

ALONE AT THE TOP
Dr. Dwight Smith

Preface

CHAPTER 1 A Day for Change!

CHAPTER 2 Cooperating with the Nature of the Church

CHAPTER 3 Alone at the Top

CHAPTER 4 Conforming to the Nature of the Body

CHAPTER 5 Doing Leadership the Jesus Way

CHAPTER 6 What Does This Kind of Leadership Look Like

CHAPTER 7 The Five Functions given by Jesus

CHAPTER 8 The Four spiritual gifts given by the Spirit

CHAPTER 9 Identifying People of Vision

CHAPTER 10 Unity in Diversity

CHAPTER 11 Getting it to Work Together

CHAPTER 12 Training Leadership God's Way

CHAPTER 13 A New Moment in History

Preface

My father seeded the genesis of this book into my life early on. Even as I write these words I realize how late in life I have come to recognize this. He was not a talkative man, but he was a student. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that he read, at least some portion, of the nearly 3,000 volumes he bequeathed to me on his death.

And who can say? Was it something he said to me about the Church and its challenges? Or, was it the underlining and notes I have found in the books of other unsatisfied sojourners that I have read from his library? Whatever the case, I have come to recognize the depth of my own dissatisfaction with the Western Church more clearly now than ever before. It is a "hunt" to discover remedies that have, mostly unseen by me, dominated much of my adult life. So, as with my book with Martin Robinson on the church, *Invading Secular Space*, this book on leadership is the record of an odyssey. And

though I believe it reflects the heart and words of God on the subject, it is couched in my personal search.

The older I get, the more it seems to me that all along the ideas about leadership of my generation were distorted. They have wounded us. But, most importantly, they have wounded the people for whom God gave us responsibility. And, ultimately, their lack of spiritual vitality and ministry effectiveness, has defrauded the world around us. The sweet savor of Jesus lived in any and every daily circumstance by His people is lost on the world around us. And so, the conviction of sin that leads to reconciliation is diminished. The opiate of sin in the hands of the one, who blinds the eyes of the world that they may not see, sets in on our generation.

This reality does not lead me to despair! For God in his sovereignty will cause His name to be praised even in this generation. But, will it be through us? Or, will He use other means. The global movement of the Church worldwide is already a witness to that sovereignty. My hope and prayer is that we will yet be a significant part of the evangelization of the west, and a blessing to the rest.

This hope of reformation will not come easy. We have deviated significantly from the simple nature of the church as God designed it. And, our leadership concepts, the true root of the problem, are equally distorted. He has designed leadership to cooperate with His Holy Spirit in “midwifing” Christ spiritual vitality and ministry effectiveness. Instead, the time, money, people and, yes, even the glory, has been too vested into the program and the professionals who run it.

In a recent talk given to a gathering of pastors and wives addressing the issue of reaching their city with the Gospel of Jesus, I was asked to synthesize the leadership issues we face. I left them with three issues, among others.

First, it will demand leadership committed to lateral growth as more important than vertical growth.

I do not mean to say that “getting bigger” is always wrong. But, the programmed approach to getting bigger can be measurably demonstrated to consume most of our assets instead of focusing on the purpose of God in our generation – to deliver a repeated and incarnated message of the Gospel to every man, woman, and child in our world.

Leadership and churches committed to do the purpose of God in our generation will do three things with any lateral growth God gives them. They will grow more congregations in their own context. They will grow new churches to reach people not connected or attracted to their target worship pattern. And, they will bless and enrich existing churches to see them be fully effective in their place.

Second, it will demand leadership committed to seeing everyone do the work of ministry rather than a handful of professionals.

What do I mean by “doing the work of the ministry?” One, I believe that Christians need to learn to engage God on their own. When our teaching efforts do not yield people who engage their priesthood and practice relationship with God on their own, then our teaching efforts themselves may have become the problem.

Two, I believe that Christians need to learn to tell their grace story in any and all of their relationships. Three, I believe that Christians need to use their spiritual gifts in the totality of their lives and relationships. Four, I believe that Christians need to measurably grow in their practice of interdependent community living. And, five, I believe that the Church, as a whole, can and should be measurably shown to be penetrating the world around them

Third, it will take leadership committed to the wholeness of the Church.

C.S. Lewis calls the divisions of our day “sin” and spent much of his own life trying to speak to a broad middle ground that accentuated many unities of the church. I whole- heartedly agree with C.S. Lewis! It is preposterous to believe

that any one church or even one denomination can or should carry out all that God has ordained for His whole body to carry out. We have lost the leverage potential of the body of Christ in neighborhoods, cities, states, nations, and continents because we are so divided.

I am not the first, nor will I be the last, to be dissatisfied with the distortion of our present reality. My prayer is that in the sharing of my journey others will be inspired to join in a growing chorus of reformation. I want to see the incarnation of Jesus released into every nook and cranny of our world and demonstrated in the people whom He is transforming. I want these people to be interdependent leaders who, with the Holy Spirit, nurture Christ's people into growing spiritual vitality and growing ministry effectiveness.

Chapter 1 A Day for Change!

Change is in the air! Two thousand years of faithful witness by succeeding generations of Christians are coming up full bloom, and we are witnessing it in our lifetime. Other generations of Christians prayed, sacrificed and hoped for what we are seeing. But as the writer of Hebrews reminds his generation in the hall of faithful witnesses of Chapter 11, "And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:39-40, ESV). But, we are seeing it!

It is only speculation that we are in the final days before the return of King Jesus. But, many would say that more of the promises of the Old and New Testament are complete than at any other time in Biblical history. No promise is becoming more complete than the words of Jesus to His disciples: "But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all

nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:13-14, ESV). In every continent and in almost every nation of the world there are growing numbers of churches and followers of Jesus. And, in our lifetime!

Nearly forty years ago, Kenneth LaTourette pointed out just how western the church was for so many centuries, "Since it had its birth, its first triumphs, and its initial chief stronghold in the Greco-Roman world, Christianity was profoundly molded by it. In organization and in thought it conformed in part to it. It came to be largely identified with what is called the Occident, that portion of mankind, which is the heir of Greece, Rome, and itself. Only occasionally did it spread extensively among non-Occidental peoples. Not until recently has it gained substantial footing in all of the other great cultural units and among the majority of the primitive groups of mankind. Only within the past few decades has it become actually world-wide." (From, A History of Christianity, pg. 21)

In some Continents, like Latin America and Africa, and, in some nations, like China and India, the numbers of Christians are staggering – over one hundred million in Latin America, over three hundred million in Africa, and, maybe the most amazing of all, over 100 million in China. Did the faithful Christians of Western Europe and America who were missionaries all over the world for more than 200 years expect such a harvest?

I don't believe that many of the missionaries with whom Patti and I first served with in Colombia, South America in the early 1970's expected such a harvest. Indeed, they had personally experienced decades of persecution. And, in the midst of great travail, they had worked hard to plant a relative few, mostly small, churches.

Unknown, or maybe better said, unrecognized, the Spirit of God was brooding. Using the faithful witness of both national Christians and missionaries, He was about to birth an Acts kind of Church: an infinitely reproducible church! As LaTourette concludes, "The period which had its inception in AD 1914 and is still incomplete constitutes the latest division of our story. In spite of colossal threats and striking

losses, Christianity has moved forward. Never before at any one time have all cultures been so shaken. The revolutions have centered in what was once termed Christendom. Indeed, there is some reason for regarding them as the fruit, directly or indirectly, of Christianity. Yet for the first time Christianity is becoming truly worldwide. It is entering into the lives of more people than it or any other religion has ever done" (pg. XXV – emphasis mine). And this assessment is over 40 years old!

I first heard the term, "infinitely reproducible church" many years ago from the mouth of people like Donald McGavran. It was as if the Spirit of God was engraving it upon my soul. Even in the midst of "success" as a church planter and pastor, from the Western point of view, my interest was in a Church so virile and courageous that it, swept along by the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit in our world, reproduced itself infinitely.

In later years, and under the personal tutelage of Jim Montgomery and Bob Waymire, and training received from Peter Wagner, I have continued that interest. Interest that gave birth to a search. In the midst of the search, I have discovered that my generation is not the first to be on the search for the church as Scripture describes it, and as Acts documents it. The infinitely reproducible church! Generations of other men and women have asked some of the same questions.

In spite of the phenomenal growth of the church around the world, or maybe better said, because of it, we may be the first generation of western Christians pressed to rediscover the essence of such a church. While the gospel of Jesus goes out with power throughout the world the western church struggles. We find ourselves confronted with new realities. First, church is no longer the place to go. Second, the cultural philosophies around us are hostile to our message. God has designed the Church to infinitely reproduce. When in Church history we see leaders and followers actively cooperating, whether ignorantly or knowingly, with God's design, the Church has multiplied its number and has had great impact on the world.

Two principles that most impact the Church's' ability to infinitely reproduce

can be quite succinctly stated. They are principles behind much of what I want to say in this book, and thus will restate for emphasis from time to time.

One, whatever God is going to do in the world, He is going to do through all of Christ's people.

This understanding of the Church stands in stark contrast to the programmatic nature of the Church found in the West today. From my study of Scripture, I come to the conviction that this kind of Church is not built upon the programmatic but upon the organic, God created nature. The Church is made up of people, called out of the world to follow Jesus into relationship with God the Father, in the process of becoming the qualitatively distinct people He wants them to be, and in the process of doing what He created them to do, both individually and corporately.

Notice the distinctive element in this concept of the Church. It is founded upon the call of Scripture to be reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5). Any form or practice of Church that does not lead and empower people to daily practice the priesthood for which they were created is less than Biblical and, thus, unacceptable. God's original intention in creating Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis 1, was to be in relationship with Him and to represent Him on His created Earth.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:27-28, ESV)

This theme is repeated throughout the Bible and picked up by Jesus. Jesus calls all of us to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind; and, to love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. And, as He adds, all of the law and the prophets hang upon the framework of these two priorities.

"But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all of the Law and the Prophets.'" (Matthew 22:34-40, ESV).

There is a unique and symbiotic relationship between who we are becoming and what we are called to be doing. Some people in the church have seen a conflict between the "doing" of evangelizing and the "becoming" of discipling – between the quality of the church and the quantity of those joining it. It has left many of us to wonder, can the two be resolved? I say there is no conflict here! The being and the doing elements of the followers of Jesus are perfectly woven together. As Paul states in Ephesians 2:20- 21, "Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (ESV).

The being is fitted into the doing. What we are becoming, in relationship to the Father, made possible by the Son, and empowered by the Spirit, is put front stage in the world to be observed. Any vocation, any language, and any culture can be used by God as the crucible into which Christ's people will demonstrate the extraordinary nature of their relationships to each other: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, kindness, and self-control. These extraordinary qualities of Jesus demonstrate to the world that the grave is indeed empty. Jesus is incarnated in His people, the Church!

Two, whatever God is going to do in the world through Christ's people, He is going to do through leaders who empower His people as their first priority and as more

important than their own giftedness.

This is the crux of our 21st century challenge – to reconnect the church in western nations to its Biblical purpose. Some want to blame other factors. But, our problem today is not a Church problem. We do not have people in our churches that are any more or less potentially obedient than other generations. If nothing more, the stark contrast between the people of the Pauline letters to Corinth and to Thessalonica clearly declares this. Corinth was filled with just about every sin imaginable. While Thessalonica was so mature that Paul was content to simply affirm them. But, he declares both to be genuine reflections of the body of Christ.

"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (I Corinthians 1:2, ESV). "To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1b, ESV).

"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." (I Thessalonians 1:1, ESV).

All generations of Christians, if the Holy Spirit truly lives in them, are capable of obedience. No, our problem today is not a problem of church, or even culture. It may be that the world is more sinful than at any time since the creation, though I doubt it. It may simply be that through mass media we are more aware of what goes on in more places and all at the same time. "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'" (Romans 3:9-12, ESV).

Jesus' command to disciple the nations (Matthew 28) holds true for every

generation of the Church, no matter what the context may hold. As Paul says in Ephesians 5, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16, ESV). No, our problem is a leadership problem! God is looking for leaders. He is looking for men and women who will take the opportunities that God gives them to empower His people to be His, and to do the work He has designed them to do. The result is the incarnated holiness of Jesus pulsating through Christ's people, and poured out, in, and through all of their relationships. This will be the visible proof that the Holy Spirit will use to convince and convict the over 6.5 billion people on this planet about the resurrection message of Jesus.

Nor is our challenge merely an information problem. I am grateful to God for any and all books on leadership that truly help me analyze bits and pieces of the leadership function. But, the Church is not IBM, and, the average church leadership I meet is not composed of Lee Iacocca-types. This is not to say that many fine principles cannot be captured from the glut of books on the topic of leadership. But, high-powered business types will never lead the infinitely reproducible church. The organic nature of the church militates against many of the conclusions found in secular books on leadership. The power of the Church is people, not when they are gathered, but when they are decentralized into the world. The kind of leadership necessary to lead this kind of church in its gathered and decentralized life comes uniquely from God. Whenever it happens to share principles of the secular world, it is because these principles are already God-given and seen in Scripture.

Nor is our challenge to produce leadership of greater purity. I am extremely concerned that church leaders be better people. The public humiliation we have all suffered in the exposure of leadership less than holy is embarrassing to say the least. Character or genuineness is indeed a challenge for church leadership. But, I am more concerned that many good, godly men and women in church leadership, growing in

Christ-likeness, still don't know how to carry out the function of leadership in the midst of the people of Christ. That weakness has reached epidemic proportions and needs to be addressed and rectified. After passing through just about every level of training available to church leadership, I am staggered that never once was I offered a class in leadership. My whole training consisted in learning to manage the teaching discipline, augmented with a few of the mercy (therapeutic) disciplines. The unsaid conclusion seemed to be: Do these things and leadership will result. Thirty-five years later and I finally know better!

God has designed leadership to cooperate to the maximum with His infinitely reproducible church. And, this is the question of our day. What kind of leadership does it take to lead this kind of church? One thing is clear, "The company of Jesus is not people streaming to a shrine; and it is not people making up an audience for a speaker; it is laborers engaged in the harvesting task of reaching their perplexed and seeking brethren with something so vital that if it is received, it will change their lives" (Elton Trueblood, *Company of the Committed*, pg. 45).

Beyond the two fundamental principles highlighted, what will an infinitely reproducible church look like when it is empowered by Biblical leadership?

The first characteristic of the Jesus follower is that they live the Jesus standards.

The key word here is that it lives these standards. Everything that Jesus said is important for His followers to obey. But, four issues seem to me to stand out as "gatekeepers" to the rest.

One, a growing intimacy with God is non-negotiable. All of the words of Jesus pulsate with this primacy. He has come to reveal the Father. He has come to give His followers eternal life. And, eternal life is centered on knowing the Father. The Jesus follower's first

calling is a growing relationship with the Father.

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'" (John 17:1-3, ESV).

Two, the Jesus follower is always prepared to tell his or her grace story. This is the purpose of the Church on this earth according to Paul. "So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 3:10, ESV). These diverse and individually unique stories are the primary instrument that God the Spirit uses to engage the world by painting incarnated grace through each of Christ's people. The body of Christ continues through all of eternity to be the proof that grace is greater than sin.

Three, the Jesus follower pursues, discovers, finds and uses the gifts that the Spirit has given. God will use each of them, as individuals, in small groups, or even whole congregations, to do the work of the ministry of reconciliation. No venue, no language, no vocation will be a limitation to God's orchestration of their gifts used in His purpose and plan for this world. The Jesus followers imitate their Savior in submission to the designs, workings and outcomes of the Father in the world.

Four, the Jesus follower submits to the "fitting" of him or her by the Son into the temple that God inhabits (Ephesians 2:19-21). As a result of this sovereign fitting by God the Son, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, they live out unique interpersonal relationships. Their community behavior is distinct. As a result, the world takes notice that they have been with Jesus. The fruit that the Spirit is working in them, He is also working through them. They are the incarnation of the message that the grave is empty and that Jesus has achieved victory over sin.

"...the Church... should be the most clear revelation of the Spirit. Christians living naturally in their old familiar homes must live their lives exactly as their neighbors and

friends live, or they must show some change. If they live exactly as their neighbors, then no question will be asked, because all their neighbors will be familiar with the spirit, which animates them. But if there is a change in the spirit in which they do familiar things, then a question at once arises. When men see a change in the lives of their neighbors who have previously lived a life in all respects identical with their own, and whose life is still in nearly all its outward aspects identical with their own; when they see such neighbors changed, doing the same things that they do themselves but doing them with a difference, in a different spirit; when they see them united in a Church which is a living body in the place and in which the Spirit resides which appears to affect the conduct of its individual members; then they inevitably begin to wonder and to question the cause. If these Christians are unlike their neighbors, the cause must be an object of curiosity. It must be some internal spiritual power, which makes them unlike. If their neighbors judge the change to be a bad one, they will certainly ascribe it to some evil spiritual force which has seized upon them; if they judge it to be good, they must ascribe it to a spiritual force which is in its nature good. They are then face to face with a spiritual force previously unknown to them, but unquestionably a spiritual force. If the change is seen to be good, and the spiritual force which causes the change is judged to be good, then the people are face to face with the Holy Ghost.." - Rolland Allen

The second characteristic of the Jesus follower is that **he lives the Jesus standard IN the world**. The body of Christ in any generation is not intended by God to be locked away in a hermetically sealed off religion. Each of their lives, with all of their relationships in communities and the market place, is the place where God wants to live through them. The validity of God's message is partly predicated upon the ability to observe His power in Christ's people. And so, they play out the eternal message in the midst of ordinariness for all to see.

The third characteristic of the Jesus follower is that **he lives the Jesus standard in the world with a sense of accountability**. And, so, infinitely reproducible churches

are confident in themselves. They know why they exist. They know what they exist to do. God the Spirit has spoken powerfully to them about the place where they live and they have discovered some significant and measurable things He wants them to do in the population of that place.

Fourth, **the Jesus Follower knows where God has called him to do it.** Jesus Followers can begin to tell you what it might look like when they have completed what God gave them to do. I can still remember the first time I met Stuart Bell, church leader in England. I asked him, “What is God saying to you?” His answer was clear. He said, “I am responsible for the Humber to the Wash!” Stuart lives in between two major rivers in England, the Humber and the Wash. God had laid that place, its purpose, and its churches on Stuart’s heart.

The infinitely reproducible church knows that it is not only called to be like its Master, Jesus. It also knows that a consistent, repeated and tenacious impact upon the world around them is its reason to exist. It is my belief and experience that infinitely reproducible churches are not just taught or pastored, they are led!

Chapter 2 Cooperating with the Nature of the Church

“There is no room in a truly apostolic church that takes its responsibility seriously to carry about the dying of Jesus and to represent Christ crucified to the world, for the ‘great minister’ or prelate. There is no nobler Christian title than ‘servant servorum dei,’ but whether this has been best exemplified by those who have officially borne it is a question that few today would regard as an open one” (CK Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle*, pg. 92, Paternoster Press, 1996).

