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TRAINING MANUAL

THE APOSTOLIC/PROPHETIC MODEL

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Introduction

The aim of this course is to give the student an understanding of the Biblical model of what it is to be an apostolic/prophetic people.

Our aim is that the student comes away with the understanding that it is the individual's responsibility to take the Gospel into the entire world, and that there is a Biblical model (or pattern) that we have been given for this work. Every individual is to be properly based in a local church that is in turn properly connected to the work of the Kingdom – which is trans-local – through a relationship with an Apostolic/Prophetic team. Included in this work is the establishing of base churches, which in turn would also continue to work in their sphere of ministry and expand, sending forth the good and precious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

UNIT ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand God's mandate for the church in today's world.
2. Identify the three major components needed for the building of the church.
3. Understand the theological foundation for the Apostolic/Prophetic model of the church.
4. Identify key gifts of the Spirit needed within today's church.

1.1 MANDATE FOR THE CHURCH

Go into all the World

The heart of Apostolic Christianity is to fulfil the commission given by Jesus to "make disciples of all nations" by planting churches, training leaders and functioning as the priesthood. Apostolic Christianity has a passion to go and not to gather, to send and not to stay. This is a church body that embraces the prophetic purposes of God in every age, and gives everything without compromise to be what God calls them to be and to do what God calls them to do.

The mandate of the church is to *go into the entire world.* Not only to the cities, the suburbs or the streets of one's own country, but to the entire world. This attitude needs to be expressed in all that we do. The church must be focused on all believers having a "going" attitude, even if it is only to the neighbour's house. In our hearts we should carry the understanding that every believer and every church has the mandate to be witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

☑ FOR YOUR INFORMATION: ABRAHAM – GENESIS 12:1-3

Also known as: Abram ("exalted father").
Name means: "Father of many" or "father of multitudes" (Genesis 17:5).
Homes: Ur of the Chaldeans; Haran (11:31); the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:5); Egypt (Genesis 12:10); Beersheba in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:34).
Family: See Genesis 15:4–6.
Best known today as: The patriarch of ancient Israel and the one to whom and through whom God promised blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–16; 17:1–8; 18:17–19; 22:17–18).

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1Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Word in Life Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Very often local churches are focused only on their own communities and, while this is a valid ‘mission field’, no church should be focused solely on its immediate community. The entire church, that means every local expression of the church, should have a heart for the nations.

This is not only a New Testament concept. This is the essence of what is read in Genesis 12:1-3: The Lord asked Abram to leave his country and go to a land God would reveal to Him.

Paul, writing to the Galatians, calls these verses the “gospel in advance”; the promise that all peoples will be blessed through Abram and his seed. The church is also part of the seed of Abram and is subject to the blessings of Abram.

God was so intent on accomplishing this that Christ left heaven and came into the world to win nations for the Father (John 20:21). Now He is sending the church into the world. The church must have this same vision.

1.2 GOD’S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

1.2.1 God’s Agenda

What is it that God is doing in the world today? The most important issue of the world today is what God is doing in and through His church. He does have a very specific agenda in the world. The highpoint of this plan was the coming of Christ and the fulfilment of God’s plan will be seen when Jesus comes again.

Prior to Jesus, God worked out His plan for humankind through His chosen people, the nation of Israel. Since Jesus came, died and rose again. God has focused His activity in the world through the church. Israel still has a role to play in God’s plan but He has only one Holy nation, which is now made up of both Jew and Gentile. The church was created to be the primary vehicle for God’s work in the earth.

If God’s mandate for the church is to make disciples of all nations, what then is his agenda with the Church? Surely it must be to bring us to the place where we can best fulfil our mandate.

God has often worked with a wineskin that has not been able to sustain the flow of the new wine to the thirsty.

Throughout Church History there have been various moves of holiness and the fear of God, but none of them have been sustained. The same is true for various moves of power and healing.

There are many that pray for revival, for a restoration of reverence for God in the church. Some focus on holiness and holy living, others only wait for signs and wonders, many Christians believe today is the ‘harvest time’, others will say that God is restoring the apostles and prophets to the church. These and

other moves of God are all part of His agenda, but many have failed to find a sustained expression in the Church.

This is not only true of moves that took place in the last seven or eight centuries, but it is also true of some of the most powerful moves of God that took place at the inception of the churches, like Turkey, where there are almost no believers left. What has happened to the church?

We believe that the reason for this is that the pattern of God for the church was lost and, as a result, there was nothing that could sustain the ways, the work or the moves of God. Therefore, God's highest priority is to prepare a wineskin that can do this, a wineskin that is suitable for the administration of the Kingdom of God.

First and foremost, God is building a wineskin that can contain all that He wants to do in and through the church in a sustained manner. God's primary focus is to build a wineskin that is true to His Word.

1.2.2 The Wineskin suitable for the Administration of God's Kingdom

The wineskin is the church. God is building a wineskin that is true to His Word and He is building it for eternity. Therefore, the duty of the believers in the church is to give ourselves to be building a church in accordance with God's Word and His ways.

God is building a wineskin that is able to contain all that He wants to do in and through the church in a sustained manner. Revivals, holiness, gifts of the Spirit are all important and vital to the development of the church, but they cannot be sustained unless there is a wineskin to properly contain and administer them.

Everything in the church, the structure, programmes, and even the leadership, should facilitate the administration and sustaining of the flow of the new wine that God is pouring out. We need to remember that the things of the Spirit are organic and will not suffer being limited by organisational models. What we need is God's model. We cannot simply apply any model that we have seen that works in the world. Therefore, the constant challenge for the Church is to be adjusting everything that is done in order to facilitate the in-flow and outworking of the new wine. This adjustment must be made in response to what we see in God's Word.

There are many things that constitute a wineskin that is suitable for the Kingdom of God. We will examine some of these in the next unit.

Search the Globe: Read Matthew 9:16, 17; Mark 2:21, 22; Luke 5:36–39. Jesus makes a valid illustration of this new gospel of grace. What areas in your life are you holding on to past traditions?

KEY CONCEPT: *Avoid* emphasising past traditional structures on present changes. *Understand* that yesterday's structures and forms are often unable to handle today's lively spiritual renewal.

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1.3 THE MODEL OF THE CHURCH

1.3.1 Introducing The Apostolic/Prophetic Model

The model of the church must be rooted in the Bible and not in the ways of the world. There are many successful models around, especially in the business arena, but success does not indicate that something is founded on truth. We believe that God has given us a model for the church in Scripture, and the term to describe this is "Apostolic/Prophetic Model".

Apostolic is a "going" culture. It is a culture that is intent on sending and not on staying, on giving and not on getting. Many pastors are only gathering people because it looks good when there are many people who come to listen to them teach.

It is an apostolic church that is able to properly fulfil this mandate. The apostolic continuously calls us to remember that:

- The mandate is not a staying mandate, it is a sending mandate.
- The mandate is not a gathering mandate; it is a going mandate.
- The mandate is not a getting mandate; it is a giving mandate.

All of this must take place through the legitimate channels that we see in Scripture.

Prophetic authority is given to establish a *passion for Jesus* and an *uncompromising heart* to do things God's way. It continuously points the people of God to the picture, or pattern, that God has for the church. The

[2]Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Word in Life Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

prophetic thrust is for the church to become all that God has designed it to be. A prophetic people are those who have the ability to see the future as God sees it, to prepare for the future and to become the future. What do we mean by this?

God's people have always been prophetic by nature. i.e. they have had the ability to hear God and have an understanding of his plans and purposes and can then, by faith, move into them.

In the Old Testament God revealed his plans through his servants the prophets. "Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets". Amos 3:7 (NKJV)

In the New Testament, we see the prophetic gifting and anointing finding it's fullest expression in Jesus. Jesus in turn passed this prophetic anointing on to the church and, although that is done specifically through the office of prophet, there is now a sense in which all of His people are prophetic because we all have access to Him and to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the head of the church. If the church is operating out of relationship with Him and is appropriating the gifting that he has passed on to the church in the power of the Holy Spirit, it follows that the church can enjoy the same prophetic nature as the Lord of the church. For this reason, the church is by nature and gifting prophetic.

The prophetic only exists because God reveals "His secrets." He has always done this and has preserved all of that which is relevant for this age in Scripture. Only that which aligns with Scripture is truly prophetic. Anything outside of this is not valid. We are still dependent, however, on the work of the Holy Spirit to help us understand what is recorded in Scripture, to see the plans that God has for His people, and to know how to apply that to our lives.

When we say that a prophetic people see the future, we mean that they see what God sees for His church and reveals through Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit. A healthy dependence on God acknowledges our need for this ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, and it is in the nature and ways of God to give us this 'revelation.' He has always done this and He will not stop doing it until this age has passed. Without it we cannot know His plan and purpose for us.

In other words, through the current work of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to hear God's plans and purposes for the future and can, by faith, make the necessary adjustments in our lives and walk into the future, or become the future. Which is simply saying that we become all that God intends us to be and do all that He intends us to do.

1.3.2 A Theological Foundation for This Model

We believe this is a model that is found throughout the Bible and it is the only one that can be called a whole-Bible model for the church. Some of the models that have been applied in the past have emphasised aspects that are

only a part of the whole model. They are all included in the Apostolic/Prophetic model and this is what the church needs; a model that embraces and is able to effectively work out the whole of Scripture.

What this statement is saying is that the apostolic heart and pattern is not only a New Testament teaching or experience. It has always been in the heart of God. In the New Testament we see the apostolic heart and pattern coming into sharper focus with the coming of Jesus and as it is fleshed out in His life and ministry and we see it through with the apostles (and prophets) that He gathered around him and sent out.

From the beginning, it has always been in the heart of God to bless all nations. We see this in the life of Abraham. He was called to go and be a blessing, which would impact nations for all generations.

> Genesis 12:2 (NKJV) "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abraham's call was apostolic. i.e. he was sent out.

> Hebrews 11:8 (NKJV) "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place, which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."

There was a prophetic element to his going as well. He went, not knowing, yet trusted that God would open up and reveal the way to him.

> Hebrews 11:10 (NKJV) "For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God."

As he moved forward in faith, God did give him understanding and opened up the way before him. As he walked in obedience and faith, he experienced the fulfilment of God's prophetic word to him, viz. "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Israel as a nation was always called by God to be a blessing to the nations. God always drew their attention to this and made it an integral part of the temple – His dwelling place on earth.

Isaiah 56:7 (NKJV) "Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices [will be] accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

David Bosch says, "It is not true that there is mission because there is Church; rather, there is Church because there is mission." This is also true for the Old Testament. There has always been a mission. Mission is not a New Testament idea. God's 'mission' from the beginning has been to reach the lost

through his chosen instruments – through the called out ones, His chosen people – the *ekklesia*. First with Israel (a light to the Gentiles) and then moving toward the full revelation of this in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the Church.

The Apostolic/Prophetic model is reflected throughout scripture as a recurring theme and pattern. God is continually 'sending,' continually working through his chosen instruments to reveal himself, His will and His way. It can be said that God Himself is apostolic by nature. i.e. He is a sending God. He sent His Son into the world to save it. Just as He made Israel a prophetic people, we see the ultimate revelation of His prophetic purpose in Jesus. The mandate is then passed onto the Church through which He intends to "disciple the nations."

When Jesus came into the world He gathered disciples around Himself and sent them out. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." John 20:21 (NKJV)

In the same way, the apostles gathered and sent, having prophetic impact upon the nations they were sent to.

Christian leaders are called to help God's people discover, develop in, demonstrate and delight in a whole Bible, Kingdom of God, Word of God, Apostolic/Prophetic culture. There is a liberty and a reality to this culture. It has authenticity.

While this is a supernatural culture, it is not unnatural. Sometimes the two are confused and what is supernatural is actually regarded as "eerie", or may have an unnatural spirituality that is not properly rooted in the whole of God's Word. God's model, however, is one that is real, liveable, and enjoyable. It works.

