things that anyone of us could face from time to time. We need to help one another in these things.

However, on the other hand, when it comes to things we have to do as work, tasks, occupation, we understand that each one of us must do our own work and discharge our own responsibilities. We are to bear our own “load,” that is, fulfill our own duties.

## **Fathers, Mothers, Sons And Daughters In A Local Church Family**

In a family there are usually people in different stages of growth and maturity—fathers, mothers, young men and women, and little children.

Although nothing is known of the group of people, church, or group of churches to whom the Apostle John addressed his first epistle, we see him addressing three sets of people who he refers to as “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers.”

- ✓ Little children (1 John 2:1,12-13,18,28; 1 John 3:7,18; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21),
- ✓ Young men (1 John 2:13-14),
- ✓ Fathers (1 John 2:13-14).

In a local church we will have people at different stages of spiritual growth and maturity. How we relate to, what we expect, and what we assign to people will differ, based on their levels of spiritual maturity.

For instance, in the natural, we are more tolerant to little children. We tend to overlook their mistakes, pay more attention to take care of their needs, and so on. As people grow up, we expect them to do more on their own, not need as much care and help in carrying some of the responsibilities.

**Galatians 4:1-2**

**1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,  
2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.**

As long as one is a child, one's privileges and responsibilities differ from that of a mature son or daughter. Children are to remain under the tutorship and leadership of spiritual elders until they grow into being mature sons and daughters.

We must nurture everyone, so that they are growing up to become fathers and mothers in the house of God.

## **A "Son Mentality" Versus A "Servant Mentality"**

There is a big difference in how people relate to the local church, the house of God, depending on how they perceive themselves. Those who see themselves as belonging to the house of God, being a part of the local church family, have what we can call a "son mentality." Those who do not have such a relationship with the local church family, often carry what we can call a "servant mentality."

**John 8:35**

**And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.**

- ✓ A servant does work in the house for a reward, while a son does work in the house because he belongs.
- ✓ A servant's commitment can change and can leave one house to work in another house. A son is firm in his commitment. He knows where he belongs.
- ✓ A servant receives a reward for his or her work, but a son receives an inheritance because he belongs.

We must help people have a "son mentality." They need to have a sense of belonging to the local church family, be a part of what God is doing because they understand that they are an integral part of the house of God.

If as pastors or leaders we treat God's people as sons and daughters, they will grow into that. They will have a "son mentality." If, however, we treat them as "servants," they will grow into that with a "servant mentality." As pastors or leaders, it is important that we ourselves learn to be true fathers or mothers in the house of God, rather than being lords or bosses over God's people. Fathers and mothers have sons and daughters. Lords or bosses have servants. Who we are, will greatly determine the kind of people we nurture in the house of God!

## **Characteristics Of Sons And Daughters Of The House**

Some characteristics of sons and daughters of the house:

### **Demonstrate Faithfulness**

They are faithful to the family. They stay aligned to the vision and direction given.

### **Serve as Sons and Daughters**

They are like-minded with the vision and direction of the leadership of the house.

They serve out of love and not out of obligation.

They understand and reflect the heart of the leaders, rather than speaking their own ideas and interests.

They welcome and draw people into the family, the house of God, instead of drawing people after themselves.

### **Philippians 2:19-22**

**19** But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.

**20** For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.

**21** For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

**22** But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

"Like-minded" = "of similar spirit" (Strong's Dictionary)

Timothy worked alongside Paul at Philippi to raise up the church there. He served faithfully with Paul, so much so that Paul could refer to him as being "like-minded" and "*as a son with the father.*" Timothy, later was launched into his own ministry, being appointed as the pastor of the church at Ephesus.

### **Receive Correction with a Good Spirit**

Just as every good father would lovingly correct his children (Hebrews 12:7-13), sons and daughters understand and receive correction as part of the nurturing process. A son or daughter of the house will be able to receive correction from the house without being offended.

### **Honor Fathers and Mothers of the House**

Sons and daughters honor fathers and mothers, those in leadership in the house of God.

In Genesis 9:18-27 we have an interesting incident in the life of Noah and his sons. The first man to discover wine, as far as we can tell, was Noah. Noah made a genuine mistake by drinking too much of the wine. There is no indication that he drank wine or got drunk again after this incident. Anyway, when Ham saw the nakedness of his father, all he did was go out and tell his brothers. It is quite possible that he did this with ridicule. However, Shem and Japheth took a garment, walked backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father. Noah, after he woke up and realized what had happened, released the father's blessings on Shem and Japheth.

Genuine sons and daughters do not gossip, expose, and publicize genuine mistakes that have been made inside the house. Honest mistakes must be forgiven, forgotten, and covered. Continual sin, of course, must be exposed and judged.

### **Fathers And Mothers In The House Of God**

We are using the term "fathering" in a gender-independent way, i.e., it also includes "mothering." God is the ultimate Father. All fatherhood flows from Him (Ephesians 3:14-15). As His children, we flow in that same nature that moves us to be a "father" or "mother" to others. Spiritual fathering is an extension of the Fatherhood of God.

Paul had spiritual sons and daughters. He referred to Timothy, Titus, and believers at Corinth, Galatia, and Thessalonica as his spiritual sons or children (2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17; Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

It is interesting to note that when the heart of the fathers is not toward the children, and when the heart of the children is not toward their fathers, it opens the door to a curse (Malachi 4:5-6). Perhaps many local churches experience this, when there is strife between the sons and daughters and between fathers and mothers.

A true spiritual father or mother is one who can take a person from spiritual childhood to maturity. Spiritual fathers and mothers leave a spiritual legacy for their children (2 Corinthians 12:14). They pass on a spiritual inheritance (2 Timothy 1:3-5). As a spiritual father or mother, we nurture people into a place where they can receive everything God has given to us.

Of course, there are no perfect fathers and mothers. Spiritual fathers and mothers can make mistakes, but a genuine father or mother will acknowledge that they made a mistake and correct their wrong.

Here are some ways by which we can be fathers and mothers, where we nurture people and take them to spiritual maturity.

- Establish a personal relationship so that based on that relationship we can then speak into people's lives.
- Go past having just a superficial surface level relationship to a place where we can lovingly correct, rebuke, discipline, and guide people, so as to instruct the inner man, bringing adjustment and alignment to the Word of God.
- Exercise a positive influence and hold people accountable for their spiritual growth, conduct, daily lifestyle, and ministry.
- Deal with the person's character more than gifting. Have a true and sincere heart in building the person, not just using their gift.
- Encourage people to press in for themselves and we do not feel insecure if they exceed and go beyond where we are. A true spiritual father or mother will not be like Saul who became jealous of David's accomplishments.
- Train people for their God-appointed destiny and release them at the right time without any strings attached.

## **Becoming Family—Developing Community**

One of the important ways we live out being a house of God is by creating a community of believers who live out our family relationship in real and practical ways. We are the family of God not just on Sundays or during services when we gather. We are the family of God every day of the week, and hence we should live this out every day of the week in real and practical ways.

However, we must understand the true nature of Christian community, otherwise we end up building just another social club or social group and become no different from what the world does. We then miss out on what God really intends for us to have when He called us to be His family.

## What Christian Community Is

- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where the Lord Jesus is at the center, because of Him, for Him, and doing things together through Him.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where spiritual nurture and growth in spiritual things is emphasized. Hence prayer, worship, sharing God's Word together are important parts of what happens among the people.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where life-to-life nurture happens so that Christlike character formation takes place in people's lives. People grow together in godliness.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where we serve each other in love and compassion, help meet each other's needs, and support one another in times of crises.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where we empower and equip one another for life in the world. We share practical ways to live out our faith in society and in the world.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where we encourage each other in love and good works, so that together we reach out to neighborhoods, our city, and the nation.
- It is a community of believers who relate to one another in a manner where we work together to see the Great Commission fulfilled. We go out into all the world to win souls and make disciples.
- It is a community of believers among whom and through whom we see the Kingdom of God manifested. The Kingdom of God is among us.

We get a glimpse of this in the early days when the Church in Jerusalem was born. It is true that conditions were different, in that many people who had come away from their places of residence to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, got saved and decided to stay. Here is how they lived out their being part of the family of God:

### **Acts 2:44-47**

**44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,**

**45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.**

**46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,**

**47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**

- They shared their resources.
- They met together for worship, prayer, and teaching.
- They ate food in each other's homes.

- They worshipped God together at homes.
- They had favor with all people—had good healthy relationships even with the unsaved.
- They saw many people being added as believers daily This is a great example of true Christian community.

## **What Christian Community Is Not**

It is important that we do not fall into a trap of building community that really is not true Christian community. If we miss doing it right, we end up with something like the world, or perhaps worse than the world, because we pretend to be something we are not.

### **Not a Christian Garb for Worldliness**

We should not meet in the name of Christian fellowship and do things that are not appropriate for believers. For example, if believers get together and watch an indecent movie, it does not make for true Christian fellowship. Sitting around and sharing somewhat questionable or even blatantly dirty jokes does not make for true Christian fellowship. *“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks”* (Ephesians 5:3-4).

### **Not an Escape from Going Out into All the World to Make Disciples**

Christian community should not become a hideout or an escape from going out into the world to share the Gospel. We are often very comfortable coming together. But if we do this all the time, we then fail to have impact on the world. We need to intentionally go out to reach people for Jesus Christ.

### **Not a Substitute for True Spiritual Fellowship**

It is good to spend time together, doing life together, learning from each other, sharing food, having clean fun and all the other nice things that we can do together. However, having done all of this, if we do not make sharing of faith, prayer, worship, and other things we have highlighted earlier, an integral part of being together, then we become no different than any other social group.

## God Does House Cleaning

### 1 Peter 4:17

**For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

We must keep in mind that God does want to see His house, the local church family, in order. There will be times when things are out of order, and God needs to clean up the house. Judgment begins at the house of God. It is much better to keep the house of God in order, so that there will be nothing that needs to come under the judgment of God.

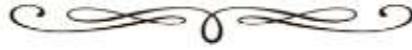
### Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This

- Create a sense of belonging to the house of God, the family of God. The local church should be more than a place where people attend service. It should become family, a place where we belong.
- Encourage people to serve with a “son mentality” not a “servant mentality.” Encourage people to grow up to become fathers and mothers in the house of the Lord.
- Encourage fathers and mothers to nurture younger ones.
- Develop true Christian community. This takes time but is necessary. One of the best ways to foster community is to encourage people to meet regularly in small groups, and to also meet informally outside church settings.
- Developing true Christian community among ministry-specific teams (E.g., Ushering team, Worship team, Media team, and others) is another way to foster community.

### Challenges To Be Prepared For

- Not everyone who is part of the local church may see the need to be part of a spiritual family or to develop community. Many tend to be satisfied if they have two hours of good spiritual experience in a Sunday service. It takes a lot of patient teaching and modeling to help people understand what it means to be the house of God and willing to be the family of God.
- In a large church, with a congregation of several hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, it is easy for people to feel disconnected, lost, and lonely. Even if small groups are available, getting people connected to small groups is a challenge.
- Danger of people forming cliques or elite groups. These groups may enjoy “community” within themselves, but end up isolating themselves from the larger family, doing more harm than good.

## REFLECTION



1. What are some of the ways we can examine and evaluate if a local church congregation is truly becoming the house of God and experiencing being a family?
2. How do we create a culture of nurturing, where fathers and mothers spontaneously care for and nurture little children?

## **10. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE PILLAR OF TRUTH**

### **1 Timothy 3:15**

**But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

The local church is to be the pillar and ground of truth, the upholder, the standard bearer, the foundation of truth in a sin sick, corrupt, dark, and depraved world.

When people want to know what is right and wrong, they should look at the local church in their community as a reference point.

### **Aligned And Committed To The Truth**

#### **John 17:17**

**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**

The local church is the upholder and foundation of truth in the community and society it is in. God's Word is truth. The local church must be aligned and committed to the Word of God, the truth. This of course, begins with the leaders of the local church being committed to God's holy Word. If the leaders compromise, then it is going to be difficult for the rest of the local church body to uphold the truth.

As pastors and leaders of our local churches, we should be uncompromisingly committed to God's Word and uphold His Word unashamedly. When asked to speak on current issues, we should boldly and unashamedly declare what God's Word has to say about these topics.

### **Raise Up People Who Will Be Upholders Of Truth**

#### **John 17:15-19**

**15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.**

**16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.**

**17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**

**18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.**

**19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.**

As the Lord Jesus prayed for His disciples and those of us who would believe on Him, while acknowledging that we were not of the world, and yet we were being sent into the world, the Lord Jesus prayed: *“sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth.”*

If we are going to raise up God’s people who can be sent into the world and yet not be of the world, first they need to be sanctified by the truth—the Word of God. As pastors we must preach, teach, and proclaim the undiluted, uncompromised, clear, and complete Word of God, week after week, continually. The Word of God will sanctify people and empower them to go into the world and yet not be part of it. They will be upholders of truth in the world/society where it really matters.

As pastors we must make sure that our preaching and teaching inspires, empowers, and equips God’s people to uphold truth in the world.

## **Beware Of Compromise**

**John 17:16**

**They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.**

**Matthew 5:13**

**You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.**

As pastors and leaders we will face pressures to be soft, nice, and not too forceful in stating the truth of God’s Word, especially when it comes to areas where people do not want us to “rock the boat.” We must beware of compromise. We are not of this world, and we cannot give up on the truth to adjust with this world. If we compromise on the truth, we become salt that has lost its flavor. We cease to make a difference. If we compromise as pastors in what we teach and preach, then in all probability, people in our congregation will also do the same.

## **Provide Biblical Response To Current Issues**

**1 Corinthians 14:8**

**For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?**

People want to know what God’s Word has to say about critical issues they face today. We must apply God’s truth to today’s problems. We must provide answers from God’s Word for today’s challenges. We need to make God’s eternal truth relevant to this day and age. Our answers must be clear, precise, and not an “uncertain sound.” Otherwise, although we may have the truth, we cannot influence the world.

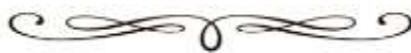
## **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Ensure that the preaching and teaching from the pulpit is sound, strong, and uncompromising.
- Address real-life issues, problems, and challenges with the Word of God. Speak the truth in love.
- Empower and encourage believers to live by the truth out there in the world where it really matters.
- Encourage believers to engage society in meaningful ways to present God's truth to the world.
- Encourage believers to take up opportunities to bring Kingdom-values and Kingdom-perspectives into public places and forums.

## **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Complex issues may arise that will require some serious study of God's Word and hearing from heaven to accurately communicate God's Word [Example: corruption, homosexuality, various scenarios for divorce, euthanasia, abortion, universal salvation, and so on].
- Popular opinion may grip believers' minds and hence believers may find it difficult to accept or apply what God's Word has to say on certain issues.
- The voice of compromising Christian leaders may be louder than others, and their compromising message may be well accepted, leading many believers astray. As pastors we will have to stand firm with the truth of God's Word [Example: Certain sections of Christendom ordain homosexuals as ministers of God. This cannot be accepted].

## **REFLECTION**



1. What could one or two serious issues that believers in your congregation are currently grappling with be?
2. If one section of your congregation (example, the youth) are all struggling with questions on a certain issue, is it best to address that group separately or should you do it with the entire congregation together?

## **11. THE LOCAL CHURCH—AN ARMY**

### **The Church Is An Army**

In the New Testament, both the Church and the individual believer are often addressed in military terms. This conveys to us that the Church, in a spiritual sense, is an army, a militant force that is engaged in spiritual warfare. We examined in detail in Chapter 1, the passage in Matthew 16:15-19, where the Lord Jesus describes the Church as a Body that is authorized by heaven to bind and loose and to go against the powers of darkness.

The Apostle Paul uses a lot of military imagery in his epistles, depicting believers engaged in spiritual conflict. He gives us a full description of the spiritual armor we must clothe ourselves with as we combat spiritual forces of wickedness in Ephesians 6. Here are a few other references where the life of a believer is described in military terms:

**Philippians 2:25**

**Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;**

**1 Timothy 1:18**

**This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,**

**1 Timothy 6:12**

**Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

**2 Timothy 2:3-4**

**3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

**4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**

**2 Timothy 4:7**

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

### **A Sense Of Spiritual Militancy**

Both as individual believers and as a local church body, we need to live with a sense of spiritual militancy. We are in the middle of spiritual conflict. We are to be taught and trained on how to engage in spiritual warfare.

At a personal level, believers need to know how to resist the devil and his schemes to overcome temptations and how not to give the devil access into their lives. We must know how to use the shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts that the devil throws at us.

**1 Peter 5:8-9**

**8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

**9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.**

**Ephesians 4:27**

**Nor give place to the devil.**

As a local church body, we must understand that the devil would attempt to infiltrate by causing division and strife and taking advantage of other problem situations. We are to stop fighting each other and focus on our one real enemy. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). We are not to be ignorant of the devil’s schemes, *“lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Corinthians 2:11). The enemy may even attempt to strike down people in positions of leadership. The devil knows that if he can strike the shepherd, he can scatter the sheep (Zechariah 13:7).

As a local church, our mission to win souls and make disciples involves spiritual warfare. The battle for souls is a spiritual battle. We must learn how to engage and overthrow the works of darkness using the weapons God has given us, so that we can see people come into the marvelous light of God.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

**3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,**

**4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.**

**Acts 26:17-18**

**17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,**

**18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.**

## **Believers Trained In Spiritual Warfare**

The local church is an army of soldiers who are engaged in spiritual conflict. The local church therefore must be in one sense a boot camp, an equipping and training center where soldiers are trained to engage in spiritual warfare. In Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, he writes to believers encouraging them to stand strong against the enemy

and teaches them about the spiritual weapons they are to use: *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Ephesians 6:10-11).

## **Armed And Dangerous**

God has given us spiritual weapons that are mighty. As believers, we are armed and dangerous to the enemy, provided we know how to use the weapons God has given us.

### **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

**3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.**

**4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,**

**5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

Some of the spiritual weapons that we have as believers, which we must be trained to use:

- The name of Jesus,
- The Word of God,
- The blood of Jesus and the completed work of the cross,
- Our position in Christ,
- The full armor of God,
- Prayer and intercession,
- Praise and worship,
- Repentance and righteousness.

To begin with we must learn to live victorious and overcoming lives as individual believers, using these spiritual weapons. Then, we also minister to people, destroying the works of darkness, setting them free from the hold of the enemy over their lives, and bringing souls out of darkness.

## **Anointed For Battle**

We are anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the anointing that destroys yokes and removes burdens (Isaiah 10:27). By the power of the Spirit we cast out devils and usher in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28). We bind the strongman, so that we can plunder his goods (Matthew 12:29).

## **The Local Church Must Intentionally Advance Against The Gates Of Hell**

Within their community, city, and region the local church must be on the offensive against the power centers of demonic domination. Corporately and individually, believers must be engaged in destroying the works of the devil through the power of God's Spirit. The Lord Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and we have been sent on a similar mission (John 20:21). There are works of darkness that each believer can overthrow—healing the sick, casting out devils, setting captives free, bringing souls out of darkness and into the light of God, and so on. Similarly, the local church body must engage collectively to see souls released *en masse* from the power of darkness through spiritual warfare. We need to collectively go against demonic power centers as seen in social evils (example drug and alcohol addictions, suicide, prostitution, crime, corruption, and other such evils) that may be prevalent in the community and region. Ultimately, our goal is to see people brought out of the power of satan and brought into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Rank, Order Discipline In The Local Church Army**

There are some strategic insights we can gain from how an army operates and relate that back to how a local church body should function, since we are an army engaged in spiritual conflict.

### **Keep Rank and Order**

**Joel 2:7-8**

**7 They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks.**

**8 They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down.**

There is rank, order, and discipline in the army. God has set leaders amongst the local church body, to lead them forward. We need to recognize and honor leaders at all levels. However, we understand that New Testament obedience is always "*in the Lord.*" This means that absolute obedience is reserved only to the Lord, since it is possible for human leaders to make mistakes. The authority we walk in experientially on the earth is in proportion to our submission to the King. Our submission to leadership He has appointed is essentially our submission to Him.

**James 4:7**

**Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

## **Military Mindset**

We need to be on “high alert” since we are in battle. We refuse to give the enemy any inroad. We refuse to let the enemy gain ground (1 Peter 5:8-9; Ephesians 4:27).

## **Military Lifestyle**

We live as soldiers. While we discharge our earthly duties, we must keep ourselves from being entangled with the affairs of this life.

**2 Timothy 2:3-4**

**3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

**4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**

## **Military Discipline**

We keep our entire being—spirit, soul, and body under discipline.

## **An Army Has Strategy**

We must be strategic in the way we go about fighting battles both at a personal level and at a corporate level. We cannot be as “one who beats the air,” just “shooting at random” hoping that we will find our target. Hence, every mission the local church engages in must be purposeful and strategic.

## **An Army Takes Care Of Its Wounded**

It is possible that there will be people in the local church body who are facing challenges, struggles, and setbacks. There may be some who are in the middle of intense personal conflicts. Some may fall making mistakes. We support those who have been wounded in conflict. We do not “kill” our own, just because of their failures. We help people recover and regain strength.

We share and celebrate each victory!

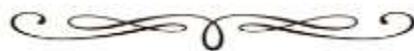
## **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Teach people about their spiritual authority, spiritual identity, the cross, the blood, the weapons of our warfare, prayer and intercession, praise and worship, and other areas.
- Teach people how to correctly exercise spiritual authority, how to minister healing and deliverance, and how to correctly engage in prayer and intercession.
- Encourage people to be engaged in prayer and intercession for the salvation of souls in the community, city, or region. Carry this out strategically.
- Call for extended times of worship and intercession to affect the spiritual atmosphere over the region.
- Set specific targets and go after them collectively as a local church body. These targets could be in the number of souls to be reached, transformation of specific communities, change to come in specific social problems, and similar God-directed goals.

## **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Always maintain focus on the Lord Jesus and not on what the devil is doing. Sometimes people go overboard and become more “demon conscious” rather than staying focused on the Lord and simply operating out of who we are in Christ. Some people could become “spooky spiritual” and very difficult to relate to.
- Engaging incorrectly in spiritual warfare. Keep to dealing with things that we have been given authority over.