A growing number of younger leaders would both agree and disagree with Barrett. He is right to point in out that the crux of the problem is in the apostolic nature of the Church. It is not the Trinity’s problem. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

are working according to the sovereign nature of God's design. The very organic nature of the three in one reflects both design and function. By God's design it takes three, of one nature, but distinct in function, to provide all that God designs for this world through Christ's church. This diversity in unity operates at all levels: in creation, in filling history with God's sovereign work, in the Church and, in the final days of this planet.

The problem is not the Church. Yes, people, even redeemed people, can and do create problems and do live less than the fulfilled lives that God has designed. But, at the very core of the regenerated man that God has created in His Son, Jesus Christ, and through the indwelling and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, is the capacity to live differently. Christian people have been created to tell their particular and unique grace story (Ephesians 3:10-11). Christians have been created to use their Spirit giftedness in all of their relationships (I Corinthians 12). Christians have been created to live the fruit of the Spirit, and, thus, incarnate exceptional interpersonal relationships (Galatians 5/Ephesians 2:18-21).

The challenge of today's church starts not with God, nor His people, but with leadership. Everything else God has created is organically related: the world around us, the Church we live in, the gifts we corporately live out and the unique mix of grace testimonies we possess and tell. But, leadership patterns, instituted by the 2nd Century, unreformed across the centuries, and now, tested by new philosophical, post-modern convictions of the 21st century, are exposed for their programmatic orientation, and bereft of the ability to empower. They have become the antithesis of organic expression!

George Barna in his research found that, "...only 6 percent of our senior pastors claim they have the gift of leadership. Without question, a central part of the pastoral task is to lead people. The churches we have studied that are facilitating significant spiritual development within their people are pastured by those who claim the gift of leadership in their gift mix" (pg.122 Today's Pastor, George Barna, Regal Books).

There is much to be concerned about in Barna's statement, not the least of

which is the tradition-loaded jargon that Barna himself uses to describe the problem. But, if as he correctly points out, that “facilitating” is a central task of leadership, and if a majority of “pastors” sense they do not have a “gift” called leadership, then who is facilitating Christ’s people?

Where a growing number of leaders would disagree with Barrett is whether this reality need go unquestioned. More than a few of us are frustrated with the superstar syndrome of the Senior Pastor model of the Western Church. Having said this quite strongly, I believe that many of those same superstar Senior Pastors would agree with me. The system has corrupted all of us. The people are lulled into believing a host of anti-biblical ideas. For example, church leadership is not hired to perform, it is supported to empower. Church leadership is not priestly, it is mandated to lead the whole body in the personal odyssey of individual intimacy with God. In Jesus, every Christian is personally prepared and invited into the presence of God the Father.

We, the leadership in such systems, have had our first love ripped from us. Rarely have I heard a testimony from colleagues that did not begin with a heart rendering experience of “feeling” God’s love for lost people. It was the expectation of personally connecting God’s love for the world to people that moved most of us into "ministry." All of a sudden, years later, we wake up to discover that we are "managing" a group of people less than committed, and maybe even totally disconnected from God’s heartbeat for lost people. We are "pastoring" people, waiting for eternity, while building a fairly happy and lucrative life here on the earth.

Early on in "ministry", I was exposed to another possibility other than the Senior Pastor model. It was not the pattern I captured in seminary, nor the one I lived in the church. But, it was there to consider. The model was displayed for me at Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, California. Though I have never been on the inside of a leadership meeting, I have observed several important possibilities from afar.

Though I would not necessarily subscribe to all of the ways in which they have developed ministry over more than four decades, their leadership model encourages me in three ways. One, there is more than one designated communicator. They have been able to debunk the perceived need for a quasi-superstar to do all of the preaching. In fact, there are multiples of people who do the preaching. And, no one does an inordinate amount, though I am sure that each would love to preach more. And, undoubtedly people have their "favorite." This does not change their actions, however.

From the outside it would seem that they have captured the Biblical ideal: the function of communication of God's word into public forums is always more important than the communicator! If nothing else, this seems to be one of the strong messages behind God's use of an ass to speak to Balaam. And, also of Jesus' rebuke to the Jewish leaders at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. If the people are not permitted to speak their words of declaration and celebration of Him as King, then the rocks will cry out! Of course, God has ordained that His people are His primary instruments, and as such, teach, preach, and speak His words. But, it is a fallacious extension to conclude that a "Pastor" or "Senior Pastor" is designated by God to be the primary communicator. It is not only Biblically wrong, but it is also unhealthy for both the communicator and the audience. And, PBC gives me great hope that this great harm can be corrected. Two, as I have observed Ray Stedman, Ron Ritchie, and the rest of the leadership of PBC, it became immediately clear that they were not alike.

This is a principle of Biblical leadership that God wants to reinforce to us today. The power of leadership, just like the power of the Church, is its diversity. Yes, it is a diversity that must be worked and woven into a unity of purpose and delivery. But, when it can be approximated, the fullness of the purpose for which Jesus gave these gifted people to His body is achievable. More on that purpose later. But, it was always a quiet blessing to me to see such diversely gifted men working together into more

effective leadership than the “Senior Pastor” model displayed.

Knowing these men, even watching them from afar, there is no doubt that they not only were diversely gifted, but they were also individually strong. There must have been many fiery meetings between those men! But, they acted as a group. The disagreements, diversity and differing opinions were ultimately woven into one. This seems to me to be the most important point to capture. It is good for diversity to be woven into unity. It expresses the wholeness of God when each variance can be rubbed and modified by the interactive process of the whole. Of course, the ground rules for such interactive unity must be set in place. And, all must hold to core values that they deeply share. But, when that foundation is set, then a more complete and mature richness of leadership can be affected into the body of Christ. Moreover, it is good for the individual. We all need to be reminded that acting alone at the top of a pyramid is unhealthy, not only for the body, but for us as well. When my giftedness unilaterally dominates the environment, whether by interaction or by structure (the buck stops here!), then the church suffers the aberration of me!

Third, PBC had no recognized leader. This idea goes against the fiber of the church as it is today. However, it is more closely aligned with the Biblical model as we shall see in chapter five. We have been in the “top down” model for so long that it feels right, and, as such, is Biblically, albeit spuriously defended. In identifying this point, I am not saying that no one was leading at PBC. In fact, someone has to lead. But, who it is, and more importantly, how they do it, can be very different than our traditions have taught us!

Robert Greenleaf in his book, *Servant Leadership*, comes closest to identifying with the NT principles when he calls for the *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, to deliver the vision. Such "leading" is what I call the management of future and is delivered into the rest of the leadership body, with inter-dependent authority.

No doubt this was true at PBC as well. Someone, probably a number of someones, given the large size of the church, was delivering vision. But, that was not so obvious to the distant public. Jesus is the head of the body. If leadership is His gift, His alter ego we might say, into the midst of Christ's people, He, not they, gives leadership. Yes, His leadership is brokered through people. But, He still intends to give headship direction to His body, through the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, resident in everyone on the leadership body. How the Spirit may choose to weave differing gifts together in order to deliver the empowerment of His people is totally up to Him and His foreknowledge of the Church and the context that it lives in. No one else can take the leadership role of Jesus. And, as a body, no body part is more important than any other. It takes a unique, courageous and persistent weaving of diversity in unity for true Biblical leadership to be effected into the body of Christ. And, for the people to clearly observe the total impact of a group of diversely gifted people called leadership, they must be viewed first as a whole, not as the team of one strong man.

The correction of the centuries-old tradition of "pastor" will not come easy. We have held these distortions for too long for them to die an easy death. Early on in the life of the Church an unholy divide between secular and sacred was set in place, preparing the way for not only a definition of "ministry" that is not Scriptural, but also a role for a person called Pastor that is not Biblical.

The Church inherited thoughts from the Old Testament that God was reforming and unleashing in the New Testament. "Every reader of the Old Testament was familiar with passages which spoke of the imparting of a Spirit to men appointed to special work, by the laying on of the hands of inspired men, or by an anointing. The idea was quite familiar. What was not familiar, what was indeed peculiar to the new dispensation, was the communication of the Spirit to the whole body of Christians, and to every individual member of the body. That those who were possessed with the Spirit should lay hands

on common men that they might be filled with the Spirit for their common daily life as Christians, was marvelously strange. It exalted the common life of common men to heights before held only by some special and important service of God. It exalted men occupied in humble tasks of daily toil to the position before peculiar to prophets and kings and priests. Christians all became kings and priests (Rev. 1.6; I Pet. 2.9); the Church became a kingdom of priests (The Ministry of the Spirit, Roland Allen, Eerdmans, p. 40).

Chapter 3 Alone at the Top

In the roughly 65 nations I have visited, and at just about every conference or seminar I teach, the question comes up, “What kind of leadership does it take to lead the kinds of churches you believe the New Testament advocates?” The principles they are referring to are found in other books and articles available through scpi.org. In short, those principles can be summarized into four statements. First, whatever God is going to do in the world He is going to do through all of Christ’s people. Anything less is less than the DNA that God has ordained for Christ’s body. Second, Christ whatever God is going to do in the world through all of Christ’s people, He is going to do through leaders who empower people as their first priority and as more important than the practice of their own giftedness. Third, whatever God is going to do in the world through all of Christ’s people, He is going to do primarily through a decentralized structure. And, finally, whatever God is going to do in the world distant from any local church's circle of accountability, He is going to do through the resources of churches, telescoped in joint-venture with the Holy Spirit and with indigenous resources. The answer to the question is really quite simple – what God has designed the church to be and do, He has also designed leadership adequate to the task.

Robert Greenleaf in commenting upon the failure of today's western organizations to lead with distinction says, "Part of the failure of our institutions to serve with distinction may be the interaction between two reinforcing elements: low

levels of trusteeship and the concept of the single chief executive." Indicating his further distaste for the single leader system, he goes on to say that to be a lone chief atop a pyramid is abnormal and corrupting.

These statements are no less true about the state of leadership in the Church, and by extension, local churches all over the western world. Books abound lamenting the present state of effective leadership crippling churches and Christian institutions. This lack of effectiveness has implications so large as to daunt the caring observer. But, it is the impact upon the participant that is the most painful. When leadership is unable to fulfill its God-given mandate, then Christ's people are the poorer. The quality of their lives and the focus of their living are both pushed deeper into the orbit of the influence of the culture of the day. Nothing in life is static. Christ's people cannot live in a cocoon of protection from the Cosmos around them, waiting for a day when their spirit comes alive and they begin to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as God intended. When Christ people do not actively cooperate with the Spirit in this divine dance, they retrograde!

I have been around the Church all of my life and heard an abundance of reasons why successive generations of Christians do not live in the fullness of God's so clearly given expectations and promises. So many of those "reasons" have focused upon the challenge of the world we live in and the satanic pull of the Cosmos that surrounds us. Others have lamented the wearing impact of this Cosmos upon the psyche of followers, and lay the majority of the blame upon the followers of Christ. While both of these assessments, with their variations, have grains of truth in them, I do not believe that they constitute our greatest challenge. Responsible leadership must always lay the blame where it Biblically belongs – with us, the leaders, in whom the Lord has commended the responsibility.

Greenleaf is correct in his critique of the weaknesses of leadership in the western institutions. The abnormality of the "man at the top" syndrome, whether he is called CEO, or President, or Senior Pastor, is a cancer eating at the health of all human organization. It is

this cancer, extended through expectations of younger leaders and reinforced by training institutions, that has created our present realities. The pervasiveness of this syndrome fulfills itself in Greenleaf's second target of responsibility, trustees, whether they come as synods, or commissions, or elder boards. The "man at the top" syndrome has become our culture and, as such, does not allow for the creation of trustees of distinction. We are left to die the death of the strengths and weaknesses of the man at the top! What is true for the secular domain of the market place is truer for the organic domain of the Church. The secular convictions of Greenleaf hold true not because of any lofty ethical demands, but because all genuine and universal truth conforms to God's first truths.

Three passages of Scripture dominate the scene of the New Testament in regards to the leading of Christ's people. So much more could be said, but these passages lay a grid of expectation over all of the other necessary statements.

They form the "culture" in which New Testament Church leadership must operate. The first passage, Ephesians 4:11-12, deals with the why of leadership. The second passage, I Corinthians 12, deals with the structure of leadership. I use the word structure to denote universal and foundational descriptions about leadership, and not polity, which is open to so much historical and theological debate. The third passage, Mathew 20, is where we receive an instructive description from Jesus of the very essence of leadership. Indeed, if any New Testament passage could be said to be the essence of a Theology of Leadership in the New Testament, I believe it would be this one.

Learning to cooperate with the nature and role of leadership in the New Testament.

So much could be said about the first passage, Ephesians 4:11-12, that many will lament that more is not said by me. But, after all of the potential debates have been fought, and the differences highlighted, it seems to me that two essential elements remain – essentials that, if we are to see the full impact of God's provision, must be

retained after all of the other debates have ceased. Paul says, “and He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV).

One, the gifted people that Christ has given to the Church is an insightful gift directly from Him. This gift symbolized more than merely His love for the body. I see in these verses something similar to the foresight of God recorded by Moses in Genesis 1 and 2. The great omniscience of God makes way for a completing work by God. All of nature resonates with His beauty and power. But, with all of creation fixed into place by the powerful hand of God, there is still something missing. What is missing is an element of human experience that only God could anticipate, but even He could not apparently fill. Adam had to have a companion. But not just any companion. His companion had to be like Him in that she would bear God's image and be distinct to the rest of God's created order. But, she had to be different than Adam as well. Between the two of them, something of the image of God and the fullness of human experience is captured that can be captured in no other way. God foresees this need and gives a gift to Adam and the rest of Adam's family that has followed him down the corridor of time.

To me, Ephesians 4:11 seems to carry the same foreseeing stamp of God the provider. Jesus sees all that the Church is to be, do and become – from its inception until He returns again for her. Yet, with all of the provisions in place, something is still missing. If elders and deacons are the mainstay of the life of the local congregation, and the Holy Spirit is the empowering force behind all that God is doing in the world and in Christ's people, there may be something else still missing. The functions represented by apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers seem to me to be the missing element that Christ knew His people would need to fulfill their nature and calling. More will be said later about the roles that these gifted people play in the worldwide ministry of the Church. Suffice it to say, for now they appear to be a provision by the Lord to His body, without which they would not be able to acknowledge and fulfill their nature and purpose.

My experience within the body of Christ over the last 36 years has led me to ask the question, "If any one of the functions of these gifted people is missing from the life of the Church, what is missing?" As we shall see further on, what is missing is exactly what causes the Church to miss its nature and purpose, and correspondingly loose its impact upon the world around it. How do these people organize themselves? How are they identified and trained? Where do they find their accountability? These questions are all secondary to this primary question. Basically, we have become a movement dominated by only a portion of the full gift of Jesus recorded in Ephesians 4:11, and so independent local church-based, that we lose the full impact of the complete gift of Jesus to His body. We die the death of the strength and weaknesses of the "man at the top!"

This dilemma has been around so long that it feels natural. But, it is as unnatural as any of the worst heresies fought by our early fathers. A short review of the history of the Church demonstrates that this weakness was seeded early on into the rapidly institutionalizing life of the Church. Only in the last century, and especially as the non-western Church has superseded the Church in the west, have we seen a more fundamental and widespread discontent. As the Church outside of the west has grown dramatically over the last century, we have seen a much more Biblically based diversity of the Ephesians 4:11 functions, as well as the widespread decentralization of church forms and, thus, leadership practice. My wife and I have traveled the globe serving national church leadership in over fifty nations of the world at some time in our life. In Latin America, Africa and Asia we have consistently found mega churches scattered throughout. Of course, we have done the same in the United States, but the differences are striking! I have found few, if any, mega churches in America that have intentionally planted daughter churches. At best, we have found a few among them who have planted a handful of other churches, and most of them were planted not because of a primary vision, but because of the unfulfilled dreams of a group of people or a staff

member in the church.

The picture is very different outside of the United States. I have rarely, if ever, found a mega church in other parts of the world that was not systematically planting daughter churches. And, most of them could point to hundreds of other churches that they had planted. They were not planting churches because it seemed like a good programmatic idea. They were planting churches because, deep down, they were marching to the beat of a different drum. They did not exist to build a mega church, but to extend the Gospel into a people, nation, state, city and neighborhood. Planting new churches, by the releasing of new leaders, was like breathing.

Why are the two pictures so dramatically different? I believe that one part of the answer is found in Ephesians 4:11. A pastor or a teacher leads the average western church, and thus, as created by God the Spirit, this one person focuses on caring for truth and people. Left in isolation, as our system of leadership requires, the church he seeks to lead dies the death of his personal strengths and weaknesses. But, leadership in these other Churches around the world, unencumbered as many of them are about the historical debate of this passage, play out a different role.

In fact, they are not pastors or teachers in function, but apostles. Moreover, they have learned to cooperate with a diversity of gifted people in ways that most westerners do not understand. The result is that these leaders release much more of the Holy Spirit in and through Christ's people.

But, what were these gifted people, given by Jesus supposed to do? **That is the second essential that needs to be highlighted from this passage.** It is important to note that Paul does nothing to describe the actual ministry of these gifted people individually. It is the corporate effect of these gifted people that fills his mind. They were given by resurrected Jesus to empower His people to do the work of ministry. "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12 ESV).

This idea of ministry must encompass the two parts of the ministry that Paul has already described in the book Ephesians. On one side, ministry is that which describes the life and witness of the individual. In Chapter Two, Paul describes the sovereign work of God in creating us after the image of His Son and giving to each and every one of us good deeds which He planned for us to do. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV). The actual context, culture, or vocation in which each follower of Jesus lives and walks matters little, for every context, every culture, and every vocation is a place where God has ordained His Gospel to be lived and told. Every follower of Jesus is an equally important instrument of that story.

But, there is another important view of the ministry. It is the cumulative effect of the whole body of believers – whether local, citywide, statewide, nationwide, or global. It is this picture of the body that Jesus describes in John 17. But, Paul has also described the importance of this impact in Ephesians 3:10-11. The individual stories of every Christian coming to and living grace, from Pentecost until Jesus comes, has an impact upon the unseen forces of eternity, and for all of eternity.

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:8-11 ESV).

The measurable impact of Christ's gifted people, that we today have called leaders, is to empower all of Christ's people to play out this eternal purpose on their personal stage of time, and through whatever context, culture, or vocation God gives them to do so. The degree to which any generation, or local manifestation of Christ's

people (church), fails to grow in the incarnation of this reality reveals the failure of its leadership.

Nothing in the words of Paul would lead us to conjure in our minds the importance of any individual in leadership, or even any one of the functions as more important than the other. Surely it is not too far to say that Jesus anticipated that these gifted people would actively cooperate and coordinate their impact in and on the body. Can the great burden that Paul confesses for and through the people of Christ, especially as seen in the letters to the Corinthians, leave us any doubt that he was willing to be measured by the impact of the ministry of his team upon the body? Would Paul have been satisfied to sell books, teach seminars, or shoot videos if Christ's people had not measurably grown in their intimacy with the Heavenly Father, or lived out the incarnation of His Gospel story?