I believe that this model incorporates all that the New Testament church ever was and all that it was meant to be. An Apostolic/Prophetic model therefore includes the restoration of what was lost, what was stolen and also what is most needed. This is a model for the whole of church life, one that is applicable to every church and to every believer.

The foundation of every local church and believer should include the following:

- Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).
- The Word of God (Matthew 7:24-27).
- The foundations of the church being laid by apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20).

CONSIDER THIS: EPHESIANS 2:19–22

Many church buildings in the United States and Europe receive special protection from various different agencies. Historians research these landmark buildings, and visitors tour them. Paul regards the community of believers at Ephesus as a special building. Apostles and prophets are the foundation, and Christ is its cornerstone. Jews and Gentiles are carved into living bricks and put together, until it becomes the "dwelling place of God." Such an assembly is so unique, so full of grace, that Paul gives the building special recognition. What are you and your fellow believers doing to construct a holy dwelling place for God?

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1.3.3 The Theological Ground we Stand On

Although we are focussing on the Apostolic/Prophetic ministry we do acknowledge that all of the five-fold ministries are still valid and indeed necessary.

Paul says that they are necessary:

> "… for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; Eph 4:12 (NKJV)

Until this Scripture is fulfilled we have need of all of these ministries.

The theological ground we stand on takes the view that the ministry gifts mentioned in Eph 4 are valid and operative in the church today.

We understand that there are other theological points of view about these ministries, but it is not the purpose of this course to debate these issues.

Therefore when it comes to discussing the function of the apostolic and prophetic ministries we will take that as a given in the context of this course.

1.3.4 Laying the Foundation For The Church

Clearly the foundation that is laid is Jesus Christ Himself and is thus the only valid foundation for the church. This is non-negotiable. However, all three of the elements mentioned above, including the need for apostles and prophets to lay the foundations, apply today as much as they did to the early church.

For a long time, however, there has been little or no acknowledgment of apostles and prophets being valid and necessary in the post-New Testament era. That is changing, but we do not only want these ministries to return as another set of titles that some can apply to themselves. We need genuine

[3]Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Word in Life Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

apostolic and prophetic ministries that build into churches in the way that God designed them to. Their role is to help the church establish Jesus as the primary foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), and align all forms of structure to Him, the Chief Cornerstone, and to build according to the pattern that God has revealed in His Word.

The apostolic and the prophetic gifts are designed to work together in establishing churches. The apostolic is designed to work with the prophetic, and the prophetic is designed to work with the apostolic. This does not reduce the importance of the gifts; each ought be working together in a team to equip the saints. In the context of establishing the church on a correct Biblical model, however, these two have a specific, God-ordained role to play.

Apostolic authority is given to ensure that the church is correctly joined to the Head of the church (Jesus) and to the rest of the Body. It is also given to establish in local churches aspects of the whole-Bible theology of church.

There is no disputing that the foundation of the Church universal has already been laid. This is an established fact and no other foundation can be laid but the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus – 1Corinthians 3:11.

The same is in fact true for everything that Jesus has established. These cannot be established again and do not need to be established again. Let us take for example the cross of Christ.

The cross with all its power and merits has happened. It took place in time and history. Yet it's power can only be effective today for those who embrace it in repentance and faith. What happened nearly 2000 years ago I have to embrace as truth and appropriated by faith and obedience before that reality is appropriated and established in my life. Without that response, the cross is merely an event in history or a theological concept. It's power and significance is lost to me.

In the same way, the apostles and prophets have already laid the foundation of the Church, with Christ as the cornerstone. That too can simply be a theological concept, unless appropriated by the church in faith and obedience. Therefore, even though it is true that the foundation was laid for the Church Universal by the apostles and prophets, the present church must apply the implications of those foundations today. There is a need for the present day apostles and prophets to lay those same foundations anew in every new local church plant. Just how that is done has to be thought through and properly defined. This is what we hope to achieve with this course.

One could conclude that the ministry of the present apostles and prophets is really not that necessary if we limit the laying of foundations required by a local church to the original foundations laid. However, the reality often encountered by present apostolic teams are churches started and planted that have little or no foundations, and require a reconstruction process by apostles and prophets whereby they re-lay good foundations.

Some situations we have encountered required the existing church to be closed down because of the lack of foundations, or faulty foundations, and a new one started in its place with Biblical foundations.

Again there are situations where churches have inadequate foundations resulting in a variety of problems. In such cases the ministry of apostles and prophets are given by God precisely to come in and correct the situation, relaying some foundations and strengthening others.

It is for these reasons that the work of the apostolic and prophetic ministries to lay these foundations in each church is still of utmost importance today. These ministries play a vital and necessary role in building into the foundation of local churches a full expression of the Apostolic/Prophetic model that we see in the Bible.

Later on in the course we will be dealing specifically with the work of the apostolic/prophetic ministry. Hopefully your understanding of the subject will become clearer.

Review:

1. I believe the pattern of God for the church was lost.
2. The church must be true and built up by the sustainable Word of God.
3. Foundation is important and must incorporate Jesus (as the Cornerstone), the Word of God and the apostolic and prophetic ministries (Ephesians 2:20).
4. The mandate of the church is to go into the entire world.
5. God has a plan for the church and His highest priority is to prepare a suitable church for His kingdom.
6. Everything in the church, the structure, programmes, and leadership facilitates the accommodation of the new wine.

Now try the Self-test on the next page.

Self-test:

1. According to the authors what is God's mandate for the church?

2. According to the authors what is God's *primary focus*?

3. What should the foundation of every local church and believer include?

4. Prophetic authority is given to establish …?

5. What facilitates the accommodation of the new wine?

6. In this unit what functions of Christian leaders are emphasised?

7. I believe that God has given us a model for the church in Scripture, and the best term to describe this is

Compare your answers with mine on the next page.

Self-test: Answers

1. According to the authors what is God's mandate for the church?

The mandate of the church is to go into the entire world.

2. According to the authors what is God's *primary focus*?

God's primary focus is to build a wineskin that is true to His Word.

3. What should the foundation of every local church and believer include?

- **Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).**
- **The Word of God (Matthew 7:24-27).**
- **The foundations of the church being laid by apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20).**

4. Prophetic authority is given to establish …?

Prophetic authority is given to establish a passion for Jesus and an uncompromising heart to do things God's way.

5. What facilitates the accommodation of the new wine?

Everything in the church, the structure, programmes, and leadership facilitates the accommodation of the new wine.

6. In this unit what functions of Christian leaders are emphasised?

Christian leaders are called to help God's people discover, develop in, demonstrate and delight in a New Testament, Kingdom of God, Apostolic/Prophetic culture.

7. I believe that God has given us a model for the church in Scripture, and the best term to describe this is **Apostolic/Prophetic Model**

UNIT TWO

THE PATTERN

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify and explain God's pattern for the church.
2. Understand the foundation and importance of God's church.
3. Define and correctly identify the major aspects of the church.
4. Grasp the apostolic pattern introduced by the ministry of Paul.
5. Understand the importance of the 14 key strategies associated with the apostolic pattern.

2.1 A CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

2.1.1 The Authority of the Bible

The Bible is the final and full authority for the whole of our lives, both personally and corporately. This must be true for every issue we discuss. If we find something in the Word of God that does not fit with what we have thought or believed in the past, we have to put aside our preconceptions, our pride and prejudice, take a stand and decide that no matter who thinks what, we will do the Biblical way.

We are living in a time that some have referred to as one in which we will see the "restoration of all things". By implication, every one of us has to change, preacher and hearer alike. The Word of God should direct that change. I believe Acts 15 tells us that God is restoring the fallen tabernacle of David. Some have taken this to mean a restoration in the area of praise and worship, but I think it is more than that.

☑ FOR YOUR INFORMATION: DAVID – 1 SAMUEL 16

Also known as: "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1). David was the second and greatest king of Israel (1010-970 BC), whose dynasty ruled Judah for over four hundred years.
Name means: "beloved"
Homes: Judah
Family: David belonged to the tribe of Judah and was born in Bethlehem to Jesse as the youngest of eight sons. David married Bathesheba.
Best known today as: The author of many Psalms (almost one-half are attributed to him in the titles of the KJV). God promised David a kingdom without end (2 Samuel 7:14-16).

I believe there is a Davidic wineskin that God is restoring. It was under David that Israel saw its greatest victories and took the most territory. David had a heart to do things God's way. He diligently applied the Word of God in His life.

[4]Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Word in Life Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Even when he failed God, he turned back to God and did not hold onto his pride or his own way. The Davidic wineskin, I believe includes the church built, without compromise, according to the Word of God, and built according to the ways of God.

If God's Word threatens our present modus operandi, preferences or theologies, then let change come. Our attitude and response needs to be grounded in the kind of understanding we have from Acts 17:30. In times of ignorance God overlooked things "…but now He commands all people everywhere to repent." While this relates specifically to our initial repentance in response to the gospel, I believe that it also has an implication that requires us to be constantly repenting of wrong understanding, or modus operandi, in response to the revelation of God.

In Exodus 25:8 God commanded that a sanctuary be built for Him to dwell in and that it be built exactly according to a specific pattern that He gave to them. Here, even under the old covenant, He gives incredible detail.

In Chronicles 15:13 we read again that there was a definite pattern, a prescribed way that God had for the Ark to be carried. They made the mistake of not finding out what the prescribed way was a great blessing broke out.

Discover! Consider of the following plans God has set forth. Identify and explain the purpose for each.

Tabernacle of Moses (Exodus 25-27):

Temple of Solomon (1 Chronicles 29; 2 Chronicles 2:1-16):

Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel chapters 43 – 45)

Time and time again in the Old Testament, God gave detailed plans and patterns for His house and for the way He wanted things done. He has always had prescribed ways. If He had such a definite pattern for the tabernacle of the Old Testament, then surely He has no less than that for the church in our day.

The Tabernacle itself pointed to Christ. His presence could never be contained in a physical structure made by human hands, but there was a different 'tabernacle' that was to come in which He would dwell. In the church He has revealed this – a living, organic tabernacle, built with living stones. Surely He has as much of a prescribed way for this tabernacle as He had for the previous ones.

He wants us to know, especially as leaders, that we can hear from Him and know what the intricate detail is of how He wants us to build. He has a blueprint. I believe it is based on Old Testament revelation, but it is found in much more detail and clarity in the New Testament – particularly in Acts. We find there the way that we should be building the church, both locally and trans-locally.

2.1.2 Applying God's Word

There is a 'Bible' way to apply the Word. There are principles in the Word that I am passionate about and which the Holy Spirit has applied to my life. I cannot, however, apply all of those principles to others in the same way that God applied them to my life. That could bring bondage. It is therefore important to find the way of God in the application of truth. He knows best how to apply these principles to each person's life or to each the local church.

For example, there is only one instance where Jesus told anyone that in order to follow Him, he would have to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. There is a principle here that if we want the 'pearl of great price' we must be willing to give all that we have in order to obtain it. But Jesus did not tell any other who followed Him to sell al their possession. The application of the principle is different for different people.

When it comes to applying the Apostolic/Prophetic model in the church there is a Biblical way to do this. We are dealing with a model that is not static; it is alive and dynamic. There is continual adjustment as we are transformed in response to the revelation of God's picture of the church in His word. We have to constantly ask God to show us how to apply this model.

This is a model that should never be bogged down by rules and regulations that are of our own making, and neither is it a model that can be sustained by human passion alone. It is a model that brings and maintains a genuine liberty in the church, a liberty that enables God's people to live passionately for Him.

As we apply the function of the Apostolic/Prophetic, we must bear in mind that these ministries should never have authority to lord over any local church. Even though they do have a significant role in building the church, they are never to control it. The highest human authority in a local church is always its own eldership or pastoral team, and that must not be lost or undermined in any way.