## **REFLECTION**



1. In practical ways, how can we balance a “family mindset” and an “army mindset” in the local church?
2. What would be some of the dangers of not correctly balancing a “soldier mentality” with a “family mentality” in a local church?

## 12. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE BRIDE

Perhaps one of the most wonderful pictures of the Church is that of His Bride.

The Lord's dealings with His people Israel under the Old Covenant, in many ways is a parallel (or is an example or illustration) of His dealings with the Church in the New Covenant. There are some differences, but many similarities.

Differences, for instance would be:

- Under the Old Covenant He dealt with them based on the Law. However, under the New Covenant, He deals with us based on grace.
- Under the Old Covenant, not everyone experienced the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives personally. However, under the New Covenant, every believer enjoys the personal presence and work of the Spirit.

There are many similarities, though:

- Under both covenants, God has chosen a people through whom He could bless the nations of this world.
- Under both covenants, God's people are a royal priesthood, called to minister unto God.

One interesting similarity is that under both covenants, God pictures His relationship with His people, as that of a groom to His bride.

He is the Bridegroom God, and we His people, are His Bride.

So, we begin with the Old Testament, go into the New Testament, and draw insight from the role of the Church (us—God's people) as His Bride.

Three Old Testament prophets spoke of God's relationship with His people, in terms of a Groom married to His Bride: Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah.

## The Love Of Your Betrothal

**Jeremiah 2:2-3**

**2** “Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.  
**3** Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,” says the LORD.’ “

God talks about the day when Israel was “betrothed” (“engaged”) to Him—the kindness, the love, the pursuit they demonstrated. A nation that was holy unto Him. His firstfruits. Israel was betrothed to Him on Mt. Sinai in the wilderness, after He had brought them out of Egypt, while journeying to their land of promise.

**Jeremiah 3:14**

“Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

God calls a wayward people back to Himself, declaring that He is “married” to them.

**Jeremiah 31:3-4**

**3** The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.  
**4** Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

**Jeremiah 31:32**

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

God assures a wayward people of His everlasting love. He woos them back with His loving kindness. He assures them that they will be restored and rebuilt.

He speaks of the Covenant He established with His people, in terms of being a “husband”—a covenant He will not break.

## You Will Call Me “My Husband”

The entire book of Hosea is around the theme of God, the Husband, wooing back His wayward wife.

We look at a few verses:

**Hosea 2:16-17**

16 “And it shall be, in that day,” says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master,’

17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more.

As a devoted “wife,” God expects faithfulness—not going after other gods.

**Hosea 2:19-20**

19 “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy;

20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.

These verses provide amazing insight on how God relates to the one He is married to:

- Mine forever—we are His forever.
- Righteousness—He draws us to Himself in holiness, purity.
- Justice—God delivers us from every form of oppression and injustice.
- Lovingkindness—God extends His love and kindness.
- Mercy—God receives us just as we are, in spite of all failures.
- Faithfulness—His is a faithful love.
- Intimacy (you shall know the LORD)—He brings us into a place of intimacy with Himself.

## **Your Maker Is Your Husband**

**Isaiah 54:4-8**

4 “Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.

5 For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

6 For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,” says your God.

7 “For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you.

8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer.

Isaiah prophesies hope for Israel—assuring Israel of God’s unending love as a “husband.”

**Isaiah 62:4-7**

4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

**6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,  
7 And give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

Hephzibah means “My Delight.”

Beulah means “Married.”

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so God shall rejoice over you.

Notice also how the ministry of intercession for God’s people flows out of knowing that God’s people are His delight, are His Bride and that God rejoices over His people.

## **The Parable Of The Ten Virgins**

In the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the Lord Jesus uses the Jewish wedding as an illustration, to convey to us the importance of being prepared and ready, with expectation and endurance, for His coming.

In those days, a typical Jewish wedding was celebrated over the course of several nights, typically seven nights. Those who were closest to the couple were invited on the first night and enjoyed the celebration for the nights that followed.

The Church is to await His coming in a state of preparedness, readiness, expectation, and endurance.

## **A Chaste Virgin**

**2 Corinthians 11:2**

**For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

The Apostle Paul pictured his ministry by the Spirit, as that of presenting the Church as a pure virgin to Christ, the Bridegroom God.

All ministry that we do must be coupled with the understanding that we are preparing a Bride for the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom God. He is wooing His Bride unto Himself with tender love and affection, drawing Her to a place of intimacy.

## A Glorious Church

**Ephesians 5:22-32**

**22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

**23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.**

**24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.**

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

**26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,**

**27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**

**28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

**29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.**

**30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.**

**31 "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."**

**32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

Christ's relationship with the Church is compared to a husband's relationship to his wife. Jesus paid a great price to possess His Bride. What Jesus does for the Church:

- He sanctifies and cleanses the Church with His Word.
- He is working on making her a glorious Church without any blemish, perfect in holiness.
- He nourishes and cherishes the Church.

## The Bride Has Made Herself Ready

**Revelation 19:6-9**

**6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!**

**7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."**

**8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

**9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."**

Looking up ahead into what is yet to come, the Apostle John sees the great marriage supper, the wedding supper of the Lamb. When the Bridegroom God will be "married" forever with His redeemed saints, who have been prepared for Him. These are a people who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, clothed with His garments of righteousness, and are walking in righteous acts (expressing His righteousness).

## **The Spirit And The Bride**

**Revelation 22:17**

**And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”**

The Holy Spirit has been entrusted with the work of preparing the Bride for the Groom (Jesus).

As the Bride, we must be in alignment and unity with the Spirit—hearing, saying, doing—what He desires, as He works in us, among us, through us, to prepare us for the Bridegroom God, Jesus Christ.

## **The Bride And The Groom**

Our relationship with our Lord is in many ways defined by the relationship of a bride to a groom. Let us summarize what we observe from both the Old and New Testaments:

### **The Bride Is Lost in Her Love, Admiration, Commitment to Her Groom**

She is totally in love—deep desperate love. She sings her love songs to the Groom-in-waiting. This is worship. Love songs of the Bride to the Groom. Songs that describe how great, how majestic, how wonderful, how awesome the Groom is to the Bride. We sing the love songs of God’s heart back to Him. Love songs inspired by the Spirit.

The Bridegroom God desires this, as we saw in Jeremiah 2:2-3

NOTE: There are two things we need to address here:

- a. Women are not to interpret this understanding in a fleshly way of “romancing” Jesus, as though He were their “natural” lover, boyfriend, or husband.
- b. For men, it is not that we lose our natural masculinity as we embrace this truth, rather we understand its meaning and application in our spiritual relationship with Jesus.

### **The Bride Adorns Herself in What Would Please Her Groom So That She Can Present Herself in Her Best for the Groom.**

Church is therefore not about us and what pleases us. Church is about what pleases Him.

Church is not about what I like, but about what He likes to see in us and among us.

Church is not about us impressing and looking good before one another. Church is about being pleasing in His eyes.

**The Bride Is the Recipient of the Groom’s Unconditional Love.**

We see repeatedly the Bridegroom God assuring His Bride of His unconditional love.

Jesus, the Bridegroom God, is filled with tender love, affection, gentleness, mercy, faithfulness, justice, enduring love, for His Bride—the Church.

We must give ourselves to this truth and experience His emotions, His heart of unconditional love for us.

**The Bride has Access to the Groom’s Heart—a Place of Intimacy.**

The Bridegroom God longs for this. He calls us to a place where we will know Him (Hosea 2:20).

**The Bride Keeps Herself for the Groom. She does Not Settle for Any Other Man.**

Christ is coming back for a bride who will be without spot or wrinkle—who has been washed with the Word, kept Herself pure, and made herself ready.

When we see how He loves us, as His cherished Bride, we give ourselves completely and totally to Him.

We are cleansed (“sanctified”) because of His love.

A correct understanding of the heart of the Bridegroom God will lead us into a place of purity and devotion birthed out of pure love.

**We Are Called to Be Like a Bride Getting Ready for Her Marriage to the Groom. She Waits Expectantly.**

A sense of expectation with endurance, readiness with preparedness must grip our hearts.

**When We Serve the Body of Christ, We Are Serving the Bride of Christ—A People Whom God Loves Unconditionally, A People in Whom He Delights as His Bride, A**

**People Whom He Is Married to. All Ministry, Including Intercession, Must Flow Out of This Understanding.**

Ministry and intercession are birthed out of this understanding of the Bridegroom God and His love for His bride. When we encounter Jesus, the Bridegroom God, and understand His passionate heart for His Bride, our ministry and intercession takes on new meaning. We see all we do to prepare a Bride and to present her spotless to the Bridegroom God. We do not approach God's people with anger, criticism, and so on. We base it on His love for His Bride.

**Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Encourage people to become passionate lovers and worshippers of the Lord.
- Teach people that everything we do unto the Lord is birthed out of pure love for Him and not out of obligation. After all, we are His Bride.
- Teach ministers that all ministry must flow out of this understanding that we are preparing a Bride for the Bridegroom God. We do it out of the same love that the Bridegroom has for His Bride.
- Be sensitive to the moving of the Spirit. He draws us in, but He also sends us out. We must flow with the seasons the Spirit is leading the local church congregation through. There may be seasons when the Lord just calls us to wait in His presence and pour out on Him. There may be seasons when He sends us out to labor intensely in the mission fields.

**Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- We need to balance both the "come" and the "go." The Bridegroom God calls us deeper into Himself. Yet as the Lord of the harvest He has also commissioned us to go. If the local church body enjoys the "come" and ignores the "go," we are not obeying Him completely.
- There can be some people who are more inclined to enjoy waiting on the Lord, while there are others who are more inclined to go and gather the harvest. As a pastor or leader depending on who is speaking to you, there can be a push or pull toward one or the other. You need to be strong enough not to be influenced by people's preferences, but rather by what the Lord is saying at any given point in time. Listen to people, then listen to the Lord and do what the Lord says.
- There could be a tendency among women to get emotionally carried away with this spiritual truth, where they imagine themselves to be "married" to the Lord. They then tend to disregard, sometimes dishonor their husbands or men in leadership. So, in

presenting this truth, we need to clearly explain the right and wrong application of us being His Bride.

## **REFLECTION**



1. How can we help believers maintain the oil of passionate love for the Lord, so that their lamps of extravagant devotion and worship is always offered up to the Bridegroom God?

## **13. THE LOCAL CHURCH—A HOUSE OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP**

### **A Royal Priesthood**

In both Testaments, we see that God desired a people who would be His “royal priesthood.”

**Exodus 19:3-6**

**3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:**

**4 “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.**

**5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.**

**6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”**

**1 Peter 2:5**

**You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

We are a holy priesthood called to offer spiritual sacrifices.

Our worship and our prayer are important spiritual sacrifices that we offer up to God.

### **A Perpetual Fire**

**Leviticus 6:12-13**

**12 And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings.**

**13 A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.**

Once Moses had built the Tabernacle, at the inauguration of the Tabernacle, the first fire upon the brazen altar came from heaven (Leviticus 9:24), so that by keeping that up continually with a constant supply of fuel, all their sacrifices throughout all their generations might be said to be consumed with that fire from heaven.

Fire falls on sacrifice. We provide the sacrifice; God provides His fire. Our continuous sacrifices of worship and prayer are fueled by the fire of God. God wants this to be ongoing, never ceasing.

## The Holy Incense

**Exodus 30:34-38**

**34** And the LORD said to Moses: “Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each.

**35** You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy.

**36** And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you.

**37** But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD.

**38** Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.”

Anything offered to God must be holy and pure (Vs 35-36).

What we offer to God, we must not offer to anyone or anything else (Vs 37).

Our encounters with God take place in the midst of holiness (Vs 36).

## The Tabernacle Of David

Around 1000 BC, as an outflow of his heart, King David commanded that the ark of the covenant be brought up on the shoulders of the Levites amidst the sound of songs and musical instruments to his new capital, Jerusalem. There he had it placed in a tent referred to as the Tabernacle of David (1 Chronicles 15:1). Within this tent, a new order of worship was instituted which was unlike anything that had been done in Israel before. From the tribe of Levi and the priests, David appointed 4000 musicians, 4000 gate-keepers (1 Chronicles 23:5) and 288 prophetic singers (1 Chronicles 25:7) who ministered day and night “*to make petition, to give thanks and to praise the Lord*” (1 Chronicles 16:4)—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year they ministered, and this continued for about 33 years (1 Chronicles 16:37; 2 Samuel 5:5). Many of the Psalms were originally written and sung as prophetic songs of worship in David’s tabernacle.

## Important Features Of Worship In David’s Tabernacle

### Extravagant Worship and Powerful Intercession

Everything was extravagant, the best that they could offer to God. Imagine 4000 musicians, 288 singers dedicated to serve God so that continuous 24/7 worship and intercession can be offered up to God. No effort was spared in making this happen.

## Prophetic Worship

### 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

1 Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the skilled men performing their service was:

2 of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king.

3 Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the LORD.

4 Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth.

5 All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to exalt his horn. For God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

6 All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the authority of the king.

7 So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the LORD, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight.

8 And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student.

The tabernacle worship was not just a routine singing of hymns and songs. These were prophetic in nature, inspired by the Spirit, often spontaneous, or songs inspired by the Spirit that were written down and sung to the Lord. Most of the Psalms were birthed in David's tabernacle.

## Orderly Worship with Excellence

There were 24 groups or teams of musicians and singers who had a daily schedule to follow (1 Chronicles 24:18-19).

There was rank (leadership) and order in everything that was setup. People walked under their leaders (1 Chronicles 25:6, 8).

These were highly skilled musicians. There was excellence in what was being done (1 Chronicles 25:7).

## Revival And The Davidic Order Of Worship

Although the tabernacle was replaced by a temple, the Davidic order of worship was embraced and reinstated by seven subsequent leaders in the history of Israel and Judah. Each time this order of worship was reintroduced, spiritual breakthrough, deliverance, and military victory followed.

**Solomon** instructed that worship in the temple should be in accordance with the Davidic order (2 Chronicles 8:14-15).

**Jehoshaphat** defeated Moab and Ammon by setting singers up in accordance with the Davidic order: singers at the front of the army singing the Great Hallel. Jehoshaphat reinstated Davidic worship in the temple (2 Chronicles 20:20–22,28).

**Joash** (2 Chronicles 23:1–21; 24:1-27).

**Hezekiah** cleansed and reconsecrated the temple and reinstated the Davidic order of worship (2 Chronicles 29:1–36; 30:21).

**Josiah** reinstated Davidic worship (2 Chronicles 35:1–27).

**Ezra and Nehemiah**, returning from Babylon, reinstated Davidic worship (Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 12:28–47).

With establishing a habitation for God’s presence, comes transformation.

## The Prophecy Of Amos

About 250 years after David, the Prophet Amos prophesied:

### Amos 9:11-13

**11** “On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old;

**12** that they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” says the LORD who does this thing.

**13** “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

God spoke through the Prophet Amos and declared that He would rebuild the tabernacle of David and restore it as it was in the past. He would do this so that the Gentiles would be taken. “Edom” refers to the unsaved, Gentile world. At this time, there would be such a harvest, that the sower will overtake the reaper. The harvest will be so plenteous, that reapers will still be busy gathering in the harvest from the previous season, when the sowers will come in to start the work for the next season.

We see in Scripture that God fulfills in the Church spiritually, what will be fulfilled literally in Israel. For instance, Joel’s prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29),

was first experienced by the Church (Acts 2:16-18) and will be fulfilled in literal Israel, at a future time.

In the Early Church when the Gospel had spread among the Gentiles, there was a debate among the apostles whether the Gentiles who follow Jesus should also follow Jewish customs. James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, quotes from the prophecy of Amos (Amos 9:11-12) and states his decision:

**Acts 15:16-17**

**16 'AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN AND WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID, WHICH HAS FALLEN DOWN; I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL SET IT UP;  
17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, EVEN ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SAYS THE LORD WHO DOES ALL THESE THINGS.'**

At that time, the physical tabernacle of David did not exist. However, quoting from the Prophet Amos (Amos 9:11-12), and inspired by the Holy Spirit, James indicates that the Church is the spiritual fulfillment of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. In David's tabernacle there was 24/7 praise and worship of God. The Early Church was being the tabernacle of David in a spiritual sense, through the offering up of worship and intercession. Hence, there was the ingathering of Gentiles to the Lord. There is a direct relationship therefore between the offering up of continuous worship and intercession and the winning of souls to the Lord.

We believe that as local churches give themselves to continuous worship and intercession, they will see a large ingathering of souls into the Kingdom of God in their region. The harvest will be so plenteous that the sower will overtake the reaper.

## **A House Of Prayer And Worship**

**Isaiah 56:6-7**

**6 "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—**

**7 even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."**

**Matthew 21:12-14**

**12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.**

**13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES.'**

**14 Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.**

God intends for His people to be a house of prayer for all nations. We are to be engaged in prayer for the nation(s).

Notice that the context in Isaiah 56 has to do with the Gentiles being brought into the house of prayer. This reveals to us that as God's people establish themselves as a house of prayer for all nations, there will be the consequential result of people coming to love the Lord and become His servants.

The Lord Jesus quoted from Isaiah, as He drove out the money changers from the temple. He then ministered healing to the blind and the lame. The Lord intends that a house of prayer for the nations will become an oasis of healing for the nations. People will come into the house of prayer to receive healing.

## **A Visit To The Throne Room**

### **Psalm 141:2**

**Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**

The book of Revelation takes us into the throne room of God and gives us a glimpse of the kind of worship that goes on around the throne room of God.

Worship in heaven is continuous. *"The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within and they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come" (Revelation 4:8).*

Both worship and intercession are offered up to the Lord continuously. *"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:8-10).* The harp represents worship. The bowl represents prayer. There is continuous worship and prayer rising up in the throne room. *"Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:3-4).*

Every being worships the Lord. No being stands as a spectator. *"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,*

*saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing" " (Revelation 5:11-12).*

Worship covers the seven-fold realm of honor due to the King. *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).* Seven represents completion or perfection. Perfect honor for the King is when He is honored in all seven realms: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.

- Power is influence, authority, dominion, and sovereignty.
- Riches is all the wealth and possessions.
- Wisdom is all knowledge, understanding, skill.
- Strength is all might and ability.
- Honor is all respect, reverence, and submission given to the King.
- Glory is all the splendor, majesty, greatness, and awe because of who He is and what He does.
- Blessing is all the praise, worship, adoration, admiration, love, and devotion offered to the King.

The great multitude of saints join in worship before the throne. *"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 7:9-12).*

Let worship and intercession be on earth, as it is in heaven.

## **Movements Of Prayer And Worship**

History shows that through the Centuries there have been times when 24x7 prayer and worship was practiced by communities of believers.

### **400 A.D. Alexander Akimetes and the Sleepless Ones**

Around 400 A.D. a monk named Alexander Akimetes gathered between 300 and 400 monks in Constantinople, where he established *laus perennis* to fulfill Paul's exhortation to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Driven from Constantinople, the monks

established the monastery at Gormon, at the mouth of the Black Sea. This became the founding monastery of the order of the Acoemetae (literally, the sleepless ones) and the Sleepless Ones.

### **1727 The Moravians, the Hundred-Year Prayer Meeting and Subsequent Missions**

In 1727, the little Moravian community in Herrnhut, led by Count Zinzendorf experienced what is seen as the Moravian Pentecost. Zinzendorf said August 13 was “a day of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation; it was its Pentecost.” Within two weeks of the outpouring, twenty-four men and twenty-four women covenanted to pray “hourly intercessions,” thus praying every hour around the clock. They were committed to see that *“The fire shall be kept burning on the altar continuously; it shall never go out”* (Leviticus 6:13). The numbers committed to this endeavor soon increased to around seventy from the community. This prayer meeting would go non-stop for the next one hundred years and is seen by many as the spiritual power behind the impact the Moravians had on the world.

From the prayer room at Herrnhut came a missionary zeal which has hardly been surpassed in Church history. Many of the community went out into the world to preach the Gospel, some even selling themselves into slavery to fulfill the Great Commission. This commitment is shown by a simple statistic. Typically, when it comes to world missions the Protestant laity to missionary ratio has been 5000:1. The Moravians, however, saw a much-increased ratio of 60:1. By 1776, some 226 missionaries had been sent out from the community at Herrnhut. It is clear through the teaching of the so-called father of modern missions, William Carey, that the Moravians had a profound impact on him about their zeal for missionary activity. It is also through the missions-minded Moravians that John Wesley came to faith. The impact of this little community in Saxony, which committed to seek the face of the Lord day and night, has truly been immeasurable.

### **Prayer Mountain in Seoul, Korea**

In 1973, David Yonggi Cho, Pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, established Prayer Mountain, with night and day prayer. Prayer Mountain was soon attracting over a million visitors per year, as people would spend retreats in the prayer cells provided on the mountain. Cho had a commitment to continuous prayer, to faith, and to establishing small discipleship cells in his church. Perhaps as a result, Cho’s church rapidly expanded to become the largest church congregation on the globe, with membership now over 780,000.

## **The International House of Prayer, Kansas City**

On September 19, 1999, the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, started a prayer and worship meeting that has continued for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week ever since. With a similar vision to Zinzendorf, that the fire on the altar should never go out, there has never been a time when worship and prayer has not ascended to heaven since that date.

There is a lot more that is happening all around the world as believers seek to establish local communities of 24x7 worship and prayer.

## **Day And Night**

**Isaiah 62:6-7**

**6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,**

**7 And give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

**Luke 18:1,7**

**1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,**

**7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?**

**Psalm 134:1-3**

**1 Behold, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who by night stand in the house of the LORD!**

**2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.**

**3 The LORD who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!**

Let us become a people who will cry out to God day and night.

## **Establishing A House Of Prayer And Worship**

As local churches, we must move into this. We must encourage the establishing of the tabernacle of David, with continuous prayer and worship so that His Kingdom will come in our communities, cities, and region. All ministry that flows out of such a lifestyle of intimacy with God, through prayer and worship, will be powerful.

## **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Teach people to understand the importance of prayer and worship.
- Develop the local church in prophetic worship and powerful, strategic prayer and intercession. Collect strategic information of things (E.g., social problems, demonic strongholds) happening in the city or community and make these our prayer targets.