Is this not the precise picture of what we see in the book of Acts? As others have noted, it is appropriate to call this book “the acts of the Holy Spirit.” For not only is Paul convincing and convicting the world about its sin, but He is also equally working through these gifted people to inspire and lead Christ's people to the full impact that God has designed in them and destined through them. FF Bruce points out in his book, *The Pauline Circle*, that Paul had over 25 other people who could be seen in the New Testament to have worked alongside him to fulfill his apostolic mandate in and through the Church of his generation. Are we in any less need of such cooperation, or of such accountability?

Chapter 4 Conforming to the Nature of the Body

“The society into which the Christian is called at baptism is not a collective but a Body. It is in fact that Body of which the family is an image on the natural level. If anyone came to it with the misconception that membership of the Church was

membership in a debased modern sense—a massing together of persons as if they were pennies or counters—he would be corrected at the threshold by the discovery that the Head of this Body is so unlike the inferior members that they share no predicate with Him save analogy. We are summoned from the outset to combine as creatures with our Creator, as mortals with immortal, as redeemed sinners with sinless Redeemer. His presence, the interaction between Him and us, must always be the overwhelmingly dominant factor in the life we are to lead within the Body: and any conception of Christian fellowship which does not mean primarily fellowship with Him is out of court.”
(Transposition and Other Addresses, Ch. 3, C.S. Lewis)

The weight of the second passage, 1 Corinthians 12, cannot be overstated.

It presents a similar challenge as Ephesians 4:11-12. And, once again I only want to focus on two salient concepts and only as they relate to leadership. The picture painted by Paul of the body is only a metaphor and must be limited in its applications. But, it is a metaphor that dominates the whole of the chapter, and, as such, must also be given credence. Something of such importance as to dominate so much of the message to the Corinthians, and dealing as it does with foundational pictures about the Church, has messages to leadership.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were any eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:7-27 ESV).

First, leadership must conform to the gifts given to the body.

People in the leadership body are first and foremost followers of Jesus. They are not leadership first. They are Christians first. All descriptions about the foundational nature of the Church must also apply to them. The first foundation identified by Paul in I Corinthians is that one of the gifts, or Spirit-energized abilities, is given by the Holy Spirit to each and every believer. The way in which these are given, the reason for which they are given, and the way in which they fit into the body are all also true of people in the leadership body. This is true whether they are in the local church leadership or are one of the gifted people given by Jesus to the Church and in a multi-church ministry. As we think about gifts and leadership, several universals apply.

Gifts are given to each and every one of Christ's people (vs.7). No follower is left without at least one Spirit-energized ability, and probably most, if not all, Christians have a mosaic of gifts. I speak of gifts as Spirit-energized abilities because I think these gifts are the Spirit Himself working through each and every one of us in different ways. This is a needed corrective to the idea that somehow these gifts are "my" gifts. I do not possess them. They possess me – even as the Spirit lives in and through me to accomplish my personal and earthly ends in the ministry of the Gospel and, ultimately, in the sovereign completion of God's design over human history. The Holy Spirit

cooperates with my personality, and does so in ways that move His power through me for God's ends, not my personal fulfillment. Yes, I do feel fulfilled when I cooperate with such movement by the Spirit, but the gifting is not for my personal fulfillment.

The gifts exist for the common good (vs. 7). If there were no common good that God saw fit to be accomplished through the individual gifting, orchestrated in and through the corporate body, then gifts would not be given. They are not for me to possess, manipulate, adore or reject. They are for the common good of others and the purposes of God.

The gifts that we receive are decided exclusively by the Spirit (vs. 11). I have not decided which gifts I have been given, nor have my Christian parents decided which ones they would like their son to have. The theological training school that I attended cannot, by such training, guarantee that I will receive the gifts that they deem most important. The Spirit, without my consultation, has decided, by His sovereignty and for God's purposes, which ones I will receive. Of course, in His wisdom, He can be trusted to give me ones that will most cooperate with my personal fulfillment and with God's purposes.

The true effectiveness of these gifts as they are played out through ministries, or body parts, as Paul calls them, is only measured in the cooperative and coordinative dance of the whole body together (vs. 12-26). No body part can deny the validity of another. And, no body part can think of itself as possessing the most important place in the configuration of parts. Indeed, we are left with this somewhat uncomfortable declaration by Paul that a healthy body does all that it can to both protect and honor the hidden and least publicly honorable parts of the body.

One last difference needs identification before we close this short review of Spirit gifts. The thoughts that open the discussion of the gifts and the body in verses 4-7 do not appear to be repeated anywhere else in Scripture, at least in their relationship to each other, so we will be careful not to take the applications too far. Paul tells us that

the Trinity is cooperating together in the preparation of the body, and each part in the body, to fulfill its role in God's purposes. The Spirit controls the distribution of gifts. Jesus the Son controls the ministries in which these gifts will operate. And, God the Father controls the effects, or domains as I call them, of the gifts and ministries. What is the purpose and meaning of this revelation?

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 ESV).

Maybe God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are a model of the kind of cooperation and coordination that is expected from the people of Christ. It takes the cooperative and coordinated ministry by all three to fully empower, engage, and mobilize the body of Christ into its divinely ordained purpose. I think we all would agree that God the Father is the first among equals, as the Bible is replete with such indications as to His role in the Trinity. But, who would want to attribute to God the Father the likes of the man at the top syndrome that is now controlling so much of western Christianity? Surely the words and attitude of Jesus Himself are instructive in this regard, "Let your attitude to life be that of Christ Jesus himself. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his privileges as God's equal, but stripped himself of every advantage..." (Philippians 2:5-7, Phillips). The Trinity, in its own mysterious way is actively cooperating together in the full capacitating of the body of Jesus to fulfill its role in the purposes of God.

“The unity and diversity are found in the community of the Trinity. In the Trinity before the creation of man, personhood, love and communication existed in the Godhead. An important deduction pertains because in the Trinity there is implicit a hierarchy of roles within the Godhead that does not violate an equality of essence. A proper understanding of the Trinity not only gives us a key to understanding unity in diversity, but also brings us a unique answer to the great struggle we face between

“races, cultures, and for that matter, even gender” Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man live without God?*, 1994, pg. 148.

Moreover, there are indications in this passage of a much deeper diversity in each of us than merely gifts alone. If we would look at these words through the picture of a circle, we would see four pieces to that circle. The first piece is the mosaic of gifts that God the Spirit has given to each. I think it is reasonable to assume that the gifts I am given not only come with the sovereign knowledge of God, but also come with the cooperative impact of these gifts in and through me. The second piece is the differing ways that each of us serves, or ministers, within the body of Christ and for the purposes of God. There are not only an infinite number of ways that gifts can be used, but there is also any number of ways, places, or ministries where my personal mosaic of gifts can be used. In fact, the precise mix of those gifts may change over my lifetime.

The third piece is the energies, or domains, that these gifts and their ministries have within the body of Christ and for the purposes of God. I have called these domains because they indicate to me the breadth of influence the sovereign God is deciding for and through each one of us. Of course, ego, assertiveness and aggression can also explain the breadth of some people's ministry. Good marketing can supersede the designs of God. But, when we cooperate with the work of the Trinity, and with the other body parts, then God sovereignly puts each of us in the place He has designed for us. Again, none of this is for personal glory, any more than any one of my own body parts performs its function for its own glory!

When we see this kind of active cooperation with the full-orbed ministry of the Trinity, we can also see the desires of most of our own hearts, the full mobilization of Christ's people, and the full evangelization of the world. But, there is one more piece missing to complete the circle. And, it is the most mysterious. The final piece is my own personality. God has a gracious way of working in and through all of Christ's people in such a way as to highlight Himself and His purposes and also bring great joy and fulfillment to my life. As the historic statement about inspiration so ably states, God was greatly working in the authors of the Bible, that, without destroying their own

personalities, He communicated His own God-breathed word through them.

My own life might be an explanation of this fact. For much of the early days of serving the body of Christ in this thing called leadership, I have the title of Pastor. Over the years I begin to detect a conflict. First, each successive man or group of men I worked under defined this role of leader (the word leader is their word, not mine) along lines that seemed increasingly uniform. If I was working under a true pastor, according to the function as I understand it from Ephesians 4:11, then leader or pastor or youth pastor was always defined with mercy overtones. This definition was most clearly seen in the activities that were preeminent in that person's mind. For the mercy person, a good leader (i.e. pastor, i.e. me), was supposed to invest significant portions of each day with people in a variety of activities, such as hospital visitations, home visitations, etc. When I worked for a managerially inclined leader, he would project manager over the definition of leader and, of course, the most desirable activities of a good manager were expected. So, for this phase of my life, I was expected to read books on management, learn to plan and handle committee meetings, and much more.

This same scenario could be played out for many other gifts in the body that friends or colleagues or bosses had and projected over me. It was equally true with the functions listed by Paul in Ephesians, and the people whom I have worked for or with who, in fact, were called by God to carry out that particular function. The evangelist expects me to be a great soul winner. The pastor expects me to define my life by the compassionate engagement of Christ's people and their needs. The teacher expects me to spend long hours studying God's word and be the expert exegete that the Holy Scriptures deserve. The gift of exhortation expects me to be willing to spend long hours listening and sympathizing with people's struggles. We, all of us, are great at projecting our own gifts and functions onto others!

It took years of reflection and dissatisfaction for me to come to my own personal

understanding of God's wonderful and diverse working in each of us in ways that confirm us as unique individuals useful for His purposes. Without hesitation, I can joyfully affirm that I am not a manager, so don't expect me to enjoy managing the things that good managers enjoying managing. I am not an evangelist either, so don't expect me to act like one. I am also not a pastor, so don't expect compassion as my first response to people's needs.

Yes, I have spent time reading in all of these disciplines, and for good reason. First, it helps me confirm who I am not. Second, it helps me appreciate the work that these gifts and gifted people do. Third, it reminds me of the importance of this diversity being woven into a unified whole for the important task of empowering Christ's people. And fourth, it helps me learn how to practice the core issues in each discipline that are expected from all of Christ's people. From the pastor, I learn to pursue compassion. From the evangelist, I learn to share my witness. From the teacher, I learn the importance and pursuit of truth. But, none of these, or the ministries that they engage in, or the impacts that they will have, are mine.

The gifts that the Spirit of God is working through me orbit around three gifts: leading (more on that later), communication, and organization. These gifts can be used in a variety of ways and change over time. At times, the gift of communication took the lead, and I was found primarily in a local church. At other times, the gift of leading was stronger, and I was found in the leadership of a mission organization. At the present time, there is an interesting blend of both communication and leading developing in a way like never before.

God the Spirit is working the gifts of leading, communication, and organization through my life. God the Son is working to put me into the right place (body part) at the right time within the worldwide ministry of the Gospel through the Church. And, God the Father is working the impact (domain) of all of this as He knows best. The Trinity does all of this without destroying who I am, or turning me into a mere robot. Yes, I am expected to submit to the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The more I allow Him to work

the effects of the resurrection into my life, the more I will look qualitatively like the Master, Jesus. And, by extension, the more effective the ministry of the Gospel will be.

The Trinity is performing something similar in and for the people of Jesus, when, in their coordinative and cooperative work, they fully capacitate each Christian for action. I use the word capacitate in anticipation and acknowledgement of the fact that God has given leadership the task of bringing all of this to fruition. It is the great mystery of God that He has entrusted leadership with such an important role for Christ's people. To one degree or another, our failure becomes His failure. But, that is the greatness of God, and the strength of the model that He leaves us. He will not move people to do what, in their hearts, they have not decided to do. He is the master of working with human reality and maturation to fully and sovereignly accomplish His purpose.

Not only must leadership conform to the gift giving by the Holy Spirit, but it must also **conform to the holistic nature of the body itself**. Maybe the two most compelling reasons for a different kind of leadership than we have possessed for so long in the west is the model of the Trinity, and the holistic nature of the body. The context of discussion about leadership is by revelational necessity within the discussion of the body. Take away the reality of the body, and we have no need, in regards to the New Testament, to talk about leadership. Any leadership in the New Testament is, by nature, of, for and within the body. It must be defined by words and concepts that describe the body. Any other discussion of leadership that takes it out of, or in conflict with, the very way that God has created the body of Christ must be rejected.

1 Corinthians 12 clearly indicates the holistic nature of the body of Christ. An ear is acknowledged as an ear only when it is attached to the body and performing the appropriate function. So it is with all of the other body parts. So it is with the nature and function of leadership. Leadership must be conceived as something that: a) lives, moves and acts only within the body of Christ; b) partakes of the same reality of diversity as found within the whole body; and c) exists only for a particular function and not for the glory or fame or benefit of itself.

As the healthy body is always looking to care for the apparently less important parts, or the more susceptible parts, so leadership too, works to protect the same within its own grouping. Leadership is not equivalent to a golden tongue or a particularly effective mouth. Indeed, the healthy leadership body will take action to protect itself from anyone in the body mistakenly getting this opinion. Furthermore, healthy leadership groups will protect themselves from being misunderstood by projecting the importance of any one particular function. These kinds of leadership groups have learned to let the body clearly know that no matter the function, it is always more important than the person who God uses to perform that function. Finally, healthy leadership always puts the emphasis on the body playing out its intended role within the purpose of God, and not on the individual function of any one part. Leadership is only said to be effective when the body fulfills this role, or as Paul says in Ephesians, when the body is empowered and does the work of the ministry.

All of this is why those in church leadership must be careful about applying world or marketplace principles to church leadership. Marketplace principles do not begin with these two pre-requisites: to be a model of the work of the Trinity, or to be a reflection of the nature of the body of Christ. When marketplace principles conform to God's first truths, they are applicable not because they reveal a new truth, but because they conform to God's already given truth. When they cooperate more with the system of the day, no matter how utilitarian they may be, they must be rejected.

This is also true with Old Testament teaching on leadership. From the Old Testament we can identify some very important and universal truths, relevant for all generations of leadership. But, when the structure of the leadership in the Old Testament, and especially in regards to Israel, is brought into the Church, it is wrong. The Church knows no Kings but King Jesus. The Church does not practice the priesthood of Aaron, but the priesthood of every believer. And, the temple is no longer found in a tent or a building, but in the people of Christ themselves (I Corinthians 6:19 and

Ephesians 2:19- 21).

Chapter 5 Doing Leadership the Jesus Way

Jesus leaves us with the most powerful statement on leadership we can find in the New Testament. He leaves us breathless with its simplicity, but challenges us by its seeming impossibility. Jesus seems to be preparing these men for an emphatic change from every form of leadership known to them in the Roman Empire, the Jewish nation, and most of the Old Testament!

This leads us directly into the third, and I believe most important, passage in regards to leadership within the body of Christ. "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will drink my cup, but to sit at the right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father'. And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served by to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:20- 28 ESV).

The discussion between Jesus and the disciples is instructive because it shows so much about Jesus and His followers. First, we see the patience of Jesus. The disciples had heard His teaching and seen it supported by miracles. But now, near the end, they

are seeking out position and power. But, Jesus understands their human frailty. And, even though He understands the question, He ignores the contradiction in it and its answer. "Can you truly drink the cup I am about to drink?" The "cup" to which He had just referred to is found in verses 18ff. The "cup" of royalty that the disciples had expected would come to Jesus any day was a cup that they indeed could drink. But, could they drink the "cup" of the cross? We see in James and John, as we too often see in ourselves, that the effects of the way we think and act are still highly impacted by the residue of our flesh. And, it will remain until we die or are taken away to be with God the Father for eternity.

Second, we see the humanity of even the best of Jesus' followers. These men would go on to form the foundation upon which so much of what we know today about the eternal truths of God is based (Ephesians 2:19-21). But, they, too, are filled with humanity. When the rest of the disciples discovered what James and John had requested, they were indignant! Indignant of what? Perhaps they were indignant of the presumption of the brothers, or the hope for power that they themselves wanted? It is encouraging to see the change in their lives that matures over the years recorded in the book of Acts and the other letters.

We should thank God for His gracious preservation of this very human encounter. In it we see three principles stated by Jesus that must dominate all other thinking about leadership. First, there is the acknowledgement that all of the other systems around them were similar to the pattern of their expectations and interactions among each other. The Jewish system of the day and the Roman political system were oppressive top-down systems. They were an exact incarnation of the "man at the top" thinking that comes so naturally to unredeemed men. It seems that Jesus is saying, "I know that this is the culture that surrounds you, and the flesh that possesses you."

All around us today there persists this same cultural reality, top-down, over-under

mentality. It is as natural as breathing. All kinds of differing cultural forms can be found around the globe. And, yes, it dominates the religious landscape of the world we live in. By the second Century after Jesus died, the most comfortable model of leadership found in man, the “man at the top,” was invading the Church of Jesus.

I think it is important to note that Jesus does not begin His monologue with the disciples explaining how they might redeem such a model. It is because this model is unredeemable! The second principle that Jesus wants His disciples to learn is that what He is about to say is unlike anything that they have ever experienced. We live in a world filled with the cultural reality of such models of leadership. And, just like the residue of the flesh that remains in each of us until we meet Him, it will impact how we do business. But, when we reflect upon the powerful words of Scripture and the model of our Lord, we see that the ideal is something very different than we have experienced or will fully experience in our lifetime.

The third principle is found in verse 26, "not so among you." With these few words Jesus rejects the leadership of man in favor of the enigma of God's own pattern of relating to His creation. Jesus Himself is the incarnation of that model. The words of the Jesus model are completely opposite of what surrounds us. In spite of what seems to be overwhelming odds, Jesus does not diminish the call to lead. He is not saying that leadership is a lackey of people's whims, or a doormat to people's abuses. But, He is making it clear that the “man at the top” pyramid is the opposite of His model. Even though Jesus metaphorically turns the system upside down, He does not negate the important role of leadership. He simply states that if we are to lead in His Kingdom, it must be by His designs and standards alone.

As I have pondered these earth-shaking words of Jesus, I have come to at least two conclusions in this regard. First, leadership in the New Testament is probably best seen as a series of concentric circles rather than as a pyramid. The circles acknowledge the importance of leadership as foundational to the community of Jesus' people, and if

viewed multi-dimensionally, also acknowledge that the life of the community is built upon the servant work of effective leadership. The circles also acknowledge the organic connection between the people in the core leadership body, and between the other leadership groups and the people of Christ in the church. Concentric circles of leadership, each relating to each other and reaching out to the rest of the body that has been armed by the Holy Spirit with gifts and grace stories, provide a better picture of the organic nature of the body as described by Paul in I Corinthians 12. Incidentally, it is a much more strategic way for leadership to empower the people for whom God has given them responsibility. True leadership is, first and foremost, relational and influential.

Church leadership was all under the authority of its Head, Jesus Christ. Christ is the supreme authority without which no leadership structure is possible. But, even His leadership must be recognized as organic and not organizational. As Guthrie points out, “The head essentially belongs to the body as the body belongs to the head. It is the most intimate kind of authority, since the body functions efficiently only when it responds at once to the dictates of the head.” (David Smith, *All God’s People*, Pgs. 281-82)

This kind of intimate leadership goes well beyond the “talking head” or distant “worship leader” to people who can interweave themselves under the headship of Christ into a diversely gifted force of people who the Spirit uses to inspire, encourage, correct, and model His people into empowerment. Paul does not mention clergy in his writings. (For) the New Testament church stressed function more so than position (Smith, pg. 282).