At the same time, each church must be linked to the bigger picture, the wider ramifications of the gospel and the discipling of the nations. This is where the

role of the Apostolic/Prophetic ministries comes in. Trans-local, Apostolic/Prophetic teams are valid Biblical structures for facilitating this linking in to the bigger picture. There is, however, a particular way that the partnership between the local and the trans-local is to be worked out, a way that is based on relationship, not on hierarchy.

In the Scripture, particularly in Acts, we see that local churches were established with the help of trans-local Apostolic/Prophetic gifting so that, from the start, the right foundations were laid into the church. Likewise today, trans-local ministries are administered through teams of men and women working together to build the church. Through relationship with trans-local teams, local churches are linked to the whole of what God wants to do through the church. Let us be clear about this. This relationship is not an 'optional extra' for local churches, it is the only legitimate model for the church.

It is a model that brings a mutual and voluntary accountability to local churches and to trans-local teams. It is also a model that releases the full potential of the ministries and gifts that God has given to the church. It does so within a context that allows no person, local church or ministry to operate independently, or to build a platform other than one that facilitates the work of the Kingdom. Jesus is at the head, and not any person or ministry. All work together to serve Him and the bigger picture, without any part receiving a profile or position that is solely for its own benefit.

2.2 IDENTIFYING THE MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

I believe there are three major components to the church:

- The wine
- The wineskin
- The worshippers / workers

2.2.1 Identifying the Wine

The image of the wine and wineskin is taken from Jesus' teaching in three of the gospels (Matthew 9:4-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39). The wine speaks of His life, His power, His creativity and activity in the church. However, there can be no argument that this is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church today.

Acts chapter 2 says of those that had been baptised with the Holy Spirit that they were not drunk with wine but with the Spirit of God who had come down. Ephesians 5:18,19 says, "Be not drunk with wine but be, being filled with the Spirit." This is Jesus, by His Spirit, coming to the church. Jesus is the Wine, by His Spirit. Through the wineskin - the church - that same wine is brought to the lips and the lives of the thirsty. So, wine is a type of the Holy Spirit, but I think that the wine really is Jesus, by His Spirit.

When we are saved it is Jesus who comes into our lives by His Spirit. Paul writes to the Romans 8:8,9 "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

It is Jesus that we want to see come to those who are thirsty. He is the focus of every manifestation of the Holy Spirit. While the manifestations of the Spirit are often the most tangible aspect of the wine for us, we must remember that Jesus is the focus.

Now, it would be absolutely impossible to record every manifestation of the Holy Spirit in one book. He is the Holy Spirit, Who is the Creator. He was active in Genesis Chapter 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and it says, "The Spirit of God hovered, over the face of the deep." While we understand that God the Father, in His role within the Trinity, spoke the word of creation, the Holy Spirit was active in that process. The Holy Spirit was active in the creation of every daisy, every lily, every different colour, leaf, shape, and bird.

What I am trying to say is that the work and manifestation of the Holy Spirit is so diverse and so big that we would never be able to record everything that the Holy Spirit can possibly do in one book, not even into the Bible. Some of these manifestations are emphasised in the Bible and others are not. We are to emphasise those that the Bible does. This is one way in which we can keep the focus on Jesus.

Stop and investigate: Read the following Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit. Write a brief synopsis of His work in each category.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit among believers:
Micah 3:8; John 16:13; 3:3, 5; 14:16–26; Acts 2:17–41; Romans 8:11; 15:16; 8:16; 14:17; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16; 12:3–11; Galatians 5:22, 23; Hebrews 10:15; 1 John 2:20, 27; 4:1–6.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church:
Acts 2:4; Acts 20:17, 28; 13:2, 4; 8:29; 9:31; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

[5]

There are other things that the Holy Spirit does that we can enjoy, but when we emphasise what the Bible does not emphasise, we are in trouble. When we make something the focus that the Bible has not, we are out of step with Him. We have to be careful, however, when we say that something cannot be God at all. There are many things that are possible within God's creativity and which are manifestations of the Spirit, but they are simply not to be an emphasis.

5Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's topical Bible index [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

The wonderful reality of the person of the Holy Spirit is a precious truth that has been restored to the church and there is still more that we will see made manifest. The wine is His presence with us in person. While you can experience the person He is not merely an experience. It is important that we remember that the Holy Spirit is a person and not an 'it'. He is a person who acts in ways that impact and transform lives.

We believe that God's plan for us is a fuller expression of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the 'new wine' includes the culture of the Kingdom breaking into the present, either for a sustained manifestation, or for a brief period – which is what a miracle is. When the fullness of the Spirit is made manifest, signs and wonders, healings, joy, deliverance of body, soul and spirit are all a part of the 'natural' lifestyle of the kingdom.

2.2.2 Identifying the Wineskin

I believe that the wineskin of the church is the structure. There are at least four aspects to the wineskin:

- **Vision** – is rooted in God's vision for the church universal and is given specific form by what God wants each local church to be. It goes further than simply seeing people saved, and includes the specific plan of God for each local church.
- **Values** – are about how we fulfil God's vision without cutting across Scripture or violating our conscience.
- **Authority structure** – is the actually structure of church government, paying special attention to who is released into leadership and how they exercise it. The kind of leaders released will determine the effectiveness in the context of God's work, and for how long the work will be effective.
- **Biblical working model** – must be based on Scripture and must be producing fruit.

Our wineskin must be Biblical, flexible and, I believe, expanding or enlarging. I am of the opinion that God does not only want to change the shape of the wineskin, but He also wants to change the size of it. God in heaven has an abundance of wine to pour into the church; there is still so much of the Holy Spirit that needs to break in on us. For that to happen, God requires a wineskin that can, at the very least, cope with more than we have see so far.

Stop and investigate: Consider each of the major components of the wineskin above. How does **your** church measure up? What are the strengths and weaknesses in each area?

Vision:

Values:

Authority structures:

Biblical working model:

I have already experienced some wonderful things, but there has to be more than that. It has to be larger than that, more sustained than that. This is desire of God's heart, to take us into the 'more'. That is why He is intent on transforming the wineskin.

The wineskin is, however, not an end in itself. The sole purpose of the wineskin is to get the wine to the people. When I am thirsty and someone has water, I do not want them to hold up the container and begin to expound on its benefits and qualities. I am not interested in the container at that moment; I want the stuff that is inside, the water. Yet we see people travelling the world to look at the wineskins. Many try to 'import' the wineskin, often without having the wine.

2.2.3 Identifying the Worshippers

The work of the worshippers should come out of a loving heart of worship for God. When we understand the Biblical picture of work and of worship, we will see that they are interlinked activities of the people of God.

The wine and the wineskin need to transform into worship. Ultimately, God is not even looking for wine, let alone the wineskin, as vitally important as these are to fulfil His plan. He is seeking worshippers, people who are touched by the presence of God. Before church members are anything else, they must be worshippers. There is no value for me in having a perfect wineskin if I am not a worshipper.

All service for God is to be worship. I do not do the work of the Kingdom with a heart of fear or because of any pressure. It is a sheer delight. Nothing stops me working for God, because it is a thrill to do it. If, however, I am only a worker without being a worshipper, I will eventually run out of steam. If I am a worshipper (such as God seeks) I simply do not run out of resources.

Stop and investigate: Worshippers are those who serve. Consider the Hebrew and Greek words for those who worship. Write a phrase that will best describe the act of worship.

Scripture References: 1 Kings 10; John 4:23,24; Hebrews 10:2
âbād (Hebrew), *to serve*
latreuō (Greek), *to minister* [to God]
proskunētēs (Greek), *adorer*

6

2.3 THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

2.3.1 Paul's Pattern

The apostolic pattern of Paul and his team is clear once we look at the New Testament as a whole book. Barnabas and Paul, together with their team, set up **a base in Antioch**. This was a multicultural community (Acts 13:1-2), which was training and releasing leaders (Acts 15:35). It was a church community of grace where people were being saved (Acts 11:22-27).

From their base in Antioch, they reached out and preached, taught and appointed elders in the surrounding provinces (Acts 14:23). They were involved in planting new churches – Philippi (Acts 16), Thessalonica (Acts 17), Berea (Acts 17), and Corinth (Acts 18) – and in returning to existing churches to encourage the believers (Acts 14:21-26; Acts 18:23). Possibly Barnabas stayed in Philippi (Acts 16:40).

Once Paul reached Corinth, which was situated on the outer limits of the sphere of influence of Antioch, he desired to plant a new base. He stayed in Corinth for 18 months and "some time" (Acts 18:11,18). We are able to read of some of the problems with division and doctrine that this church had in First and Second Corinthians. The church in Corinth, however, never became a base, even though it was in a wealthy city and the church was not lacking in spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7). It had the 'wine', but not the 'wineskin', i.e. the gifts of the Spirit, but not the structure.

6James Strong, *New Strong's guide to Bible words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Paul's strategy was to work with a team, training faithful men to train faithful men. (2 Timothy 2:2)

He used key cities with geographic, economic and political influence to establish key bases that could influence the surrounding area by planting churches and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Each church as it matured would then be a base to encourage believers, train leaders and plant new churches in its sphere of influence. Paul drew faithful men to make up his trans-local teams from each area (Acts 20:4). He also used both Jews and Greeks in his team. Paul used people in business (Acts 16:14; 18:2-3; Romans 16:3-5), civic leaders (Acts 19:22; Romans 16:23) and religious leaders (Acts 18:8 and 1 Corinthians 1:1) to help plant churches.

Paul was based in a local church, but his ministry was trans-local. He was training others so that he could hand over ministry responsibility to them (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 1:3). He was moving on from where he had preached and aiming at where the Gospel had not been preached.

This model is just as relevant for the church today. Each local church has a sphere of influence, which it can impact and change. Each local church can extend this sphere of influence by sending out both short-term teams and by training and sending out church planters.

God's plan is that local churches be autonomous and governed by the shepherds who know the sheep. But God also wants local churches to work in partnership with Apostolic/Prophetic trans-local teams so that the church can be strengthened in faith and grow in numbers (Acts 16:5). Local leaders need to release trans-local ministries as God calls (Acts 13:1-4). Trans-local ministries need to release local elders (Acts 14:23). When we build according to the New Testament pattern, we will see New Testament results – i.e. not only local church growth, but also church planting in areas not yet reached.

☑ FOR YOUR INFORMATION: PAUL – ACTS

Also known as: Paul was called Saul before his conversion and missionary journeys.
Name means: "small, little"
Homes: Saul came from Tarsus but later found his "home" in Antioch and then spent the last part of his life in Rome.
Family: He came from a well to do family and he himself was a member of the Sanhedrin. Paul remained single for most of his life; whether he had married or not is unknown.
Best-known today as: The Apostle Paul, writer of 13 New Testament letters, and missionary.

[7]

[7]Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Word in Life Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

This is not a new hierarchy, nor super-apostles becoming the leaders of new super-denominations. Paul was against denominational divisions; Christ is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:12-13). The Lord is calling us to servant leadership, to give more than we receive (Acts 20:35) and to be “co-labourers” together with Him to build the church (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

There are 14 key strategies of the apostolic pattern that are found from the study of Acts. All are necessary in order for the church to be healthy and to multiply. The key strategies are:

14 KEY STRATEGIES OF THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

1. **Preparation –** Acts 1:14-2:4 (cf. Luke 24:49-53): Praying for and seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the new task.

2. **Priesthood of all Believers –** Acts 2:42-47: Releasing the priesthood of all believers.

3. **Power Evangelism –** Acts 8:5-14: Signs and wonders can accompany the saving of many.

4. **Purity –** Acts 8:20-23: Purity of motive and deed. Not self-righteousness or legalism but a passionate love of the Lord.

5. **Prayer –** Acts 13:1-3: Finding the heart of God.