- Have regular scheduled times for corporate worship and prayer, example: daily or weekly services, regular times of all-night worship and prayer, extended periods (days) of worship and prayer.
- Encourage people to meet in small groups with worship, prayer, and intercession as a focus.
- Work toward establishing a 24x7 house of prayer and worship in your local church where groups of people take two-hour slots to engage in worship and prayer.

### **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Progress step-by-step start where people are. Do not try to jump immediately into something (E.g., 24x7 house of prayer) that people in the congregation are unable to do.
- Give people time to rest physically as well. Engaging in extended hours of worship and intercession can be physically tiring for those who are involved in leading in worship and intercession. So, ensure sufficient time for leaders to rest.

### **REFLECTION**



1. How would establishing the local church body as a people who give themselves to prayer and worship, directly result in the salvation of souls?
2. How can you train worship teams, intercessors, and the local church body to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in worship and intercession, so that worship and intercession is prophetic (inspired by the Spirit)?

## 14. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE TEMPLE OF GOD

### The Temple, A Holy Place Where God Dwells

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17**

**16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

**17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.**

We often quote and interpret these verses in an individual sense. While it is true in its individual application, Paul is writing to a local community of believers, and hence the context addresses a collective Body of believers. We are the temple of God, the place where God dwells. We are a habitation of God. We must be filled with His presence.

The temple of God is holy. It is to be kept holy. Together we have the responsibility of keeping this temple holy and free from defilement. Leaders and believers need to have a deep sense of reverence for the local church body. The fact that the local church body is holy and that we are part of it, should keep us from sinning or causing others to sin, as we do not want to be responsible for defiling the temple of God.

### The Tabernacle Of Moses

God had instructed Moses to build the tabernacle. The book of Hebrews teaches us that the tabernacle that Moses was instructed to build was a copy and a shadow of the true tabernacle that is in heaven. The tabernacle of Moses was according to the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle (Hebrews 8:1-5).

The tabernacle of Moses contained the ark of the covenant and it was the place God would meet with the high priest.

**Exodus 25:8**

**And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.**

**Exodus 25:21-22**

**21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.**

**22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.**

**Exodus 30:6**

**And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.**

Further, the tabernacle was a place where the glory of God would be visible from time to time. It was the glory of God that sanctified the tabernacle.

**Exodus 29:43**

**And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory.**

**Exodus 40:34-35**

**34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.  
35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

Several times during Israel's journey we read of instances when "*the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*" (Leviticus 9:23; Number 14:10; Numbers 16:19, 42; Numbers 20:6).

The Old Testament tabernacle of Moses was a place where God met with His people and where His glory was revealed.

## **Solomon's Temple**

We see a similar visible manifestation during the inauguration of Solomon's Temple. This was an amazing picture of God's glory invading a literal temple.

**2 Chronicles 5:13-14**

**13 Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud,  
14 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.**

The glory of the Lord filled the house of God! This is what God desires. The Old Testament, which is a type and shadow of New Testament realities, reveals God's heart to have His glory manifested through His people.

## **A House Filled With His Glory**

Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. At the end of the 70-year captivity, the Jewish people were released to go back to their own land to rebuild Jerusalem. The work on rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem began with the foundations in 536 BC. The work went on for about 16 years, when it was interrupted. About this time the Prophet

Haggai prophesies to encourage the people to complete rebuilding the temple, with these words:

**Haggai 2:7-9**

**7 'And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.**

**8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.**

**9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts.**

God promises His people that if they would build the temple, He would fill it with His glory. In fact, He promised that the glory of this latter temple will be greater than before.

**The Glory of God, an Expression of Who He Is and What He Does**

The glory of God is a manifestation of who God is and what He does, so that people see an expression of His invisible attributes. God's glory therefore can be manifested in innumerable ways. At the tabernacle of Moses and in the dedication of Solomon's temple, for example, the glory of God was manifested as a cloud. Some of us may question, "What benefit is a visible cloud as an expression of God's glory?" To the natural mind, a cloud seems to be of no value. However, it did have a powerful effect on the people who saw the glory of God manifest as a cloud. People stood in awe of God's presence among them. God's glory can become tangible not only through what we see, but sometimes His glory is revealed through what we sense or feel. Sometimes His glory is revealed through what we hear—a word that is spoken, a song that is sung, and so on.

We will look at some of the other ways in which God's glory is manifested. We must keep in mind that God can manifest His glory in many ways, which we are probably not even aware of. Ultimately, the manifestations of God's glory points people to who He is and what He does.

**Varying Levels of God's Glory**

God promised that the glory of the latter temple would be greater than that of the former. This implies that there can be varying levels of God's glory present among His people. The house of God can have no glory, a little glory, or greater glory. There is no limit to what we can experience. All we can say is that we must desire for more of His glory to be manifested through us, so that He can be glorified even more!

## **God Desires A People Who Will Manifest His Glory**

Right from the Garden of Eden, God desired for His glory to be released through the human race and to fill the earth. What Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden was a prototype or sample of what God wanted to fill the earth with. After the Fall, God wanted to have a people through whom this could be accomplished. As part of this plan, God chose the people of Israel. He brought them out of Egypt to take them to their land of promise. Along the way, Israel rebelled against God several times. At one of those junctures where Israel was in rebellion, God told Moses that He would wipe out the entire nation and start all over with Moses. At this point, Moses interceded for the people and the Lord agreed to pardon their rebellion. He told Moses:

### **Numbers 14:20-21**

**20 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;  
21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."**

At this point God reiterated His heart's intent. He would fulfill His original plan to have a people through whom all the earth will be filled with His glory.

The Church and therefore every local church body today, is part of this great purpose of God. To see the earth filled with the glory of God.

## **A People Among Whom God Dwells**

The temple of God really is a place where God dwells. It is a place of His presence. It is a place where His glory is revealed. Psalm 132:13-18 is a wonderful passage that depicts God desiring to dwell among His people and then reveals what He would do as He dwells among them.

### **Psalm 132:13-18**

**13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place:  
14 "This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.  
15 I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.  
16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.  
17 There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.  
18 His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon Himself His crown shall flourish."**

Notice how God expresses His desire to dwell among His people. *"He has desired it for His dwelling place."* *"Here I will dwell, for I have desired it."* God chooses where He wishes to dwell and where He causes His presence to abide. Revival really is God's people turning to God, so that He responds and makes His dwelling among them. The Church is designed to be the spiritual Zion, a people among whom God dwells.

What happens when we become a people among whom God dwells:

Vs 15: **I will** abundantly bless her provision; **I will** satisfy her poor with bread.

There is supernatural provision, prosperity, and blessing.

Vs 16: **I will** also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

There is salvation which includes forgiveness, healing, deliverance, victory, and more. There is the joy of salvation that resounds continually among us.

Vs 17: *There* **I will** make the horn of David grow; **I will** prepare a lamp for My Anointed.

There is a continual increase of strength and dominion (“horn”).

There is continual revelation (“lamp”).

As His anointed people, we see continual increase in strength, dominion, and revelation.

Vs 18: *His enemies* **I will** clothe with shame, but upon Himself His crown shall flourish.

We triumph over our enemies and continue to increase, flourish and blossom as His people.

Seven “**I will**” Promises

Notice that God states “**I will**” seven times. What a wonderful thing this is! When God makes us His dwelling, He declares that He will do all these things. The Lord will do this Himself. When the local church body becomes such a community where God dwells among them, the unsaved, the ungodly will want to come and experience what God is doing among us.

## **When God’s Glory Is Seen Upon Us**

Isaiah 60 begins by revealing once again God’s desire to manifest His glory in and through His people. “*Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you*” (Isaiah 60:1-2). Several times through the chapter, God repeats the fact of His glory being revealed through His people:

- ✓ I will glorify the house of My glory (Vs 7),
- ✓ Because He has glorified you (Vs 9),

- ✓ I will make the place of My feet glorious (Vs 13),
- ✓ The LORD will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory (Vs 19).

The rest of the chapter describes what will happen when the glory of God is seen among His people.

## **Signs, Wonders, And Miracles Reveal The Glory Of God**

We see as embodied in the life of Jesus several ways the glory of God was revealed among man.

The Lord Jesus walked in grace and truth and this revealed the glory of God. We call this the Sonship glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14)

The signs, wonders, healings, and miracles He did revealed the glory of God. *“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him”* (John 2:11). *“So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel”* (Matthew 15:31).

The Sonship glory that the Lord Jesus walked in was released to the Body of Christ. Every believer therefore is to walk in and manifest the same Sonship glory. *“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one”* (John 17:22). The local church body is to be a house filled with His glory! His glory in us unites us. *“That they may be one just as We are one.”* To the degree we walk in unity of the Spirit, to that degree we will be able to manifest His glory among us. In addition to walking in unity, we must walk in faith to have His glory revealed. *“... if you would believe you would see the glory of God ...”* (John 11:40).

Each time we hear from the Holy Spirit, and then follow through on what He speaks to us, we reveal His glory. *“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you”* (John 16:14). When we hear what the Spirit declares to us, and then we declare it, this is prophecy. Prophecy reveals His glory. When we hear from the Spirit and do what He says, we reveal His glory. The Holy Spirit reveals to us of what is His. In Him *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Colossians 2:3). The Holy Spirit releases to us some of these treasures of wisdom and knowledge and then when we release it to the world, we reveal the glory of our God.

God’s people in every local church body should be a people who are manifesting the glory of God in the world around them.

## When His Glory Departs

Sadly, in the Old Testament, we see times when the glory of God was no longer among the people of God. One instance was during the time of Eli the priest. Israel had been defeated by the Philistines. The two sons of Eli were dead and the ark of God had been captured. When Eli heard this news, he also died. His daughter-in-law, at this time went into labor, gave birth to a son, gave him his name and she too died. *“Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband”* (1 Samuel 4:21).

## When God Stands Outside The Temple

The Prophet Ezekiel prophesied during the time of Israel’s 70-year Babylonian captivity. Here was another season when God refused to be in the temple. The priests had given themselves to idolatry. The Lord spoke to Ezekiel: *“Furthermore He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations”* (Ezekiel 8:6). Later in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel, God visits the temple once again, and shows Ezekiel a vision of His glory departing from the temple and being lifted into heaven upon the wings of the cherubim. *“Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD’s house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them”* (Ezekiel 10:18-19).

## The Future Temple

In Ezekiel Chapter 40 onward, the prophet is shown details of a new city and a new temple. In this vision of the new temple, God shows the restoration of His glory in the temple.

**Ezekiel 43:4-7**

**4** And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east.

**5** The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

**6** Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me.

**7** And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places.”

**Ezekiel 44:4**

**Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell on my face.**

The temple is the place of His throne, it is the place of the soles of His feet, the place where God dwells among His people, a house filled with His glory. This reflects so much what John writes in the closing of the book of Revelation: *“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple”* (Revelation 21:22).

All this reveals God’s heart for His people. We who taste of the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5), have the privilege of experiencing the spiritual fulfillment of this in our day and time. The local church, the Body of believers, referred to as the temple of God in the New Testament, is the place of His throne among a community. It is the place where His Kingdom is manifested. It is the place of the soles of His feet, that is, the place of His dominion. God rules in and through His people. It is the place where God dwells among His people. The local church is the house filled with His glory.

## **The Church—The Temple Of God**

We have gone through a quick overview of the Old Testament understanding of the tabernacle and temple, so that we understand the significance of us, New Testament believers being called the temple of God. As New Testament believers, living under a new and better covenant, as a spiritual Body we are the temple of God, the dwelling place of God. It is no longer about a physical tent or building, but about us, the Body of believers who in communities and regions all over the world are the dwelling place of God. He promised that when two or more of His people are gathered, He would be present. *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). The Apostle Paul reiterated this when he wrote to the Corinthians: *“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 5:4).

As part of the household of God, we are being assembled into a holy temple so that we can be a dwelling place of God by His Spirit. A house filled with His glory.

**Ephesians 2:19-22**

**19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**

**20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,**

**21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,**

**22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

## **The Early Church**

The Early Church was a prototype, or a sample of what God intends for us. The Early Church demonstrated great power, great grace, and great glory.

**Acts 4:33**

**And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.**

**Acts 6:8**

**And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.**

That was the beginning. How much more should our local churches manifest great power, great grace, and great glory. Let us press into what God has called us and designed us to be!

## **Keep the Temple Holy**

The Corinthian church was perhaps the most spiritual local church body as seen through Paul's writings, and yet at the same time perhaps the church with the most internal problems. Immorality and sin had crept into the local church body, and Paul had to address this, among other things. In admonishing the Corinthian believers to a life of purity and holiness, Paul reminds them in both his epistles that they are the temple of God.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**

**14 Do not be UNEQUALLY yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

**15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?**

**16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."**

**17 Therefore "COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU."**

**18 "I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY."**

**2 Corinthians 7:1**

**Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

As believers, when we understand that we are the temple of God—both individually and collectively as a Body, indulging with sin, will not be our way of life. We will treasure the fact that He is dwelling amongst us and that He desires for His glory to be manifested in

and through us. It is our turn to be the Temple of God and manifest His glory—greater glory.

### **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Impart an understanding that both individually and corporately we are the temple of God.
- Impart an understanding of what we must expect as we become a habitation of His presence, a dwelling place of God. Let us keep the house of God clean and holy and press into being what He has called us to be.
- Empower and equip all believers to manifest the glory of God. We must desire and expect greater glory.

### **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- While the Old Testament emphasized the physical, our emphasis in the New Testament must be on the spiritual aspect of being the temple of God. Otherwise, we can drive ourselves into dead religion, having a form of godliness without the power.
- We must always operate out of the understanding that the work has already been done and that we are striving to live out of what God has already done for us in Christ. We are the temple of God. We have the glory of God. We are His dwelling place. This is positional truth. In the spirit realm the work has been done. What we are striving to do, is to walk in this reality in our everyday life. We must not have the incorrect understanding that we are striving to become something in the spirit that God has not already done for us.

## **REFLECTION**



1. Is it possible today for local churches to function as a church but not have God dwelling in them and the glory of God not manifested among them?
2. What are some ways you can tell if a local church has God dwelling among them and is having the glory of God manifested in and through them?

## 15. THE LOCAL CHURCH—ZION: GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE

### Welcome To Mount Zion, The Church Of The Firstborn

#### Hebrews 12:22-24

**22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,  
**23** to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,  
**24** to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

The writer of Hebrews addressing believers in the Lord Jesus Christ lets us know that we are part of Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, and are a people who are registered in heaven. New Testament believers are referred to with an Old Testament term, “Mount Zion.” Mount Zion in the Old Testament represents the city of David and the people of God in the Old Testament. Mount Zion in the New Testament represents the city of the Living God and the people of God, the Church.

The Apostle Peter refers to the Church as “Zion,” and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the “Chief Cornerstone.”

#### 1 Peter 2:6

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “**BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNERSTONE, ELECT, PRECIOUS, AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME.**”

Peter continues to explain what being Zion implies. As Zion, we are the chosen people of God. We are a nation of holy people who are priests unto God. We are His own special people to show His praises. And hence our conduct in this world reflects who we are.

#### 1 Peter 2:9-12

**9** “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;  
**10** who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.  
**11** Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,  
**12** having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

## **Zion—God’s Chosen People**

Zion is a name often used as a synonym for Jerusalem. The word is first found in 2 Samuel 5:7 commonly referred to a specific mountain near Jerusalem (Mount Zion), on which stood a Jebusite fortress of the same name that was conquered by David and was named the City of David. After David captured “*the stronghold of Zion*,” Zion was then called “*the City of David*” (1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chronicles 11:5; 2 Chronicles 5:2).

When Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, “Zion” expanded in meaning to include the temple and the area surrounding it (Psalms 2:6; Psalms 48:2; Psalms 11-12; Psalms 132:13). “Zion” was eventually used as a name for the city of Jerusalem, the land of Judah and the people of Israel as a whole (Isaiah 40:9; Jeremiah 31:12; Zechariah 9:13).

The most important use of the word “Zion” is in a theological sense. “Zion” is used figuratively of Israel as the people of God (Isaiah 60:14). The spiritual meaning of “Zion” is continued in the New Testament, where the Church of the Firstborn, the heavenly Jerusalem is referred to as Zion (Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 14:1). Peter refers to Christ as the Cornerstone of Zion (1 Peter 2:6).

Since the spiritual Body of Christ, the Church, is referred to as Zion, then the local church, the physical expression of the spiritual body is also Zion, God’s chosen people.

While the Old Testament reveals several truths concerning Zion and how God relates to Zion, we review a few of these here, and then address how the local church is to fulfill its call to be Zion, in its community, city, and region.

### **God Dwells And Rules In Zion**

#### **Zechariah 2:10**

**“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD.**

#### **Psalm 2:6-8**

**6 “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.”**

**7 “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.**

**8 Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.**

God dwells and rules among His people. We are His people, and He is our King. His rule and Kingdom are to extend through all the earth. The Father has promised the Son, “*Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.*” We are here as His people to see His rule and Kingdom extend through the nations and to the ends of the earth.

## **Out Of Zion, God Shines**

**Psalm 50:1-2**

**1 The Mighty One, God the LORD, Has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down.**

**2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.**

God displays His glory and splendor out of Zion.

## **Deliverance On Mount Zion**

**Obadiah 1:17,21**

**17 "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.**

**21 Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.**

Deliverance and holiness will be in Zion, among the people of God. God's people will possess their possessions. The deliverers that God raises up on Mount Zion will have rule over the unsaved and ungodly.

## **The LORD Roars From Zion**

**Joel 3:16**

**The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.**

The voice of the Lord is released from Zion. He will show forth His strength from among His people.

## **Releasing The Rod Of His Strength**

**Psalm 110:1-2**

**1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."**

**2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!**

We know that this Scripture refers to Jesus Christ (Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34). His rule and dominion, the rod of His strength, will go out of Zion, that is through His people. Through His people He will rule among His enemies.

## **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

### **God's Own People**

As Zion we are God's own people. We are His special people. We have a heavenly citizenship. We live by the culture and values of His Kingdom. We are called to be holy.

- Every local church must raise up a people who represent Kingdom culture and values in this world.
- Every local church must raise up a people who are holy, sanctified, and living transformed lives as Romans 12:1-2 states.

### **Called to Show Forth His Praises**

As God's own people we are here to put on display God's greatness. We are here for the world to see the greatness, the goodness, the virtues of our God.

- Every local church must raise up a people who are proclaiming the praises of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

### **Called to See His Kingdom Come**

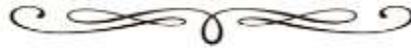
As His people, the Lord desires to release His Kingdom through us. We are here to see His Kingdom come and His will be done.

- Every local church must raise up a people who walk in Kingdom power, authority, and dominion.

### **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Status-quo Christianity will resist this kind of a lifestyle. It is too risky. It is non-conforming. It means we live as citizens of heaven. However, as pastors/leaders we have no choice, but to preach and teach so that people will be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

## REFLECTION



1. Why would some believers find it difficult to live by Kingdom culture and Kingdom values, and hence resist the practical application of being the people of God?
2. What are some practical areas where believers struggle to live as God's own special people, and how can we help address these areas?

## 16. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

**John 15:1-8**

**1** “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

**2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

**3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

**4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

**5** “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

**6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

**7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

**8** By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The Lord Jesus painted this wonderful picture of His relationship with His disciples. He is the Vine and we are the branches. This is applicable to believers as individuals, as well as to believers as a local church community.

We can summarize some important truths from this passage:

We are designed to be fruitful and God desires for us to be very fruitful. To be fruitful is to manifest or express the life of the Vine. We are to manifest who Jesus is and what He does. All of us are to manifest “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23), which really are an expression of the life of Christ in us. Each of us must bear fruit in the role, function, gift, and calling that God has for our lives individually.

Fruitfulness is birthed out of “abiding” in Him and Him (His Word) abiding in us. Fruitfulness is birthed out of intimacy.

The reward for being fruitful is purging (cleansing, purifying) so that we can become even more fruitful.

**2 Peter 1:5-8**

**5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

**6** to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

**7** to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

**8** For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith, virtue (character), knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, these are seven areas in which we need to keep on growing to be fruitful. God's dealings with us, in purging and cleansing us, often addresses growth in one or more of these seven areas.

### **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- As a local church we need to emphasize and focus on intimacy with Him. Everything must be birthed out of our abiding in Him and He in us.
- As a local church we need to check up on fruitfulness, the same way He checks up on us. We should not get busy with activity. The Lord is not measuring our activity, but He is looking for fruit.
- We need to encourage every branch (person) to be fruitful.
- As a local church we need to go through seasons of cleansing and purging, so that we can move into greater fruitfulness. Sometimes God will lead you, as pastor, to preach, teach, and minister along certain lines to deal with certain areas of pruning and cleansing that He desires to bring to the local church, so that fruitfulness can go to a new level.

### **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Learning to abide in Him, focusing on intimacy is never easy, especially for those who are action oriented. Some may consider this a waste of time. But we must continue to emphasize that everything done in a local church must be birthed out of a place of intimacy.
- It is easy for an individual or a local church body to become satisfied with the measure of fruitfulness we already have. We think this is where everything stops. However, we need to remind ourselves that the Lord is always looking for greater levels of fruitfulness.
- Some may not like the purging and cleansing process needed to go to new levels and hence may resist this. In some cases, they cease being fruitful and may wish to move away. We must be prepared to let go and keep journeying forward.

## **REFLECTION**



1. *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away.”* What does this mean for a local church?

2. What are some ways that the Lord would bring about pruning or cleansing in a local church?

## 17. THE LOCAL CHURCH—THE LAMPSTAND

### The Lampstand In The Old Testament

The tabernacle given to Moses was a copy or shadow of the true tabernacle in heaven (Hebrews 8:1-5). The tabernacle had the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. The outer court had the brazen altar (altar of sacrifice) and the laver (or basin) with water for washing. The holy place had the golden lampstand (Menorah), the table of showbread, and the altar of incense. The holy of holies was separated by a veil, past which was the ark of the covenant on which was the mercy seat.

The golden lampstand was part of Moses' tabernacle (Exodus 25:31-40), and later the temple.