This is often a hard lesson for many in church leadership to learn. The visible church is a volunteer body and, as such, votes with its feet. If leadership is actively carrying out its mandate to empower these people to fullness and effectiveness, then relationship and influence are two of the most important tools they have been given in

this task. The closer leadership can stay relationally to the people for whom they have responsibility from God, the more empowering their ministry will be. Many other issues impact leadership's ability to empower, but no issues are more important than relationship and influence. We see in Matthew 20 that Jesus had both!

The second conclusion that I have come to in regards to this passage is that it paints our ideal. We live in a real world and, as such, will always have to do battle with the culture that surrounds and the flesh that is within. Once I begin to act within the Jesus model and it becomes my default, I can begin to see my decision-making dominated, or at least heavily influenced, by a new way of thinking and feeling. The goal is to get to the place where I am acting in accordance with the Jesus model without having to even think about it. However, I will never be able to always act in this way. This is, and always will be, an ongoing process. The culture around me is equally pervasive and inhibiting. The more egalitarian the culture, the more it may appear to cooperate with the Jesus model. I say "appear" because the heart of man will always corrupt the most innocent of efforts. And, America, which is about as egalitarian a nation as one will find, has still found a way to live the top-down system.

In my travels around the world and in my attempt to teach and see these principles lived out, I have found just about every conceivable variation of the system that Jesus rejects in Matthew 20. In recognition of the above thoughts, I have found several commitments helpful. One, a commitment to make the empowerment of Christ's people one of our most important measurable milestones. Two, a commitment in my heart to treat all leaders according to what I have found in Matthew, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians, even when their cultural demands are in conflict to this. I may not be able to change the way they act, but I can change what is in my heart and how I treat them. Three, a realization that the best way to achieve this is what I call a flattening of the cultural demand. The flatter the pyramid becomes, the closer it gets to the Jesus model.

The saddest part of losing the ability to move completely in step with the Jesus

model is that we also lose the ability to move fully within the nature of the full role of leadership within the body. And, by extension, we lose the ability to move fully within the nature and design of the Church. The fullness of its release is inextricably bound to the power of leadership to fully engage its inherent nature. And, if I am correct, that the organic nature of the body is one of its non-negotiables, and anything less than a fully organic leadership will be less than fully capable of empowering. God is sovereign and will work with our realities. But, how much more joy and fullness would there be if we could reform our ideas of both church and leadership!

Chapter 6 What Does This Kind of Leadership Look Like?

“There has arisen in our time a most singular fancy. They fancy that when things go very wrong we need a practical man. It would be far truer to say that when things go wrong we need an unpractical man. A practical man means a man accustomed to merely daily practice, the way things commonly work. When things will not work, you must have the thinking man who has some doctrines about why they work at all” (G.K. Chesterton in *A Long Journey Home* by Os Guinness).

How leadership does or does not think about itself is crucial to our generation. When taken as a whole, Ephesians 4:11-12, I Corinthians 12, and Matthew 20 teach us many things about leadership in the Church of the 21st century. One, leadership is always multiple – more than one! The title of Pastor referring to a person working in leadership in a local church is, at least, debatable. That person, working in isolation and with a special kind of Biblical authority, is not found in the New Testament. I can find no passage in the New Testament where leadership, in any dimension, is ever dealt with in singularity. Moreover, the organic nature of the body demands an organic leadership. And, the diversity of what the people of Jesus need in order to be fully empowered demands more giftedness than any one person possesses.

I vividly remember a discussion I had as a young Pastor with another Pastor near the end of his ministry. He had invited us to speak to his leadership team and his church.

Even though the concepts of the book you're reading were still largely ill-defined, they were present. Over dinner he said to me, with a smile, but in all seriousness, "You're dangerous." Why was I "dangerous" in his mind? Maybe I was dangerous because my leadership concepts were dangerous. Dangerous to whom? In his mind, and according to the leadership paradigm he had inherited and practiced, to me! He said, "You will be sorry someday, because your convictions will hurt you!" How? Through the people with whom I led! His convictions, and I am sure experience, taught him that people (even other leaders) were to be kept at a safe distance. Safety was, and is, an isolated position!

Two, the challenge of unity is diversity. So much of the contention within the body of Christ can be better understood as points of actually given to us by the Trinity. The diversity of gifts, functions and domains, and their naturally accompanying points of view are a diversity from God meant to enrich corporate decision making. They are there for our protection. A simple spectrum chart reveals this predicament. If you write the gift of mercy at one end and list some of the characteristics of that gift, then write the gift of administration at the other end, and list some of its characteristics, you have a picture of the problem. Mercy gifts view the world through the matrix of people. Administrative gifts view the world through the matrix of tasks. If neither has learned to appreciate the diversity of gifts that the Spirit has given, and the point of view that each brings to the table, there will be conflict.

The same scenario can be played out for the gifted people listed in Ephesians 4:11, as we shall see later. The diversity that the Trinity has seeded into the body of Christ and into leadership holds out the great promise of full empowerment or bitter conflict. How we learn to deal with the importance of other gifts, in direct and necessary diversity to our own, will determine the degree of healthy relationships among people in leadership bodies, and, ultimately, the effectiveness of leadership.

Three, the outcome of leadership is always the same – Christ's people are empowered. They are empowered to practice their priesthood and live in intimacy with the Heavenly Father. They are empowered to live the uniqueness of their personal grace testimonies in all of the relationships God brings their way. And, they are empowered to use their Spirit gifts in all of those same relationships, as well as ministries that the Lord opens up for them.

A major difference is that no New Testament leadership actually possesses

any inherent power. Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* give helpful insight into what true empowerment might look like. "Only leaders who feel powerful will delegate, reward talent, and build a team composed of people powerful in their own right. Leaders can use the power that flows to them in service of others. They can give their own power away to others in the same way that they acquired it themselves."

The power of the church is the Holy Spirit working in and through all of Christ's people by the empowering ministry of leaders, whom Christ has given to His people. When church leadership fulfills cooperative and coordinated apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, teaching, and pastoral functions, Christ's people are nurtured into greater intimacy with God the Father. They daily release their grace testimonies, and can identify, be trained in and release all of the Spirit-given gifts into ministries that will deliver the message of reconciliation to every man, woman and child in the church's circle of accountability in a God ordained time frame.

Some may have concluded by now that I do not believe in any type of organization or structure. In fact, the opposite is true. No human body of people can last long without systems of organizing what they do and how they do it. Others may have concluded that I do not have a very high view of leadership. Again, the opposite is true. As we have already seen from Ephesians 4, leadership is Christ's gift to His Church. I am very concerned, however, with how leadership perceives itself. The way in which leadership perceives itself, and the structure that results, will determine how the people of Christ see and relate to leadership.

The greatest modeling of leadership is not so much in what we say, but in what we do. As important as teaching and preaching are, their importance in the midst of the western Church has been the seedbed for the lack of empowerment of Christ's people. And, if we are unable to empower and mobilize Christ's people, we will find it very difficult to fulfill His Gospel purposes through them to reach our world.

In anticipation of the differing functions and gifts found within leadership, it is vitally important to emphasize the role of leadership. Three concepts describe leadership at a variety of levels – local, citywide, multi-church, denominational, national and global. **First, there is the role of leadership.** This role is to empower the people of Christ to do the work of the ministry, as found in Ephesians 4:11-12.

Empowerment is a broad word. But, if we can conclude that the corporate impact of leadership is to affect something within Christ's people, then we can begin to ask the question, what do they affect? It seems clear that the non-negotiables of the New Testament story is a place to start. Of all of the important statements and realities described in this process, none seem more important or more foundational than the following four thresholds.

One, are the people of Christ walking in their priesthood – growing in intimacy with the Father (Matthew 22: 34-40)? Two, with what consistency do the people of Christ tell their unique grace story (Ephesians 3:10-11)? Three, do they understand and use their Spirit gifts, especially in opportunities and relationships outside of the church body? And four, do they display the fruit of the Spirit in their interpersonal relationships? These thresholds are easy to read and effective indicators to tell us whether leadership is performing its God given role.

When Christ's people are equipped correctly they will demonstrate regular and measurable growth in these thresholds. When these thresholds are taking root in the daily lives of Christ's people, the power of the Gospel will be felt on the world around them.

Second, there is the leadership body itself. I have concluded that true Biblical leadership is the multiplicity of diversity woven into a unity of vision that is played out by the Holy Spirit through Christ's people in the world directly around them, and into the world distant to them. All leadership, as seen in the New Testament both in teaching about and observation of practice, is multiple. There is always more than one.

Leadership is always a mixture of diversely gifted people. The diversity of the leadership team comes from the very nature of the body that leadership serves. So, the word leader is a misnomer. Leadership, as a plural, is the correct Biblical word.

As is the nature of the church, so is the nature of the leadership team. No individual has all of the gifts and no individual can perform all of the diverse functions necessary to truly play out God's ordained role for leadership. Empowering people is not just the act of teaching, or preaching, or managing. It is the impact of all of these with emphasis on the heart, head, and actions of Christ's people. The role of leadership demands much more than any one person could possibly possess. It demands an interdependency best expressed by the Trinity and clearly seen in the metaphor of the body itself.

“For as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” (Romans 12:4-6 ESV).

Third, there is the composite of the team necessary to fulfill the God ordained task of empowering people. If a diversity of gifts is needed and has been given, what does that diversity look like? Of course, the exact composition of any one particular leadership group or team will be dependent upon the context in which they work, but there are some general patterns to note. The answer to this question lies in the mixture of gifted people. Just as there are gifted people (lets call them spiritual functions for now), there are also at least four other gifts (lets call these human functions) given by the Holy Spirit that provide vital pieces to the empowering role of leadership. The five spiritual functions (Eph. 4:11) and the four human functions will provide the framework for discussion in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 7 The Five functions given by Jesus

I have discovered that the words of Ephesians 4:11 come charged with reaction. Almost all Protestants react to the Catholic identification of the apostolic authority of the Church and of the Pope. Non-charismatic believers react to the charismatic believers who embrace all of the gifts of the Spirit. Even among Pentecostals and Charismatics there is disagreement. Many of my Pentecostal friends react to the Charismatic idea of apostolic covering.

Allow me to lay aside all of these debates for a moment and concentrate on the question, “What are the functions behind these gifted people given by Christ to His Church?” The importance and role of each one is clearly seen if we ask their individual function (Eph. 4:11) within their clearly expected role (Eph. 4:12). And, as I have already referred to, their continued functional existence can be most clearly seen by asking, “What is missing when one or more of them are deemed non-existent?” Or, “When any and all of them are not active, interdependent, coordinated and cooperative?” For the purpose of this chapter, let me reiterate that I am only talking about the functions described by the passage and not the role, position, or authority of any particularly gifted individual. The words used to describe each function seem straightforward enough, and should provoke no dissention.

The Apostolic Function

“Apostle” is one who is sent. The one sent is a representative of another who is of greater authority and position than themselves. C.K. Barrett points out in his book, *Signs of Apostle*, that the word “apostle” is used in the New Testament to refer to eight different groupings of people referred to as apostles. John Stott says that in the New Testament, “there were the “apostles of Christ” personally appointed by him (Christ) to be witnesses of the resurrection, who included the Twelve, Paul and probably James. There is no evidence that Barnabas belonged to this group. On the

other hand, there were the ‘apostles of the churches,’ sent out by a church or churches on particular missions as Epaphroditus was an apostle or messenger of the Philippian church (Stott, Acts, pg. 229).

None would disagree that the original twelve hold a special place in the New Testament revelation. The addition of Paul to their standing adds some complications to the designation of the original twelve, but can be overcome, especially when viewed with his Damascus Road calling.

But, the New Testament adds others to the list of those called apostles, at least, or maybe most importantly, when referring to the apostolic nature of the Church in the first century. It seems to me that we can safely protect the role of the original twelve or thirteen apostles, especially for the sake of divine and complete revelation, while still recognizing the primary role of “apostles” within the life of the Body of Christ.

As one who is “sent” to represent the Gospel, as seen in the life and words of Jesus, they “lead” in forging the extending ministry of the Church. The Church, as pilgrim on this Earth, is called to take the Gospel to the nations. I believe that this would include the very specific task of seeing that every man, woman, and child on the earth has the opportunity to see, hear, understand, and accept the offer of Christ Jesus.

If we layer into this onto the “domain” assignments we have already seen in I Corinthians 12:6, we can see the importance of this function at many geographic levels, if not at every level. Local city, state, nation, continent and international – Jesus has given people called to lead the charge in extending the Gospel in and through the Body of Christ. No one mosaic of gifts can be prescribed as defining the function of apostle. For every context will demand not only a “unique” apostolic function, but also aggressive and cooperative action by the other functions found in Ephesians 4:11.

In 1st and 2nd Timothy, Paul describes himself in the same “mosaic” fashion: evangelist, apostle, and teacher. If one reflects for a moment on the

times, the required combination of these truths becomes evident. As the first one arriving in so many places, he had to do the work of evangelist. As one called to extend the purpose of the Church, he had to gather new believers into new churches. And as one who would move on before others arrived, he had to leave enough “truth” behind to begin the spiritual building of people.

All of this must not be taken out of the divine DNA set by God in the nature of the Church as already seen in I Corinthians 12. Paul did not minister in superstar isolation. F.F. Bruce in his book, *The Pauline Circle*, points out that Paul had at least twenty-five other gifted people listed in The New Testament as active with him in the extension of the Gospel.

If any cumulative impact of the function of apostle can be described it would be this, to extend the Gospel purpose of the Church. At every geographic level, apostles lead the charge of extending the Gospel, resulting in new followers of Jesus who are organized into new churches. The apostolic function in a new, unreached territory must include the evangelistic function, and will result in new believers and new churches. The apostolic function in partially reached or even “post” reached places will function through existing churches to mobilize them outside of themselves into full evangelization or re-evangelization of their particular place, and a strategic engagement with others churches of unreached territories around the world.

Without the function of the apostle in the 21st century, the church is left without energy to seek and pursue its purpose. Little wonder that a Western Church left to the pastors and teachers has lost its passion for engagement of the world around it! And, when passion for purpose is lost, we discover that truth and mercy, even faithfully applied, are not enough to keep the people of Christ living the disciplines of the Kingdom. Purpose calls people outside of themselves, and defines their life by the eternal. Once the purpose is lost to the majority of people in Christ’s Church, they lose the cutting edge with their society, and the light of the Kingdom, ordained to be seen

through the people of Christ, fades.

The Prophetic Function

The most controversial of the functions is prophet. So much could and should be said about this function, but I want to focus on what can be agreed to rather than what divides. I see prophet as one who knows. In the Old Testament, prophets not only knew God, they “knew” what He wanted for His people, and where He was taking them. Of course, no one prophet knew it all. But, each had received specific prophetic words inspired from God. We describe this as the ministry of foreknowing. It is not so much the prophet foreknowing, as God, who (fore) knows, speaking through them.

“The unique nature of the Old Testament prophecy stems from what might be called the prophetic consciousness – the unqualified conviction on the part of the prophets of a divine call and commission to proclaim the very words of God. This conviction, so clearly manifested in the declaration of Amos, is expressed countless times in the Old Testament by the prophetic formula ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ which always prefaced the prophet's message from God that followed” (Hubbard Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, Moody Press, pg. 51).

Prophets insist that God is the sovereign center. Prophets insist that we deal with God as God reveals Himself, not as we imagine Him to be. These men and women woke people up to the sovereign presence of God in their lives. They yelled, they wept, they rebuked, they soothed, they challenged, they comforted. They used words with power and imagination, whether blunt or subtle.

These sixteen Hebrew prophets provide the help we so badly need if we are to stay alert and knowledgeable regarding the conditions in which we cultivate faithful and obedient lives before God. The ways of the world—its assumptions, its values, its

methods of going about its work—are never on the side of God. Never.

The prophets purge our imaginations of this world's assumptions on how life is lived and what counts in life. Over and over again, the Holy Spirit uses these prophets to separate His people from the cultures in which they live, putting them back on the path of simple faith and obedience and worship in defiance of all that the world admires and rewards. Prophets train us in discerning the difference between the ways of the world and the ways of the Gospel, keeping us present to the Presence of God (taken from the Message introduction to the prophets online/Amos).

As important as the foreknowing was, it did not consume the majority of the prophet's daily time. Foreknowledge came in short windows of Holy Spirit inspiration. The vast majority of daily prophetic activity in The Old Testament was spent in telling and retelling the information they had received from God. Can we doubt that the OT prophets spent hours speaking, explaining and telling the story and its implications to God's people? The telling consumed much more of their daily life than foretelling or foreknowing.

Just as in the Old Testament, the majority of daily time of the prophetic function in the New Testament, should be spent in forth telling. The prophet, as one who knows, has not changed. What has changed is that the prophet knows because God has already spoken in His Word. From the sure footing of a closed canon, the Spirit uses prophets today to correct and encourage the people of Christ to walk in the fullness of God's revelation. The prophets call the people of the church to the full integration of the Gospel.

It is possible to conceive of a Jonah in today's world, using God's completed revelation and being moved by the Spirit, to confront a people or place with the call of God and the implications of rejection. But, it is even easier to see the prophet moving within the existing church teaching and exhorting Christ to full obedience to God's revelation. Some would counter that God has His Word, and it, through the ministry of the teacher, is sufficient. And, it is true that God's Word is the convicting power in the

hands of the Holy Spirit. But, God has always chosen to use human instruments as His vessels of grace and ministry. The teacher is charged with the understanding and explanation of the truth of God's revelation. But, the prophet, somewhat protective of the heart of God, is charged with the obedience to the revelation of God. This is where the characteristics of teachers and prophets intersect. They share the same disciplines of study and understanding. But, I think they separate at focus and mode of explanation.

The focus of the prophetic is, to some, tenaciously riveted upon obedience. The strongest tool in the prophet's life is the ability to form the understanding of God's Word into compelling words that the Spirit uses to move the hearts of His people. The finest teacher moves my head to understand. The finest prophet moves my heart to obey. Both are dependent upon the revealed Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Both are necessary to complete the ministry that God wants carried on in Christ's people. Phillip Greenslade, in his book *Leadership, Greatness and Servanthood*, says that in relationship to time and truth, the prophet will show us: 1. What God is up to in history 2. What the Church is really meant to do 3. What is going on in the world, and, what is coming in the future. The prophet opens our eyes by, describing what he sees, speaking what he knows, showing how he feels, asking questions, bringing the 'now' word of God, evaluating the past and motivating.

As Freeman concludes of the Old Testament prophets, "Thus, the foundation of the prophet is seen clearly in the Hebrew term and its usage in the Old Testament. Those passages where it is used indicate that the prophet's function was to speak the moral and ethical message God had revealed to them." (Freeman, pg. 49).

So, too, the New Testament prophets, working off of a closed canon, stand in the gap. For, "it is not the biblical view to suppose that prophecy is limited to the disclosure of the future. That which is given by the Spirit to the prophet can refer to the past and to the present as well as the future" (Freeman, pg. 14).