6. **Participation –** Acts 15:40-16:5: Team ministry and discipleship.

7. **Prophetic Direction –** Acts 16:1-2 (cf. 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6): Prophetic inspiration and impartation.

8. **Potential Doors –** Acts 16:9-10: great doors opening for effectual work (with opposition). Breaking into areas where the gospel has not been preached.

9. **Praise –** Acts 16:25-26: Opens the heart and the way for God to move.

10. **Planting –** Acts 17,18 and 19: Apostolic/Prophetic teams helping to train new leaders and plant new churches.

11. **Provision –** Acts 18:5 (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:9 and Philippians 4:15-18): Financial release to support the work.

12. **Preaching –** Acts 19:8-10: Proclaiming God’s truth to a confused and dying society.

13. **Pattern of Apostolic Ministry –** Acts 19:10: Trans-local teams involved with local churches. Building a model to multiply, i.e. base churches.

14. **Pastoral Leadership –** Acts 20:28-35: Servant Leadership, i.e. shepherd heart.

Many of these keys or qualities are represented in the church of today. However, I believe it is important that all fourteen keys are present and active for the church to build effectively on Apostolic/Prophetic foundations.

The thrust of the New Reformation must be in bringing autonomous, eldership-governed local churches into relationship with trans-local apostolic teams. In this way, churches will be strengthened in the faith and grow in numbers (Acts16:5). What was so obvious to Paul and his team needs to be put into practice in our day.

The most important key is Jesus.

Consider the verses below. Give practical examples of how these points can be accomplished in your church and life.

- We must preach Jesus (Acts 11:20)
- Baptise believers into the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5)
- Finish doing what "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1).
- Paul's strategy for ministry came from imitating Jesus (cf. Matthew 4:23-25). Where and how can we do this?

The local church needs to train up leaders and become the base for sending out church planters. All of God's people need to hear God's call. Local elders and in particular, church planters, need to be networking and working together with "Ephesians 4" trans-local teams (Apostolic/Prophetic Teams). We need to be praying for the Lord of the harvest to release workers so that Bible-based churches can be planted in un-reached nations, and disciples of Jesus can be made.

Review:

1. There is a Biblical way of applying an Apostolic/Prophetic model for the church.
2. God has a pattern for the church that is seen throughout Scripture.
3. I believe three major components to the church are the wine, wineskin and the worshippers.
4. There are four aspects concerning the wineskin, the vision, values, authority structures and the Biblical working model.
5. Paul and apostolic team had a pattern, which they used to plant churches and establish congregations.
6. There are 14 key strategies to Paul's apostolic pattern.
7. Jesus is the most important aspect to the apostolic pattern.

Now try the Self-test on the next page.

Self-test:

1. What are the three major components to the church, as discussed in this unit?

2. What four aspects of the wineskin are given in this unit? Give a brief explanation of each.

3. What were Paul and his team involved in, starting from their base in Antioch?

4. What was Paul's strategy in the working in a team?

5. List 5 of the 14 key strategies given in this unit. Briefly describe the importance of each.

6. If the most important foundation to build on, in the church, is Jesus, what are the four characteristics we need to emulate in our life and church?

Now compare your answers with mine on the next page.

Self-test: Answers

1. What are the three major components to the church?

There are three major components to the church:

- **The wine**
- **The wineskin**
- **The worshippers**

2. What four aspects of the wineskin are given in this unit? Give a brief explanation of each.

- **Vision** – is rooted in God's vision for the church universal and is given specific form by what God wants each local church to be. It goes further than simply seeing people saved, and includes the specific plan of God for each local church.
- **Values** – are about how we fulfil God's vision without cutting across Scripture or violating our conscience.
- **Authority structure** – is the actually structure of church government, paying special attention to who is released into leadership and how they exercise it. The kind of leaders released will determine the effectiveness in the context of God's work, and for how long the work will be effective.
- **Biblical working model** – must be based on Scripture and must be producing fruit.

3. What were Paul and his team involved in, starting from their base in Antioch?

From their base in Antioch, they reached out and preached, taught and released elders in the surrounding provinces (Acts 14). They were involved in planting new church – Philippi (Acts 16), Thessalonica (Acts 17), Berea (Acts 17), and Corinth (Acts 18) – and in returning to existing churches to encourage the believers (Acts 14:21-26; Acts 18:23). Possibly Barnabas stayed in Philippi (Acts 16:40).

4. What was Paul's strategy in the working in a team?

Paul's strategy was to work with a team, training faithful men to train faithful men. (2 Timothy 2:2)

5. List 5 of the 14 key strategies given in this unit. Briefly describe the importance of each.

Found on page 26.

6. If the most important foundation to build on, in the church, is Jesus, what are the four characteristics we need to emulate in our life and church?

- **We must preach Jesus (Acts 11:20)**
- **Baptise believers into the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5)**
- **Finish doing what "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1).**
- **Paul's strategy for ministry came from imitating Jesus (cf. Matthew 4:23-25). Where and how can we do this?**

ASSIGNMENT ONE

PART ONE

It is important that you are familiar with the apostolic/prophetic model as a concept that is rooted in Scripture and in the heart of God. Write an essay discussing the restoration of the apostolic/prophetic ministry and include the following:

- Identify and explain the concept of an apostolic/prophetic church.
- The Biblical definition and example of an apostle.
- Identify the apostle's and prophet's calling and gifts.
- Discuss the relation between the mission of the church and the apostolic/prophetic mandate.

[Approximately 1200 words]

UNIT THREE

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the need and importance of working in apostolic teams.
2. Identify key concepts relating to the working of an apostolic team.
3. Define the nature of the church's organic life.
4. Identify the characteristics of organic life within the church.
5. Understand Paul's apostolic heart and pattern for ministry.

3.1 SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

3.1.1 Home Base

Paul started with his first base in Antioch, from where he worked and to where he returned after two trips. He then moved his base to Ephesus; from this city he made two trips. Paul was looking for key bases, in key provinces, to impact key nations so that the Gospel could be spread.

He worked together with a team, planting new churches and training new leaders (Colossians 4:7-14; Acts 20:14; and 2 Timothy 2:2).

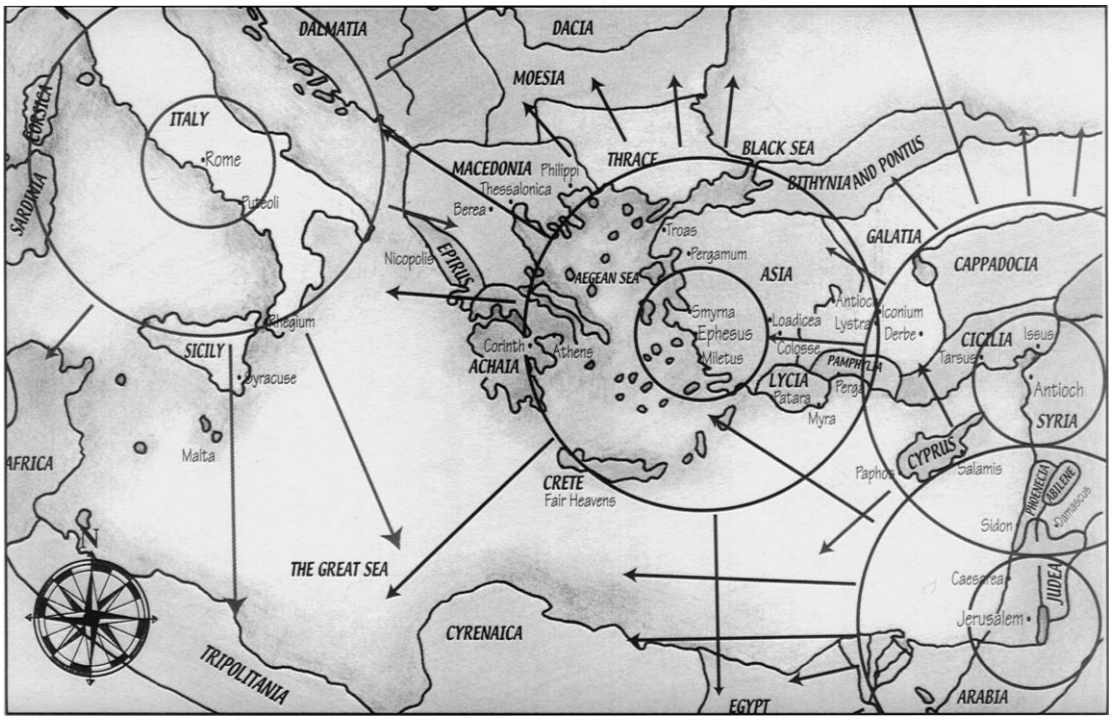
Later, Paul and his team were in Rome. Paul was under house arrest, but others joined him. The book of Hebrews tells how they impacted the whole of Italy with the preaching of the Gospel. The members of the team may have been Paul, Barnabas and Silas, together with John Mark and Timothy (1 Peter 5:12-13; Acts 28:16; and Hebrews 13:23). Peter and Barnabas were part of "those who heard him" (Hebrews 2:3).

Search the globe: Your church is a mission station to reach your nation and the nations next door (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 10:15-16). Discuss ways in which you and your church can successfully reach out to the nations.

The 21st century church must adopt the New Testament pattern and turn our world right side up. The church needs to become an army, armed with the sharp two-edged sword of the Word, working together with a common strategy under God's key men, the apostles and prophets, in order to prepare

the planet for the coming of the King. We need to redeem souls, occupy cities and plant churches in order to model New Testament living.

I believe the local church must become the Bible College and the Mission Station. Local churches must be networked together through Apostolic Teams.



Consider the map above and the apostolic pattern of Paul. Consider the application for today of this pattern. How would you see the outworking of this in a specific region? You may use the example of your local situation or do some research to find out how it is working in that region.

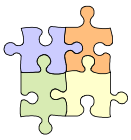
3.1.2 Apostolic Teams

The New Testament shows us a number of teams that are involved in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. We read of the Gospel expanding from Jerusalem to Rome as men and women went out in teams planting churches, establishing bases, training leaders and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

This is the real key to understanding Paul's pattern and strategy. We begin to understand Paul's heart; his motivation for the Kingdom; the way he built the church with team ministry; the way he encouraged leaders to be shepherds,

not to lord it over God's people; the way he encouraged church followers to follow, to submit, to honour and obey their leaders so that it would be of value for them. Paul was not building a hierarchy. He was not building a democracy. Paul was building a fighting force to bring the Kingdom of God to the nations of the world.

Paul worked with great men on his team. The church needs to do the same. There should be no hierarchies or democracies. There must be effective strategising that is able to challenge principalities and powers, not wrestling against flesh and blood but against those principalities in heavenly places (i.e. those mindsets, ideas and arguments that come up against Jesus). Reasoning and vain imagination that exalts itself above God must be brought down. The church must pull them down with the preaching of the Gospel and with the living out of the Apostolic/Prophetic pattern, so that there is great victory in Jesus' name.



TEAM

A company of workers, or a side of players in a game who have a common goal, and who all contribute to achieving that goal.

TEAMWORK

An unselfish cooperation by the group who act as a unit – as one.

TEAM SPIRIT

The attitude of the individual that subordinates individual desire for the sake of what the team is called to do.

Individual members of a team must act as a unit and cooperate with each other, something that clearly requires like-mindedness. This does not mean that teams should be made up of 'yes' men who have no opinions of their own. There should be a godly liberty in a team that allows for freedom of expression. However, one cannot build an effective team with individuals who are following their own vision, or are working out a set of values that differs significantly from the rest of the team. Like-mindedness will promote agreement, and agreement is essential if a team is going to work together as one unit.

Leadership teams are by definition made up of leaders, but each leader has an obligation as a team member to put his or her own agendas aside for the sake of the task that the team is assigned with. In unity we are far more effective than on our own. In other words, there is more advantage to putting aside those things that do not promote the task of the team than to insist on the fulfilment of our own dreams and desires.