The golden lampstand, referred to as "Menorah," was to be kept burning continually (Exodus 27:20-21; Leviticus 24:1-4). The golden lampstand has seven branches (candlesticks), with pure olive oil and wicks. Each branch looked like that of an almond tree with buds, blossoms, and flowers. The lampstand was the only source of light in the Holy Place. Its light shined upon the table of showbread (the bread of His presence) and the altar of incense. The lampstand provided the light necessary for the priest to partake of the showbread and work on the altar of incense. The table of showbread represented the Word of God and communion with the Lord and the altar of incense represented prayer and worship of God. The lampstand, therefore, represents to us illumination that enables receiving God's Word, enables communion with God, and enables prayer and worship of God.

### The Local Church—A Lampstand

In the revelation that John receives, He sees the Lord Jesus walking in the midst of seven golden lampstands. Each lampstand represents a local church body. The Lord Jesus has a message to the leader of each local church.

#### Revelation 1:12-13,20

**12** Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

**20** The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

**Revelation 2:1,5**

**1 “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:**

**5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”**

The Lord moves among the lampstands and examines each lampstand to ensure that its light is always shining.

The local church is God’s lampstand set before Him in heaven, bringing His light and revelation into earth. The local church as a lampstand is to be light in this world illuminating hearts and minds so that they can come into a place of understanding God’s Word, come into a place of communion, prayer, and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the local church is not doing what it is supposed to do, as in the case of the church at Ephesus, the Lord Jesus warned that unless they set things right, their lampstand would be removed from its place. When a lampstand is removed from His presence, it no longer has the capacity to bring His light and revelation into this earth. It has no influence on the darkness around it.

The Lord Jesus came to be the light of the world (John 8:12; John 12:46). This mission is also entrusted to us believers. As believers we are called to be light in this darkness (Matthew 5:14,16; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:14-15).

Our light must shine so that people see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. If our good works do not point to Jesus Christ, then our light really is not shining. We really are not being the lampstand that God wants us to be.

**Matthew 5:14-16**

**14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.**

**15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

**16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

We are to walk as people of light. We do not partake of the works of darkness, things that are done in secret (John 3:20). Rather as children of light, we expose the works of darkness for what they really are.

**Ephesians 5:8,11-13**

**8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**

**11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**

**12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.**

**13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.**

Our life and conduct must reveal that we are children of God, and we thus shine as lights in a dark world.

**Philippians 2:14-15**

**14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,**

**15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

### **Practical Ways A Local Church Can Implement This**

- Maintain our first love, so that our lampstand is burning strong in His presence. We then have the power to influence our world with His light.
- The local church must provide illumination for God's people so that they can be in a place of understanding God's Word, a place of communion, prayer, and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Encourage believers to live lives and to do good works that will point people to the Lord and expose what is of darkness.

### **Challenges To Be Prepared For**

- Believers engaging in good works more as a form of social service, without revealing and pointing people to Jesus Christ. We then become no different from the unsaved doing good works.
- Believers forgetting to focus on their first love to be light in this world.

## **REFLECTION**



1. What if a lampstand is removed from its place in heaven but continues functioning as a local church here on earth?
2. How could the local church and/or believers expose the works of darkness in a proper way?

## 18. BUILDING ACCORDING TO GOD'S DESIGN

### The Early Church, Our Starting Point

The Church in the book of Acts is our starting point and hence a prototype of the church that Jesus began to build. The Early Church walked in some measure in all the ten aspects of the local church blueprint.

As the **Body of Christ**, they represented Christ powerfully in their world as His hands and feet.

As the **family of God**, they shared all things and supported one another.

As the **pillar of truth**, they stood against the pressures of opposing traditions, philosophies, and false religion.

As the **army of God**, they advanced forcefully and overthrew the works of darkness and released people and regions from demonic domination.

As the **Bride of Christ**, they were deeply in love with their Bridegroom God to the point that they were willing to die for His cause, lived consecrated unto Him, lived expectantly for His return.

As a **house of prayer and worship**, they devoted themselves to powerful prayer, worship, and intercession always.

As the **temple of God**, they saw God's presence and glory manifested.

As the **people of God**, they lived radically different from the world around them,

As **branches on the true vine**, they walked in intimacy and fruitfulness.

As the **lampstand set by God**, they let their light shine in the midst of darkness.

## Ten Perspectives, One Blueprint

What we have covered in this section are ten parts of one blueprint in building strong local churches. As pastor/leader of our local congregations, we must look over at these ten areas and see how the local congregation is doing in each of them.

### GOD’S BLUEPRINT FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

|   |  |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>THE BRIDE</b></p> <p>In love with our Bridegroom God</p>                      | <p><b>A HOUSE OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP</b></p> <p>Continuous worship and prayer</p> | <p><b>THE TEMPLE OF GOD</b></p> <p>God dwelling among us and His glory revealed through us</p> | <p><b>THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES</b></p> <p>Intimacy that births fruitfulness</p>   | <p><b>THE LAMPSTAND</b></p> <p>Our standing before Him makes us light in a dark world</p> |
| <p><b>THE BODY OF CHRIST</b></p> <p>We represent Him and carry out His purposes</p> | <p><b>THE FAMILY OF GOD</b></p> <p>We live as His family here on earth</p>       | <p><b>THE PILLAR OF TRUTH</b></p> <p>We uphold truth in this world</p>                         | <p><b>GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE</b></p> <p>We demonstrate Kingdom-culture and values</p> | <p><b>AN ARMY</b></p> <p>We overthrow the works and powers of darkness</p>                |
| <p><b>THE EARLY CHURCH</b><br/>A prototype to follow and exceed</p>                 |  |  |  |   |

Our preaching, teaching, and other ministry for the local church must be designed to continually build the house of God, in each of these ten areas given to us in Scripture. As we do so, we can be confident that we are building according to God’s blueprint and we will not go wrong.

These ten areas give a perfect balance of (A) Upward Focus on the Lord (B) Inward Strengthening of the believer and (C) Outward Reach into the world.

## **Understand The Grace Bestowed On Your Local Church In Different Seasons**

### **2 Corinthians 8:1**

**Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.**

As you lead your local church through these various seasons of growth and development, you will notice that each season has a specific grace that is bestowed on your congregation. This means that in a certain season, God is leading the church forward in a specific area or a certain set of areas. You will notice that people's hearts are open toward certain things. It is important to recognize what God is doing, where He is leading and go with that.

### **Church Assessment And Plan For Growth**

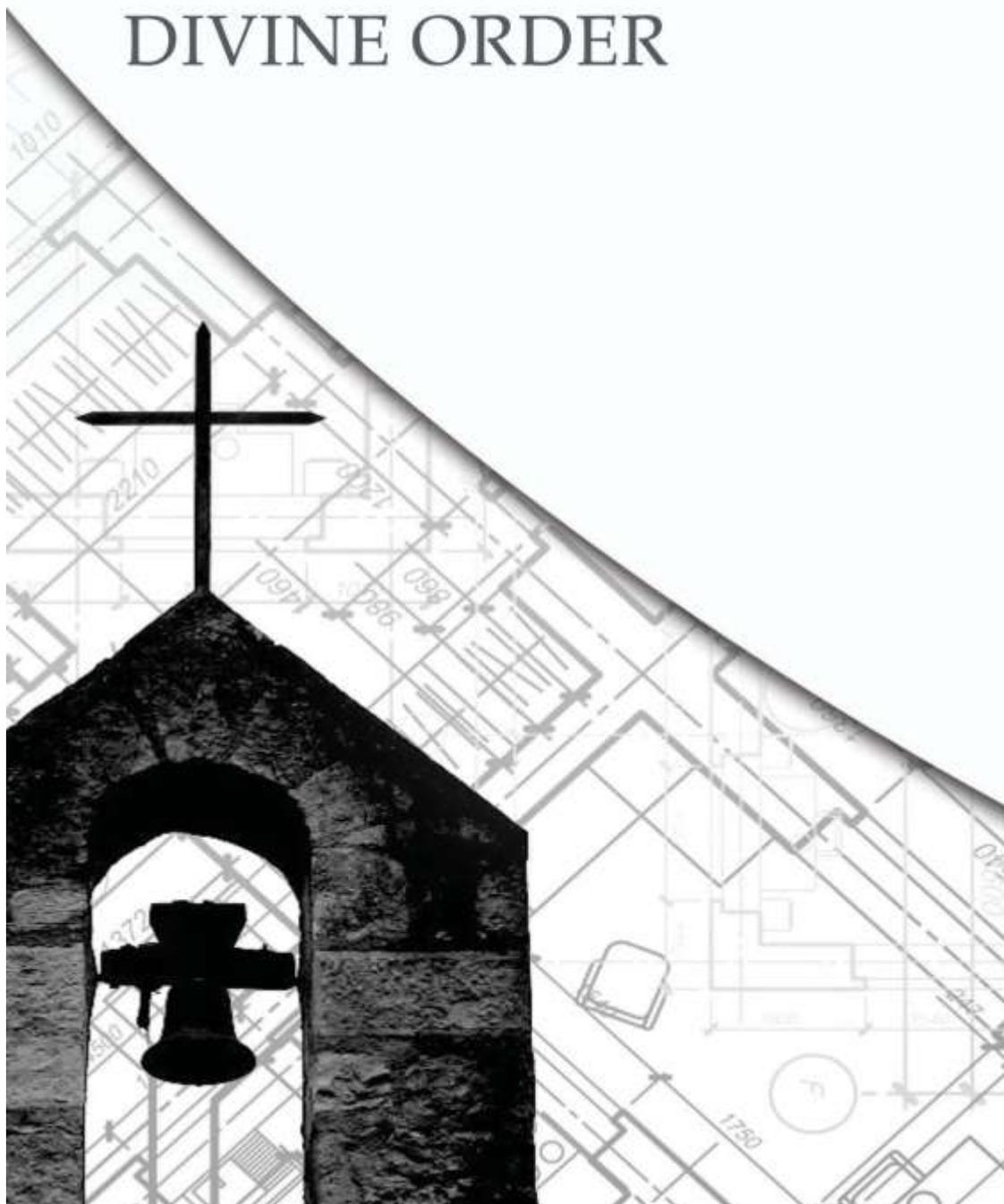
Take time to evaluate where your local church congregation is in each of these ten areas of the blueprint. Listen to the Holy Spirit and determine practical ways by which you can help your local church grow in these areas. Then with the help of the Holy Spirit begin to lead your congregation forward through your preaching, teaching, and practice.

The House of God

| BLUEPRINT AREA  | WHERE WE ARE | STEPS FOR GROWTH TO THE NEXT LEVEL |
|---|--------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>THE BODY OF CHRIST:</b> We represent Him and carry out His purposes            |              |                                    |
| <b>THE FAMILY OF GOD:</b> We live as His family here on earth                     |              |                                    |
| <b>THE PILLAR OF TRUTH:</b> We uphold truth in this world                         |              |                                    |
| <b>AN ARMY:</b> We overthrow the works and powers of darkness                     |              |                                    |
| <b>THE BRIDE:</b> In love with our Bridegroom God                                 |              |                                    |
| <b>A HOUSE OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP:</b> Continuous worship and prayer               |              |                                    |
| <b>THE TEMPLE OF GOD:</b> God dwelling among us and His glory revealed through us |              |                                    |
| <b>GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE:</b> We demonstrate Kingdom-culture and values             |              |                                    |
| <b>THE VINE AND THE BRANCES:</b> The intimacy that births fruitfulness            |              |                                    |
| <b>THE LAMPSTAND:</b> Our standing before Him makes us light in a dark world      |              |                                    |

Section Three:

# DIVINE ORDER



## 19. SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

By sacraments or ordinances of the Church, we refer to the practices ordained by Christ to be permanently observed by the Church. Water baptism and the Lord's supper are the two sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ our Lord for the Church.

These ordinances as practiced by the believer are also means by which the power of Christ's finished work on the cross becomes real and effective in the believer's life.

Each time we lead people in participating in these sacraments, we must encourage them to receive the power of God into their lives.

### Water Baptism

1. Introduced by John the Baptist when announcing the Kingdom of heaven on earth, as a sign of repentance (Matthew 3:1-8).
2. Jesus was baptized, although He had nothing to repent from, to demonstrate obedience to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:13-16).
3. Baptism is a command in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19-20).
4. Baptism expresses your decision to follow Jesus Christ alone (Acts 2:38-39).
5. Baptism is a symbol of the inner experience of death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus (Romans 6:4).
6. Baptism is an expression of your desire to maintain a clear conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21).
7. The only requirement to be baptized is "repent and believe" in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:36-37).
8. Baptism is by immersion in water only (Acts 8:36-37).
9. You do not have to become very holy to be baptized. People were baptized as soon as they repented and believed in Jesus Christ.
10. Water baptism will not make you a spiritual giant. You still must grow spiritually through the Word and prayer.
11. Because baptism is an act of obedience, you can expect increased measure of blessing.
12. Because baptism is a symbolic proclamation of the cross, you can expect the power of the cross to affect your life in breaking bondages, addictions, bringing deliverance, and more, during baptism.

In the book of Acts, we see each time people were baptized, they were baptized “*in the name of Jesus.*” We understand that this means “by the authority given to us by Jesus.” “In Jesus’ name” means we are here in His place, we represent Him, and we act on His behalf.

We baptize in water saying: “In Jesus’ name, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

## **The Lord’s Table**

The Lord’s Table was instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matthew 26:18-30). The Lord Jesus then gave this instruction by revelation to the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:20-34; 1 Corinthians 10:16-21).

The Lord’s Table is open to all who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Celebrating the Lord’s Table is:

1. An expression of our personal faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.
2. A proclamation of the completed work of Christ on the cross. Every proclamation is powerful in the spiritual realm and hence we can expect to receive the power of the cross invading our lives as we partake in the Lord’s Table.
3. An expression of our faith in His return.
4. An expression of our union with Jesus (we are declaring our “communion” with the Body and Blood of Jesus—with Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 10:16).
5. An expression of our union (covenant) with one another (1 Corinthians 10:17).

In a covenant relationship, we commit ourselves to one another and share our lives as fully as we can, in accordance with the boundaries set by God’s Word. We make a firm determination to avoid backbiting and mistrust and commit to building loving relationships of trust and forgiveness.

We must prepare our hearts by:

- Examining our lives and renouncing known sin.
- Taking the elements, understanding, and believing in what they represent, the finished work of Christ on the cross through his death and resurrection.

In celebrating the Lord’s Table, we must expect the full blessings of the cross: salvation, healing, breaking of bondages, deliverance, wholeness, blessing, provision, and more, to be released into our lives. Each time we partake of the Lord’s Table, we must welcome the power of the cross to be made effective in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The elements of bread and grape juice are symbolic. We do not believe in transmutation, that is, the elements suddenly supernaturally becoming the actual flesh and blood of Jesus when you eat them. The Lord Jesus never said that it would happen.

### **Partaking in a Worthy Manner**

One of the issues Paul is addressing is the behavior of people at the Corinthian church. There were two ways in which they were violating the Lord's Table:

1. They were partaking of the Lord's Table (as an act of worship) and then also partaking of foods offered to idols as an act of worship toward the idol which Paul calls idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14-33). The real problem was not with the food—but with the reverence that was being given to the idol in so eating something sacrificed to the idol, which also became a stumbling block to other new believers.
2. They had turned the Lord's Table into some sort of feast (1 Corinthians 11:20-22) and hence the admonition to discern the body and partake in a worthy manner. If we do so in a worthy manner—we receive the full blessings of the cross in our lives—which included healing. If we do it without really understanding or paying attention to the significance of what we are doing, we miss receiving the blessings of the cross—and one of the consequences is we miss out on the provision of healing for our bodies, and hence “ ... *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died ...*”

### **Only Requirement**

There is no explicit instruction in Scripture that you must be water baptized before taking part in the Lord's Table. Therefore, at All Peoples Church, we keep participation in the Lord's Table open to all born-again believers.

There is no explicit age restriction in Scripture on when a person should be baptized in water or when a person can start participating in the Lord's Table. The only requirement is that a person has been born-again (has become a believer) through personal faith in Jesus Christ. Hence, we take this approach in welcoming people to be baptized or partake in the Lord's Table.

## **REFLECTION**



1. If I was “baptized” before—either “sprinkled” or just went through “immersion” without having been born again, is it necessary/ alright for me to be baptized “again?”

*Now that you are a believer, yes, it is alright to be baptized again and do it as an expression of your faith in Jesus Christ. We have such an instance in Acts 19:1-6, when Paul encountered some disciples who had been baptized by John the Baptist. He updated them about Jesus Christ, and after they believed, they were baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ.*

2. Do I need to reach some spiritual level or spiritual maturity before being water baptized?

*No. The only requirement we see is that one is born again, becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts most of them were baptized in water as soon as they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. Can one believer baptize another believer in water or should water baptism be conducted only by a pastor or some spiritual leader?

*In the book of Acts, we see Philip who was a deacon at the Church in Jerusalem baptizing new believers. We also see Ananias who was a believer sent to baptize Saul (who later became Paul). So yes, any believer can baptize another believer in water.*

4. What if I took part in the Lord's Table in an "unworthy manner" not really understanding or having faith in what I was doing—will I be struck down with some deadly disease?

*No. Just recognize that you took this lightly. Tell the Lord you are sorry, (i.e., repent of doing this in an unworthy manner) and going forward, do this the right way.*

5. Should I take part in the Lord's Table when the person leading the celebration himself does not believe in what he is doing?

*In general, there is no value in taking part in the Lord's Table if the person leading the celebration does not believe in what is being done. However, in spite of this, if you have no other option, you can choose to do this meaningfully through your personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did for you on the cross. Ultimately, each one has to examine himself and discern the Lord's body for himself.*

6. Can I as a believer take part in the Lord's Table at home?

*Sure. As long as you are doing it as unto the Lord, in remembrance of Him, one or more believers can celebrate the Lord's Table at home or anywhere else.*

## 20. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

While leading a local congregation of believers, there will be internal problems. Some of these will have to do with believers. Some may have to do with individual conduct, moral, and lifestyle issues. There may even be problems with leaders who have been appointed and given responsibility over areas of ministry. We cover some of what the Scriptures teach us in matters of Church discipline.

### Resolving Conflicts

#### Matthew 18:15-22

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

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY WORD MAY BE ESTABLISHED.'

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

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

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

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

As a pastor or leader, people will come to you with problems among themselves. Encourage people to follow the instruction given by the Lord. Let people try to resolve it peacefully among themselves. If that is not possible, get another believer to mediate between the two. If that does not progress, then the leader(s) of the church can step in to resolve the matter. In all things, we need to encourage and work toward forgiveness and reconciliation. If either of the parties involved refuses to hear what the leaders of the church advise, then they can be released from the fellowship, since it will not profit anyone if strife, unforgiveness, and division continues.

#### 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

**4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?**

**5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?**

**6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!**

**7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?**

**8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!**

In some cases, the problems may need more serious intervention, for example, business matters, family/divorce matters, real estate, financial matter, and other situations that typically would need legal proceedings. The Scriptures instruct believers to bring even such matters to God's people, typically "*... a wise man among you ... who will be able to judge between his brethren*" (Vs 5). Of course, we cannot impose this on people. But if we can teach people what the Scriptures instruct us to do, they can then follow through and obey God's Word.

Some guidance when dealing with such matters:

- A. If possible (or necessary) have a team of one or more elders or a team of people qualified, experienced in both spiritual and practical aspects relating to the situation who can help with the problem resolution.
- B. Make it clear that all decisions will be made without any partiality, based on God's Word and for the cause of justice, righteousness, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- C. Put everything down in writing, so that there can be no one claiming anything different later.

Once the church leader(s) have provided their decision, the believers involved, need to follow through. If the believers decide to proceed to a legal court, that decision is left to them. The church leader(s) have done their part to provide a resolution.

In doing all this we must abide by the laws of the land, without compromising God's Word.

## **Bringing Correction**

Bringing correction to individuals is best done in person. As a general guidance, correct individuals in private and in person. Do not address personal individual matters in public. Address issues from the pulpit only when necessary.

## **Cultural Problems**

**Acts 6:1-4**

**1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.**

**2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.**

**3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;**

**4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."**

In Acts 6:1-4, we have the record of a problem between the Hebrew-speaking Jewish believers and the Greek-speaking Jewish believers in the Church at Jerusalem. The problem was addressed by selecting and appointing seven Spirit-filled godly men to take care of food distribution in a non-partial manner.

### **Cliques and Divisions**

**1 Corinthians 3:3-4**

**3 Or you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**

**4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?**

**1 Corinthians 4:21**

**What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?**

The Corinthian church had numerous internal problems, one of which was strife and division because of people taking sides with different ministers of God. In response, Paul addressed this issue by writing, teaching, and instructing the believers in right conduct. He also encourages their alignment to what he has to say and was prepared to deal with it in person if necessary.

### **Moral Issues**

The Corinthian church had problems due to immoral behavior of at least one of its members (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11). Paul addresses this sternly, instructing them to *"deliver such a one to satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 5:5) and to *"put away from yourselves this evil person"* (1 Corinthians 5:13). Once they had done this, and news of that individual's repentance had been received, he writes to encourage the church to receive him back. *"This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him"* (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

### **Disorderly Behavior**

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-15**

**6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.**

**7** For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;  
**8** nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,  
**9** not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.  
**10** For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.  
**11** For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.  
**12** Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in QUIETNESS and eat their own bread.  
**13** But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.  
**14** And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.  
**15** Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

If there are believers not living right, for instance, not working to earn their living, indulging in gossip, and other behavior not appropriate for believers, they need to be warned and corrected. If they do not change, then we are not to continue encouraging them and not befriend them, so that they realize that what they are doing is wrong.

### **Deceiving Brethren**

One of the major challenges Paul faced in the new church plants at Corinth and Galatia, was "*false apostles*" (2 Corinthians 11:13) and "*false brethren*" (Galatians 2:4) who crept into the churches and started promoting their doctrine. Paul addressed these challenges by writing to the brethren, warning them of these people, and encouraging them to hold on to the truth he had taught. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul amplified the truth of our liberty in Christ and challenges the brethren to walk in the Spirit, and not by the law.