The Evangelistic Function

The apostle is used by God to extend the Gospel purpose of the church. The prophet is used by God to integrate the Gospel foundations in the people of the church. But, the evangelist is used by God to expand the Gospel story in the church. The differences between the extending ministry of the apostle and the expanding ministry of the evangelist exist on a number of levels.

First, extension, by nature, is a strategic concept focused upon the whole grid of a people or a place. FF Bruce highlights the strategic focus of the apostolic as seen in Paul when he says, "A Roman Colony is a community of Roman citizens planted at a strategic point of communications, to safeguard the interests of Rome in that outpost of empire. Paul's missionary (apostolic, mine) eye picked out these strategic outposts and envisaged them as strategic centers in the spiritual kingdom which he was proclaiming and extending" (pg. 95, *The Spreading Flame*, Paternoster, 1970).

This is not to say that evangelists are not strategic. But, the evangelist has a God-given compulsion to focus upon people rather than on strategy as the first order of business. It is, however, important to note a probable divide in the evangelistic calling based upon the gift mosaic of the person. It seems to me that when the function of leading (to be seen more fully in the next chapter) is yoked into the ministry of the evangelist, we see infrastructure development and larger numbers of people targeted and impacted.

Second, extension through apostles is focused upon church, its creation (church planting), and extension. Expansion is focused upon the Gospel – its declaration into the lives of people and places. By its very nature, expansion through evangelists, works from point to point. Or, we might say, from inside a place and the people in it, out. Focused upon people, individuals in need of Grace, this must be so. Extension focuses not on a center or a person so much as the full extension of the Gospel across a place. Church planting is the most incarnational element of the fruit of the apostolic.

Evangelists talk about, pray for, and are impassioned for people without Christ. Apostles, of course want to see people come to Christ, and talk about, pray for, and are passionate for the multiplication of churches. These churches filled with followers accessible to a whole people or place are the platforms from which the Gospel is lived and declared.

Finally, expansion through evangelists is about telling and retelling the Gospel story of God's grace in Jesus. The evangelist guards the heart of God for lost people. They remind all of us that the first love of God is demonstrated toward us in that while we were in sin and rebellion, God sent His Son to die in the place of the wrath we deserved.

Implications of the 1st Three Functions

From one point of view we might say that the apostle protects and projects the heart of God for the full incarnation of God's Gospel story in Jesus through churches living and telling this story in every place on earth. As Jim Montgomery, founder of DAWN ministries has taught me, the outcome of world evangelization is to see Gospel-living people of Christ in every village, town, and neighborhood of every city in a country or nation in the world is the ultimate goal. The prophet projects and protects the heart of God for the full obedience to the life of grace that God has worked into all of Christ's people. Obedience is the prophet's watch word, though each may give a slightly different view to this obedience. This diversity of focus stems from the particular sin of a particular group of Jesus' people and, nonetheless, leads straight back to obedience to God.

The evangelist projects and protects the heart of God for lost people, and, the declaration of His Gospel story to each and every one of them. As one who tells, the evangelist is concerned not only that the story be told, but also that all of Christ's people participate in the telling. Whether they are focused on one person

at a time or on groups of people, the simple story of Jesus is their passion! The diversity of the three (prophet, evangelist and apostle) is evident in their impact. But, in distinctions to the next two, pastor and teacher, they share at least two important characteristics. One, they tend to be task-driven. For the apostle, there are always more places needing churches. For the prophet, there is always truth to be obeyed. For the evangelist, there are always more people who need to hear. These three carry both the passion and the vision of God through the people of Christ into the World.

This is why I believe that we most often see what many call vision in these three functions. It is also why we rarely, if ever, see outcome vision in a pastor or teacher. At this point, it is well to remember that no gift or function is more important than any other. So, to say that some functions carry certain characteristics and not others is not wrong or incomplete. It is by God's own design, the Spirit's gifting, and Christ's gift that these blessings exist in our midst. We'll explore more later on the importance of embracing and practicing the implications inherent in God's design.

The Pastoral Function

More than all of the other functions, pastors touch the heart of God for the pain in the human experience – whether that pain is found in those who are followers of Jesus, or in those who have not yet come to faith. Pastors bear God's mercy to people. They are God's nurturers. Their ultimate responsibility is to nurture the truths of the Gospel in the people of Christ. Patience, tenacity, availability, mercy, and compassion are all characteristics of Christ's pastoral gift to the Church.

Because they are people-centered, or people-driven, we might say, the demands of today are prominent in their hearts and on their calendar! As one's who they live their lives with people and those people's needs. They are Christ's

hands into hospitals, home visitation, orphanages, etc. They reach out the hands of Christ to touch human suffering. When yoked to the gift of exhortation, they take time to listen, wait, and minister the love and forgiveness of God to people.

One of the greatest mistakes of our day is to have anointed all full-time local church leadership with the title “pastor.” It is a mistake of interpretation of Scripture. The word “pastor” is only used one time in the New Testament, and that is in Ephesians 4:11 matrixed with the other functions. It is a mistake that has created a travesty of expectation upon hundreds of leaders holding the position of pastor, but gifted by the Spirit and given by Christ to His Church for other functions.

Worst of all, as apostle, prophet, and evangelist have been lost to the local church, pastor and teacher, have dominated the life of too many local churches. Over hundreds of years, that domination, coupled with the loss of the other three, has conditioned theological training around this same scenario. As we shall see later, our future becomes self-fulfilling if left only to the functions of pastors and teachers!

The Teaching Function

Teachers are Christ’s gifts to the church to project and protect the truth that God has revealed in His Word. Their impact in the body of Christ is the explanation of the truths of the Gospel. Of course, teachers, like all of the other functions, come in differing expressions. Some favor the discipling end of the truth spectrum and teaching functions. Others, diligent in study and creative in mind, favor the scholastic end of the truth spectrum and teaching functions. Others are gifted with different degrees of personal discipline, cognitive abilities, audience size, and even audience cognitive abilities. But, one connection runs through their beings: The truth shall set you free!

I do not make this statement lightly, but in recognition of the importance of truth and the teachers who bring forth this truth. Without them, we do not plummet

the depths of God's written revelations, nor are we prepared to withstand the penetration of cultural error around us. We succumb to some degree of syncretism. At all levels, the body of Christ needs to be filled with people who explain.

Having said this, history has left us with three dangers. One, as with pastor, our existing theological training schools are dominated by the teaching function, and reproduce in kind. Of course, there are core disciplines in the teaching function that all of the Ephesians 4:11 functions need to learn. All need to know how to interpret Scripture. All need to know how to frame and defend their systematic understanding of Scripture. And, of course, all need to know how to teach and lead others in the discovery of God's revealed truth.

But, when the majority of training programs are focused upon and taught by those who bear the function of truth and to the near exclusion of the other functions, then a dangerous and unbiblical action is placed upon the body of Christ. More importantly, the full-orbed use of the gift of Christ to His body, withheld in its completeness, will restrict the Church.

Two, though truth is mandatory to a healthy spiritual life, truth alone is not the end. Jesus Himself, in restating what all good Jews knew from OT revelation, makes that clear. The greatest commandment is this, to love the Lord God with all your heart, mind and soul. Indeed, upon this and the horizontal manifestation of the same to those around you, hangs all of the Law and prophets. The culmination of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus was to restore all people to God's originally created purpose: to have relationship with Him and to represent Him.

Evident in today's Western Church is a people consumed with mercy (pastor) and truth (teacher), but nearly devoid of vision and passion (apostle, prophet, and evangelist). Truth can indeed deliver us into relationship with the Truth-giver when it is received and acted upon. But, truth outside of purpose, vision, and obedience can also

kill. Too many people have become convinced that what they hold in their heads, but not in their hearts, will save them.

Three, teachers and pastors left to “lead” the church with their gifts alone will not lead the church to fulfill its complete mission. This is not a criticism. It is a statement made in recognition of the very nature of the Church as found in I Corinthians 12, and the people given by the resurrected Jesus to His body. Unless a complimentary, coordinated, and interdependent functioning relationship can be found between all five functions, then the strengths of one or two will predominate. When the strengths of one or two will always dominate, the receiving audience will create an environment in which they became the aberration of these functions. Only in the effective, repeated, and coordinated delivery of all of the gifts and all of the functions can the Church be empowered, and the world engaged!

Chapter 8 The Four Spiritual Gifts Given by the Spirit

Jesus gave a gift to His body when He went to the right hand of the Father. As we have already seen, Ephesians 4:11 tells us about that gift. But, the Spirit has also given gifts to the ongoing empowerment of the Church to do the work of the ministry of the Gospel. Four of those gifts listed in the New Testament have a most direct role to play in the function of leadership within the body.

These four have been noted for many years in books on leadership and especially in material developed to describe leadership as it is played out in worldly structures. I use the phrase "worldly structures" not in a negative sense, but in distinction to what Jesus has committed to us in Matthew 20. There are junctures at which the gifts, functions, and roles of leadership intersect between the Church and the world. But, equally so, there are points at which they not only do not intersect, they contradict!

Without a doubt we are forever learning to recognize those intersections and act accordingly. Too often we lose the battle of vigilance and are the poorer because of it.

There are at least three points where we must realize the distinction between the Church and world leadership. One, Church leadership shares the reality of volunteerism like unto other volunteer organizations. In essence, people vote with their feet! It is true that world leadership does have to deal with motivation, feelings, desires, etc. But, only to a degree and much less than people who involve themselves in leadership of a volunteer organization. Followers do not join such groupings because they have to or because they need to earn something or support a family. They join only by choice!

Two, the leadership of the Church must be charismatically pursued. Work force, shareholders, and recipients are all secondary to what the Holy Spirit wants from the Church and wants to do through the Church. Good organization, excellent goals, valid visions, even human effectiveness all pale in comparison to the indwelling leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Third, the Church lives only to fulfill the mandate of the Master, not a bottom-line. How the church lives is not only important in and of itself, but it is also the very strength that the church carries into their daily marketplace and relationships that demonstrates the power of the Gospel. They are the proof of the pudding! If there is a "be vs. do" debate in leadership as defined and carried out in the world, it pales in importance to the "be vs. do" nature of the people of Christ. Finding that balance is part of the secret of moving the power of the Gospel into the world. For when the world can see the being reality of the people of Christ as they are doing the things of Christ – in their relationships, in their marriages, in their families, and in their fellowships – then they have proof that the grave is indeed empty!

It should be noted that all of the gifts given by the Holy Spirit are important to the body, but not all necessarily directly engage the function of leadership. Leadership demands the active involvement of administration, management, organization and leading. We are not left to look only to the world or personal observation to determine the existence of these gifts. The world and personal observation, even into the Church,

corroborate the likelihood that these are gifts of the Spirit. But, more importantly, the Spirit has left witness of their giving in the New Testament.

Any simple study of words in the New Testament can reveal much, and heighten our understanding of context, and, ultimately, of God's message. There are limitations, however, to the simple study of words, especially as we find them recorded in regards to spiritual gifts. Since so many of the gifts appear simply in lists, the words by themselves appear with no supporting context. The extent of this challenge can be seen in the many different translations and paraphrases in regards to the gifts. In some of them there appears to be no agreement. Complicating the matter is that the same word, with no contextual definition, and thus some universal agreement, can mean differing and even opposing things to different people.

This lack of supporting context means that we must be careful not to take the word in isolation to context too far. In the New Testament, some gifts can be seen through people, and thus are not only understood by definition, but are also explained and more fully understood by context. With this caution in mind, the corroborating evidence we have in books written on leadership, and with our own personal observation, let's look at the four words.

Administration – The Management of Details

In Romans 12:7 Paul says, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving." The word used here for serving is the word "diakonos." This word is used broadly in Scripture to describe anything from the servant who serves to the attitude one should have in serving. It is not necessarily wrong to have translated the word "to serve" here in verse seven, but it is not the only way in which it can be applied. As one who is committed to serve the needs of another, this word can also be translated as administration. It is the same word used in Acts 6:1-6 in reference to the men who

were chosen to "take care of the details" and meet the needs of the widows so the Apostles could dedicate themselves to other work.

From this, the corroboration of world structures, and what we observe with our own eyes, administration is a gift given by the Holy Spirit to be a part of the leadership function of empowering Christ's people. At just about all levels there must be people who can handle the management of details. As with all gifts, and even the gifted people given by Christ to His Church, these must be played out in coordinated tension with other necessary gifts and gifted people in the whole task of empowering Christ's people. I obviously refer to the concept of administration as a gift given by the Spirit, and not to any admixture that would come in the application of this gift into the life of a believer. If, as I have already asserted, gifts come in a matrix with other gifts worked by the Spirit through me, and if these gifts also come with a matrix of possible ministries through which they may operate and effects or domains in which they will operate, then we describe here only what they look like in their generic definitions. All gifts will be colored by the presence of other gifts, ministries and domains working in my life. But below the surface of everyone who has the gift of administration will be the drive to manage the details of empowering Christ's people.

Management – The Management of People

In Romans 12:8 Paul continues, "...if it is leadership, let him govern diligently." I am not satisfied with the translation of either word. The word leadership comes from "proistami," which is translated to put before, to set over, to preside, to rule, or to govern. However, this same word appears in Paul's instructions to Timothy concerning the qualifications of both elders and deacons to be able to manage their own households (I Timothy 3:4-5; 12). In that case, it clearly refers to the modern word "manage," and many translations do, in fact, use that very word.

I see the same idea operating here in Romans 12. Paul is referring to those who

have what we would call today the gift of management, or the Spirit-given ability to manage people. In reality, a great portion of what is available to us in books on the subject of leadership is about these kinds of people. And, of course, the work of empowering Christ's people requires the work of managing people. It requires managing how they arrange their time, how they order what they will do, and what they expect to accomplish. But, most importantly, I think the great contribution of people with the gift of managing is that they manage the communication between people. What an important job!

So much of the real "success" of life is dependent upon whether we have heard and understood each other. It is no less important in the body of Christ that opposing views, needs and expectations hear and understand each other. If this is vital in the microcosm of a local congregation, imagine how important it becomes when translated into inner city, inter-city, intra-national, interdenominational, and international relationships of the body of Christ. People with the gift of management are necessary within the body.

I have often wondered if the most appropriate gift for the mid-size congregation is a person with a high degree of compassion, maybe even mercy (as seen in the pastoral function), who also had an equal ability to manage. The day-to-day tasks of the leadership body of a midsize congregation demand patience, tenacity, and the ability to keep people working together. It is where the rubber of who we are and what we believe meets the proverbial road! All sorts of more complex gifting can operate at broader domains of influence. But, the local congregation, groups of between 75 and 200 people, demand heavy doses of managerial ability.

Our tradition has been very weak here, universalizing the singular function of pastor, at best buttressing it with teacher, but totally ignoring the fact that at this level the management of people was the greater demand. It works fine if we have trained and assigned people who are gifted by the Spirit with this added gifting of

management, even when we do little or nothing to empower it. These people will learn instinctively, or by experience, that bringing other leaders together to understand each other, their respective gifts, and a corporate sense of action, is mandatory.

Our history is the opposite, however. We have taken primarily mercy-gifted people, or teacher-gifted people, and put them into positions of singular authority expecting them to significantly impact the role that God has ordained Christ's people play to each other and to the world. We have done nothing to help them understand the diversity of gifts and functions necessary to truly empower Christ's people. And, equally nothing to help them know how to build in others who have gifts that they lack. Many, maybe even most, have attempted to faithfully play out the empowering role that can be clearly seen in the Scriptures. Many have knowingly failed, and therefore search for the next seminar that will compensate for what they cannot do.

It is little wonder that at a moment of crisis in the Western world when the message of the Gospel could be clearly seen and understood, we are unable to respond. It takes the full gifting of the leadership body, coordinated by the Holy Spirit, under the guidance of Jesus, and within the sovereign effects God has designed, to fully mobilize Christ's people into the growing practice of their priesthood. Only one other gift is functionally missing from the leadership of the local congregation more than the gift of management. That gift is organization.

Organization – The Management of Structure

In I Corinthians 12:28 Paul says, "And God has appointed in the church.....gifts of administrating." It is interesting to choose the word administration here. Confusion arises because other translations have chosen different words. The translation creates even more confusion by adopting the word administration, which is a word I find used in many different ways by many different people. I consistently hear people use the word administrator when they really mean a manager, or a pastor, or a leader. These

are not created equal.

The word Paul chose is, "kubernesis." It means to steer or to guide, as of the pilot of a ship would do. The same word is used by Greek translations of Proverbs 1:5 and 11:14 to mean guidance. It is also used in Acts 27:11 to refer to the pilot of the ship. My experience in the Navy has taught me important differences between the Executive Officer of a large ship and the Captain, whom I take to fulfill the role of pilot. The Executive Officer plays the managerial role with the other officers, while the Captain plots the course of the ship. By plot I am not referring to the physical task of plotting the course on a map, but rather the decision as to the directions the ship will take. While there are many more things to say about the role of a Captain, the management of the structure, guidance as to how all will be handled, and guidance as to the direction of the ship, is solely his to make.

This word is indeed the most difficult of the four to discern. But, with the benefit of books written on the subject and personal observation, I think "kubernesis" describes the person who is able to set structure to people and events. The many fine strategists I have met partake of this gift. While they may not be drawn to the management of people, or the details necessary to support people in their actions, they can see where it is going and create milestone markers along the way. They have the ability to help us understand the obstacles we will face along the path, and how to chart a course around them. They have the ability to help us understand premises and foundations below our thinking. If the manager is seen as the spine that ties all of us together, the administrator as the corpuscles that feverishly work to flesh out our activity, then the organizer can be seen as the skeletal framework upon which all will hang.

Leading – The Management of Future

There is one last word used in the New Testament to describe one more added dimension of the human function of leadership. It is a word not found in the lists of

Romans and I Corinthians, but one that addresses an added piece in the leadership body necessary to empower Christ's people. It can and has been easily confused. It has been confused with aggressiveness, or the passion to succeed. Gifts are not personality descriptions, though obviously many gifts fit naturally with certain personalities. It seems fair to say that the Spirit is unlikely to give the gift of evangelism to an introvert. The gift of evangelism, as I have seen and experienced, goes to people who are, by nature, gregarious. Of course, all of us must share our faith, but evangelism is most certainly a people-centered gift.

It also seems fair to say that the gift of teaching will come in a person who is able to discipline time and place better than people-centered people. The greater the domains of teaching, the greater the need to study, reflect and meditate. The function of teaching demands the ability to say no to people and other interactions for long periods of time – something God clearly does not want evangelists to do!

It should go without saying that all gifts are also abilities, and need proper time and training to reach their full potential. However, even the most effective gifts will still gravitate to their natural zones of comfort, zones that are highly influenced by our personality.

This gift can also be easily confused with what some call vision. The word vision has taken on so many negative connotations in the Christian world, and I think has come to be seen as something akin to dreaming. All of the other gifts of the Spirit need to be woven together into a chorus of testimonies and ministries that move within the designs God has for the body of Christ. I refer to designs as corporate ends for which

God has created, gifted, empowered, and will hold the body accountable. It is the eternal plan that God is playing out upon the stage of history, and at this point in history, through the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So much of what ails us in today's Western Church is not the absence of highly effective gifts or even the opportunity. The greater the darkness that surrounds us, the

greater the opportunity to define the earthly within the eternal (Ephesians 5:8-16). But, while all of the other gifts given by the Spirit help to mix, manage, educate, train, exhort, and love the people of Christ, none of them serves to give the compelling sense of reason to this odyssey. God has created the odyssey and has chosen to use leadership to compel Christ's people to move with expectation and determination on the journey!