Consider the following: To maintain unity we must **guard against** the following. Read the verses and comment on each. Then list some other things that teams must **guard against**, and include Scripture references.

1. Petty Annoyances – Philippians 4:11
2. Conflict of wills – Galatians 5:13
3. Jealousy – Proverbs 6:3
4. Misunderstandings – Ephesians 4:31-32
5. Competition – 1 Corinthians 9:24
6. Criticism – Romans 2:1-3; James 2:4-17; Proverbs 11:13; 14:15
7. Sarcasm – James 3:1-17
8. Manipulation – Jeremiah 9:4-6
9. Selfishness – Matthew 16:24
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.

Each of us must also develop our ability to work well with others, to relate properly to them, to be sensitive to them and their concerns, and to listen properly to what they have to say. In our actions, attitudes and decisions we are to be considerate toward others. Our assessments of them and attitudes toward them should be fair and loving. We are called to work together with others, not on our own, and we must therefore do everything that we can to learn the skills that will enable us to do this well. This does not mean that we are not to be strong in what we stand for. On the contrary, I believe that we should have strong convictions, but they should never cause us to be rude, abrasive, inconsiderate, unloving or independent in the context of the team.

Christian Character Results from:

Knowing God's Word: Psalm 119:11

Obeying His Will: John 14:15

Acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord: Acts 4:12

3.2 LIVING THE MODEL

3.2.1 The Church as an Organism

An important aspect of Apostolic/Prophetic culture (which was touched on in the previous unit) is that it is **organic.** God sees His church as a living, growing *organism* and not as an *organisation*. Yet, when you look at the church today, we see that much of church life is organised and very little is organic. We must make sure that we are able to recognise the difference between organic and organisational life and know how to apply this as the church is built.

It is the Holy Spirit who breathes life into the church. Much of the symbolism used of the Holy Spirit in the Scripture conveys the idea of organic life. Wind is organic and so is rain – we do not organise or engineer these. The wind blows where it pleases and the rain simply falls. Another symbol used is fire. Fire cleanses and it also warms and comforts. Then there is the symbolism of wine (and wineskins). Again this is an organic symbol, as is the new birth spoken of in John 3:3.

Stop and search: Consider the following verses in relation to the *Personality* of the Holy Spirit. Identify each of the qualities of His personality.

Acts 28:25

John 14:26

Genesis 6:3

Acts 9:31

Romans 8:26

Ephesians 4:30

Acts 7:51

Another symbol that is often used is oil. Oil refuels, lubricates and keeps things operating smoothly. When there is a lack of oil things begin to get rough and grind down slowly – they become burdensome and heavy. This can be true in the church corporately, and in our own lives as individuals.

Water is another example of this organic symbolism. John 4:14 compares salvation to a well breaking forth within us. In John 7:38 Jesus says that rivers of living water will flow out of our innermost being. Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 20 and 21 speak of a river with trees on both banks, with leaves that are for the healing of the nations. Wherever this river goes, it brings life, organic life.

3.2.2 Characteristics of Organic Life

1. **It recognises that some things are only for a season and not forever.** We often make the mistake of holding on to things that we enjoy, or that are working, and fail to realise that God only intended them for a season. If this is how we operate, He will eventually move on and we will be left behind. When we are able to see the moves of God and the life of the church as organic, we are able to move when He moves and bear the right fruit in the right season.

2. **Organic life catches, embraces and accommodates the momentum of the Holy Spirit.** When we live organically, we do not try and organise the Scriptures at every level and interpret and capture them in a legal document. Organisational life, on the other hand, tries to write down everything that is allowed to happen or not allowed to happen and put it into a constitution, or some similar document. If something is only for a season, you cannot bring it into your constitution. What will you do when that season is over and it takes ages to change one article of the constitution? Organic life goes to the Word of God to see what must be done, and then does it. We cannot organise according to constitutions. We must live according to the Word and what God is continually revealing to us.

3. **Organic life also recognises that God's way is team.** We should always work together on what He is doing. Some sow, some water and some reap, but only God gives the increase.

4. **Organic life recognises this and there is therefore no competition between those who have different roles.** Anyone who is competing with another and is trying to promote himself or herself, has not understood organic life. They may talk and teach Church with their mouths, but they are not living it until they see that the Church is organic and not an organisation. Once we understand organic life, there will be room for every person to play his or her part because the whole team is needed in order to do the work.

5. **Organic life recognises that promotion only comes from God.** As long as people try to promote themselves they will remain where they are, only God can do the promotions. Where there is organic life there is no one striving to be on top or to be noticed.

6. **Organic life also recognises that every subculture that man has developed in the church must both be repented of and broken.** There are many of these and they are often expressed in the way we speak, the tone of voice we use when we pray, the words we use.

7. **Organic life does not give in to prejudices or fears, which are often only the comfort zones of the people.** There are actually very few leaders who do not give in to these. When we do, however,

we move out of the flow of organic life and follow the preferences of the people.

8. **Organic life is flexible and it embraces the God-inspired, Spirit-directed ebbs and flows.** It seeks for and accommodates the momentum of the Holy Spirit. When we minister, we want to know what the Holy Spirit is doing and move with that. I cannot do that if I give in to the preferences of the people. It is wonderful when it is not only the leaders, but the whole group that is also picking up this flow of the Spirit, when everyone is committed to the organic life of God and listening to the Spirit to see where He will take us next. Everyone in the worship team should be asking this question when they lead. We should be ready, when we see what God is doing, to embrace that, even if it is not what we had originally planned to do. When the model is organic, everything is given to accommodate this flow and is willing to be stretched.

The Apostolic/Prophetic heart yearns for the whole of God's word to be applied in the Church. It therefore embraces a model that makes room for this; one that never gets bogged down in tradition but is anchored in and dependent on the very life of God Himself.

It is this model that enables us to fully embrace a whole-Bible theology of Church and to work that out at every level. Nothing in the Bible and no genuine move of God is overlooked, because we want everything that God has for His Church. An Apostolic/Prophetic model makes way for us to live passionately for God, and to be people who are radical in their expression of His Word and His life.

Consider the 8 Characteristics of Organic Life listed above. Write a broad definition, in your own words, of the church as an organism.

3.3.1 Paul's Apostolic Heart and Pattern

Studying the book of Acts along with the letters that Paul wrote, one is able to see Paul's apostolic heart and pattern. One must look at the big picture. The pattern for the book of Acts is summarised in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The whole of Acts is laid out according to this pattern. This is also Paul's strategic pattern for ministry.

Paul's apostolic heart and vision sets the trend for his apostolic strategy in the book of Acts. Paul had a kingdom vision, i.e., an apostolic vision – a vision not just for himself or for his local church or for his nation, but a vision for the whole body of Christ and for the nations of the world. It is a vision for the church to be the flag of the kingdom, and for people to change the way they live so that they kingdom can come, so that God's will can be done right here on earth as it is in heaven. It is not done through a hierarchy, through Christians being in power in society and forcing change. It happens as people are born again and submit to Christ the King. For without being born again, we cannot even see the Kingdom (John 3:3).

Explore the heart… Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. A careless reading of verses 3-10 might lead one to think that Paul is suddenly putting together thoughts as they come to his mind. A closer look, however, will reveal a very careful and logical arrangement. List the various trials Paul is facing under the headings listed below.

vs. 4 and 5, on his trials:

vs. 6 and 7, on divine provision:

vs. 8–10, on resultant victory over circumstances:

Consider the various trials you may be facing. What comfort do you receive from Paul's words?

We can count on feeling pressure if we're going to obey Christ.
But we can take hope! That stress is preparing us for riches we will enjoy for eternity.

We now begin to understand much about Paul and his team and how they operated. We understand that apostles appointed elders in the local church (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5). We also see that local elders, together with the invitation of apostles, appointed men to apostolic teams (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). We see local leaders (teachers and prophets) sending out people to proclaim the Gospel from the local church (Acts 13:1-3).

We must build according to God's pattern. Moses was told to build according to God's pattern. David was told to build according to God's pattern. We, too, must build New Testament churches according to God's pattern. God's pattern rests on the foundation that New Testament churches are built upon the cornerstone of Jesus Christ, with the Word of God, as it is obeyed in faith. I believe this foundation is also made up of the grace and revelation given to Apostles and Prophets. I am convinced that it is this Apostolic/Prophetic ministry, which is needed in the church today. I believe the hour in which we live demands that we recognise, release and support Apostolic/Prophetic ministries and trans-local teams.

Try the Self-test on the next page.

Self-test:

1. Describe Paul's pattern and strategy in building apostolic teams.

2. Give the definition of a team.

3. List five things that we must guard against in establishing a team.

4. What are the eight (8) characteristics of organic life used to describe the church?

Self-test: Answers

1. Describe Paul's pattern and strategy in building apostolic teams.

This is the real key to understanding Paul's pattern and strategy. We begin to understand Paul's heart; his motivation for the Kingdom; the way he built the church with team ministry; the way he encouraged leaders to be shepherds, not to lord it over God's people; the way he encouraged church followers to follow, to submit, to honour and obey their leaders so that it would be of value for them. Paul was not building a hierarchy. He was not building a democracy. Paul was building a fighting force to bring the Kingdom of God to the nations of the world.

2. Give the definition of a team.

A company of workers, or a side of players in a game who have a common goal, and who all contribute to achieving that goal.

3. List five things that we must guard against in establishing a team.

Petty Annoyances – Philippians 4:11
Conflict of wills – Galatians 5:13
Jealousy – Proverbs 6:3
Misunderstandings – Ephesians 4:31-32
Competition – 1 Corinthians 9:24
Criticism – Romans 2:1-3; James 2:4-17; Proverbs 11:13; 14:15
Sarcasm – James 3:1-17
Manipulation – Jeremiah 9:4-6
Selfishness – Matthew 16:24

4. What are the eight (8) characteristics of organic life used to describe the church?

1. Organic life recognises that some things are only for a season and not forever.
2. Organic life catches, embraces and accommodates the momentum of the Holy Spirit.
3. Organic life also recognises that God's way is team.
4. Organic life recognises this and there is therefore no competition between those who have different roles.
5. Organic life recognises that promotion only comes from God.
6. Organic life also recognises that every subculture that man has developed in the church must both be repented of and broken.
7. Organic life does not give in to prejudices or fears, which are often only the comfort zones of the people.
8. Organic life is flexible and it embraces the God-inspired, Spirit-directed ebbs and flows.

UNIT FOUR

TRANS-LOCAL MINISTRY

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify the misconceptions within local church structure.
2. Understand the ministry of the apostle.
3. Understand the position of the apostle within the local and trans-local churches.
4. Learn how the apostles plant and help churches.

4.1 THE LOCAL CHURCH

4.1.1 A Structural Mindset

I believe that **the church is local but the work is trans-local.** We need to differentiate correctly between what is local and what is trans-local.

Each local church retains full autonomy to govern its own affairs, but through relationship with an Apostolic/Prophetic team the church is able to become meaningfully involved with the trans-local work. Out of relationship, the churches make what they have available to the work, but they do not give their buildings to the team.

You are Peter, a stone; and upon this rock I will build my church;
and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.
Matthew 16:18

I believe that anything that brings hierarchy into the church - committees, church boards, superintendents and the like - both locally and trans-locally, must be taken out. The executive mindset of ownership and hierarchy, is not an Apostolic/Prophetic one. It is not a mindset that has come from Scripture. It is a business mindset that will try to use a business model (organisational structures, flow charts, etc.) to run the church. We must do away with this mindset and the titles that go with it.

If the way in which the church you are part of is structured according to a business mindset, then I want to offer a word of caution here. If you are a church member, you cannot simply march in one day, confront the leadership, and try to force them to change. It is not your role to make it happen. Keep your heart right and stay away from anything that even smells like rebellion.