### **Opposing Brethren**

#### **1 Timothy 1:19-20**

**19** Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,  
**20** of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

#### **2 Timothy 2:16-18**

**16** But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.  
**17** And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,  
**18** who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

#### **2 Timothy 4:14-15**

**14** Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.  
**15** You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

At Ephesus, the Apostle Paul faced opposition from a few men, who probably had been believers and from the local church body. They somehow seemed to have become rebellious and openly challenged Paul's teaching and promoted their wrong teachings. Paul addresses this publicly by instructing believers not to be moved by their teachings and to avoid them.

### **Divisive Individuals**

#### **3 John 1:9-11**

**9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.**

**10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.**

**11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.**

In the local church led by the elder Gaius, there was a man named Diotrephes who opposed the Apostle John as well as prevented believers from being hospitable to travelling ministers. He so influenced the believers that he even put some of them out of the church. John writes against this behavior in very strong terms and promises to deal with this person very sternly when he comes to that church in person.

### **Correcting Leaders**

#### **1 Timothy 5:19-22**

**19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.**

**20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.**

**21 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.**

**22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.**

As pastors and leaders, we are responsible for leaders we have appointed in the ministry to work with us. Even leaders can make mistakes. However, we need to treat them, with "*double honor*" (Vs 17), even when mistakes are made. First, we must never pass a judgment purely based on one individual's accusation about a leader. We must have two or more witnesses to the wrongdoing.

We must then address the matter with the leader, privately, and in an honorable way. If the leader accepts the wrongdoing and corrects his or her ways, all is well. However, if the leader continues in the wrongdoing, that is when we will have to address the matter publicly, "*in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear*" (Vs 20). We do not want the leader's wrongdoing to lead the rest of the people astray. Do all this with honor.

## Restoring Fallen Ministers

### **Galatians 6:1**

**Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.**

It is possible that a man or woman of God, who has been serving God for any period of time, may fall into some serious sin, e.g., sexual immorality, misuse of money, abuse of people, or some other kind of improper conduct. As a pastor/leader, when people you are overseeing or are associated with, fall into sin, it is our responsibility not to ignore what is happening, but to step in lovingly to bring healing and restoration. There is no set process period for how long it takes to restore a fallen minister. It is advisable that we ask the minister to take a break away from all kinds of ministry. Let them just take time to be in God's presence and walk along with other ministers who will help them through the process of healing and restoration. We need to identify the underlying cause for the behavior that led to the sin. We need to work with them to lay the axe to the root of the problem, rebuild and strengthen character, bring healing and restoration. This could take a few months, a year, two years, or more. Only when we recognize that there has been healing and strength restored, that we release them to get back into ministry. In some cases, if the fallen minister is unwilling to receive help, healing, and restoration, then we are no longer responsible for their choices.

## Exercising Authority Without Abuse

In dealing with various problems within the church that require correction, as leaders and pastors we must not hesitate to use the authority God has given us. However, we do this to edify people and not for their destruction.

### **2 Corinthians 13:10**

**Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.**

### **2 Corinthians 1:23-24**

**23 Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.**

**24 Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.**

## Be Prepared For Different Responses To Correction

When we bring correction, some people may receive it well. Some may not receive it well. They may respond negatively. Receiving negative responses from the very ones you love could be one of the most painful moments of our lives as ministers of God.

Here are some kinds of negative responses you may receive:

- A. **Complaining:** Suddenly, the world becomes totally different to the individual who has received correction. What was so wonderful and beautiful, suddenly becomes a wilderness or a desert place. The individual begins to complain about every little thing.
- B. **Withdrawal:** The individual who was corrected withdraws, disconnects, and hides away in a shell.
- C. **Retaliation:** The individual begins to blame you for their problems, disappointments, or dissatisfactions. Suddenly, the respect and honor they had for you becomes a thing of the past.
- D. **Departure:** The individual suddenly disappears and vanishes with no prior notification.

What should we do in such situations?

- A. **Do not take it personal:** Someone else's inability to receive correction is not your fault.
- B. **Take no offense.** Guard your heart.
- C. **Give time for people to change:** People need time to come to terms with things that need to be dealt with.
- D. **Allow them to move on in peace:** Release them into God's hands. After all, it is only God who can work in them to bring about growth and maturity.

### **Correct In A Timely Manner—Do Not Procrastinate**

Do not delay correction with the excuse that we are extending grace. Sometimes we avoid confrontation because we do not want to risk the possibility of hurting a relationship. However, the longer we delay, the bigger the problem will become and the more painful it will become to deal with at a later stage.

## 21. CHURCH ORDER IN GATHERINGS

### Decently And In Order

There were several things that was taking place in a disorderly manner at the Corinthian church when the believers came together for worship and fellowship. Participation in the Lord's Table was disorderly. So also, the exercise of spiritual gifts needed to be done in an orderly manner. The Apostle Paul addresses these in his epistle and indicates that he will set things in order when he visits Corinth next.

**1 Corinthians 11:34**

**But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.**

**1 Corinthians 14:33**

**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**

**1 Corinthians 14:40**

**Let all things be done decently and in order.**

So, we need to ensure that things are done decently and in order, with excellence in all things that happen during our services and at other times as well. This honors and glorifies the Lord. Some areas that we strive for excellence for our services and meetings include punctuality, planning, good coordination, no waste of time, no unnecessary announcements, cleanliness, efficiency, and similar things that show that we are giving our best for the Lord. We constantly look for ways to improve what we are doing in our services.

Depending on the size of the congregation, we may or may not be able to do certain things. For example, in a house meeting with about 10-15 people, everyone can prophesy, everyone can share, pray for others, and receive prayer and personal ministry. However, in a large gathering with several hundred people, and a service that is planned for 90 minutes or maximum 120 minutes, we usually will not have the time for a lot of people to be involved from the pulpit. Hence, we will then have to find useful ways to provide people the opportunity to exercise and nurture their gifts, while keeping everything in order.

## Use Of Tongues In Corporate Gatherings

Can we use tongues in corporate settings? The main concerns in **1 Corinthians 14** is to do with (A) those who do not understand what we are doing, and (B) when giving a message in tongues (14:16-19, 27-28,32). If there is no one who can interpret a message in tongues, then let him *“keep silent,”* i.e., not give a public message in tongues, but *“let him speak to himself and to God”* (14:28). So, we can all speak in tongues in a corporate setting, so long as we fulfill what is required of the proper use of tongues in a public setting. It is perfectly fine for individual believers to speak in tongues between themselves and God, in a corporate setting. Since they are not giving a public message in tongues and are also not affecting anyone who does not understand what speaking in tongues is about. They are speaking between themselves and the Lord. In a similar vein, if we are in a setting where everyone knows what speaking in tongues is, then following what we are told in 1 Corinthians 14, it is perfectly fine for everyone to speak in tongues loudly, since we all know what we are doing. In Acts Chapters 2, 10 and 19 we see instances of groups of people who all spoke in tongues simultaneously.

## Order And Godly Chaos

**John 3:8**

**The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**

**Psalm 115:3**

**But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.**

While we pursue order, we must let God overrule and move in ways He pleases. Our order must not keep God out. If at any time we feel the Lord directing us in ways we have not planned for, we must yield our plans to the move of His Spirit.

There have been times when we felt the Lord’s presence in such an overwhelming manner that we spent the entire time in worship. We laid aside our planned and scheduled order of service, sermon, and other things. We chose to honor God above our own plans.

## Handling Fleshly Manifestations

It is possible that as we welcome the spontaneous work of the Spirit, that some people may engage in attempting to imitate the work of the Spirit through their own fleshly zeal. It takes wisdom and grace, to pastor and lead in such situations. Our approach should always be one of encouragement. Give people room to make mistakes. Correct lovingly, without discouraging them, or condemning them. If certain individuals are incorrectly motivated and are doing things out of the flesh rather than of the Spirit, deal with them

in private. Deal with the motives of the heart. The fact is there is no perfect local church, and so there is a high possibility that you will always have some amount of flesh manifesting at one point or the other. We must be careful not to quench the work of the Spirit, just because we are trying to eliminate what is of the flesh.

## 22. WOMEN IN MINISTRY

In this chapter, we consider the role women have in ministry.

### Women In Ministry—An Overview

Throughout Scripture, God’s Spirit has worked through women in many ways. The Holy Spirit has moved on women to lead, to prophesy, to bring deliverance, and so on. Here are a few examples:

#### Miriam

Exodus 15:20-21

20 Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them: “Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea.”

#### Deborah

Judges 4:4-5

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

#### Huldah

2 Kings 22:14-15 (Also see 2 Chronicles 34:22-23)

14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her.

15 Then she said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me.’ ”

Isaiah’s wife is called a prophetess. However, there is no record of any ministry she performed (Isaiah 8:1–3).

#### Esther

God used Esther to deliver His people.

## Anna

**Luke 2:36–38**

**36** Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

**37** and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

**38** And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

## Philip's Daughters

**Acts 21:8-9**

**8** On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

**9** Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

## Can A Woman Be A Minister?

First, we must understand that in Christ, there is equality in the grace that is given to both genders.

**Galatians 3:28**

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

**1 Peter 3:7**

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

Second, New Testament Ministry is not restricted to "males" alone.

**Matthew 4:4**

**"Man (*anthropos*) shall not live by bread alone ..."**

The Greek '*anthropos*,' is gender neutral.

**2 Timothy 2:2**

**And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men (*anthroopois*), who will be able to teach others also.**

The Greek '*anthroopois*,' plural of the word '*anthropos*,' means "a human being, whether male or female. Paul does not use the Greek word for man '*aner*,' which is totally masculine, but the gender-neutral word '*anthroopois*.'

**Ephesians 4:8,11**

**8 ... He gave gifts unto men** (*anthroopois*).

**11 And He gave some** ("some" could be he or she) ...

The outpouring of the Spirit is for both men and women (Acts 2:17-18). The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive power to be witnesses for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:48-49) by preaching the Gospel and proclaiming repentance and remission of sins. Women are endued with power the same way as men, to do the same kind of ministry as men.

There is no limitation in the exercise of spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 to the male alone. There is no restriction in offices to the male alone (1 Corinthians 12:28).

In the New Testament, we observe equality for both men and women in the receiving of spiritual power and grace and in the exercise of spiritual gifts and ministry offices. Hence, women can serve and minister in the same ways as men.

Paul had both Aquila and his wife Priscilla as part of his ministry team (Acts 18) and both ministered. Paul, referred to one woman Phoebe (Romans 16:1) as a minister (deaconess) and praised another woman Junia (Romans 16:7) as an outstanding apostle, and lists several women among others as part of those who served.

## **Women In Leadership**

**Romans 12:4-8**

**4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,**

**5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.**

**6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;**

**7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;**

**8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

The gift of leadership is given both to men and women just as all the other gifts listed here. These gifts are an empowering, to carry out a believer's role and function in the Body. Hence, a woman can be in a role and function of leadership, and therefore be empowered to fulfill this function through a gift of leadership.

As we have seen in the earlier section, ministry offices of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, or evangelist, listed in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 are given to both men and women. Any woman serving in one of these offices would normally serve as a leader. In the Church, we have seen God raise up and use women as heads of their ministries. Example: Kathryn Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson who was an evangelist and founder of the Foursquare Church, Maria Woodworth-Etter, Joyce Meyer, and others.

## Head And Headship

### 1 Corinthians 11:3

**But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.**

The Father and the Son are co-equal. They are God. Yet, in God's dealings and in God's plan, the Son willingly submits to the Father. Hence, the head of Christ is God.

### 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

**11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.  
12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.**

In a similar manner, while men and women are co-equal and heirs together of the grace of God (Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7), in God's government the man is head. For example, in God's government for the family, the husband is the head of the wife.

In situations where there is no man, it would NOT be right to force a woman to arbitrarily come "under" a man. Example, if a woman who is not married is leading a ministry, we must accept that God has raised her up not only as a minister but also as leader and head of her ministry. If a woman, whose husband has passed away, is now leading a ministry, we must accept her both as a woman minister and as the leader of that ministry.

We must also understand the boundaries of headship. The husband is head over his own wife. So, in a local church context, a male pastor cannot step into areas where a husband is head over his wife. So as a pastor, you must know your boundaries and not step into areas that are under her husband's jurisdiction. You can give her instructions and guidance when it comes to her area of ministry, but in all other areas, her husband is responsible for her. When pastors are not careful in this area and start doing things that interfere in things where the woman's husband is supposed to provide guidance, the woman will be confused who to listen to—her own husband or the pastor. The Bible however is very clear: "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:22).

## "Let Your Women Keep Silent"

Our interpretation of these two passages must be consistent with the context in which these were written, as well as with the rest of Scripture.

### 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

**34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.**

**35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.**

The primary objective of 1 Corinthians 14 is to encourage the use of spiritual gifts in a church gathering, but to maintain order and decency.

In this chapter, Paul gives the injunction to “keep silent” about three different situations: speaking in tongues, prophecy, and women.

- Speak in tongues to the church audience if there is someone who will also flow in interpretation. Else “keep silent” (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).
- Take turns to prophesy, when you have delivered your prophecy then “keep silent” when someone else has the inspiration to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:29-30).
- Women, if you have questions “keep silent” in church. Ask your husband at home later (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

The objective is order, not the stopping of the exercise of the spiritual gift. We do not use the “keep silent” injunction to prevent speaking in tongues or prophecy. So why should we prevent women from preaching in church using this same injunction? The correct understanding of this passage is that if a woman had questions, she should ask them at an appropriate time rather than during the church service.

### **“I Do Not Permit a Woman to Teach”**

#### **1 Timothy 2:11-15**

**11 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.**

**12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**

**13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.**

**14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

**15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.**

It appears that this passage of Scripture completely prevents women from teaching. We will have to interpret this in the light of Paul’s own ministry practices, the context in which Paul’s epistle to Timothy was written, and in the light of the rest of Scripture.

In their book, “I Suffer Not a Woman,” Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger explain that certain cultic worship practices involving female priestesses of Diana had invaded the first-century church. These priestesses promoted blasphemous ideas about sex and spirituality, and they sometimes performed rituals in which they pronounced curses on men and declared female superiority. What Paul was most likely saying to the Ephesians was this: “I do not allow a woman to teach these cultic heresies, nor do I allow them to usurp authority from men by performing pagan rituals.” He was not saying, as some Christians have assumed, “I do not allow godly Christian women to teach the Bible.” [J.

Lee Grady, in "Ten Lies the Church Tells Women," Article: 20050204105114 in [www.spiritedwoman.com](http://www.spiritedwoman.com), by Strang Communications]

The issue here is submission and yielding to men when it comes to leadership and teaching, in the light of the cultural teaching on the superiority of women. Paul reminds them of man's headship in God's government stating that "Adam was formed first." This therefore is not a prohibition for women being in ministry to serve God, but rather an active submission to men and a code for proper conduct in local church setting, in that cultural context.

**1 Timothy 2:14**

**And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

This verse does not imply that women are more easily deceived. The Apostle Paul is simply stating what had happened in Genesis 3:1-7. The serpent spoke directly to Eve, lied to her, twisted what God had said, deceived her (2 Corinthians 11:3), and got her to take the first bite. The serpent did not have to speak to Adam. Eve passed the fruit on to Adam and he ate it without questioning. Both disobeyed God; both sinned and both fell.

**1 Timothy 2:15**

**Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.**

The simple understanding is that the wife will be kept safe during childbirth in the light of Genesis 3:16.

## **Conclusion**

Imagine a church where women did not serve God in any way! We must recognize that God has always used and continues to use women in different ways for the purposes of His Kingdom.

## **For Further Study**

*I Suffer Not a Woman*, Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger.

*Code of Honor*, Ashish Raichur, free book from All Peoples Church (Read the chapter "Women.")

Section Four:

# MINISTRY ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT



## **23. SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

In this section, we discuss the practical aspects of ministry organization. What are some ways to organize the local church for ministry and to develop or grow the organization? Proper organization is important to (A) have excellence (B) ensure proper functioning and (C) to multiply and increase what is being done. If things are not properly organized then all the wonderful gifts, anointing, and grace that God gives, could easily be wasted. Through proper organization we can effectively multiply the impact and the reach of what God is releasing to a local church body.

Our motivation in ministry organization and developing the organization is so that we can build local churches according to God's blueprint, and thereby glorify Jesus Christ. So, we organize around the blueprint God has given to us in Scripture.

We present here some ideas and practical ways that could be used. These are not the only ways to organize a local church ministry. God may lead you to organize and set things up differently and that is perfectly fine. We simply wish to share some of our own learning and ideas that could be adapted and implemented in other local churches.

The church is a "body" analogous to the human body. The human body has various systems, a total of nine. Paying attention to all the systems is essential to health, strength, and productivity. We can draw an interesting parallel from the human body and organize the local church with systems and processes to ensure similar objectives are met. Let us consider each of the nine.

### **Circulatory System: Care And Nurture**

Ensuring every individual receives care and nurture. Develop more veins, arteries, and capillaries to get adequate care and nurture to every person.

- One-on-one mentoring,
- Small groups,
- Member care team,
- Specialized counselors to address personal needs,
- Regular seminars of topics addressing special needs: e.g., Marriage, Parenting, Finances, Workplace.

## **Skeletal System: Shape And Structure**

Ensuring structure, shape, and support by having proper leadership, organization, and administration in place.

Leaders are pillars in the church.

The Holy Spirit can send people to be connected to your local church. You must welcome and receive them.

In most cases you need to raise up strong leaders within your local church.

- Spiritual mentoring.
- Create opportunities and give people time to take up responsibility, learn, and grow. Train them as they do the ministry.
- Good administrative support staff.
- Employ sound church management practices.

## **Muscular System: Strength And Mobility**

Ensuring strength, movement, and mobility in the body, by ensuring that every believer becomes a minister.

Equipping of believers can happen through several processes. The key is to keep this consistent.

- Training, mentoring, and releasing of small group leaders.
- Purposeful teaching and preaching from the pulpit.
- Opportunity for everyone to minister.
- Create a culture where everyone is encouraged to serve.
- Regular events that equip and mobilize people, e.g., Weekend schools for training.

## **Digestive System: Strong Nourishment**

Ensuring a strong, anointed, and timely ministry of the Word so that people receive, digest, and absorb solid spiritual nourishment.

- Consistent strong ministry of the Word from the pulpit.
- Make additional resources available for people to learn.
- Encourage people to learn and receive from other ministers.
- Create a learning culture.

- Emphasize and reinforce application through the small groups.

### **Respiratory System: Fresh Inspiration**

Ensuring a continuous, fresh, breath, inspiration, and work of the Spirit.

- Emphasize personal and corporate prayer and worship.
- Set times for extended prayer and worship.
- Stay yielded to the leading and work of the Spirit.
- Encourage the use of spiritual gifts, prophecy, tongues, and all others.

### **Nervous System: Sensitivity And Response**

Ensuring keen sensitivity and perception to what is happening in the local body and providing a timely response.

Example, thwarting some work of evil (a wave of gossip) with prayer and biblical instruction.

- Create processes by which people can provide feedback directly to leadership.
- Regular reports by leaders of small groups.
- Be sensitive to what you see and hear in the local church body, so that you can respond quickly.
- Act quickly.
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit who can alert you ahead of time when needed

### **Endocrine System: Simple Controls**

- Without overemphasizing these, bring in reminders from time to time from the pulpit and through other means, e.g., brochures, website, video announcements.

### **Excretory System: Eliminating Waste**

**Ensuring** that the church effectively eliminates unhealthy things individually and corporately.

- Teach people that gossip, backbiting, division, strife, competition, selfish interests, self-promotion, and similar things that are wrong, should not be in the local church body.

- Regularly filter these things out from the local church body through times of prayer, repentance, and fellowship.

## **Reproductive System: Continuous Multiplication**

**Ensuring** that individuals and the local church are reproducing by winning souls, discipling, planting churches.

- Motivate and engage people in soul winning, missions, and discipleship.
- Lead and encourage all kinds of outreaches locally and to regions beyond.
- Equip and release people into church planting and missions.

## **Local Church Ministries And Ministry Teams**

At All Peoples Church, we encourage people to serve as volunteers. While we do have a good number of full-time paid staff and keep expanding our full-time staff, since we need people who can dedicate all their time for certain things, we have a very large number of people who serve as volunteers. We organize people into teams that serve in specific church ministries. Team ministry and teamwork is something we emphasize. Each team has a team leader who oversees that team.

Ministry teams become a great way to build relationships, develop community, and help one another spiritually. Since people work together, they interact with each other regularly and frequently. We encourage teams to not only do their tasks, but to do it with prayer and spiritual emphasis. So, ministry teams really become a place of spiritual nurture while ministry is being done.

Some teams may need a lot more training than others. So, we ensure that adequate training and continuous input are given. We also emphasize excellence in all we do, and hence continuously monitor and provide feedback so that all can work on improving what is being done.

We have different kinds of local church ministries and teams that serve in that area:

- Ministries and teams that are centered around ministry functions.
- Ministries and teams that are centered around felt needs.
- Ministries and teams that are centered around specific events.

Given below are some ministry areas that we are addressing and some that we would like to address as time goes by. In some of these areas we have well-developed teams and in

some other ministry areas, teams are still evolving. There could be new ministry areas that arise in the future and we will most likely form a team to serve in that ministry area.

### **Church Ministries Centered Around Ministry Functions**

Worship Teams  
Prayer and Intercession Teams  
Life Groups, Alpha Groups  
Missions Teams  
Performing Arts Teams  
School Outreach Teams (Catalyst)  
College Outreach Teams (Campus Elevates)  
Counseling (Chrysalis Counseling Ministry)  
Member Care  
Media  
Internet  
Publications  
Evangelism Teams  
Healing and Deliverance Teams  
Prophetic Ministry Teams  
Marketplace Ministry  
Social Action Teams  
Crisis Relief Teams  
Recovery and Restoration

- All people of all ages work together in teams.
- We can have many teams (E.g., many evangelism teams, many prayer teams, etc.) and hence gives room to more people to be in leadership positions.
- Where appropriate, we provide formal or informal on-the-job training for each ministry function.
- People connect because of common spiritual interest or gifting in that area of ministry.

### **Church Ministries Centered Around Age and Felt Needs**

- Children's Church
- Youth Ministry
- Young Adults
- Marriage Enrichment
- Men's Ministry
- Women's Ministry
- Mothers

- Single Parents
  - Addressing felt needs directly.
  - People tend to connect better since they are among people with common denominators like age, stage in life and common problems.