In Hebrews 13:7 and 17, we find a word to describe this other piece of the function of leadership. The word to describe this gift/function is "egomai," which means to guide or go before. I believe that this corporate impact described finds root in people who have been gifted with what I call the gift of leading. Leading is the management of the future.

The common characteristic of everyone who has the gift of leading is the ability and the urgency to think about the future. As in all of the other gifts, it is not that these people lay around conjuring up a rational future, or even hoping for an epiphany of one. What happens to them and what the Spirit delivers through comes naturally. The evangelist, especially the one trained in their gifting, does not avoid people, hoping that the Spirit will overcome their fear. Instead, with joy and anticipation, they engage any and all people they come into contact with. The mercy person does not dread going to the hospital, but looks forward to bringing a touch of care or a word of encouragement to the physically suffering. This is also true with the gift of leading! These people receive insights into future outcomes that can be turned into compelling visions in which the body of Christ can and must walk. Of course, the younger these people are, the more their gifting comes with the same immaturities that characterize all gifts. Dealing as one does with the outcomes of people's lives, it can engender fear. But, for the person who has been trained in the use of their gift, the importance of its mixing with other gifts, and the final submission of all of the gifts to the fulfillment of God's purpose through Christ's people, their contribution to the effectiveness of the church in this world can be

striking.

I call the maturing of this gift of leading, disciplined Z thinking. It is Z thinking because it deals with outcomes. What might this nation, state, region, or city look like when it is filled with the message of the Gospel? Or, what might this congregation look like when all of its members are empowered and living in the thresholds mentioned earlier? This same outcome is also felt in smaller ways throughout the body of Christ in task teams, ministries, para-churches, etc. At all levels of ministry to and by the body of Christ, outcomes must come into play, or we suffer the peril of process without reason. And, worse, we do the right things for the wrong reasons!

Kouzes and Pozner in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, say that, “The domain of leaders is the future. unique. The leader’s unique legacy is the creation of valued institutions that survive over time... Traditional management teaching focuses our attention on the short-term, the Wall Street analysts, the quarterly statement, and the annual report. Yet, in the leadership cases we have examined all the effective leaders had a long-term future orientation. They looked beyond the horizon of the present” (Kouzes and Pozner, *The Leadership Challenge*, pgs. xxi and xvii).

Z thinking is the ability to manage the future while living in the present, where vision and faith must work together. Those who are unable to allow the future and the present to live in tension are dreamers. The matured gift of leading has learned the importance of returning from the future to the present to work in coordination with all of the other gifts that are necessary to empower the people of Christ to walk in the God-given. I say God-given because when the description of the outcomes are rooted in Scripture, mediated by the Spirit, and within the cooperation and coordination of the other gifts and functions within the leadership team, then it can truly be called God- given.

Vision is the place we believe God is calling us to go. The present is the realities, challenges, and changes we face. Faith is the difference between the two. Or, said in another way, faith is the bridge that spans the gap between the two. I must constantly

orient the present to the future into which the Holy Spirit is calling the Church. We are not here to simply maintain! We are here to engage! And no engagement is more important than the engagement of the Gospel into every dimension of the world.

I linger on this gift not because it is more important than any of the other gifts, but for three main reasons. First, it is the most misunderstood. Leading is easily confused with aggressiveness. And, so, aggressive personalities who have other gifts are mistaken to be people with the gift of leading. Second, because it has apparently become the most absent gift from today's Western Church and para-Church structures. Now, I will not admit that the Spirit has withdrawn this gift. But, I will admit that we have so diminished the environment in which this gift thrives that we have lost many with the gift of leading to exclusive ministry in the marketplace. It may also be true that there is a latent pool of gifted individuals waiting to be discovered if we can turn our training institutions from a solely truth and mercy bias. Third, because it is the gift that most matches up with the three functions we desperately need to release into the Church today: apostle, prophet, and evangelist.

The gift of leading is our plum line of direction indicating that we are indeed walking where God wants us to go. The gift of organization gives us both the strategy of how to get there, and strings the milestones out in front of us to corroborate that we are indeed heading in the right direction. The gift of management gives us the ability to keep people talking and working in a coordinated fashion as each person develops and uses their particular gifts and ministries in the process. The gift of administration gives us the ability to deal with the myriad of details that comes with moving people. Which one can we live without? Need I ask? Which one is in charge? Does it really matter? If they can't effectively coordinate themselves towards a Biblical outcome then, in the end, it won't matter which got the most press, sold the most tapes, or made the most decisions!

Implications and Conclusions

Though I personally do think that God always anoints a *primes-inter-pares*, first among equals, I think it is important to ask the question, “Why should we coordinate?” And, how shall we coordinate? How we structure the accountability among ourselves is less important than we think! For, even in the finest of teams, ego is forever getting in the way. Ego dictates that my gift will dominate your gift(s), or at best, your gifts will “staff” my gifts. All these fly directly into the face of Matthew 20 and I Corinthians 12.

We need to release a new generation of young people who possess this gift of leading. They will come in all kinds of packages. Some will be apostles, focused upon the extension of the Gospel through the Church. Others will be prophets, concerned about obedience in the people of Christ in accordance to the Gospel. Others will be evangelists, focused upon the expansion of the Gospel story across the earth. Key questions will determine their effectiveness, and we shall look at those key questions in another chapter. But, it is important to ask the questions, “Will we create an environment in which they can be easily identified and flourish in the Church? Will they learn to appreciate their diversity? Can they learn to actively coordinate and cooperate?”

Chapter 9

Identifying People of Vision

I was recently sitting in an interactive training session listening to two colleagues talk about their convictions and how those convictions had enabled thousands of new churches to be planted and tens of thousands of people to come to saving faith in Christ. The longer I listened, the more I was struck with the feeling that I had heard this before. Not that I had heard their exact story before, but I had heard the underlying story before. Indeed, in our travels all over the world, I had heard it tens of times before! All of a sudden, I was caught with the sameness of such people.

It seems to me that it is a sameness of foundations that sets these people apart within the Kingdom of God. When I say sets them apart, I do not refer to them as “stars,” or anything remotely close to such a word. However, I refer to that gifting, role, and calling from God, as well as His empowering, that allows them to embrace expansive things from God. Some would call these people “leaders.” As one who believes that leadership is a role, not a person, and that such a role takes multiples of diversely gifted people to make an impact, I am uncomfortable with the term or designation, “leader.”

It is clear, however, that God uses these people to galvanize action in others. And, when they have solid Biblical foundations about God the nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church, they do move people to exceptional levels.

What caught my attention that day was how often I see the sameness around the world in such men and women. The sameness that I have seen is encapsulated in twelve descriptive words.

They all express these descriptives in a different way, most in another language, and always with differing structure. But, the effect of this sameness is always the same – people are galvanized to extraordinary action. The results of those actions are different and dependent, as we are, on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But, people moving in fullness and effectiveness is a common result in all of these men and women. Let me share with you what I observed.

First, these people are people of **vision**. They see something that **MUST** be done. In the case of my friends around the world, this “must be done” mindset is connected to the truths of Scripture, especially about the nature of the Church and the ministry of the Spirit through people. There is an itch about something that must be done that animates their lives. They cannot let it go.

Os Guinness in his book, *The Call*, has a helpful definition of such personal vision.

Christian vision is... “an act of imaginative seeing that combines the insight of faith, which goes to the heart of things below the surface, and the foresight of faith, which soars beyond the present with the power of a possible future. This combining of the not-yet- combined is the secret of visionary faith. Vision and reality, word and fulfillment, present and future, situation and possibility, restlessness and reaching out, anger at what is wrong and an aim for what is better – whatever the contrast between the pairs, visionary faith is out to close the gap. This is what makes Lawrence’s ‘dreamers of the day’ different from daydreamers – and it is also why they are dangerous: ‘They act their dreams with open eyes!’” pages 187-188

It is important at this point to emphasize that such a vision does not come from trying to have one. In all of these people, it simply comes! In those who are believers, God has so demonstrated Himself that they are filled with a picture of something that must be done. At a recent conference, I asked one of my colleagues who was giving me a tour of a building, “Can you see what it looks like?” He said, “Yes, and for some time I have seen it!” In his mind, it was already finished!

Second, they are people filled with **conviction**. Some might say that I am repeating myself in referring again to vision. But, vision about what must be done is different than the convictions about how it can and will be done. In my friends, centered as they are on the Kingdom of God, those convictions take two important expressions.

One, they are convinced about God Himself. Talk to any of them and you will find this underlying belief that God is able to do what He has asked them to do! You may find some times of wavering. But, when they close their eyes again at night, they will see and feel the “must vision” once again. In a short time this rekindling of the vision will drive them back into action.

Two, they have a deep-seated conviction about people. They are people who believe, sometimes against or in spite of the prevailing context, that people will follow

if they will lead. I refer not to a dreamy idealization that causes these people to ignore the realities surrounding moving people. Of course, the younger these people are, the more this idealization may occur. But, for the mature person of vision, steeled by the lessons of trying, there comes a conviction about people deeper than the reality of people themselves.

For these men and women who have learned the lessons of life, but taught by God in His Word, there comes the reality that the very nature of what God has placed in His people is movable. God Himself has placed an unholy discontent in His people to live out the sometimes unseen and unrecognized nature of how He has created them. They have been designed by God to know Him, be empowered by His Spirit, and represent Him. In our case today, we are the representatives of His Gospel. These people are convinced that God will move His people, if they will join with others in leading them!

Does this mean that everyone will act? Of course not! But, in most cases, enough people will act enabling these people to lead others in accomplishing much more than so many other “leaders” believe their people could ever do. Whatever the receptivity the Spirit of God is working in the midst of the culture, these people will take full of it by moving God’s human resources, the incarnated stories of His grace, into a harvest of the context over and above many others around them. They believe in the power of God through people!

Third, they are people who develop a **decentralized delivery structure**. I use this generalized term because these are people who understand the fundamental nature of the Church and its relationship to the world around them. Their goal is to make the Gospel and everything surrounding it accessible. Everything people need to come to faith, grow in faith, incarnate the faith, and extend the faith must be accessible!

Accessible means that people do not have to build extraordinary life patterns to access something. This is one of the fundamentals that make cells or small groups so powerfully effective around the world today. People do not have to go far

geographically to access the friendship, community, and accountability found in cell groups. They do not have to go far culturally to see the Gospel in their midst, lived out by marriages and families who have been transformed by its power. They do not have to go far linguistically to understand the message.

These people innately understand the importance of making everything accessible. Even when they are found gathering thousands or tens of thousands of people into worship venues, there is always something more fundamental to their effectiveness behind the scenes. That fundamental thing is the power of accessibility touched through a decentralization of delivery. The Gospel, evangelism, training, discipleship, and even multiplication are all founded on a principle of taking it to the people rather than bringing the people to them...or to us!

Fourth, they are people who **empower** others. The older they get and the more they learn from their experience, the more you will see tens and hundreds of others leading with them. Note that I say “with” and not “for.” For is a uniquely western idea caught most powerfully in the concept of staff. And, staff usually means I help you do something. However, the word “with” means that both of us have found something greater and more important than both of us. The cultural structure they are required to labor under does not stop these people from finding appropriate ways to release power, responsibility, and people into leadership. They understand, innately many times, but from Scripture as they mature, that only people can truly fulfill the vision. Yes, money, opportunity, and resources are all needed. But, for these people, none of these are a substitute for the power of God working through His people to accomplish His ends. Can it be that followers sense this deep-seated belief/expectation, and thus, move in concert with it?

Fifth, I find that these people all have a **plan of action** in their minds about how to fulfill the vision. Not that the plan is always as well thought out as it should be. But, with maturity, learning from experience, and a willingness to listen to others around them,

they develop a plan of action that first arises in their minds. Even where there is no clear detailed path for fulfilling the vision, there is a commitment to find one. Because the vision has so engraved itself into their very being, there is an equal commitment to find the path of fulfillment.

Many of these people do not have the well-developed sense of organization as one would like to see. But, by a correct understanding of the nature of the body as seen in I Corinthians, the impact that this has on our understanding of leadership, and a full appreciation for the diversity of gifts given by the Spirit, we can learn to rest in the organized elements necessary to fulfill the plan coming from someone else.

Still, I find that it is not surprising for these people to have demographical facts about their circle of accountability. Often, I will see detailed maps of where something has already been accomplished and where things are yet to be finished. These maps are always related to the full evangelization of a city, region, or even a nation. Further, I am no longer surprised to see some form of written goals and objectives.

Sixth, these people are **persistent** people. Time, money, obstacles, and even failure are all ultimately irrelevant. Where most people would not have even started, they venture out. Where others will have ceased, they will continue believing and acting. Obviously, this could also be a weakness. But, in most cases, if the Spirit of God has been the originator of the vision, then persistence will be necessary and appropriate.

Note that I add no definition of success. This is because we are a generation conditioned to define success in less than Biblical terms. These people, because they understand what God has asked them to do, and because it is related to His Kingdom and its expansion, understand that purpose ends and not just human terms of success must drive them. When God's people are growing in intimacy with Him, we are approaching success. When God's people are fulfilling His designs for them, especially as it relates to the expansion of His kingdom, then we are approaching success.

Seventh, these people have a built-in tenacious, but somewhat ruthless, sense of

accountability. Some would say that this makes them demanding. But, that is to ignore at least three very important things. One, they are more demanding of themselves than they are of anyone else. Two, as driven as they are by the vision and the true value and fulfillment that comes to people when they join in its accomplishment, they naturally expect more of people than many do of themselves. Three, as they mature they learn to mix expectation with the process of growth that we have all been inducted into when we came to Christ. Since, as I pointed out above, failure does not deflect them from the vision, they can learn to live with, and indeed harness, the growth process that we must all grow through. In the final analysis, as they mature, these kinds of people do not want to be self-deceived. A full house on Sunday morning does not necessarily mean that we are doing what God wants with His people. A big building does not necessarily indicate anything at all about the Kingdom of God and its power to transform lives.

Eighth, they are people who study **history**. There is something about men and women of like nature who have lived through similar experiences in the past that catches the attention of these kinds of people. Maybe it is a pragmatism that weaves its way into their consciousness. Or, maybe it's just an innate inquisitiveness they are born with. Whatever the reason, there is in most of them a constant desire to read and study others who have passed this way before them.

I think it is an unconscious interplay between the dimensions of time – past, present, and future – all interacting at the same time. The past lights up something in the mind, especially about how to accomplish the vision. That insight from the past, however, must be brought into the future and digested. The insights are compared to the present realities, squeezing from them principles or vicarious experiences that can be super-imposed upon the future. It is this ongoing process, provoked by the vision, compared to others in the past, and analyzed in the present that helps set the course for the future. I have dubbed this process “disciplined Z thinking.”

Ninth, they are people who **give away** more than is humanly reasonable. This distinctive, more than any of the other ones, may be what most sets these people off from other people. The more they mature and the more they learn to bring the vision in line with the expansion of the Kingdom of God, the more they will use any and all of their resources to see the Kingdom grow.

New churches planted and thousands of people brought into the Kingdom of Light is more important than the growth of their personal structure. They are most “happy” when there is an explosion of the Kingdom of God in their city and nation. Movements, not institutions and their survival, is what these kinds of people are all about.

So, it is not out of the ordinary to find these people giving away what others set up regimens to protect if it means expanding the Kingdom. It is fair to say of them that, “they live with their hands open!”

Tenth, I find that these people have the ability to understand or recognize **primary foundations**. As they mature, they will almost always act out of these foundations, and will not be easily moved by programs and methods that profess to be the next best thing to Jesus.

It is this ability, coupled with a matured understanding of the church, people, leadership, and the Holy Spirit that puts so many of them at the center of today movements that are sweeping whole nations of people into the net of the Gospel. They plant new churches in numbers that few westerners could even dream. But, imagine for one moment that all of the above mentioned distinctives are now coupled with foundational realities (or DNA) that God has already built into His creation, the Church. Little wonder that these people are at the epicenter of fully harvesting all that God has designed!

It cannot be stated too much. These people do not simply do the right things. They understand why they do such things. It is from this premise that they are able to fully adjust what they do to see God fulfill the vision that He has given.

Eleventh, it is precisely this ability to **adjust** that makes them so effective. Nothing, save the inspired word of God, is sacred. Since God gives them the vision they possess, they want to be the most effective they can be. If something is not working, they don't protect it or justify it, they adjust it!

In this I refer not to any form of cultural relativism, nor a more bang for your buck approach to spreading the Gospel. But, to their sensitivity to the importance of what God has asked of and designed for His people. If they are not demonstrably and measurably growing in their intimacy with Him, and if the Gospel, through them, is not spreading to more and more people, than they have not done their job. If what they are doing stands in the way of seeing these things come to be, than they are willing to adjust. Adjust in such a way that these things are achieved, and the Kingdom is extended.

Twelfth, and last, they realize that **getting started** is more important than getting started perfectly. So many people are easily bound up in the fear of failure or the fear that everything they imagine to be necessary is not yet in place. The kinds of people I have been referring to recognize and embrace the seed principle.

A plant will not grow unless it is properly planted, and all plants begin as a seed. When you plant the seed, it does not look like much at the beginning. But, wait a while and the seed will not only germinate, but it will grow and produce fruit far beyond its original size or appearance. So it is with just about everything we do. All truly effective things get started as a seed!

In the western Church, conditioned as we have become by the culture that surrounds us, and with an abundance of money, we have become conditioned to launch events. These kinds of people are not interested in launching events. They are dedicated to launching movements. And, events almost never launch movements. They simply exhaust time, money, and people with little eternal, Kingdom-building results. But, seeds, planted in the right place and properly nurtured with love and time, give birth to whole fields of fruit, and, ultimately, a harvest!

Conclusions

I imagine that many of you reading this will now be asking yourselves if you are this kind of person. And, maybe you should ask yourself that question. However, the reality is that God has given Christ's Church few men and women like this. In fact, if you think about it, a few are all that's really necessary for the Body to do what God has created it to do. Most people will play out other roles within the effective movement of the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. It is, however, important that there be some people like this. A small few.

Having said this, nothing said so far gives any indication that these people are more important, or any more necessary, than all of the other gifts and roles that the Holy Spirit has given to the Body. In fact, it is imperative that we all take a much more utilitarian view of our gifts and roles. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12, the gifts given by the Spirit are for the body. They do not belong to any one church, one denomination, or one person.

Recognizing, however, that the future of the body is to one degree or another based upon the full release of these kinds of people into our midst, what do you do if you are not this kind of a person? Especially if you find yourself in a position that needs more of what these people are than what you are? Allow me to give four suggestions.