I believe leaders within the church must remove these business-based models if they do still exist. This is of course not done without love, and one does not change this kind of thing overnight. There is a proper way for this to be done that does not dishonour the people who have held ‘positions’ in the past, or the people they lead.

However, if they are not removed then they may be resurrected in the future. When a church goes through a crisis it tends to slip back into what is familiar, or what is perceived to be the 'safe way', and often it is those things that have not been properly put to death that resurface. God actually wants us in the place where, when we face a crisis, we will go back to the Word and nothing else.

Once we have started to do away with mindsets that are unscriptural, we can begin to build an Apostolic/Prophetic culture into the church. This would include embracing the mandate and the mission previously mentioned, and a development of a culture that is in its essence a going and not a gathering culture. This culture is set on sending and not on staying, on giving and not on getting, and which seeks to do this through the legitimate channels of church government and church structure.

This is important because some church members have the idea that they can go or give where they want to, when they want to and how they want to, and they often cause chaos. Some give their offerings without taking into account the Apostolic/Prophetic model or the bigger picture to which their church is linked. This may cause severe problems.

Stop and search: *Grace* describes the undeserved kindness by which salvation is given, it is a *gift* (freely given) from God, Ephesians 2:8,9. How does this affect your attitude in giving (offerings, time, gifts etc.)? Explain your answer.

4.1.2 Giving

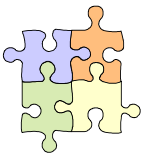
When we do not use the legitimate channels that God has given us in His blueprint, we can easily end up giving in the wrong place and to untried, untested and unaccountable ministry. No matter how popular or how famous some people appear to be, there is something wrong if they appeal for finance outside of the legitimate channels of church government and structure.

There is a Biblical way for this to happen that we find in 1 Corinthians 16:1 - 4 and 2 Corinthians 8:1 - 9:5. When Paul wanted the Corinthian church to help the church in Jerusalem, he gave instructions to this effect: "You gather up the

offering and we will then send someone down to you. Then, together with whomever you want to send, we will take it to the church in Jerusalem." Here we see the legitimate Bible way of doing it. Any other way is illegitimate. There is a tried and tested apostolic involvement that is clearly focused on building the church and not on any person's ministry.

Every one of us needs to learn to work through the legitimate channels of church government and structure and not to decide for ourselves what we want done with what we give. The working together of the trans-local and the local provides safe and legitimate channels for the whole of our church model, including our giving.

Gifted, trans-local team ministry can work into existing churches and help plant new ones, always keep the wider implications of our call in perspective. The church is to make sure that from the outset the local and trans-local are working together at every level, not only into the church, but also out of the church. This is done by actively joining with the work that the trans-local team does.



Time to get involved… Read Nehemiah 2:4-15. Nehemiah's wisdom serves as a model. Often the place to begin revitalisation of a neighbourhood is with simple tasks that are doable and achieve tangible yet significant results. List areas in which you can become involved in serving the community.

4.2 THE WORK OF APOSTLES

4.2.1 The Apostle as an Expert Builder

"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it…" (1 Corinthians 3:10). I believe that is what apostles do – they are expert builders; they know how the building should be put together. The apostle unrolls the 'blueprint' for the church and we should respond accordingly.

Apostolic passion is preoccupied with bringing reverence and a proper fear of the Lord back into the church, thereby freeing the church of pragmatic methodology. Today we see leaders in the church tolerating Boards, committees and methods that have no Biblical basis or validation, but which are accepted because they seem to be a practical way to run the church.

They may look successful for a while, but may lead to spiritual decline and death.

There are pastoral types in the church, who are pacifying the people. They are keeping the peace instead of making the peace, and therefore not confronting and dealing with relevant issues. When an apostle exposes long-standing problems, he is usually blamed for creating them. It is like going up into an attic, turning on the light, then saying, "Look at all the dust this light has caused!" The dust was there all along - the light just exposed it. As expert builders, apostles can well see where the church is going, and encourage and affirm the leaders and congregation. They may also see structural problems and weaknesses. This can be the reason why they are sometimes unpopular.

4.2.2 Parenting Churches

I believe apostles either plant new churches or 'parent' existing churches. To 'plant' means you start from scratch. But sometimes there are a handful of churches that have been going nowhere for ten years - "orphan churches" - and an apostle can come in and help establish them. This I call 'parenting'.

Questions & Answers… Read Ephesians 4:11-16, then answer the following questions.

What is the purpose of having apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., in the church?

How long are we to have apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., in the church?

What causes growth within the church body?

4.3 PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

4.3.1 "They Preached The Good News"

This may appear simplistic and obvious at the outset but, upon scrutiny, is quite profound. The *authentic apostle* is not tossed around by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14) nor is he swayed by every new emphasis currently focused upon by the Christian world. Rather, he is firmly grounded in the orthodoxy of his faith. He is radical in its full proclamation and is not easily wooed away to a disproportionate emphasis of a few truths. Paul said of himself in Acts 20:20 "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful…" and verse 27 "For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the <u>whole will</u> of God" (or *full counsel* of God).

Said in another way: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract

from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you", Deuteronomy 4:22. Revelation 22: 18-19 says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

The apostle will preach both:

power	Philippians 3: 10 - 17	**pattern**
wine	Luke 5: 37 – 39	**wineskin**
message	1 Thessalonians 1: 6 - 7	**model**
mystery	Ephesians 3: 2 – 9	**administration**
river	Revelation 22: 1- 4	**its banks**

Each of the above should be of equal importance and priority to the apostle. Many, of course, place emphasis on one or the other. Yet the Scripture clearly places equal weight on the need for both. The church so clearly needs the wine of God, that which releases "fulness of joy". It is the power that releases the full measure of God's Kingdom presence in the gifts with signs and wonders, flow into ever-increasing depths of God's healing, restoring, anointing presence.

Yet as a river without banks becomes a marsh so the church dearly needs God's pattern. It is interesting that the fruit of the river of Revelation 22 is on the banks: "On either side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month and the leaves of the tree are of for the healing of the nations."

The authentic apostle is not so desirous and preoccupied by the life, power, presence, wine of God that he neglects the weighted matter of what God has ordained to bring the most out of these things. Matters of church form, government, authority, holiness and modus operandi, purpose, etc. are given equal passionate focus and emphasis.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5. Paul is clear concerning the preaching of the Word of God. What will the correct preaching of the Word bring to its hearers?

Furthermore, the fruit of their preaching is freedom. The epistle to the Galatians, as does Acts 15, leaves no doubt that this good news is precisely that – **good news**. It is seen that where the apostle goes liberty will follow, both in churches as well as in individual lives (Galatians 5:1 "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free").

In other words the authentic apostle:

- Prioritises orthodox Biblical doctrine.
- Proclaims continuously all truth whatever the cost or consequences.
- Presents doctrines that set and keep people free.

4.3.2 A Large Number Of Disciples Won

[8]

> The word *apostle* *apostolos ap-os´-tol-os;* from a *delegate;* specifically an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ ["*apostle*"] (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

By definition apostles go, travel, and get to. While some scholars refer to Paul's "missionary journeys," these belie the fact that he was simply doing what he was called to do. In Romans 15:19-20 he says, "I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It was always my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known…" From Genesis 1 through to Revelation 22:20, the Father's apostolic heart has been made clear. Punctuated and commissioned by Matthew 28:18-20 and continued by Acts 13:1-2, the true apostle's lifestyle is "to go". This may be interrupted briefly by planting a church, as Paul did in Ephesus (Acts 19), or by returning to his base church, but apostles don't first lead large churches and expect all to come to them. The apostle's heart is to search out the lost from neighbourhoods to nations. Such is their passion that no cost is too great and no sacrifice is too daunting, (1 Corinthians 9:15 – 27). It is not merely a case of saving souls or getting converts. These apostles make disciples (followers of Christ more than decisions for Christ). More than settling the question of heaven, apostles want to equip the saints for the work of the ministry so that believers have a clear sense of their priestly duties, fulfilment of their individual calling, assurance that they know their part and how the various parts are joined together.

Acts 8: 1- 40 is a great case study to model this dynamic. Philip, the deacon of Acts 6, is a powerful Ephesians 4 evangelist. His impact is profound in Samaria. A city in this region is stunned and then elated by the proclamation and supernatural outworking of the message. Philip does not stay here and build a super-church for himself, nor does he simply move on with his pictures, slides and videos of the crusade. Rather, the apostles come down from Jerusalem, establish and ground these believers in all of the Word so that the impact of the gospel remains and a church is planted. Philip meanwhile, meets the Ethiopian eunuch, preaches to and baptises him.

8James Strong, *New Strong's guide to Bible words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Church history tells us that this man brought the gospel and revival to yet another country in Africa.

Paul's heart for the lost is clearly seen throughout his writings. Paul dearly wanted his beloved Israel to be saved (Romans 10:1); and even his call to go to the Gentiles is continuously acknowledged (Acts 9:15 and 13:47; Romans 1:13; Galatians 1:16). In Romans 15, he speaks of wanting to go "to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" (verse 20). His desire to get to Spain (Romans 15:24 and 28) indicated his heart to push open new frontiers. He continues to request that churches pray that new doors of opportunity open to him (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:2-4) as they did to plant in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-40). Paul's conclusion of the Roman epistle sums up his heart to see all nations saved: "So that all nations may believe and obey him" (Romans 16:26b). The apostle has heaven at heart, anticipating that great and glorious day, when, before the throne will be those "from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9b-10)

Consider the compassionate heart of Christ toward the following people … Respond to each by expressing real ways in which you could minister to them, so fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Weary - Matt. 11:28–30

Tempted - Heb. 2:17, 18

Helpless - Mark 9:20–22

Sorrowful - Luke 7:13, 14

Multitude - Matt. 15:32

Apostles plant churches. Apostles help others plant churches. This is not conference-formed, seminar-based or academic-fashioned church help. The Biblical patterns for apostles, however, are to plant churches and then to have an ongoing relational involvement with these churches. Let's pause and try to present it sequentially, remembering that each church plant has its own ingredients.

1 Corinthians 9:2 says, "Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of apostleship in the Lord." If one looks over the shoulder of an apostle, one should clearly see the fruit of churches he has planted or helped to plant, who are in a healthy state and who have an ongoing relationship with him.

A fragile church needs an apostle who knows and loves the Word of God, not one who has read a few manuals and attends a few courses, or even has a successful church.

How does an apostle plant and then help churches in an ongoing and meaningful way? This is a complex answer that we have to simplify at the risk of sounding simplistic.

Paul refers to himself, the apostle, as a "master builder/expert builder" (1 Corinthians 3:10). His inference is that he has the master blueprint and like the engineer, ensures that all contractors and subcontractors on site build according to the architect's (God's – Hebrews 11:10) specifications, He keeps the plumber, bricklayer, carpenter, tiler and roofer all focused together to get the task done according to the "pattern". The apostle is particular when it comes to laying foundations. There are too many unstable churches, not used for the purpose for which they were designed. Jesus Christ must be the foundation and Solid Rock on which to build (1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 7:24-29). In practical terms, as building on the foundation, it may include the following three ingredients:

Good strong godly government.

Philippians 1:1 introduces us to that picture in local churches of: "saints. …overseers…deacons." This creates a problem for those who wish to complicate church government with non-Biblical structures, titles and hierarchies. Of course, to "home churches", these Biblical "musts" seem to be ignored or forgotten. When Paul asks Titus to "straighten (things) out" NIV or "set in order" NKJV (Titus 1:5), he seems to be referring to elementary matters including the matter of church government. Added to this elementary matter is a healthy ongoing "partnership" (Philippians 1:5) with apostolic and prophetic ministry. The apostle helps to recognise, raise up and appoint elders. This demands ongoing involvement, education and finally ordination.