### **Church Ministries Centered Around Specific Events**

- Sunday services and other gatherings (several smaller teams are formed to handle this)
  - Transport
  - Hospitality and Greeters
  - Parking
  - Sound and Stage Set-up
  - Venue Maintenance
  - Resource Table
  - Information Table
  - Ushers—Welcoming First-Time Visitors, Offering, Communion
  - Sunday Church Announcements Visual Aids/Presentation
  - Audio + Video Recording, Live Streaming
  - Visitors Welcome Lounge
  - Offertory Collection and Record
- Youth Camp
- Church Camp

### **Structure Versus Spontaneity**

#### **Zechariah 4:6**

**So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.**

While providing structure is important, we must encourage spontaneity birthed by the Holy Spirit, in all that we do. The building of the local church is primarily a spiritual work and not simply an exercise in management and leadership skills. We must remain sensitive, dependent, and yielded to the Holy Spirit always.

The structure and organization we implement should be birthed by the Spirit, under His guidance and leadership. We need to consolidate these through prayer and wisdom given to us by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will move upon people in the local church to do things. He may stir certain people up to do certain ministry, reach out to certain people, and so on. These may not fit into a structure we have set. Yet, if this is of the Spirit, we should not quench it. Rather,

as pastors and leaders we should encourage this. Encourage spontaneity. Let the Holy Spirit have His way! Do not let our organization or structure in anyway hinder people from flowing with what the Holy Spirit desires to do in and through them.

## 24. NURTURING AND EQUIPPING BELIEVERS

### Ephesians 4:11-13

**11** And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

**12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

**13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

One of the important focus areas for a pastor or leader in a local church is to nurture and equip believers *“for the work of ministry.”* People must be nurtured from being new believers to becoming disciples, and then to becoming ministers in the house of God. Some of them will grow further and become leaders in the local church. In this chapter, we share some simple practical guidance on nurturing and equipping God’s people.

### **Equip Every Believer To Be A Minister**

We need to see every believer as a future minister of God. By minister, we do not mean that they will have to quit their job and become “full-time” preachers. What we intend is that they will serve the Lord Jesus in one or more ways and be fruitful in their calling and gifting.

We must continuously emphasize that every believer is a minister. We must encourage everyone to serve. We must lay aside our own personal insecurities and obey God’s Word which is for us to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

### **Help Believers Discover Their Gifts, Place, And Function**

Every believer has a gift given to them by God. In addition, there is a place (role) and function that the Lord has. We must help people discover their gifts and move into their place and carry out their function. This is a journey and not just a one-step thing. So, we need to patiently help people make this journey. As pastors and leaders, we can help people in several ways. Sometimes we hear from the Holy Spirit about God’s plan and potential for a person. Sometimes, by encouraging them to try different things, people will eventually discover one or more things they can do. Some people already know their gifts and are waiting for opportunities to start serving. Some people are fearful and hesitant and need to be encouraged out of their fears.

In their journey to finding their place and function people may make mistakes. They may attempt different things and be fruitful in some and not in other areas. Some may transition through several different roles before arriving at the place God wants them to serve. Some may serve for just a season and move on. So, there are a lot of different things that can take place as people make this journey. However, we journey with them helping them along the way, always encouraging and supporting them.

### **Help Believers Discover Their Life Assignment**

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. He designed us for this specific purpose. He planned good works that He wanted us to fulfill. Our goal as pastors and leaders is to equip God's people so that they discover and fulfill God's purpose for their lives. Hence we need to teach God's people and give them an understanding that God has a plan and purpose. We then take them through understanding how to discover God's life assignment for them and how they need to prepare and step into that. As we do so, the Body of Christ will be built up and strengthened.

### **Provide Ministry Opportunities And Start New Ministries**

Believers must be entrusted with ministry opportunities within the local church. Most ministries within the local church are started as we find people who have been gifted and called into a certain ministry area. In some cases, even though we did not initially plan to go into a certain area of ministry, when we saw God raising up people with that gift and calling, we provided the opportunity and encouragement for them to exercise their gifts and a ministry area was birthed.

### **Some Believers Will Also Be Ministers In The Marketplace**

For some believers, their ministry may not be only within a local church, but they may serve entirely or primarily outside the local church, in areas such as business, government, education, entertainment, art, media, sport, and so on. They will be ministers in the marketplace. They may come up with new ways to influence people for the Kingdom of God. They may be able to go to areas in the marketplace that typical preachers will not have access to. They may start prayer groups, Bible teaching classes, or other forms of ministry in the marketplace. As pastors and leaders, we must encourage, support, and guide as necessary, so that they can be fruitful in what God has given them to do.

### **Equip Believers In The Supernatural**

Believers must be empowered to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, manifest supernatural power, flow in the gifts of the Spirit, work signs, wonders, miracles, and

destroy the works of darkness. We must transform our local churches from being like nurseries to becoming equipping and commissioning centers, where believers are equipped with the power of God and released to impact and influence the world for Jesus Christ.

### **Provide Leadership, Let Go When Necessary**

As pastors and leaders, we must learn how to guide, guard, and govern with wisdom and discernment. We need to know when to guide and when to step back and let people discover on their own. We need to know when to guard to keep people from making mistakes, and when to let them experiment and learn from mistakes. We need to know when to govern and provide clear directives and when to let people enjoy freedom to make their own decisions. We must lead without letting our leadership become a hindrance to their development. We must also understand that a time comes when we must “let go,” when the eagle is ready to fly out of the nest and they must have the liberty to do so. Only then, can the world be affected by the Kingdom of God.

**Note:** Do read the free book from All Peoples CHURCH, *Equipping the Saints*.

## 25. NURTURING AND DEVELOPING LEADERS

Eventually, we need to raise up many leaders alongside us. Believers who have been faithful in doing their work of the ministry must be now nurtured into leaders. Here is some practical guidance on developing leaders

### What To Look For In Potential Leaders

There are several important characteristics that we need to look for in potential leaders.

- **Personal life example:** People who live out what they believe daily. Nothing is as important as a steady personal walk with God that becomes evident through a godly life and a good testimony.
- **Spiritual and emotional maturity:** Leaders need to be mature. People who know how to take care of themselves and others spiritually and emotionally. They need to have grown past the need for popularity, self-promotion, and other childish things.
- **Alignment:** People who are aligned to the vision, direction, teaching, and standards of the local church. It is dangerous to have a leader who will lead people in a direction you don't want them to go.
- **Responsible:** People who will take their role as leaders with a sense of commitment and seriousness and not treat it lightly.
- **Reliability:** People you can depend on 100 percent of the time. You know they will get the work done, that they will personally go the extra mile and not make excuses.
- **Excellence:** People who will give their absolute best and more for what they have been entrusted to do. You know they work hard, and push for excellence.
- **Continuous Growth:** People who are themselves growing, as individuals, in all facets of personal life. A leader must keep growing to new levels. Only then can he take others to higher levels.
- **No Personal Agenda:** People who do not have any personal agendas. They are not seeking to become a leader to gain visibility, so that they can then use that for their own interest. They must be free from such things.
- **Gift and Calling:** People who are suitably gifted and called to the area in which they are going to be appointed as leaders.
- **Good Followers:** Leaders are good followers. They can take instructions, do the "dirty job," go down to the lowest level, when serving under other leaders because they know the value of support.

- **Good Nurturers:** People who have a heart to nurture other leaders. Eventually, a leader should raise up other leaders.

## **Nurturing Their Growth**

As pastor or leader, we are responsible for nurturing other leaders and encouraging their growth. The development of a leader takes place through several stages.

**Preparation Stage:** In the initial period, you are sharing the vision, sharing what you want done in a certain area of ministry, and how best to go about it. You emphasize character, responsibility, and other things that you are expecting out of the leader.

**Initial Stage:** At the right time, you allow the individual to step into their leadership role. You are quite involved initially in providing needed guidance, training, equipping, and direction. You help them find others who can work with them and help them form their team. The team works through their initial challenges of learning to work with each other. There may be times you need to provide correction and realignment.

**Settling-in Stage:** Slowly, the leader starts walking in their role and starts doing well. The leader can make decisions on their own along with their team. You then take a step back and let them keep moving ahead. They become comfortable with their area of ministry. During this time, you get regular feedback, and when necessary provide input, be it guidance or correction.

**Growth Stage:** Soon the leader can take things to new levels, grow things beyond where they used to be. Their team is working well together. You continue to keep a watch on progress, but your involvement is less. You are providing the high-level vision and direction, while the leader is now taking things forward within the framework you have set. During this stage you may provide input only when required.

**Maturity Stage:** At some point the leader begins to raise up other leaders in their team and delegate parts of their responsibility to them. Ministry begins to grow to a new level since many more are doing things at a greater level of excellence. You now begin to talk to the leader about a bigger role elsewhere, perhaps a new area of ministry, or stepping up to a higher level in the same area of ministry.

**Transition Stage:** After some time, the leader has become redundant in their role because many others on their team can carry on the ministry. You now help the leader step into the new role that you have been preparing them for and let someone else step into their current leadership role.

## Creating Opportunities For Development

One of the best ways to develop leaders is to create opportunities for them to be a leader. So, do not be afraid to make room and put people into a leadership role. Most people will hesitate. But provide needed encouragement and support and help them step in.

Another important way is to get people to travel, serve, and minister alongside you. As people do this, they see your life example, how you behave, how you conduct yourself, how you minister, and how you handle difficult situations. This is a great way to develop leaders. Create opportunities for people to serve alongside you. They will grow quickly.

## Feedback, Encouragement, And Correction

It is necessary to provide feedback, encouragement, and correction for leaders to grow and become better at what they are doing. All of this is done in an atmosphere of love, encouragement, and support. It is done knowing that we are seeking the good of the leader as well as the good of the people we are serving, and for the glory of God. In such an environment where there is freedom to evaluate and provide constructive feedback people develop quickly. People also feel secure, knowing that making mistakes is acceptable as long as we learn from them and move on forward.

## Lessons From Paul-Timothy

Paul took Timothy along, and over time, nurtured him into a fellow-worker and one who could do the work of the ministry the way Paul did (1 Corinthians 16:10). Here are some key points in the way Paul helped nurture Timothy:

- **A special bond:** Paul had a heart for Timothy. He referred to Timothy as his own son in the faith. There was a special bond.
- **Closeness and transparency:** Paul let Timothy travel with him and see his life closely. Timothy must have gained a lot by just observing Paul.
- **Taught specific things:** Paul taught Timothy specific things in ministry so that Timothy could teach the same things and do the same things.
- **Encouraged and corrected:** Paul encouraged and corrected Timothy.
- **Clarified Costs:** Paul let Timothy know that it is not always easy to serve the Lord and there will be a price to pay.
- **Esteemed him highly:** Paul spoke highly of Timothy to others, calling him his own son. Paul did not treat Timothy as a “nobody” or just an ordinary helper.
- **Delegated responsibility:** Paul sent Timothy out on his own on specific assignments.
- **Positive recommendation:** Paul recommended Timothy whole-heartedly when he sent him out.

- **Released into ministry:** When the time came, Paul released Timothy into ministry to stand and work on his own.

**Note:** For a detailed study on Paul-Timothy, do read the free book from All Peoples Church, *Kingdom Builders*, Chapter 7, Raising the Next Generation for Kingdom Service.

## **Multiplying The Nurturing Process**

Leaders must develop leaders and new leaders must develop more leaders. Create a culture where leaders are encouraged to develop more leaders.

## **Developing All Five-Fold Ministries**

The local church should be a place where all kinds of ministries are birthed and encouraged. This includes the nurturing of all five-fold ministers: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists.

The development of five-fold ministers is a process and can happen only through the call and appointing of God. The local church should provide the kind of environment where those called to the five-fold ministry can develop.

Open the local church up for other trusted ministers to come and minister. As others who are in five-fold ministry come and minister, they release and impart from the gift and anointing on their life (Romans 1:11).

As pastor or leader, you need to recognize those whom God is calling into a five-fold ministry function. Walk alongside them and nurture them. Let the local church be both a nurturing ground and a home where they can come and be refreshed.

In due time, there will be many with a five-fold ministry gift who have been raised in the local church. Some may be released so that they move on to establish their own churches and ministries. Others may function to serve the local church body and outside. The senior pastor or leader continues to lead and provide oversight for all ministries being nurtured, raised, and released in the local church body.

## 26. CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Proper administration is very important to a good and healthy local church ministry. Administration is like the backbone that is hidden, but very necessary for the strength and proper functioning of the local church ministry.

Some of us have an aversion to good administration thinking that this is a fleshly thing to do. However, in Scripture we see that “*helps and administrations*” are ministry functions listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and hence a valid calling in the Body for which some are gifted, called, and anointed. Further the God we serve is a God of plan, order, and design. God does not work arbitrarily at random, without a plan or without foreknowledge. Rather we see Scripture revealing God as a God of order, of design, of plan, who works with foreknowledge, and works in a timely manner bringing things to fullness in due season.

Here are some practical things we encourage you to do in local church ministry.

### Develop A Plan For Your Ministry

Prayerfully listen to the Holy Spirit and develop a plan for what God has called you to do as a local church body.

- **Vision and Mission:** Clearly define the vision and purpose that God has given you.
- **Develop Goals:** State specific goals that you are working toward. These can be modified and refined from time to time.
- **Develop a strategic ministry plan:** Have a plan on how you will achieve those goals. This can also be revised as you go along and as things keep developing.
- **Financial Planning/Budgeting:** Look at the finances needed to carry out what God wants you to do. Be a good steward and use finances wisely.

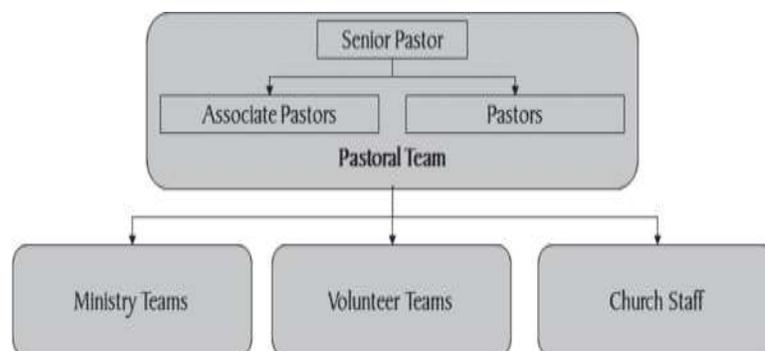
### Organize To Become An Explosive Force For God

Proper organization and administration are important not only from a legal and practical standpoint, but also to help multiply the impact of the ministry.

- **Form a Legal Organization:** We must be accountable to local government authorities. So have a proper registered trust or organization.

- **Develop an Organizational Structure:** Define an organizational structure that is best for your local church ministry. You can change and modify this organizational structure as time goes by. Start simple and let it grow from there. Keep the organizational structure as simple as possible.
- **Systems, People, Processes:** Within the organizational structure clearly define systems (the way things are done), people (who is responsible for doing what), and processes (how these things will get done).
- **Prepare Job or Role Descriptions:** Once you have different people in different ministry roles, write out clearly what is expected of those in leadership roles. For full-time staff, each staff must have a role description that describes their area of responsibility, what they are to do, and other guidelines specific to their work.
- **Establish Organizational Guidelines and Policies:** Write down guidelines and policies on how the organization will handle different areas of the ministry: Staff Guidelines for those who work full-time; Volunteer Guidelines for those who serve as volunteers; Policies on various things that happen regularly in the ministry; Finances—how will money be approved for spending, how much is to be spent on different areas, and so on.
- **Planning and Performance Review:** Encourage all ministry leaders and church staff to write out an annual plan for their area of work and ministry. Periodically (every six months) review progress. Conduct performance reviews for church staff so that work is monitored, feedback is given, and improvements are made.
- **Empower Decision-Making:** Once you have most of the above in place, it is easy to delegate responsibility and empower people to make decisions. They can follow the process and the guidelines that have been set and they can make decisions safely and securely.
- **Adapt to Change:** As the local church ministry grows you may need to review and revise the way things are being done to make things more efficient and more secure. Keep adapting as change happens.

Example of a basic organizational Structure:



## **Pastoral Team**

Comprises of a team of Pastors who focus on spiritual ministry at the church. The pastoral team comprises of mostly full-time and some bi-vocational personnel. Mainly responsible for areas such as: preaching, teaching, prayer, worship, children's ministry, youth ministry, missions, evangelism, etc.

## **Volunteer Teams**

These are teams of volunteers responsible for certain aspects of the functioning of local church-related events. Each volunteer team is led by one volunteer leader with one assistant leader and several volunteer team members. Volunteer teams are usually responsible for ministry that is administrative in nature.

Example: Sunday services—greeters, parking attendants, transport, sound setup, stage setup, information desk, book table, visitors' welcome, ushers, offertory collection, media.

Ministry teams are in some way a direct extension of pastoral ministry focusing on ministry that is mostly spiritual in nature, for the spiritual growth of believers. Ministry teams in many cases are comprised of volunteers. Each ministry team has a team leader, an assistant team leader and several team members. In some cases, ministry teams may be led by one of the pastors or pastors may assist by being part of the ministry team. Example: altar call prayer team, member care, life group leaders, men's ministry, women's ministry, Bible college.

## **Church Staff**

Church staff consists of either full-time salaried staff or paid consultants who help with various administrative functions of the church. Example: Office administration, coordinating services and events, visitor information, church records (baptisms, marriages, funerals, baby dedications), accounting, HR, payroll, venue bookings, audio and video productions, publications, promotions.

## **Be a Strong Leader**

Some important organizational skills of a strong leader and good leadership:

- **Vision:** the ability to hear from God.
- **Wisdom:** the ability to make right decisions.
- **Communication:** the ability to help people grasp the vision.

- **Delegation:** the ability to empower people to engage in the vision.
- **People Development:** the ability to help people rise to higher levels of personal growth.
- **People Management:** the ability to discern people's hearts, gifts, callings, and to position them in the right place at the right time. The ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
- **Planning:** the ability to determine how best to use resources over a period to achieve the desired outcome.
- **Execution:** the ability to carry out the plan.
- **Consistency:** the ability to keep going, even when the going gets tough.
- **Evaluation:** the ability to look at a situation objectively, identify weaknesses, and take corrective action.
- **Problem Solving:** a leader looks for a solution in the midst of a problem.
- **Continuous Learning:** constantly looking for ways to improve. Staying in touch with God's current plans.
- **Adaptability:** ability to change, rearrange as needed.
- **Follow:** a great leader is also a great follower.
- **Raising successors:** the ability to raise up people who can continue the vision.

### **Be Fruitful—Not Just Busy**

The goal in organizing and doing ministry in a proper way is not just that everyone is busy, rather it is for us to be fruitful. Hence, we must evaluate what we are doing to see if we are being fruitful for the Kingdom of God.

Put the right people in the right place for different ministries. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of each ministry. If a particular ministry is not being fruitful it could be due to several reasons and you need to identify the cause(s). Perhaps the right person is not heading it up, in which case we need to bring the right person in. Perhaps the person heading the ministry needs help and training, in which case this must be provided. Perhaps the team is not working well together, in which case problems within the team need to be identified and resolved. Whatever it is, as a pastor or leader you need to monitor fruitfulness and take decisions.

Sometimes you may need to close a certain area of ministry. Either the ministry has served its time and purpose and things need to change, or there could be other reasons as well. However, under the leading of the Holy Spirit and with the wisdom of God, you need to make tough decisions, so that time, energy, and resources are not wasted. Our goal is not being busy, but to be fruitful for the Kingdom of God.

## **Keep Your Finances in Order**

Finances are an important part of local church ministry. Any misuse of finances can be harmful for the ministry and could even cause a ministry or local church to be shut down. Apart from that, any improper use of finances brings dishonor to the name of the Lord. Hence it is very important that this area of the local church ministry is handled with utmost care.

- Keep proper accounts.
- Follow legal requirements.
- Do not spend money you do not have—avoid unmanageable debt.
- Do not be hasty. Start with what you have. Build in God’s timing.
- Have and maintain a budget.
- Step out in faith under the leading of God.

## **Maintaining Accounts**

- Take the assistance of a credible accountant if needed to get this done.
- Maintain a good accounting system to record all income and expenses accurately.
- Make sure there are adequate procedures to ensure that there are no losses.
- Measure the financial results regularly to assess the performance.

## **Legal and Financial Obligations of a Religious Trust**

The following legal and financial requirements have to be met once you register the church as a religious trust: (Take the assistance of a trustworthy auditor).

- Apply for a Permanent Account Number (PAN).
- Apply for a Tax Account Number (TAN).
- Register under section 12A and get IT exemption from the Commissioner of IT
- Register for Professional Tax.
- If applicable, register under the religious places’ registration.
- The minutes of the meetings of the trustees must be recorded and filed.
- The regular statutory audits must be carried out.
- The necessary taxes must be filed.

## **Put Everything In Writing. Cover Legal Aspects.**

The law of the land can work for you or against you. It depends on which side of the line you stand. It is wise to get all contracts and agreements that you enter into with property

owners, vendors, and other contractors in writing and signed by both parties. Do not get into major deals purely based on someone's word. They may change what they say, and situations may become very difficult.

## 27. ORGANIZING SMALL GROUPS

Small group meetings are a very important part of a local church, especially when the numbers begin to increase. Small groups help people fellowship, share, and do life together in meaningful ways. Small groups provide opportunity for many people to serve, minister, and use their gifts. Small groups are also a great way to evangelize, win souls, and make disciples. Most new people feel comfortable in small familiar settings. Also, in areas where there could be persecution that targets large group meetings, people can continue meeting in small groups and the church can continue to thrive.

Broadly speaking we can have at least two kinds of small groups:

- **Life Groups:** Small groups whose primary purpose is discipleship and fellowship, mainly for those who are already part of the local church body. We call these “Life Groups.”
- **Alpha Groups:** Small groups whose primary purpose is winning souls and nurturing new believers, so that at a later stage they can become part of the local church. We call these “Alpha Groups.”