One, thank God for who you are. It is God the Spirit who decided the gifts you have received. And, it is the Lord Jesus who decides the role that these gifts will play within the body. Moreover, God the Father will decide the domain or breadth of influence that you, with these gifts and roles, will have in the body and its extension of the Kingdom of God in our lifetime (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Your job is to discover and embrace whom God has wonderfully created you to be. Our job is to find the way for all of this to work in concert so that the full release of God's purposes can be felt in this world.

Two, build a team. You will go further with the diversity of a team than you will with your giftedness alone. It is one of the great weaknesses of our day. We have deluded ourselves into believing that something called a “pastor” has gifts more important or strategic than any other gift. 1 Corinthians makes it clear that the discussion at hand is about a whole body, not just one piece of the body. So it must be with leadership. Leadership must conform to the nature of the body. The body’s wholeness demands wholeness in leadership. What you are not, somebody has been gifted by God to be, even at this very time and place. Learn to play out the role of leadership with, not for, others.

Three, find a visionary and relate to them. The book of Acts speaks a lot to this point. As mentioned earlier, F.F. Bruce cites at least 25 people who worked with Paul to see the Gospel spread among the Gentile world of his day. Each of these people was important to the task. They found their role in relationship to Paul, because God had called them to His apostolic purpose for the Church. These kind of future thinkers/actors will not be a dime a dozen. They will not be in abundance. The task of these people is to play their role. The task of other people is to take from them what is needed to keep their particular ministry on the cutting edge of the future.

Four, get started with the Biblical convictions about the Church, no matter how small the start! Nothing starts out perfect. So, get started with what you know and what you can see needs to be done. Let God grow the seed!

Chapter 10 Unity in Diversity

“The harvest, i.e. the development of a redemptive fellowship made up wholly of ministers, is potentially great, but it cannot be actualized without the labor of men who are sufficiently gifted and dedicated to facilitate its accomplishment” (pg. 40). Because, “The notion that the professional minister’s main job is that of the conduct of public worship is something which we must destroy if we are to get ready for a larger and more fruitful team ministry”). Elton

Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship, pg. 44

The role complementation designed by God, gifted by the Spirit, and impacted by the people of Christ is mandatory for the health of the church. The apostle delivers the extension of the Gospel purpose of the Church. The prophet delivers the integration of the Gospel foundation in the people of the church. The evangelist delivers the expansion of the Gospel story in the Church. The pastor delivers the nurture of the Gospel truths in the church. And, the teacher delivers the explanation of the Gospel truths to the Church. How can any local church survive, much less thrive, without the regular and coordinated delivery of all of these functions? And, how can we be surprised when churches do not fulfill their full purpose if we have allowed any particular Church environment to be dominated by anything less than the whole? Something is missing.

Inherent Role Conflict

Of course, one of the realities that make the regular and coordinated delivery of all five functions difficult is the inherent conflict in them. The five functions have been designed by God to provide the full work of leadership in and to the Body. Some are further from each other in basic orientation than others. For example, the role of pastor demands an orientation and openness to people that lends itself most effectively to people and their needs. The role of apostle demands an orientation and openness to a specific task and its completion. The lack of understanding by either of the importance of both functions renders the empowerment of people, prescribed by God in Ephesians 4:12, incomplete – at best.

The maturing of the fruit of the Spirit as symbolic of the life of Christ in these gifted people is mandatory. For, whereas a pastor must naturally carry a “people”

DNA, it does not mean that he is allowed to be ignorant of God's ultimate purposes. And, whereas an apostle thinks naturally about the extended outcomes of God's Gospel, it does not mean he is not accountable to the Spirit to work compassion, tenderness, and patience into the people around him. This lack of embraced diversity is one of the greatest downfalls in church leadership worldwide today. Our history and shortsighted theology have bequeathed to us bodies of leadership at all levels of Church life that attempt to carry out incomplete understandings of the full order design of the leadership output, and without all of the functions Christ gave to His body. Conflict often results when coordination is discussed. This "conflict by design" must be understood to be both inherent and with purpose in the diverse functions and significant role God has designed for Christ's body.

Gift Projection

A second conflict inherent in the five functions is projection. All of us by God's design tend to view life through our own lens of giftedness and experience. Maturity may reveal these myopias over time, but often much too slowly. Mercy bearers project mercy, and by extension expect mercy from all leadership. Compassion should be expected. But, mercy, in its fullness, will flow most naturally from pastors. Teachers project onto others and expect the same desire, drive, and commitment to truth out of all leadership. Truth is core to leadership, but drive and commitment to its acquisition differ among functions. All leadership needs to spend time in the truths of Scripture to feed themselves in their relationship to God and to others as well. But, teachers should not expect the same level of commitment to truth discovery from the other functions. Evangelists bear the heart of God for lost people. They bring God something about it into the body of Christ. All of Christ's people are to bear witness to the Gospel, and especially their own particular experience of it. But, when evangelists, in the natural outworking of their function, passion, and dedication project this outcome onto others, great harm is done. All too often the greatest harm is a "guilt" that runs through the

body, yielding a forced labor of evangelism, or more often a total shut down of all the witness potential wrapped up in Christ's people. How poor we are not to see the mosaic of ongoing relationships that can and should work daily through Christ's people into every context of life.

Prophets are God's heart for obedience – not simply because God wants obedience for His people, but because obedience will also bring the joy and fulfillment He has designed for them. In the fulfillment of the obedience function, prophets give themselves to strident works and actions. The maturing prophet is still susceptible to caustic words apparently devoid of God's compassion for people. Again, when the prophet's function, and especially in an immature state, is projected upon others in leadership, the stridency that God has designed for the prophet is inappropriately expected of others. Followers of Christ can themselves project this same inappropriate expectation upon other believers. The result is always the same – division. Obedience is indeed at the core of God expectation for His people. But, truth needs explanation (teacher), cultivating (pastor), and expression in a context with meaning (apostle, evangelist) and time to grow. A heart that refuses obedience needs confrontation and correction. But, that confrontation should come attached to the delivery of all of the functions Christ has given to the role of leadership, and the gifts that the Spirit has given to the body.

The apostle has God's heart for the nations. As a result, the apostle is more expectant of broad-geographic effectiveness of the Gospel and more mobile in the pursuit of that end. They are not necessarily moving from place to place, as Paul did. However, they are more mobile over the world and a specific location than the other functions. By nature, pastors and teachers will lean towards one specific locality. They are at the core of the disciplines God uses to teach and shepherd people into Christ-likeness. Time for discovery, explanation, nurture, and growing people is needed. But,

the sheer numbers of teachers and pastors necessary to grow Christ's people into who He wants them to be demands a greater number of teachers and pastors committed to and satisfied with a more permanent locality.

Apostles, on the other hand, must have a heart of clay with expansion and, thus, mobility. In today's world, especially outside the West, I often see this function attached to a large, growing, expanding, and extending "Antioch" type church. In my travels it is the single most important discovery I see. Large churches outside the West are almost always the center of great extension, seen most clearly in the number of other churches that they have planted and plan to plant! Western churches, encumbered with a history of centralization and institutionalization and led most exclusively by pastor and teachers rarely, if ever, produce the same effect. The end results are that they reflect the strength of their leadership functions and the weakness of what these functions lack.

In contrast, apostles need to have their God-ordained output. And, maybe no other function is more lacking at all levels of Church life in the West than this one. But, the projection of this function into the leadership body with correspondent expectations will result in the same chaos as the others that are projected inappropriately.

Expected Outcomes

Several anticipated outcomes seem obvious. First, more mobility is expected. The majority of Christ's gifted leadership, and Christ's people will not be highly mobile. They will live their lives in one or two places, in a limited number of job environments, and with localized expectations. This is how God has designed the normal human experience. I think stability is the watchword of healthy culture and society. Church life needs to help people understand God's eternal purpose working through human history. As such, God's people need to pray and give to specific places and peoples distant to them. But, the majority of their lives will be lived in daily ordinariness.

Second, more sacrifice is expected. All of us continually need to grow in the amount of resources we manage for the extension of the kingdom of God. But, what God asked of Paul He did not ask of all! Paul himself notes that other apostles traveled with spouses, and many apparently had more regular support than he did. God has a right to ask from each of us what He wants. In general, the very nature of the apostolic function may demand greater sacrifice.

Third, more effectiveness in extension is expected from the whole God has designed. All churches need to understand the plan for the purpose of God for Christ's church.

Ephesians 3:10-11 says "to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." But, some leadership teams will, by God's design, be more effective than others. Sometimes the mix of Christ-given functions and the Holy Spirit-given gifts of the leadership group work for greater extension (apostolic) and expansion (evangelistic) effectiveness than other churches. Sometimes it is this same function/gift mix of the leadership group, with the added factor of high receptivity in the people or place targeted with the Gospel that yields greater effectiveness. The ultimate effect of the church in a place, even when living the fullness of its purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11), and rightly impacted and empowered by the leadership, is within the sovereign work and designs of God. Indeed, we would do well to heed the admonition of Paul when he says, "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." (1 Corinthians 3:7 ESV)

Needs for the Church Today

Sometimes greater effectiveness comes from a greater understanding of the New Testament idea of Church. Today, we are caught on the horns of a dilemma. We recognize the many limitations that both our theology of church and the history of its

outworking have left us.

One, we need a greater expression of leadership abilities within the leadership group than any one of us possesses. Two, we need those abilities to provoke greater movement in God's people than us simply performing our functions or living our gifts. Three, we need Christ's people to live in greater interdependent reality than our gifts individually or even united can produce. Independently, they need to practice their priesthood on a daily basis. Our teaching and preaching cannot and should not substitute for their own practice of listening to God through His Word. Our teaching and preaching empower them to engage God alone! Independently, they need to embrace the fullness of their grace testimony and life, which is lived out in all of their relationships. Independently, they need to discover and use their spiritual gifts in all of their relationships. Independently, they need to live out the process of God working the Spirit in their individual lives. These relationships are the seedbeds for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Four, we need to expect and recognize a wider geographic expression in which some of the functions of Ephesians 4:11 were ordained to function.

This presents a challenge. The average church, by God's design and human need, is small. Some studies show an average of about 65 people. The functions of apostle, prophet, and evangelist have great natural difficulty finding continuous expression in such domains. But, both Scripture and history can liberate us from this. It seems plainly evident from Scripture that our present day idea of church as the same, somewhat independent, and functionally isolated group of Jesus followers, in which we should expect the fullness of all Biblical promises, is not a true picture. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are all written to the collective group of believers in those places. 1 and 2 Thessalonians are both written to the church in that place. Even Galatians, written to a broad geographical region, nonetheless maintains much more holistic balance than we possess today – 2,000 years later!

This broader geography is the matrix of Christ's gift to His church. It is the natural

domain where smaller groups of believers in separate homes, villages, or even neighborhoods can receive the ministry of these functions.

Five, we need to see a greater active coordination and cooperation among all five of these functions. It is not sufficient to see apostles, prophets and evangelists create separate and totally uncoordinated para-church organizations that dip occasionally into the life of local churches for people or money while at the same time stripping local churches of their God-given purpose (extension, expansion, integration). Nor, is it sufficient for local churches to live and re-live the singular expressions of pastor or teachers without a viably, effective, and accountable relationship to the functions found in prophet, apostle, and evangelist. But, this is our greatest dilemma. Time has separated us from our greatest expression of that reality, the early church. Today, however, presents us with new global realities. And, those realities give us opportunities for new (or renewed) expressions of missed or forgotten possibilities.

Andrew F. Walls in *The Missionary Movement in Christ in History* alludes to this when he says, “The territorial idea that under lay the older missionary movement has to give way to accept much more like that of Christians within the Roman Europe in the second and third centuries parallel presences in different circles and at different levels, each seeing to penetrate within and beyond its article. This does not prevent movement and interchange and enterprise – these things certainly marked Christians in the pre-Constantine Roman Empire – but it forces revision of concepts, images, attitudes and methods that arose from the presence of Christendom that no longer exists.” (Orgr.1996 pfs 25-59)

In this context it is time to assess our understanding of leadership – why it exists, what forms it is to express, what ought to be its measurable impact, what diversities and functions are needed within it, and what domains it is to work into. I have tried to answer some of those questions. But I confess that my theological history, as well as my church history, have stood in the way for too many years!

Now I am liberated from that theology and history, while tied to inspired Scripture, and presented with so many positive models of healthy churches and leadership bodies from all over the world where the Gospel story has penetrated with such great power – and in our day! I am encouraged to believe that we can find these more Biblical expressions. Coordination and cooperation must be tenaciously pursued, and at all levels. New ways, more church-based ways, of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, must be found and lived.

I confess that I have difficulty visualizing first century ways of living the potential structures of Ephesians 4:11. The noisy dissonance of independent and separated local churches, coming together with the rampant proliferation of para-church ministries, makes a clear picture difficult at best. Difficult, but not impossible. What might such cooperation and coordination look like? Let's address this in the next chapter.

Chapter 11 Getting it to Work Together

Maybe no topic is more important to completing the task of world evangelization than this one: how to merge together the diversity that Jesus gave to His Church (Ephesians 4:11) and the Spirit-given gifts to the Church (I Corinthians 12; Romans 12) into a meaningful delivery of empowerment – first to those in the darkness of sin to understand the Gospel about Jesus. And, second, empowerment of Jesus' followers to live the life of faith, and fully participate in the ministry of the purpose of the Church. I refer to this need as “apostolically organized.”

What does it mean to be Apostolically Organized? First, to be apostolically organized is to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This may sound like a theological reduction. But, a characteristic of our culture today is how often the human and natural overwhelm a search for the unity of the Spirit in any particular point. Our idea of church has been overwhelmed by humanization of success as the first priority of measurement. I have yet to meet a church that was seriously concerned about their people if they were experiencing a regular increase of more people, more money, and generally “happy” people. And, I have seen this to be true in spite of their acknowledged

concern that a majority of their people had no regular relationship to God and His Word on their own, in spite of the fact that a majority of their people did not know or use their spiritual gifts, and in spite of the fact that the majority of their people did not actively take their grace testimony into all of their relationships.

We all acknowledge that this is in stark contrast to what we know God wants for His people. But, we are easily deceived. And, so whether from fear of what the truth might mean, or sheer naivety that things can be different, we gravitate towards spiritualized decisions that satisfy us, at least temporarily, rather than God's designs. We see Holy Spirit-directed movement written across the pages of the book of Acts as the norm – not the exception. In Acts 13:1 the recognized co-leadership group of the church in Antioch reveals such a process. Luke notes the experience almost as ordinary. There were a number of unmentioned, but regular, practices going on among these men in the Bible. One, they were in the habit of listening to God. In the business of our daily lives, too many of us, including leadership, have lost the art of listening. These men knew what it was to know God's Word, engage their own fellowship, but in the midst of this to listen, and hear, the speaking of the Spirit. Two, they knew that the purpose of the church was under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They did not debate the separating out of 40% of their leadership team to move beyond their own city (Acts 13:1-3).

The purpose of the Church is always outside the sphere of our personal lives, both individually and corporately. The Gospel is meant to move across people, languages, and nations. So, when the Spirit moves leadership to make decisions it will always be to force the Gospel further along in time towards eternity and its earthly fulfillment. In setting apart Barnabas and Paul for the work that the Spirit was preparing, there was no inconsistency in the minds of these men. It was in the fullness of the purpose of the Church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was preparing people and places for the reception of the Gospel. Their response should not be seen as extraordinary, but should be fully consistent with their understanding of the work of

the Spirit in regards to the purpose of the Church.

Acts 16: 6-10 reveals the same principles: "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Paul, Luke, and Silas all knew that the purpose of the apostolic, seen here as the expression of a full team of people, though led by an apostle, was the taking of the Gospel to further places. Where and exactly to whom was ultimately under the sovereignty and direction of the Spirit. Whether by word, circumstances or dreams, He could be trusted to give direction. In the midst of obedience to the apostolic calling, they were in process, going to where it made human sense. In that process God superseded the natural, and in a dream to Paul, spoke His will to the whole team. Nobody seemed surprised that He would lead and no one seemed surprised by where he told them to go.

Second, to be apostolically organized mean that they always operate within the central purpose of the Church. And, indeed, have an exceptional ability to stay focused upon that purpose. Whatever the context, they did so with full understanding of the purpose of the Church on this earth. For most of them the words of Jesus, whether found in Matthew 28:19-20 or Acts 1:6-8, were ringing in their minds. And, the original twelve were living the journey in the fullness of this purpose before the eyes of the watching and growing Church. They bore testimony to the apostolic (extending) nature of the Church that Jesus was carrying out and living through all of His people and places all over the Roman world.

The exceptional activities of so many ordinary people written across the book of

Acts have a number of sources. The impact of the resurrection living in these people cannot be ignored. The ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit living within them was a reality. Their conviction of the imminent return of Jesus animated their lives. But, their innate understanding of the nature of the Gospel in the purpose of the Church equally animated their enthusiasm and sacrifice. Worship, discipleship, Bible study, and ministry were all a part of their daily lives. But, they understood that all of these activities were animated by God purpose for the Church in time and for eternity.

Third, to be apostolically organized is to embrace the facilitative nature of their ministry. Maybe no other factor explains the success of the early Church. The strength of demonstration of the Spirit's power evident in miracles, wonders, and signs, and the power of the resurrected Jesus were all abundantly evident in all these men and women moving throughout the world in their day. And, we might expect that the extraordinary expansion and extension of the Gospel in the first three centuries would be a serial witness to these people. But, not so!

The power of the Holy Spirit moving throughout the Roman Empire was a witness to the power of ordinary "nobodies" taking their witness of grace into every place and relationship that the Spirit gave them opportunity. These gifted people – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – all understood that what others did because of them was more important than what they did. Yes, they preached, taught, evangelized, planted, etc. But, their numbers would never be enough to do what God ordained to be done through all of Christ's people. The total number of these people would bear sufficient numerical critical mass to go anywhere and everywhere. The total number of these people would demonstrate the full power of the Gospel to reach into every human need. It was the fullness of the "manifold wisdom of God" displayed through the church (Ephesians 3:10) that would be God's real instrument of His glory to the nations.

Finally, to be apostolically organized is to be yoked together with the other

Ephesians 4:11 functions and Spirit gifts in the ongoing extension of the Gospel. The most fundamental argument for the yoking together rises from the nature of the body itself! As we have already seen from 1 Corinthians 12, the body of Christ can be conceived in no other way than its wholeness. Anything less would not be a body, but rather a collection of body parts – parts that, in theory, may function, but serve no end without the coordinating purpose and connectedness provided by the body.

The body of leadership must find its own nature in the design of the body. Much of our present day lament of the weakness of leadership in the church, and at all levels, can be directly traced to the lack of the leadership to “find” these ground level realities. In the metaphor of 1 Corinthians 12, we are trying to be eyes, ears, and hearts without connectedness to purpose, without connectedness to each other, and, thus, without meaning. The Church itself, even without understanding why this is the case, perceives this reality and suffers accordingly. Fed by teachers and loved by pastors, they are disconnected from the other functions of Ephesians 4:11, without which the body serves itself. Self-service deprives it of its meaning. Without meaning to, the church lives a journey of personal consumption never intended by God. It is by the beautiful designs of God that the five functions of Ephesians 4:11 play out the full-orbed intention of God for Christ’s people.