A further primary stone is establishing a healthy Biblical ethos/heartbeat/commitment.

Apostles, by example (1 Corinthians 11:1) and by message, help fashion and form this ethos. Much can be said on this matter, however Acts 2:42-47 is a wonderful case study of an apostolically fashioned ethos. Acts 2:1 introduces the phrase "they were <u>all</u> together in one place" and the chapter ends with words like "everyone" and "all the believers were together and had everything in common". This "all-ness" factor of the early church is in part formed by "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching". This apostolic people were, in heart,

- RADICAL – heard and obeyed immediately
- REAL – did not leave room for the artificial or pretence
- RELATIONAL – given to and through friendships
- RELEVANT – in a Biblical way, to the world that they were called to reach.

The *authentic apostle* continues to massage the breadth of the Biblical ethos into every local church. When reading the epistles, one is stunned by the continuous adjustment that the apostle makes as churches drift from this heartbeat. In the epistle to the Galatians Paul passionately challenges them about their move away from the truth by one, "…who has bewitched you" (Galatians 3:1). In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul speaks of them "having done all, to stand firm. Stand firm then…" (Ephesians 6:13-14). Of course Paul's greatest declaration was "and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

The apostle keeps the heartbeat of the local church and broader churches passionate, zealous, enthused and motivated. There were no guest speakers or yearly cheer leading; just apostles (and the other Ephesians 4 offices) coming in to the churches to keep them encouraged, strengthened and focused.

Practical foundations required that the apostles keep the churches focused on the purposes of God.

While we are aware that each of these points can be drawn out at length, the apostle keeps the church focused on the plan and purpose of God as recorded in His Word.

We want to see the Lord return; therefore we forcefully and violently advance His Kingdom (Matthew 11:12). This is done practically:

- By Preparing A Bride (the church)
- By Discipling All Nations
- By Planting New Testament Churches
- By Raising Up And Appointing Leaders
- By Mobilising The Priesthood
- By Seeking And Saving The Lost

Not only do apostles come in to lay foundations with their teams, but they also return regularly to these regions and local churches. On the one hand the large fancy conference has replaced the apostolic teams' ongoing involvement in local churches. And on the other hand, pastors have wanted to go to the extreme whereby the team is in their churches so regularly that the team almost begins to pastor the church. Neither of these realities are Biblical.

Now try the Self-test on the next page.

Self-test:

1. What were Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth regarding giving?

2. What is the apostle preoccupied with in bringing back into the church?

3. Apostles either _____ new churches or _____ existing churches.

4. Fill in the chart below concerning what the apostle will preach.

_____	**Luke 5:37-39**	_____
_____	**1 Thess. 1:6-7**	_____
_____	**Ephesians 3:2-9**	_____
_____	**Revelation 22:1-4**	_____

5. The fruit of the apostle's preaching is _____

6. The word *apostle* means _____

7. Paul refers to himself, the apostle, as a
(1 Corinthians 3:10).

8. In heart, what where the four characteristics given to the apostolic people?

Now compare your answers with mine on the next page.

Self-test: Answers

1. What were Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth regarding giving?

Paul wanted the Corinthian church to help the church in Jerusalem, he gave instructions to this effect: "You gather up the offering and we will then send someone down to you. Then, together with whomever you want to send, we will take it to the church in Jerusalem."

3. What is the apostle preoccupied with in bringing back into the church?

Apostolic passion is preoccupied with bringing reverence and a proper fear of the Lord back into the church, thereby freeing the church of pragmatic methodology.

3. Apostles either **plant** new churches or **parent** existing churches.

4. Fill in the chart below concerning what the apostle will preach.

. wine	Luke 5:37-39	wineskin
. message	1 Thess. 1:6-7	model
. mystery	Ephesians 3:2-9	administration
. river	Revelation 22:1-4	its banks

5. The fruit of the apostle's preaching is **freedom**

6. The word *apostle* means **"sent one"**

7. Paul refers to himself, the apostle, as a **“master builder/expert builder”** (1 Corinthians 3:10).

8. In heart, what are the four characteristics given to the apostolic people?

- **RADICAL – heard and obeyed immediately**
- **REAL – did not leave room for the artificial or pretence**
- **RELATIONAL – given to and through friendships**
- **RELEVANT – in a Biblical way, to the world that they were called to reach.**

UNIT FIVE

STRATEGY

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify the importance of using leadership teams within the church.
2. Understand the different aspects of developing leadership teams within the church.
3. Understand and effectively apply specific keys to discipling the nations.
4. Learn different aspects on developing a healthy church.

5.1 A SERVANT HEART

The way in which a servant heart can best be typified is by using the concept of a team.

5.1.1 Church Teams

Team has always been high on God's agenda. In the Garden of Eden God established team. From the beginning He demonstrated the necessity for us to work together and not alone as we seek to fulfil His mandate. We even find team in the Godhead itself – a Triune God who is one. The Trinity is a perfect 'team', likeminded in every way, in complete harmony and co-operating in everything.

T alent – every person is talented (Matthew 25:14-30; Ephesians 4:11,12)

E xample – follow the example of Christ (Philippians 2:5; 1 Timothy 4:12)

A ttitude – we are to be forgiving, loving and positive (Mark 11:26; 1 John 4:7,8; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 12:1-2).

M aturity – always striving to grow (Ephesians 4:13-15)

This pattern of team is emphasised again and again throughout Scripture. Moses the Lawgiver had Aaron, Miriam and Hur. Later on he had the elders that God anointed. When spies were sent to the Promised Land, a team of 12 were sent out – they were not sent out alone. David had a number of leadership teams and he constantly conferred with them. Jesus had teams – the 3, the 12, the 72 and the 120. He also sent His disciples out two-by-two. Later, as the gospel is spread, the apostles discovered and applied the same principles; travelling and working in teams to build the church. For example, Paul worked with Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and others.

Clearly, team is an important aspect of God's pattern for how we get the work of the Kingdom done; it has always been on His heart. There is no room for loners in the call of God. To be alone (and therefore to work alone) is not good. It is not God's way. Team is an important aspect of skilful church leadership that, along with others elements of His pattern, God has been restoring to the church.

One of the clearest examples of team from which we should learn from is the New Testament model of local church government. The Bible presents a model where local church government is carried by a plurality of elders. In other words, the primary leadership of a local church should ideally be carried by an eldership team and not by an individual. I do not understand the Bible to portray this as a group chosen by and representing the will of the people, and neither do I understand it to mean a committee that is merely appointed to fulfil a task.

presbuteros *pres-boo´-ter-os;* comparative of **presbus** (*elderly*); *older;* as noun, a *senior;* specifically an Isr. *Sanhedrist* (also fig. member of the celestial council) or Christian "*presbyter*":— elder (-est), old.

For many years now, there has been a work of the Holy Spirit in the church to restore a more accurate model of church leadership. Increasingly we see that governmental authority is being carried by a non-hierarchical eldership team, and not by any hierarchical structure. There is no Biblical precedent for any form of hierarchical leadership in the church. There has been a strong move away from the model where the congregation is in charge of the church and votes on every decision. This was actually a bottom-up hierarchy. There is a dismantling of highly defined top-down hierarchical structures taking place.

God has ordained that those who are raised up as elders for each local church should carry governmental authority in that church, as a team. These are not elected to this position and neither are they chosen according to the preferences of any one person or group of individuals. God has provided us with guidelines for recognising them (these we find in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), but He is the one who will release the anointing and grace in them to lead His people.

episkopos *ep-is´-kop-os;* a *superintendent*, i.e. Christian officer in general charge of a (or the) church (lit. or fig.):— bishop, overseer.

As we embrace this, our understanding must grow around the fact that 'elders', 'pastors' and 'bishops' are all terms that describe different aspects of the same governmental office in the church. There are three Greek words that the New Testament uses to refer to governmental leadership. The first is '*presbuteros'* – the word from which we derive the English word 'presbytery' and which is most often translated as 'elder' in the Scriptures. The second word is *'episkopos'* – usually translated as 'overseer' or 'bishop'. Thirdly, there is *'poimēn'* – which, for the most part, is translated as 'shepherd' but is sometimes translated as 'pastor'. [9]

poimēn *poy-mane´;* of uncertain affixes; a *shepherd* (literal or figurative): shepherd, pastor.

[9]James Strong, *New Strong's guide to Bible words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

These three words are used interchangeably. They are all aspects of the same leadership function within the local church. The elders (who governs) are shepherds (or pastors) of the sheep for whom they have oversight (are bishops). This is what we find in Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:1-2; Titus 1:5-7 and also 1 Peter 2:25. In these passages the terms for governmental leadership are used interchangeably to refer to the same person or office of leadership, often in the plural form. This plurality, or team, is also altogether different from a hierarchy that would include these (bishops, elders and pastors) as three of the tiers of authority in or over the church.

The Biblical pattern for an eldership team is of an eldership that is a team of equals who perform different tasks at different times. Leading this team is one of those tasks and, although this may be the responsibility of one particular individual, that person is still an equal member of the team.

The fact that a team is made up of equals who each bring their strengths and abilities to that team is one of the outstanding benefits of team. It provides an environment for people to co-operate freely and effectively when working together on a task, and to accomplish more than what just the sum of their individual talents and skills would. In fact, this principle applies to the whole church. Every church should function as a team of equals who do different things at different times. Deuteronomy 32:30 tells us that in God's economy, one can put a thousand to flight, while two can put ten thousand to flight. As a team we share the burden of responsibility, just as Moses shared the load with his leaders and gave them 10's, 50's, 100's and 1000's to care for. Paul also shared the responsibility and authority he carried with those who worked with him.

As we commit to working in team according to God's pattern, we enlarge the sphere of our influence and our inheritance. Each person can only be in one place at a time; even Jesus was subject to this limitation while on earth. As a team though, we can be in many places at the same time. This is the kind of benefit we can expect from team. We can each bring the little we have and find that it is multiplied in the context of team.

Consider the significance of a leader… Read Hebrews 13:7-18. Why is it important that we obey the leaders placed over us? Cross reference to find a Biblical answer to the question.

I believe the strategy to developing churches is to enable the church to function as an apostolic model. To understand the Apostolic we must understand what Jesus and His apostles did.

Jesus worked in teams – the 3 (Peter, John and James), the 12, the 72 and the 120. He also sent His disciples out two-by-two.

The Inner Circle

Peter, James, and John made up the inner circle of disciples. At the outer perimeter was the group of five hundred who saw Christ after His resurrection (I Cor 15:6). A bit closer were the seventy disciples who were sent out two by two to preach and heal (Luke 10:1, 17). Still closer were the Twelve, of whom these three were specially selected to witness the event of the raising of Jairus' daughter, and Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. Of these three, John the beloved was closest to Christ (John 13:23; 21:20).

[10]

5.2 A STRATEGIC HEART

The way in which a servant heart can best be typified is through planning, going and reaching out.

5.2.1 Discipling Nations

There are five key strategies to discipling the nations.

Keys to Discipling the Nations

- Radical converts
- Trained, equipped and appointed key leaders
- Planting churches
- Established bases from which to operate
- Spiritual warfare

[10]Jerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.

Radical Converts

The answer to discipling the nations does not lie in strategies or formulae. It is to be found in a radical new believer with a heart and mindset that is different to what was in the past.

We are to become a people who measure everything against the Word of God. Radical new believers have settled in their heart that their life is going to be lived solely by the Word of God. A radical lifestyle begins with radical converts who have been so thoroughly saved that they are altogether renewed in this area. There must be no room for compromise.

Trained, Equipped and Appointed Key Leaders

Restoring skilful leadership in the church is a necessary element of God's plan; it is part of a bigger plan. It is also not an end in itself. We must remember that the role of a skilful leadership is to bring the people of God into the greater purposes of God.