### Life Groups

A small group of up to 12 people (adults) who meet regularly, develop meaningful friendships, grow together, and serve together in God’s purposes.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the life group is to develop believers in 1. Fellowship, 2. Discipleship, 3. Member Care, 4. Evangelism, 5. Ministry

#### The Life Group Meeting

These are held 1.5 to 2 hours, weekly or once in two weeks. There will be a time of welcome, worship, sharing testimonies, discussion of the Word (usually this is a discussion on the application of the Sunday sermon), time for prayer and ministry, followed by sharing in some food/snacks/refreshments. The actual order in which these things are done can vary. Some life groups may have the snacks at the beginning.

### **Responsibilities of the Life Group Leader**

Invite new people at the church to connect to the life group.  
Follow up with those who attended the life group during the week.  
Pray and oversee spiritual development in the lives of those in the life group.  
Encourage member care, evangelism, and ministry to take place within the life group.  
Weekly email report to pastors.

### **Life Group Dynamics: Fellowship**

Sharing of life—going beyond the casual asking and answering questions.  
Support and encouragement for spiritual growth.

### **Life Group Dynamics: Discipleship**

Helping one another mature into Christlikeness.  
Dealing with issues—sin, character development, life-plan, maturity.  
Direct people to get help from pastors or counselors when needed.

### **Life Group Dynamics: Member Care**

Demonstrate genuine love, care, and interest for each other.  
Come together to support and assist each other in times of need.  
Inform pastors in times of special need or emergencies.  
Avoid dependencies (wrong lifestyles).

### **Life Group Dynamics: Evangelism**

Stay focused on winning souls and making disciples.  
Invite new people from each one's circle of influence.  
Have special evangelism meetings and outreaches to win new people to the Lord.

### **Life Group Dynamics: Ministry**

Encourage life group members to discover gifts and serve at church.  
Go on church outreaches and mission trips.  
Engage in local ministry (slums, old-age homes, school outreaches, and so on).

### **General Guidelines**

Life group leader must not hand over leadership to someone else.

Develop community. Do not develop cliques or factions.

Stay to about 12 people per life group.

Do not let people remain as spiritual babies. Help them to grow.

Avoid disputes, arguments, and controversial topics during discussions.

Multiply quickly and send mature members out to start new life groups. Nurture and release new life group leaders.

## **28. MEGACHURCH AND MULTISITE CHURCH**

### **Megachurches**

In recent times a new class of church has emerged: the very large church, often called a “megachurch.” These local churches typically have congregations of 2,000 or more in total attendance.

While many people shy away from the idea of the megachurch, we must understand the need and benefits of the megachurch. In most urban centers with many millions of people, it would be very unfair to want to remain the “small and cozy” local church with a few people. The Lord Jesus died for every person in the city, and we must reach out, win souls, and disciple them. Secondly, megachurches can do a lot more with the pooled resources of people, energy, time, and finances. Thirdly, megachurches can affect society in significant ways by getting the attention of media, high-level officials, and can raise a voice where needed. Fourthly, megachurches can be involved a lot more in missions than smaller congregations by making use of the large resources available. Finally, megachurches can provide closeness and fellowship through the effective use of small groups, thus having the benefit of a large congregation as well as that of small groups for community.

Research reports have shown that the leader at the helm makes all the difference in a megachurch. In many ways the leader of the megachurch makes a significant difference. The senior pastor is typically a visionary leader and sets the tone and creates much of the focus, direction, and spiritual development of the congregation.

Most megachurches offer multiple worship options. This include multiple service timings as well as language options.

### **Multisite Churches**

A multisite church is one where the main church offers services at multiple locations, within the city, or across cities. There are many ways in which multisite campuses are run. One common approach is to have video teaching in the satellite campuses. The video teaching could be pre-recorded or live streamed into the service. Other multisite campuses have in-person teaching by a member of the pastoral team, sometimes called a “campus pastor.”

All Peoples Church in Bangalore follows a multisite model. We are one church with many locations or many congregations. We have the main APC-Central congregation, which over time has planted four others: APC-North, APC-South, APC-East, and APC-West congregations. We have chosen to have in-person teaching, with an associate pastor leading the congregation at each location that has been planted from the Central church.

Our primary motivation in planting out was accessibility and outreach. With such a large and expanding city, it would be convenient for people to go to a location near them. Also, having multiple sites permits us to tailor each site to the cultural context in which it is planted and reach out strategically to its immediate neighborhood.



Each location has its own team of pastors, ministry leaders, and volunteers. In each location, we encourage the development of specific ministry areas. Supporting all locations is a common team comprising of the senior pastor, common pastoral team (E.g., worship pastor, children’s church pastor, youth coordinator), and administrative teams.

Normally, the same Sunday message is preached at all locations by the associate pastors. Visiting or guest preachers may cover two locations at which time the associate pastors at the other locations preach different messages.

All finances are kept common and major decisions are made centrally.

We function as one church, where many ministries, outreaches, and missions are done together with people from all locations. We regularly come together for combined events

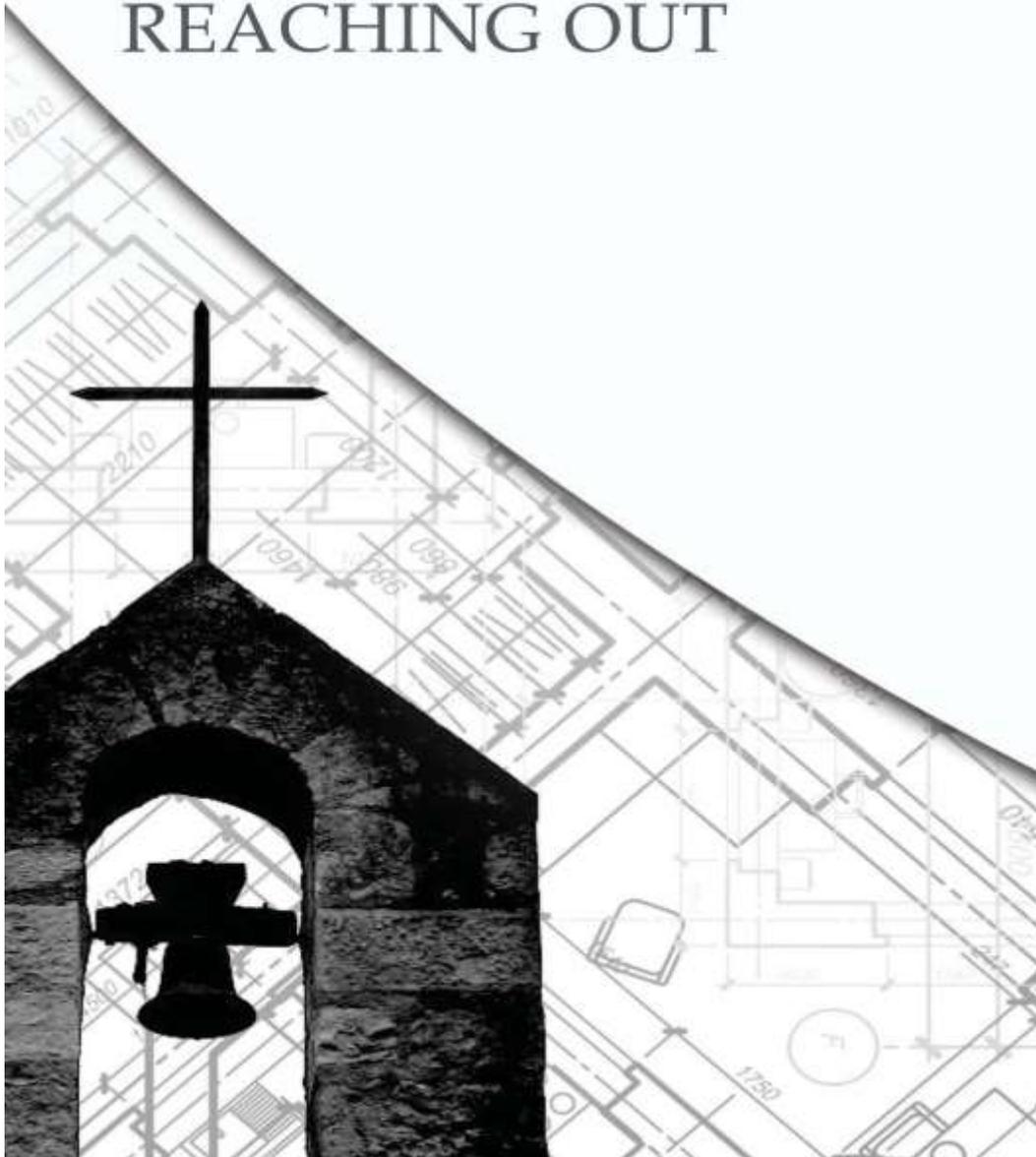
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which keeps us all connected, with a sense of belonging to one church, although we meet at different locations.

*Useful information on Megachurch and Multisite Church can be found at: Leadership Network [www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org)*

Section Five:

# REACHING OUT



## 29. THE LOCAL CHURCH IN RELATION TO OTHER CHURCHES

It is important for the local church to have an outward focus and be a blessing to other churches, Christian ministries, and to the community, whether in its vicinity or regions beyond. We see several examples of this in the New Testament.

The Church in Jerusalem reached out and ministered to the Church at Samaria that resulted from the ministry of Philip (Acts 8:14-17,25). Peter and John went and ministered to the new believers in Samaria.

The Church in Jerusalem reached out and ministered to the Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30). They sent Barnabas to pastor that church. Later, a team of prophets came from Jerusalem to minister to the Antioch church.

The Church in Antioch later sent aid to help the believers in Judea who were affected by a famine during that time. The Corinthian and Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) also took collections and sent help for the believers in Jerusalem, who were poor (2 Corinthians 8:1-14; Romans 15:26)

Traveling ministers such as Peter, Paul, and several others travelled across these local churches strengthening them spiritually.

Lessons to implement:

- Mature churches can help support and strengthen believers in newer churches spiritually.
- Local churches should relate to one another in sharing material things and being of help to others in time of need.
- Relationships across local churches can be fostered by local leaders relating to one another or through apostles and prophets who help connect these churches through godly relationships. Local churches must receive through travelling ministers that Christ has set in the Body. However, this must be done with caution so that wrong ministers are not allowed to have entrance into the local church.
- We must maintain divine order when working together. We work together, while respecting the other local church's denomination and affiliation. We must respect leadership from each other's local churches. Believers must be taught to rightly relate to other local churches.

**Note:** For more details, please read the free book from All Peoples Church, *Divine Order*.

### **30. SHEPHERDING THE CITY**

As part of looking outward, local churches must recognize their responsibility and call toward the city (or town, village, or region) in which they are situated. Over half the world's population live in urban centers. It is estimated about 75 percent of the world's population lives in cities. So, if we want to win nations, we must win their cities.

As pastors or leaders, we need to look beyond our local churches and take spiritual responsibility for the city and communities we live in. God calls us to "shepherd" the city. We must take ownership for the city and work together for city transformation.

#### **The Citywide Church And City Transformation**

It takes a citywide church to win a citywide war. One local church cannot do it alone. However, if several local churches in a city come together and work together, we can and will see city transformation.

There are "seven spheres of influence" or "seven mountains" that shape our society: Religion, Education, Government, Family, Business, Media and Arts, Entertainment (includes sports). These are the seven areas or spheres that determine our society, shaping the society we live in. The term "marketplace" embraces all seven spheres of influence. If we are going to be the salt and light to the world, we must engage in these seven spheres of influence. God needs his people in all these seven spheres of influence. We must take responsibility for bringing God's Kingdom into these seven spheres of influence. As the citywide church begins to influence and impact these spheres of society, we will see city transformation.

#### **Unity In The Citywide Church**

**Mark 3:24-25**

**24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.**

**25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.**

The Lord Jesus taught us that a house or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Unfortunately, much of the citywide church is divided along strong denominational and local church boundaries. We, as local church pastors or leaders, need to develop a Kingdom-mindset in the city and for the city. We must desire to see His Kingdom come and celebrate each time His Kingdom advances in the city. If pastors and Christian leaders

can join hearts and hands, and work together, then the citywide church will be strong and will have a powerful impact on the city.

The citywide church is truly a church without walls. The church is everywhere. It is important that we demolish the “invisible” walls of mindsets, denominational barriers that keep the citywide church divided and hence powerless to impact the city.

### **Church Reformation For City Transformation**

The citywide church meets more often in the marketplace than in their regular Sunday meetings. Saints from different local churches meet five to six days of the week in the marketplace, while they gather in their own local churches once or twice a week. If all these saints are equipped to manifest God in the marketplace, we will have a great impact. We must encourage God-ordained leaders to rise amidst the church in the marketplace, to lead a combined initiative to bring the glory of God into all the world. When we do so, we will see combined initiatives with complimentary resources across local churches to impact the city. It will no longer be one local church working to do something in the city.

What a powerful impact we will have on our city when citywide initiatives are executed with the combined resources of saints across local churches, with God-ordained apostolic leadership guiding each initiative!

The citywide church will then be a strong voice in society and will have a transforming effect on the city. When the citywide church is transformed, the city will be transformed!

### **Developing A Kingdom-Mindset**

How do we co-labor to raise up a citywide church full of believers who are equipped and released for ministry in the Church?

As we said earlier, believers from different churches meet in a common arena—the workplace. They must be encouraged to work as a team to impact their workplace, rather than carrying a sectarian, my-church-is-better attitude. If believers are not taught and trained to co-labor with believers from other local churches in the workplace, without violating divine order in the citywide church, then the purposes of God’s Kingdom are not advanced.

Apostolic leaders must get ready to provide leadership to citywide initiatives that pool resources (people, time, money), cross local church barriers with the sole purpose of seeing His Kingdom established in the city. This must be done without elevating a single man, ministry, or local church.

When souls are saved and lives transformed through these collaborative efforts, these new believers will be encouraged to become part of a good Bible-believing local church that is most appropriate for them, where they can be discipled and equipped. Which local church they connect with will no longer be important because we are seeking the expansion of His Kingdom in the hearts and lives of people. The growth and expansion of all local churches will be a natural outcome.

### **Unity Through Relationship Rather Than Structure**

The citywide church must move past basic cooperation to hold events/conferences/meetings and come to a place of unity in the Spirit. Unity in the Spirit does not depend on hosting events/ conferences/meetings. It is a change of heart and mind. It is living in this place of unity that will enable us to take the necessary steps toward city transformation.

If the citywide church can live and function in the unity of the Spirit, and this is combined with believers ministering in the marketplace—we will see our cities being powerfully touched for the Lord Jesus Christ!

Structure, if needed, can follow once Kingdom-minded relationships have been established among leaders and believers in the city.

### **Establishing The House Of God In The City**

We must encourage local church leaders and congregations to come together in seasons of worship and prayer to establish the house of God in the city. Together we engage the powers of darkness over the city. Together we exalt Jesus Christ as Lord over the city. As we do this, there will be powerful spiritual transformation over the city.

## 31. URBAN EVANGELISM

Cities have their unique opportunities and pose challenges for the salvation of souls.

### God Is Interested In Cities

The cries of the city come up before God. God is aware of what is happening within the city. Example: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 13:13; Genesis 18:17-18,20-21), Nineveh (Jonah 1:2).

God has pity over the hopelessness in the city.

**Jonah 4:11**

**And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?**

God wants His people to seek the peace of the city and to pray for the city.

**Jeremiah 29:7**

**And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.**

God is looking for people who will respond to the cries of the city.

**Ezekiel 9:4**

**And the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”**

### India

There are 48 urban agglomerations in India with a population of 1 million or more.

#### Tier I

Delhi/NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore.

#### Tier II (17 major Tier II cities)

Pune, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Surat, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, Indore, Nagpur, Kochi, Ludhiana, Bhopal, Amritsar, Gwalior.

**Tier III (33 major Tier III cities)**

Allahabad, Udaipur, Agra, Ajmer, Kota, Meerut, Shillong, Dhanbad, Hoshiarpur, Ambala, Vijayawada, Jalandhar, Raipur.

While about 70 percent of India’s population still live in rural areas, there is a steady migration from villages to cities.

As a local church, we need a strategy to not only impact our own city, but also other cities in our nation.

How can a local church reach the city?

**Spiritual, Strategic, Innovative**

Taking a three-pronged approach toward reaching a city/urban community:

| <b>Spiritual</b>   | <b>Strategic</b>  | <b>Innovative</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the spiritual nature of the city and different parts of the city</li><li>• Engaging with the power of God’s Spirit</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the demographics across the city (Social distribution, Industries, Educational and so on)</li><li>• Common problems and challenges in a community and possible approaches</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring new approaches to reaching people in the city</li><li>• Connect, Evangelize, Consolidate</li></ul> |

The most effective approach is people reaching people. Local churches must equip God’s people to share the Gospel, win souls, and nurture new believers. This is the most sustainable, long-term ongoing process that will bear much fruit.

**New Approaches—Examples**

**Strategic Church Planting**

Church plants in different parts of the city—each reaching a different kind of people. We must become intentional about urban missions via church planting in cities or parts of a city where God’s Kingdom must invade. We must also consider starting/planting congregations reaching different language groups.

### **Corporate Prayer Fellowships**

People gathering for prayer at workplace locations or in proximity to the workplace, serves as a way to reach out to the unsaved.

### **Coffee Talks**

Having meetings at Coffee shops, where believers (young people) can invite their unsaved friends. Talk about life issues relevant to young people.

### **Catalyst**

Team of believers who teach Scripture and biblical values to students in schools. Majority of students are unsaved and hence is a great opportunity to win souls and make disciples. We consider this as “discipling” entire schools.

### **Campus Elevates**

“Youth services” addressing life issues on college and school campuses.

### **Chrysalis Workshops**

Addressing needs of people, e.g., parenting workshops, marriage workshops by professional Christian counselors. Workshops are open to public.

### **Urban Youth Conferences**

Conferences addressing life issues relevant to urban youth.

### **Leveraging Special Occasions**

Christmas outreach in apartments, malls, etc., corporate Christmas breakfast.

### **Big Sundays**

Have “Special Sundays” quarterly, where the service is geared toward addressing a topic of interest for the unsaved. Believers use this opportunity to invite unsaved friends to church.

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### **Miracle and Healing Services**

Special Sunday services geared to minister healing and deliverance.

## **32. CHURCH PLANTING AND MISSIONS**

When we use the word “missions” we are talking about:

- Taking the message of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet heard and planting new local churches among them.
- Discipling and equipping those who have believed, so that they can have a self-sustained church growth movement among their own people/community.
- Empowering/working alongside those involved in the above.

The local church must reproduce. Engaging in missions is one such way to have the local church reproduce.

### **Ways A Local Church Can Engage In Missions**

There are several ways believers in a local church congregation can engage in missions. These include:

1. Cast a vision for church planting.
2. Strengthening new believers and local churches.
3. Ministering to specific physical needs of other local churches and community of believers.
4. Praying for the advancement of the Gospel.
5. Partner with those involved in missions by supporting financially and in other ways those engaged in missions.
6. Using other methods to minister Jesus Christ to new communities, e.g., Medical missions, social action, and others.

Every believer is a “sent one” in one sense. We have all been sent (John 20:21). We are His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Every believer within the context of their present vocation in life can be apostolic and manifest apostolic nature within them to pioneer, build, and govern.

### **Preparing For A Church Plant**

Here are some basic areas in which we can help believers prepare themselves to get ready to go out on a church planting mission:

- **Recognizing the call:** Be sure that the Lord is directing you into this church planting mission.
- **Get ready spiritually:** Equip yourself with the Word and the work of the Spirit.
- **Understand the terrain—spiritual, strategic:** Survey the area where you will be going into. Understand the spiritual, demographic, and other factors affecting the people.
- **Develop a plan, be ready to adapt:** Prayerfully listen to the Holy Spirit and develop a plan on how you will go about church planting in that area. However, be ready to adapt while making the journey.
- **Go as a team:** If possible, go as a team. It would be great if two or more families can make up the initial church planting team. Pray for God to add the right people to your team.

## **Pioneering A Local Church**

### **Consider Tent-making**

We assume that the call to missions will involve leaving our professional careers and going full-time as a missionary somewhere. While it is true that God may call some of us to do this, we must also understand that God also uses our professional lives in missions.

Paul the apostle, is a great example of combining his trade along with church planting. He took this approach in at least three locations, at Corinth, along with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-11), at Ephesus (Acts 20:33-35), and at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Some believers can move with their profession to another urban center in India and plant a church there or in some way engage strategically in missions.

### **Identify and Work With People Whom God has Touched in that Place**

Usually there will be people whom God has already prepared and hence are receptive to the Gospel.

At Corinth, Paul and his team worked with Aquila and Priscilla, and with Justus. Later God sent Apollos to them (Acts 18:24-28).

At Philippi, Paul and his team found a businesswoman name Lydia (Acts 16:12-15) through whom they were welcomed into the city.

At Ephesus, Paul used the school of a man named Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

## **Demonstrate the Power of the Gospel**

Very often we wonder what it will take to have a powerful impact on the city. One important key to unlocking the hearts of people in cities is to demonstrate the power of God in the marketplace. Jesus demonstrated the power of God in villages, country sides, and in the cities (Mark 6:56).

The Lord Jesus expected repentance as the outcome of demonstrating mighty works in cities (Matthew 11:20-24).

False religions dominate the lives of people in most cities. Our approach to reach them is by demonstrations of God's power. We see the following examples in the book of Acts:

- **Paul at Paphos** (Acts 13:6-12): The leader of the city was affected when he saw the demonstration of God's power.
- **Paul at Philippi** (Acts 16:16-19): The city was affected when the demonic power that dominated the people in the city was overthrown.
- **Paul at Ephesus** (Acts 19:8-20): The demonstration of the power of God through miracles affected this city.

## **Using Additional Methods to Minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

- Mass media (newspapers, television, and so on)
- Address prevailing needs/evils (E.g., drug addiction, alcoholism, and so on)
- Social work / Community transformation
- Education
- Public health improvement

## **Church Planting: Practical Guidance**

The following are a few important guidelines to follow when going into a new place/area to start a local church or establish a new ministry.

### **Prayer, Survey, and Plan of Action**

- i. Take time to survey the area, pray over the area, and its people. As far as possible we encourage you to plan and prepare well in advance for a new church plant, through prayer and physical survey of the area and region, with the exceptions of a clear and immediate directive from the Spirit of God.
- ii. Through prayer and survey, formulate a clear plan of action. The plan of action may change over time, but at least you have something to begin with.