The strategic application of this nature can be seen in what I call the rotating face of an “apostolic” team. The rotating face of an apostolic type team simply refers to which function leads in ministry at any one time. This leadership of ministry is distinct to the team’s own leadership function. Within the team itself the counter balance that each of the Ephesians 4:11 functions, or the Spiritual gifts, produces is organized around the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit “brokered” through the apostolic person or the gift of leading. As they interact with each other around this vision of the future brought through the first among equals, the vision is “purified.” Its outcome is better than it ever could have been if only one person held more than initiatory authority for it.

Leadership in ministry refers to the impact of the team in any one context. So, at

times, if it is a virgin territory, where the Gospel needs to be seeded, then the “face” of the team rotates to the evangelists. This does not eliminate the need for the other functions and gifts. It does, however, recognize that the major need of the moment is for those whose primary gift is the telling of the Gospel story – the evangelists. The time will come in every context, and sooner than most of us expect, when people who respond to the Gospel need to be organized into a visible church. Again, this does not eliminate the ongoing ministry of evangelism, or the urgent need to teach new believers. It simply puts the emphasis upon the need of the hour.

The same kind of rotating concept can be applied to any context. The key is not so much who is leading in ministry, but rather who is leading in other factors. First, do we understand the distinct roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, administration, organization, management, and leading? If we can't fully understand and practice our diversity then unity becomes impossible. Second, do we understand how the Spirit of God in the very spirit of the Trinity wants to weave these gifts and functions together? Do we know how to interact as a group around a vision that the Sovereign Spirit is presenting to us? Do we know how to coordinate ourselves in a meaningful delivery of the fullness of the ministry of empowerment of Christ's people? Third, are we willing to be accountable for what this does through Christ's people in the world?

I pray that God will lift up a generation of leaders to reform the nature and purpose of leadership in the church. In capturing that reformation, may God return the church to its original mission of extending the Gospel to every man, woman, and child along with transforming lives into the image of the second Adam. May leadership walk with the humility and character worthy of their calling.

Chapter 12 Training Leadership God's Way

The words “leadership” and “training” are used so often today that they have

almost become synonymous. My experience tells me the opposite. Leadership and training seem to have become an oxymoron! Many years ago Roland Allen, decrying the state of leadership and training in his generation said, “The training upon which we lay stress is comparatively superficial; the training upon which the apostle (Paul) laid stress is vital and fundamental.” (The Ministry of the Spirit, pg. 145)

To this we can add that leadership training, if it can actually be said to exist at all, is fixated upon delivering only two of the Ephesians 4:11 functions given by Jesus to the Church – truth and mercy. And, it is conceived as something so different and distant from the life of faith to be lived by Christ’s people in local churches, and, the fulfillment of the purpose of the local church, as to be easy prey for the present day accusation of its irrelevance.

And, the accusations abound! In some cases, it seems that training for leadership of the Church has become an economic industry rather than the means by which we agree together to identify, train, give experience, and hold accountable the people whom God has set apart for this reason. And, so, Allen rightly concludes, “Vocation to the ministry of the church has two sides. If it is important that a man should be convinced that he is called by God to serve, it is also of importance that the church which he is to serve should be convinced that he is the best man to serve it... In the New Testament we hear nowhere of men being invited to offer themselves for any office in the church.” (The Ministry of the Spirit, Allen, pg 143)

I would be remiss if in conclusion I did not at least address the issue of training. For, if we cannot center the training of leadership, at all levels, upon the issues raised in this book, I do not see how we can correctly address the challenges we face. So, inside of the local church, and outside in systems that exist to train leadership for the church, the issues need to be addressed. It is an inviolable rule – you can expand and extend the Gospel only as far as you prepare others to take the responsibility with you. The place of the greatest emphasis needs to be the local church. It is without argument that Christ gave gifted people to the Church. He gave them – apostles, prophets,

evangelists, pastors and teachers – to empower others to do the work of the ministry. Their effectiveness is measured more by what others do in obedience than by their own particular activities. Their effectiveness will be seen by history to be directly related to the time they spent preparing others in and for leadership in the local church and its Gospel ministry.

There is nothing more central to the task of the core leadership in any church than the ongoing importance of training others to share the load. Several reasons seem obvious. One, training leaders is the first step toward the full mobilization of the church. I have been greatly influenced in my life to believe that preaching was the primary way to mobilize people. I no longer believe that. Yes, I still believe in the importance of preaching and teaching, but not separate from the importance of other actions as well. If I were to start over again, I would spend as much time in training leaders as I would in preparing to and engaging in preaching and teaching.

There is something about the relational transmission of purpose, vision, values, and life that happens one-on-one or in small groups that does not happen in communicating Biblical truth to congregations. The latter is necessary to assist in motivating people to practice their own priesthood. But, the former is mandatory to spread the load of responsibility, unite the many gifts necessary to perform the leadership function, to personally touch more believers, and thus, to see them actually empowered, not simply motivated, to action.

Two, training leaders is the first step towards multiplying the church into cells, congregations, and new churches. It seems to go without saying that in order to multiply anything, more leaders are needed. I have seen this to be true with the people I have met all over the world. They extend the Church, and thus the Gospel, far beyond others of their generation, not because they are smarter, but because they train and equip so many others to join them in doing so! They do this by creating immediate opportunities for new and potential leaders to take responsibility within the life of the church. I have said “life of the church,” but with

clear distinction from what this has historically meant. By it I do not mean that new leadership serves only to keep the program of the church going. It goes without saying that all churches need a certain amount of leaders and people working to maintain the necessary programs of a church. The success of a church as I have tried to define it in the previous pages is measured more by how many people and how much leadership a church is able to release into opportunities outside of the ongoing maintenance of the church life.

Churches that are creating multiple forms of evangelism, organizing people into small groups, and planting new churches always have new places to put new and potential leadership. Moreover, these opportunities are not only the place of service, but they are also the point of training as well. It is good to have interactive and formalized training in local churches. Such training in the purpose, vision, and values of the church, as well as the training in personal spiritual disciplines, is mandatory. However, it should go without saying that “doing” is the best venue for real training.

Three, training leaders is the primary task of what I call the core leadership of the church. Without belaboring the fact, I believe that leadership is a word to describe a function. Moreover, that function is best carried out by a diverse group of people united around a vision that God has given to them, and founded on firm convictions about the mission of the Church in the world. Only this kind of leadership can truly train others of like kind. We can thank God for the training that goes on in and through organizations outside of local churches. Nevertheless, that training only serves to supplement what must be going on as a part of the life of local churches. Growing movements understand and practice this!

In the systems developed outside the church, where should the focus be? In spite of how I may have sounded to this point, I am committed to many of the categories of traditional theological training categories. Many, but not all! It seems to me that three broad categories need addressing and assurance of effective use. First, I want to address something I call the gatekeeper foundations. Too many people leave training institutions

with little or no idea of who they are. This is the mindset that frames all other necessary learning. It is little wonder that when it is missing, the “fit” of the many other activities of leadership is missing. Chief in this mindset are: who is the Church, and why does it exist? What is a Biblical theology of leadership? What is the Gospel? And, how can we practice our friendship with God on a daily basis?

The second category delves into ministry disciplines. How can we understand Scripture? Can we articulate a Biblical theology of our own? Do we know how to lead others to know God? And, do we understand the world we live in? These are disciplines that assist leadership to be able to empower others. But, a caution is also needed. The possession of this knowledge does not necessarily mean that leadership knows how to gather up the whole body of Christ into loving that nature.

And so, the third category of formal training needs to provide learning and accountability practice for the application of empowerment of the people of Christ who actually carry out the ministry. How to empower and release people and how to organize the work that people do – both of these are taught in foundation to the applications of the Ephesians 4:11 functions. And, finally, how all of these functions actively cooperate and coordinate together for the empowerment of Christ’s people in the fulfillment of the purpose of the church should be taught as well.

Chapter 13 A New Moment in History

It seems appropriate to me to end our discussion with what may be our greatest challenge: Has the full impact of the Gospel already left those in the West, and what does it mean to the Church worldwide? If so, what are we to do? Indeed, is there anything we can do? Biblical history indicates that the full impact of the redemptive force of the Gospel comes only once to a nation or people. The Old Testament is itself a witness to this. From King David to the final prophets Israel slides into succeeding generations of apathy until the judgment of God is fully felt, Jerusalem falls, the temple

is destroyed and the majority of people are carried away in waves of forced exile.

A trip to Europe today bears witness too to the same conclusion. The Church in Protestant Europe for all intents does not exist. England, Wales, Scotland, Germany, Holland, The Netherlands, and so on, all felt at one point the full impact of the Gospel. Thousands of people became true followers of Jesus. Churches were planted in every village and neighborhood of every city. Social institutions were begun, and even laws were transformed by the tenacious actions of people of the redemptive community, the Church. Catholic Europe has not been immune from the same reality. Nations recorded in history as being fully under the sway of the Catholic Church, today are as nominal and pagan as any of the nations to which they sent missionaries in centuries past. This is one way to take the words of Paul in Romans 11, and especially verse 22, "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."

The Geneva Study Bible says of this passage, "Many are now for a season cut off, that is, are without the root, who in their time will be grafted in: and again there are a great number who after a certain manner, and with regard to the outward show seem to be engrafted, who nonetheless through their own fault afterwards are cut off, and completely cast away: which thing is especially to be considered in nations and peoples, as in the Gentiles and Jews.

The People's Bible says, "Gentile believers will be cut off unless they "continue in the goodness of God," so the Jews, if they abandon their unbelief, shall again be grafted in. They are not cut off by a decree of God casting them away, but by their own unbelief. 24. For if thou, etc. This argument is to the Gentile. If wild branches were grafted into the good olive tree, the Gentiles grafted into the spiritual stock of Abraham, how much more likely is it that the natural branches, the Jews, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree, the seed of Abraham to which they

belong by nature.”

How long the full impact of the Gospel lasts (decades or even centuries) in a people or place depends upon how well each succeeding generation is nurtured in the fundamentals of God’s creative purposes for human creation. In Deuteronomy, God reminds Israel just how important this passing on is: “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." (4:9-10)

Israel is a witness that it only takes one generation of people disobedient to God’s revelation, and the slide is not just slight, but proportional. Once the intensity of the fundamentals is reduced the number of people truly in the redemptive community declines. As the number of people truly in the redemptive community declines the restraining and purifying effect of the redemptive community on that people or place correspondingly decreases, and the wrath of God sits on them. As Paul says in Romans 1:18: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

The results of this wrath are not so much because eternal judgment has set in, but because when a people reject the primary call of God of obedience to the revelation of Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, they have chosen wrath rather than God. As Jesus Himself says in John 3:16-17: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Or, as John the Baptist put it: “He who believes in the Son has

everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

The full effects of a society in the grip of spiraling disobedience come upon the people and their way of life. Wickedness increases and will not cease except by the final collapse of the culture or the return of Jesus.

In the face of this, what then is the role of the Church in such a reality? In fact, the role of the Church does not change. As the redemptive community they are to live and declare the message of reconciliation to God in His Son, Jesus Christ. For we never know if God Himself in His sovereignty over this world and all that it is in it, might not break the evident pattern of Biblical and human history of unrestrained decline when once the full impact of the Gospel as felt in the lives of the redemptive community is rejected by succeeding generations. In such a case, a time of broad repentance in a wavering generation will at least have the effect of restraining for a time the full force that comes over a people or place when once a significant number of people in it have rejected obedience to God invitation back to Himself in His Son, Jesus.

For the Church worldwide, at least two concerns come readily to mind. First, over the coming years, the West should not be counted on to play a major role in the completion of world evangelization. Their interest and their monies will wane, especially as more and more churches spend inordinate amounts of their assets on retaining minimal involvement from a growingly nominal church population.

Second, there is an inherent warning that the Christian life is not guaranteed durability just because it exists. Every generation must choose to be obedient to the things that we have been given in Scripture. We must stay focused up the planting of the Kingdom in our own generation, and the one immediately following us.

But as one still committed to seeing the redemptive community carry out its creative design, what am I to suggest? The context does not change the role of the redemptive community found today in and through the Church, it only intensifies its

importance and demands concerted effort. The importance of the effort is abundantly clear from Scripture. As the redemptive community, four very important effects remain, in spite of growing lawlessness in the culture. One, there are still individuals in the people or place that God will woo to Himself through the life and witness of the people of the redemptive community. Their numbers will decrease, but they will still be found. Second, the restraining impact of the salt and light nature of the people of God will keep the culture from falling into total and complete lawlessness, or at least slow its demise. Third, God will continue to build His eternal testimony against that people and place for their disregard of the witness of Himself, and His offering of reconciliation that He has given in His Son, and through His people. Fourth, the true redemptive community is God's sign for any and all to see so that they will not be carried into nominalizing Christian bodies masquerading as true people of Christ.

This moment in time demands a greater effort of those who truly are in the redemptive community. One, the effectual nurturing of their own extended biological family demands a greater effort in such surroundings. It is of greater importance if they are to see their personal next generations nurtured in the creative purposes of God for His creation. It will take more time and effort than a more cooperative culture would have afforded. It will take more purposeful protection of them against the seducing culture around them, and yet, doing so without cutting them off from their full participation in the redemptive ministry of the people of Christ in the world. It will take purposeful rejection of the values in the world around us, and our participation in them.

For example, we need to reject notions in the hoarding mentality that surrounds us. We need to give away more of all that we possess. In order to do so, we need to reject the bigger house, the better car, the better paying job, the better vacation. We

may need to clear our houses and lives of the ready-made access to any and every thought, commodity, novelty that invades it and us through the proliferating media means. There are ways to stay abreast of the most important facts that take place in our history without succumbing to the seducing DNA attached to so much of what we touch in what appears to be “neutral” technology.

Two, the constant vigilance of our own hearts demands a greater effort. Correct understandings of why God has revealed Himself and the ways that He has given to us to relate to Him, are imperative. If it ever was a luxury that in past generations Christ’s people could count on the Christian culture around them to carry them in relationship to God, that day is long gone. We will need to dedicate ourselves more fully to learning to listen to God through His word for ourselves, and not just allowing teachers and worship experiences to carry our intimacy with God.

In the midst of the busy life in which most live, we will be called on more than ever to learn the disciplines that nurture our priesthood as believers. When so many among us find themselves with few hours each month among other Christians, and, when so many among us are continuously surrounded by people with no God consciousness, and, when so many among us live in unchecked connection to the culture around us, then, the importance of each learning to practice the disciples of relationship with God on their own is not just luxury, it is survival!

We need to learn to: 1. Read Scripture more often, 2. Listen to God in what we read by greater meditation and reflection on what is said, and what it means for each new day. 3. Choose local churches that teach us how to live in communion with God, and not just participate in their program or listen to their leaders talk and sing about relationship to God. We can no longer afford to allow others to substitute anything for what we, every one of us, must learn to practice. 4. Invite God to invade our consciousness more often throughout the day. 5. Seek occasional but regular retreats when we can once again allow the Spirit of God to reset our spiritual compass.

Robert Foster says of this listening to God: “What does lectio divina mean? Well, it means listening to the text of Scripture— really listening; listening yielded and still. It means submitting to the text of Scripture; allowing its message to flow into us rather than our attempting to master it. It means reflecting on the text of Scripture; permitting ourselves to become fully engaged—both mind and heart— by the drama of the passage. It means praying the text of Scripture; letting the biblical reality of this with- God life give rise to our heart cry of gratitude or confession or complaint or petition. It means applying the text of Scripture; seeing how God’s Holy Word provides a personal word for our life circumstances. And, it means obeying the text of Scripture; turning, always turning, from our wicked way and into the way everlasting (Ps 139:23-24).” Pg 8, from introduction to Renovare Bible.

In reference to the importance of people learning to listen to God, Andrew Murray in *The Lord’s Table*, says: “I am convinced that one chief cause why some do not grow more in grace is that they do not take time to hold converse with the Lord in secret. Spiritual, divine truth does not thus become our possession at once. Although I understand what I read, although I consent heartily to it, although I receive it, it may speedily fade away and be forgotten, unless by private meditation I give it time to become fixed and rooted in me, to become united and identified with me. Christians, give yourselves, give your Lord time to transfer His heavenly thoughts to your inner, spiritual life. When you have read a portion, set yourselves in silence before God.”

Third, meaningful investment in the Kingdom of God is of greater importance. It is more important for two reasons. Our society has convinced us of the “things” that make life meaningful and many among us have bought the argument. We have been seduced into at least three lies.

One, that whatever it is that our culture is selling will make us happy. The bigger

house, the better school for our children, the job in the marketplace for mothers, and so much more must be sought and possessed if we are truly to be happy. And, yet, if these things make so many people happy, why are we surrounded by so many broken marriages, emotionally wounded, etc..

Two, whatever it is that will make us happier, we deserve. It is amazing how such a relatively small number of people in the West have come to a point in history that everything that they can think, everything that they can possess, they deserve. It is a seductive argument for example that you work, or you vote, or you have saved, therefore you deserve it, whatever it is. It makes us a demanding, self-serving people.

Three, whatever it is that we sought after, possess, deserve, etc. is built to last. This nonsense exists in spite of the evident proof all around us that nothing is built to last. The cars begin to deteriorate from day one. The house needs constant repair. Everything we touch is disappearing.

All three lies are in desperate need of being exposed for the lies that they are. We will need to be much more vigilant to guard ourselves from being seduced, unawares, into the lies! Even more importantly, we will need to be diligent in training and protecting our children from being seduced by the glut of media instruments marketing non-stop the lies. And yet, we will need to do this without defrauding the world of the incarnational impact of the redemptive community constantly moving in their midst.

Maybe the greatest sadness of these lies and any sway that they hold over the people of God is that pursuit of these things deprives the Kingdom of God of the wholehearted investment needed to fulfill the purposes of God for this world. And so, fourth, meaningful investment in the needs of the Kingdom of God is of greater importance because we are slowly deprived of growing a conviction of eternity and its more important investments. Will I be happy? Will I be fulfilled? Will I be used? The center of our questioning has become "I". Go just about anywhere in Scripture and you

find words similar to the writer of Hebrews as he describes those of faith of past generations. He says of their faith and faith acts, that by these they were demonstrating that the home they were looking for they had not found. For if they had wanted a home in this world, they could have returned. But, they kept seeking that place promised to them, and us by God our Father.

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13-16

I suspect that the full impact of the Gospel comes only once to a people or place. Whether those in the West are sliding into this reality, we are suspiciously close. In this day, those who truly are in the redemptive community need to: 1. Reflect on their heart and life. 2. Take corrective action. 3. Build disciplines of relationship to God through His Word. 4. Protect the unprotected in their midst. 5. Teach them to listen to God and discern Him and His ways for themselves. 6. Aggressively restructure their expectations and investments in light of eternity, not time. In the pursuit of these ends, our thoughts about church, what it is, and not just what it does, are paramount. And, one cannot think about church without thinking about the people who lead it. What kind of people are they to be? What do they do? And, why did God think them necessary in the first place? All of these questions lead us to the need for greater reflection, greater diligence, and greater change!