- iii. Share and discuss this with the leadership of your present local church to receive further direction and counsel. Step out with their guidance and blessing.

### **Relating to Local Christian Leaders in the Area**

- i. Meet and establish good relationships with existing local church pastors and leaders of Christian ministries, if any. Always maintain good relationships with local Christian leaders.
- ii. Once you move into that area, become part of a local pastors' gathering and fellowship.

### **Clearly Express Your Primary Purpose**

- i. Always clearly state the primary purpose of your plan. If you are going to plant a local church, tell everyone clearly that you are planning to start a local church.
- ii. Do not state your intent as starting a prayer meeting, a house meeting, a healing meeting, a small fellowship, and so on. State clearly that you are planning on starting a strong local church and hope to see it grow and impact many lives.

### **Initial Period**

- i. Once you move into the area, get the work started right away without any delay. Delaying the start of work can cause distractions with other things and there is the tendency to move into directions that are away from the primary vision. Hence, start work as soon as possible after moving into the area.
- ii. There are many ways you can get the work started. You may spend some time doing evangelism (street, door-to-door) and then begin Sunday services. You may have a series of evangelistic meetings and so on. This would have been determined when you formulated your plan of action.
- iii. You may initially begin by having meetings and Sunday services in your home and then move into a larger hall as things develop or you may begin at a hall. Either of these options is fine.
- iv. You may choose to use the "house church" format and call for a combined large meeting once a month or choose to do it as the typical Sunday large gathering, combined with other meetings during the week.
- v. Be careful when ministering to people who already are regular members of another local church. Try to avoid this as much as possible. If this does happen, minister in such a way that such people are always directed back to their local church and stay faithful to their leadership. Encourage such people to call for their own pastor(s) to come and minister to them.
- vi. Do not start your ministry in the house of believers who are part of another local church.

- vii. During this time there may be people who will connect with you and feel called to share in the vision you have. God may have already prepared such people for you. Be open to them and allow them to come in, so long as they are genuinely sent by God and are committed to your vision. On the other hand, there may be people who want to join you for the wrong reasons. Therefore, (A) Be discerning and take things slowly (B) Do not make promises of leadership positions, salary, trust membership, and so on, at this point (C) Constantly evaluate their motives and attitudes before committing yourself to trust and depend on them.
- viii. If you are starting meetings in your home, please make sure that you do not become a nuisance to your neighbors. You may end up unnecessarily causing trouble for yourself. If you feel that having loud singing, praying, preaching, and a lot of people coming and going will cause disturbance to your neighbors, then please look for an independent venue (hall or a house away from close neighbors) to hold meetings.

### **Finding a Venue for Local Church Meetings**

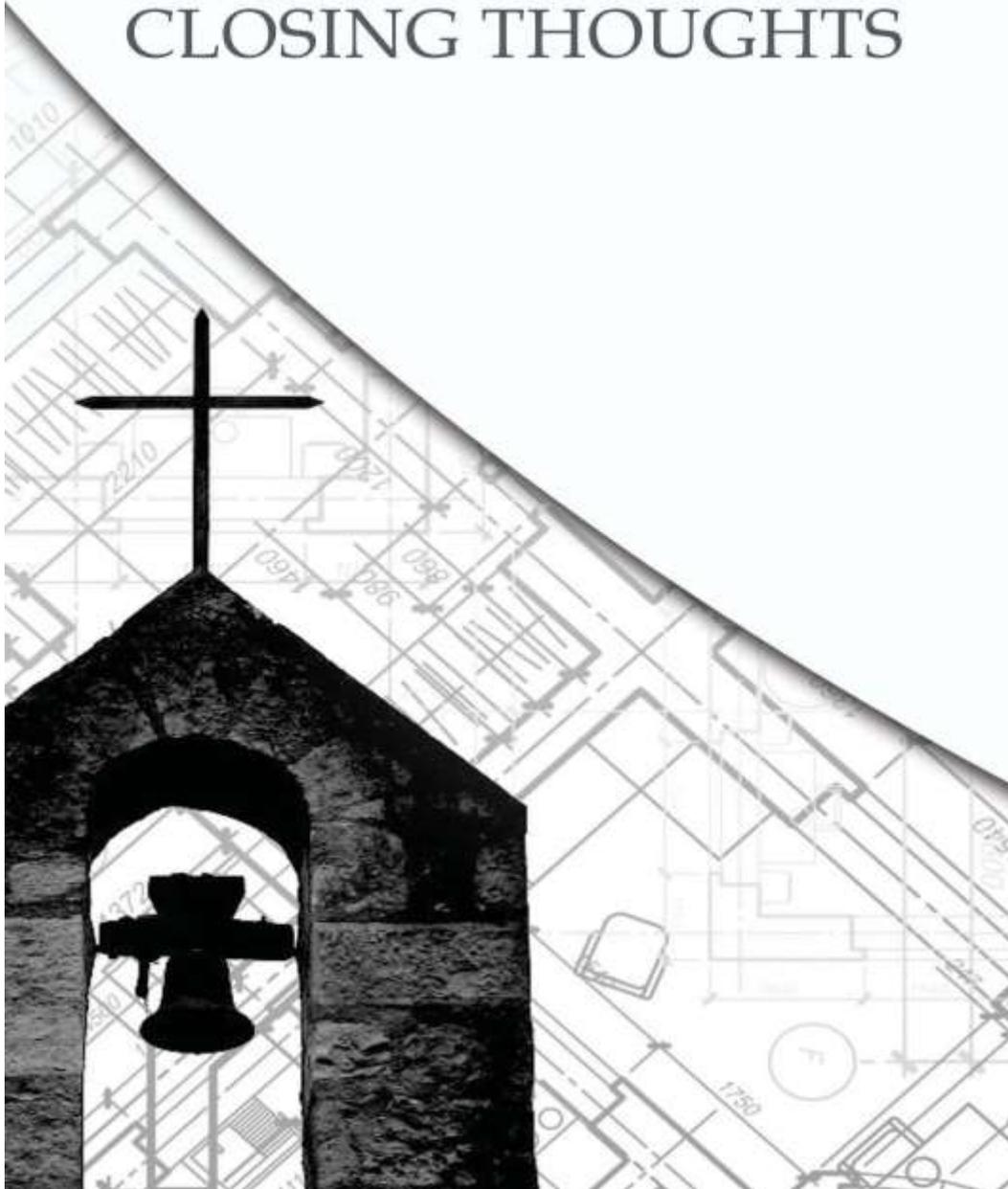
- i. Once you have decided to have meetings in a hall, try to look for a venue that is easily accessible and close to your target audience, e.g., colleges, café, restaurants, marketplace, and so on.
- ii. We recommend first exploring the possibility of using the hall of Christian schools or institutions. This generally works out more cost-efficient than renting a commercial place. This is an option to keep in mind.
- iii. If finding a suitable school hall is not feasible, look for a commercial hall for rent.
- iv. When discussing with the owner or landlord, always make it clear that you will be having church/prayer services, prayer meetings and that there will be many people coming and going. There should be no misunderstanding about this.
- v. Always sign a lease agreement with the landlord or school authorities on legal stamp paper, clearly stating the deposit and rental amounts. Do not go purely by word-of-mouth commitments as people tend to forget or can easily change what they have once said.

### **Formal Launch of Services and Meetings**

- i. Ensure excellence in the way the church service/meeting is conducted. Start on time, have things organized properly.
- ii. While you cannot prevent members of other churches visiting your church service, announce regularly, “If you are already part of a local church where the uncompromised Word of God is being taught, please remain faithful there. However, if you are looking for a home church, we welcome you to visit us again.”

Section Six:

# CLOSING THOUGHTS



### **33. PITFALLS TO AVOID: LESSONS FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

The book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, begins with a message from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, to the seven churches in Asia. There are lessons we can learn from what the Lord spoke to these churches.

#### **Church Of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7): Maintain Your First Love**

You have left your first love.

As a local church, our focus should be on the Lord—loving Him, worshipping Him, and ministering to Him.

#### **Church in Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11): Be Faithful Unto Death**

Be faithful unto death.

As a local church we must be prepared to stand strong through persecution.

#### **Church In Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17): Guard Against Wrong Doctrine**

People in the church who espouse the “doctrine of Balaam” and the “doctrine of the Nicolaitans.”

Two groups of people who espoused a lifestyle of idolatry and immorality.

As a local church we must keep God’s house/people clean. Guard against teaching that permits people to live in idolatry and immorality.

#### **Church In Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29): Guard Against Demonic Spirits**

Permitting a woman Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess to seduce God’s people into immorality and idolatry.

Paul warned of a phenomenon in the last days:

**1 Timothy 4:1**

**Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**

**The Spirit of Jezebel**

We see a woman identified as Jezebel, posing as a prophetess, supposedly proclaiming “deeper truths” (which are nothing but the “depths of satan” or doctrines of demons) and was able to “teach and seduce” God’s people, leading them astray into immorality and idolatry. The immorality and idolatry seem to be more of a “spiritual” form of immorality and idolatry rather than natural, meaning that these people embraced something other than the living God.

“To seduce” means “to lead into error.”

The “Jezebel spirit” can work through a man or woman. Jezebel in the Old Testament led Ahab into worship of false gods (1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 21:25), she killed the true prophets of God (1 Kings 18:4), supported false prophets (1 Kings 18:19), intimidated/ threatened God’s true prophet (1 Kings 19:2), committed murder for property (1 Kings 21:5-15), and promoted witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22).

As a local church, we should be on guard not to permit teaching that seduces—teaching that leads people astray into immorality and idolatry, where people’s affections (immorality) and worship (idolatry) are taken over by something other than the true and living God.

**The Religious Spirit**

We see this operating through the Pharisees or religious leaders during Jesus’ time.

Jesus was the Word who became flesh. He was the Son of God and yet the Pharisees, the religious people, did not recognize Him. In fact, they opposed him.

The religious spirit has several characteristics:

- **Self-deceiving:** calling the truth a lie (John 7:40-49). The fear of deception that keeps you from embracing the truth is a great deception in itself!
- **Hypocritical:** points out the speck in the other person, while ignoring the beam in one’s own eye (Matthew 7:3-5).
- **Man-pleasing:** Seeks honor from men instead of the honor that comes from God (John 5:44).

- **Pretense:** Put on a pretense of piety, self-righteousness, or super spirituality (Matthew 23) instead of pursuing pure religion (James 1:26-27).

We must protect the local church from such “*deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*” that Paul warned us about.

### **Church In Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6): Do Not Be Fooled By Reputation**

You have a reputation that you are alive, but you are dead.

As a local church, we must ensure that we are right before God. Man’s opinion does not matter. What God says about us is important.

### **Church In Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13): Persevere, Hold On**

Persevere, hold fast what you have.

### **Church Of The Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-22): Be Red Hot, On Fire**

You are neither cold nor hot.

Beware of self-sufficiency, complacency! It keeps Jesus out of His house! We must always be “hot,” on fire with passion for the Lord.

## **SAMPLES YOU CAN ADAPT**

All Peoples Church is pleased to provide free electronic copies (Microsoft Word documents) of any or all the following documents that we use:

- ✓ Church Staff Guidelines
- ✓ Church Staff Performance Review Document
- ✓ Church Volunteer Guidelines
- ✓ Life-Group Leaders Training Manual
- ✓ Church Membership Booklet
- ✓ Mentoring Guidelines
- ✓ Role Description Samples

You can request these by sending an email to: [contact@apcwo.org](mailto:contact@apcwo.org)

You are free to modify and use them for your church and ministry as you see fit.

## Partner with All Peoples Church

All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of publications are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

We invite you to partner with us financially by sending either a one-time gift or a monthly financial gift. Any amount that you can send to help us in this work across our nation will be greatly appreciated.

You can send your gift by cheque / bank draft payable to “All Peoples Church” to our office address. Else you can remit your contribution directly by bank transfer using our bank account details.

Account Name: All Peoples Church

Account Number: 0057213809

IFSC Code: CITI0000004

Bank: Citibank N.A., No. 5, M.G. Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001

*Kindly note: All Peoples Church can only accept bank contributions from an India based bank account. When making your contribution, if desired, you can indicate the specific APC ministry area where you would like your contribution to be used. For additional details please visit [apcwo.org/give](http://apcwo.org/give)*

Also, please remember to pray for us and our ministry whenever you can.

**Thank You and God Bless!**

## FREE PUBLICATIONS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| A Church in Revival*                        | Offenses—Don't Take Them                      |
| A Real Place Called Heaven                  | Open Heavens*                                 |
| A Time for Every Purpose                    | Our Redemption                                |
| Ancient Landmarks*                          | Receiving God's Guidance                      |
| Baptism in the Holy Spirit                  | Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God        |
| Being Spiritually Minded and Earthly Wise   | Shhh! No Gossip!                              |
| Biblical Attitude Towards Work              | Speak Your Faith *                            |
| Breaking Personal and Generational Bondages | The Conquest of the Mind                      |
| Change*                                     | The Father's Love                             |
| Code of Honor                               | The House of God                              |
| Divine Favor*                               | The Kingdom of God                            |
| Divine Order in the Citywide Church         | The Mighty Name of Jesus *                    |
| Don't Compromise Your Calling*              | The Night Seasons of Life                     |
| Don't Lose Hope                             | The Power of Commitment*                      |
| Equipping the Saints                        | The Presence of God                           |
| Foundations (Track 1)                       | The Redemptive Heart of God                   |
| Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life      | The Refiner's Fire                            |
| Gifts of the Holy Spirit                    | The Spirit of Wisdom, Revelation and Power*   |
| Giving Birth to the Purposes of God*        | The Wonderful Benefits of speaking in Tongues |
| God Is a Good God                           | Timeless Principles for the Workplace         |
| God's Word—The Miracle Seed*                | Understanding the Prophetic                   |
| How to Help Your Pastor                     | Water Baptism                                 |
| Integrity                                   | We Are Different*                             |
| Kingdom Builders                            | Who We Are in Christ                          |
| Laying the Axe to the Root                  | Women in the Workplace                        |
| Living Life Without Strife*                 | Work Its Original Design                      |
| Marriage and Family                         |   |
| Ministering Healing and Deliverance         |   |

PDF versions of all the above books are available for free download from our church website at [apcwo.org/books](http://apcwo.org/books). Many of these books are also available in other languages. To request your free copy of these books, please send an email to [bookrequest@apcwo.org](mailto:bookrequest@apcwo.org)

\*Available only as PDF

Also visit our church website for free Audio and Video sermons, Sermon notes ([apcwo.org/sermons](http://apcwo.org/sermons)), and many other resources you can use.

## **ATTEND A WEEKEND SCHOOL**

Weekend Schools, held in Bangalore, are geared to train and equip believers in specific areas of life and ministry. These are conveniently held on a Saturday 9am-6pm. Weekend schools are open to all believers from all churches and across denominations, who are interested in being trained and equipped. Below is a list of weekend schools that are currently being hosted.

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry

Weekend School of Healing and Deliverance

Weekend School on Gifts of the Spirit

Weekend School of Prayer and Intercession

Weekend School on Inner Wholeness

Weekend School on Lifestyle Evangelism

Weekend School on God@Work

Weekend School of Urban Missions and Church Planting

Weekend School on Christian Apologetics

Please visit: [apcwo.org/weekendschool](http://apcwo.org/weekendschool) for current schedule and to register online.

## HOST A CHRISTIAN LEADERS CONFERENCE

All Peoples Church provides Spirit anointed equipping and impartation for pastors, local church leadership, leaders of Christian organizations and others engaging in Christian ministry. In addition to anointed teaching, Spirit-led ministry and impartation, our teams engage in personal interaction and discussions with participants. Each Christian Leaders Conference runs typically for 2 to 3 days focused on a specific theme. Participants will leave renewed, empowered, and equipped for greater impact and effectiveness in their ministry. Christian Leaders Conferences are typically hosted by a local church, a Christian ministry, a missions organization or denominational head-office for churches and pastors in its area or within its network or denomination. The hosting organization will cover the expenses of the conference as well as inviting participants. All Peoples Church will send its ministry team to serve the participants at the Christian Leaders Conference.

Some of the themes that our teams commonly minister on:

- **Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God**
- **Presence and Glory**
- **Kingdom Builders** (The Kingdom of God and Kingdom Building)
- **Level Ground**
- **The House of God**
- **Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry**
- **Ministering Healing and Deliverance**
- **Gifts of the Spirit**
- **Marriage and Family**
- **Equipping the Saints and Marketplace Transformation**

For additional details and a current listing of themes for Christian Leaders Conference, please visit: [apcwo.org/CLC](http://apcwo.org/CLC)

To schedule and plan a Christian Leaders Conference please email us at: [contact@apcwo.org](mailto:contact@apcwo.org)

## About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology, and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at [www.apcwo.org/locations](http://www.apcwo.org/locations) or send an email to [contact@apcwo.org](mailto:contact@apcwo.org).

## DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

**All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.**

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)**. Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him wholeheartedly.

**"... through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).**

**... “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).**

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

*Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.*

*Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.*

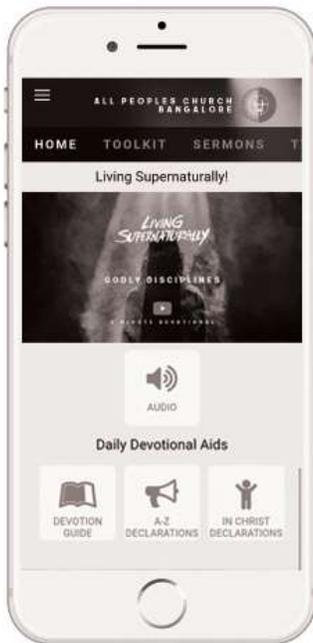
*Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..*

*Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.*

**DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP!**



*Search for*  
**"All Peoples Church Bangalore"**  
in the App or Google play stores.



*A daily 5-minute video devotional.*

*A daily Bible reading and prayer guide.*

*5-minute Sermon summary.*

*Toolkit with Scriptures on various topics to build faith and information to share the Gospel.*

*Resources with sermons, sermon notes, TV programs, books, music and more.*

***IF YOU LOVE IT, TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT!***

## BUILD TO IMPACT: SHARE IN THIS VISION



### Build

APC WORLD OUTREACH & EQUIPPING CENTER in Bangalore will be a world-class state-of-the-art equipping center and missions base serving the Body of Christ across nations.

### Impact

Leveraging cutting-edge technology and tools we will provide Spirit-anointed, Bible-based training to equip, send and support a new generation of Christian ministers, locally and globally. The facility will include a Bible college serving residential and non-residential students, with support for distance learning via live and off-line lectures and a media center to reach people in a connected world. The facility will also include a sanctuary, children, and youth center and a 24X7 prayer center.

As the Lord leads and enables, we invite you to make a contribution of any amount and partner with us in this vision and help us Build To Impact. To contribute towards APC WORLD OUTREACH & EQUIPPING CENTER in Bangalore, and the on-going Build To Impact project, please use the following details.

| Wire Transfer   | Cheques  |
|---|--|
| Account: <b>All Peoples Church Building Fund AC</b><br>Account No: 520101021447450<br>IFSC Code: CORP0000656<br>Bank Name: Corporation Bank<br>Branch Name: R.T Nagar Branch, Bangalore | In favor of: <b>All Peoples Church Building Fund AC</b><br>Cheques can be mailed to:<br>All Peoples Church,<br>#319, 2nd Floor, 7th Main, 2nd Block HRBR Layout,<br>Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore 560043, Karnataka, India |

We welcome your contribution from an India based bank account into our bank details provided. We do not have facility to accept overseas contributions. For any questions email us at [buildtoimpact@apcwo.org](mailto:buildtoimpact@apcwo.org)

Please visit: [apcwo.org/buildtoimpact](http://apcwo.org/buildtoimpact) for project progress and additional details.



## All Peoples Church Bible College [apcbiblecollege.org](http://apcbiblecollege.org)

All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles—all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

We offer three programs:

- One-year Certificate in Theology and Christian Ministry (C.Th.)
- Two-year Diploma in Theology and Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.)
- Three-year Bachelor's in Theology and Christian Ministry (B.Th.)

Classes are held each weekday, **Monday to Friday from 9:00am-1pm**. Day scholars, working professionals, and homemakers can attend these classes and continue with their workday after 1pm. Separate hostel facilities are available for men and women who desire to be residential students. Students participate in field work, special seminars, prayer and worship times in the afternoon sessions, each weekday from 2pm-5pm. The afternoon sessions are optional for day scholars (non-residential students). All students are encouraged to serve at one or more local churches over the weekends.

To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: [apcbiblecollege.org](http://apcbiblecollege.org)

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations  
Association for Theological  
Accreditation (NATA).



## **The Blueprint**

A blueprint is a guide for making something. It is a design or pattern that can be followed. When we sit down to build something, we normally draw up a blueprint and then follow the design carefully. A blueprint helps you determine what to do. In this manual "The House of God" our goal is to discover God's blueprint for local churches and local communities of believers. We also share practical ways to build local churches according to God's blueprint.

Our goal is not to present one set of "methods" and "techniques", but rather discover what God wants the local church to be. Each one of us will have to make our own journey with God as we develop our local congregations according to God's blueprint. Each one of us will have to discover our own expression of this blueprint in our local communities. Since God is a creative God, He has many ways and many expressions of His blueprint.

The one common denominator is that we are all pursuing the same blueprint for each local church. The blueprint describes God's design. It is God's original intent. It highlights main characteristics. It describes key features. It points to important focus areas. When we follow His blueprint we know we are moving in the right direction and will eventually arrive at the right destination for our local churches.

## **Your Ministry And God's Blueprint**

Regardless of what your ministry is inside or in relation to the local church, it is important that what you are doing, is aligned to God's blueprint for His people. As a pastor/Senior pastor, your responsibility is to ensure that the local church is growing and developing in all dimensions according to God's blueprint. As an itinerant evangelist, teacher, prophet or apostle whenever you minister to a congregation, your goal is to help impart and increase the congregation in some way according to God's design for the local church. Whether you serve as a youth pastor, worship leader, children's church, women's ministry, men's ministry, small groups, etc. you are working towards establishing God's blueprint in the lives of His people in that local church.

Follow God's design closely and you will not go wrong!

Ashish Raichur

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