In order to see God's people come into their fulness as priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), we need to learn the skill of being leaders who are *releasing* in their whole leadership style:

- The way we **relate** to those we lead
- The way we **exercise** leadership
- The way we **train** and **equip** leaders

Perhaps one of the most important attitudes of heart is that we are always building *away* from ourselves. By this I mean that we seek neither to own nor to control the people we lead, but are dedicated to creating real 'priesthood opportunities' for them and to build them toward God and His kingdom. Our leadership should draw them into serving God and the corporate vision.

When our leadership is exercised with this in mind, it becomes *releasing* in nature. It prepares people for ministry and gives opportunity for the body of Christ to fully express itself in all walks of life. Skilful leadership is devoted to seeing this become a reality for every believer. It continually labours to bring the people of God to a place of maturity in life and in ministry.

John Wesley had three criteria for ordaining Methodist ministers:

- Is Jesus his Saviour and Lord?
- Is he using his spiritual and natural gifts for God's glory?
- Is his ministry fruitful?

Consider Wesley's three criteria for ordaining ministers…What would be the importance of each criteria? Find Scripture to validate each criteria.

Church Planting

I believe the only way to fulfil the Great Commission is to plant New Testament churches in every village, town and city of every country in which God calls us to work. In order for this to happen, we have to *go*. Churches will not be planted if no one goes.

New converts must be planted in new churches, churches that have embraced the whole Bible and are intent on fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples of the nations.

Making disciples involves training, equipping and releasing. It means that we bring people to the point where they are theologically equipped. Church-planters, pastors, and leaders all need to be trained and this should be done the very first day a church is planted.

Establishing church…

The Greek word for church (Gr. *ekklēsia*) literally means "a chosen or called-out assembly." Thus the use of the word as a technical term for an assembly or group of believers in Christ is quite natural. It is not viewed as an external organisation, denomination, or hierarchical system. The New Testament church, therefore, is a local autonomous congregation or assembly of believers, which is a "church" in and of itself. The first occurrence of the word in the New Testament is in Matthew 16:18. Since the commission in Matthew 10 sent the apostles only to the "house of Israel," and no further commission was given until chapter 28, there was no worldwide task for the disciples until the physical manifestation of the church on the Day of Pentecost.

11

11Thomas Nelson, Inc., *King James Version Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1988 by Liberty University.

Establishing Bases from which to Operate

Radical disciples and churches being planted with radical new converts are needed. Then these churches must be built into bases from which we can operate into the world. From day one we should have the desire for our church to become a base from which we can send people all over the world. If the church has one hundred people, there are enough people to finance others' going to the nations on a permanent basis.

When we begin to see our church as a base, then we will also handle finances properly and not be self-absorbed in how we allocate them. We will use what we have to play an active role in the mandate and the mission - going into the whole world and making disciples.

We need to build it into our churches so that the churches do not hold on to their leaders. When we have a 'going' attitude we will be willing to release the best leaders in order to begin new churches and establish more bases.

Finances… How can a church make its resources available to fulfilling the mandate of the church?

Notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is about declaring the Lordship of Jesus in and over every arena in which we find ourselves. **All** authority belongs to Jesus and all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). Every sphere and every kingdom is ultimately going to be brought into subjection to His sovereign will. Everything and everyone will be faced with the claim of God and His Kingdom.

Spiritual warfare changes the spiritual atmosphere in a given place or situation or set of circumstances. If there is no change, then no spiritual warfare is taking place. Light replaces darkness, truth dethrones lies, life overcomes death, and love overcomes hate, selfishness, division and the like. The change is real and evident when spiritual warfare is exercised.

Character that is untested by the storms of adversity is as yet unproven. Unity that is untested by the threat of division may only be cooperation on the surface. Maturity that is untested by difficult tribulation is not yet trustworthy.

Spiritual warfare is breaking strongholds wherever they may exist – our own lives, in our church or over our country. Wherever they exist they will come into conflict with the Lordship of Jesus. Very often, even the will of the church is in conflict with the will of God, and that brings bondage. When this happens we sometimes think that is the devil getting the upper hand and yet it is only our will coming into conflict with the will of God. These are strongholds that must be broken.

Ultimately, spiritual warfare is waged in order that the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Christ may come to an individual or situation. For that reason, spiritual warfare is focused on Jesus and not on the enemy.

5.2.2 Perspectives of a Healthy Church

Signs or characteristics of a healthy church abound in Scripture. They will help us to look at some areas of the church in which we are involved and to make the necessary adjustments to bring about a spiritually healthy church. If we do not have healthy churches then we are not going to bring about a healthy expression of the Kingdom of God here on earth. However, when we have healthy churches, we will also have spiritually healthy converts.

Converts need to be firmly grounded in the Word of God so that their responses, reactions, everything they do and say are Christ-like. Rather than drifting in and out of the Kingdom of God and the life of Jesus, they ought to be firmly founded on Jesus.

Characteristics of a healthy church:

Characteristic 1: Fulfilling the Great Commission

A healthy church is a church that is fulfilling the Great Commission by planting New Testament churches in every village, town and city of every country, both in our corporate-ness and also as local churches (Matthew 28:19-20).

This is a church that, while it recognises the validity of other expressions of the Body of Christ, will not take a chance on just sending people away. It says “They are saved because God sent us to proclaim the Gospel.” Not saved in the sense of where their destiny lies but saved in the sense of their expression of effectiveness in keeping them from bondage and empty traditions. The first occurrence of something that was going to bring bondage to the early church, is found in Acts 15. The situation was dealt with radically. They were not going to bring any bondage to any of God’s people.

Characteristic 2: Truly Knowing God

One of the vital signs of a healthy church is that it knows God, truly know God – who He is and how He operates, what He has done, what He is doing and what He wants to do through His people.

Most of these will come from the Word of God. We need to preach the Biblical evidence of what it means to be truly born again. Evidence of the new birth may be summarised using 1 John:

- A new life – 1 John 1,2,3,5
- A new liberty – 1 John 3,5,2
- A new light – 1 John 1,2
- A hatred of the world – 1 John 2
- A new longing and love for obedience – 1 John 2,3
- A new loyalty – 1 John 2

Characteristic 3: Going for Gold

Going for gold means aiming for the highest possible goal, not settling for second best or less than what God has for you. In conversion, we are to remember the "all" factor. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came and *all* were filled, all spoken with other tongues, they *all* heard the sound of a mighty wind. With that knowledge Peter spoke and declared the riches of God. God desires that there is that prophetic life in the church, so that He is able to speak into healthy churches, to prepare the planet, the people of God, and us to reach the heathen with the Good News.

After Peter preached he immediately offered to those who would believe the opportunity to repent and be baptised, the outward symbol of an inward change. There was no consulting, no praying with friends, or asking anyone else; when a person is going for gold they go for the full reward. I believe that this is a sign of a healthy church – when we accept and act on the complete message of God's Word.

"Peter said to them,
'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ
so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' "
Acts 2:38

Characteristic 4: Relationship with God

Excellent and healthy churches are traditional without being traditionists, the do not intend to re-invent Christianity but they do make Scripture the heart of whatever they do.

There are people that have come and gone who, in their past exploits, have done for God more than the church has done in its corporateness:

> Kenneth Callaghan: in his book *The Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* suggests that a strong church has a mission objective and secondly, dynamic worship. Darryl Robinson in total church life argues that strategy is the key component for an effective church.

John McArthur comments, “the marks of a healthy church” stresses goals, discipleship and doctrine. Bill Hall in *Seven Steps to Transform your Church* stresses renewal and evangelism.

Day Stoneask in his book *Who wants to grow a Church?* Asks the following questions:

- Are you praying? When we pray, we set loose the power of the Holy Spirit. These days the Spirit leads us to places we would not go ourselves.
- Are you willing to serve? Unless we humble ourselves so that we are willing to serve others, growth will remain illusive.
- Are you willing to change? It is not easy to change; it requires great courage, because our natural tendency is to resist change.
- Can you build a team? Team players are going to win the ball game. Not much forward progress can be made with a team that is not united and excited.
- Can you prioritise? There are many things that Paul had a tug with its leaders in ministry. It takes a firm hand to sort out a church and its priorities and stick to them.
- Can you persevere? It takes time to build a winner. The faint-of-heart quite early. Those who endure however, soon earn the respect of others. This in turn leads to credibility.
- Are you a visionary? Do you and your staff have the ability to think ahead to visualise what your ministries are going to look like in years ahead? Devote time to honestly accessing what the future may hold.

Take a moment to think of 5 or 10 essential elements you believe are crucial to developing a healthy church. Support your answer with Scripture.

Developing a healthy apostolic/prophetic church will produce healthy and vibrant base churches with radical converts possessing a desire to proclaim the Gospel and live in the powerful truth of God’s Word.

Now try the Self-test on the next page.

Self-test:

1. Give examples, from Scripture, of the pattern of “team”.

2. What is the Biblical pattern for an eldership team?

3. In what ways did Jesus work in teams?

4. What are the five keys to discipling the nations?

5. Making disciples involves _____ , _____ and _____

6. What are the three aspects of spiritual warfare emphasised in this unit?

7. What are the four characteristics of a healthy church given in this unit?

8. Based on 1 John 1-5, what are the six evidences of new birth highlighted in this unit?

Compare your answers with mine on the next page.

Self-test: Answers

1. Give examples, from Scripture, of the pattern of “team”.

This pattern of team is emphasised again and again throughout Scripture. Moses the Lawgiver had Aaron, Miriam and Hur. Later on he had the elders that God anoints. When spies were sent to the Promised Land, a team of 12 were sent out – they were not sent out alone. David had a number of leadership teams and he constantly conferred with them. Jesus had teams – the 3, the 12, the 72 and the 120. He also sent His disciples out two-by-two. Later, as the gospel is spread, the apostles discovered and applied the same principles; travelling and working in teams to build the church. For example, Paul worked with Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and others.

2. What is the Biblical pattern for an eldership team?

The Biblical pattern for an eldership team is of an eldership that is a team of equals who perform different tasks at different times. Leading this team is one of those tasks and, although this may be the responsibility of one particular individual, that person is still an equal member of the team.

3. In what ways did Jesus work in teams?

Jesus worked in teams – the 3 (Peter, John and James), the 12, the 72 and the 120. He also sent His disciples out two-by-two.

4. What are the five keys to discipling the nations?

- **Radical converts**
- **Trained, equipped and appointed key leaders**
- **Planting churches**
- **Established bases from which to operate**
- **Spiritual warfare**

5. Making disciples involves **training**, **equipping** and **releasing**

6. What are the three aspects of spiritual warfare emphasised in this unit?

Spiritual warfare is about declaring the Lordship of Jesus in and over every arena that we find ourselves in.

Spiritual warfare changes the spiritual atmosphere in a given place or situation or set of circumstances.

Spiritual warfare is breaking strongholds wherever they may exist – our own lives, in our church or over our country.

7. What are the four characteristics of a healthy church given in this unit?

Characteristic 1: Fulfilling the Great Commission
Characteristic 2: Truly Knowing God
Characteristic 3: Going for Gold
Characteristic 4: Relationship with God

8. Based on 1 John 1-5, what are the six evidences of new birth highlighted in this unit?

- **A new life – 1 John 1,2,3,5**
- **A new liberty – 1 John 3,5,2**
- **A new light – 1 John 1,2**
- **A hatred of the world – 1 John 2**
- **A new longing and love for obedience – 1 John 2,3**
- **A new loyalty – 1 John 2**

ASSIGNMENT TWO

2.1 Visit a minimum of two different churches, other than your local church. Through interaction with the pastors/elder(s) find out the following:

- What are they doing to reach out in their community, city, nation and entire world?
- What are their plans for future activity within their community, city, nation and entire world?

2.2 Using the information you received from the churches write an essay of 1000 words detailing each of the churches' commitments and activities.

On the basis of the knowledge gained from the course material and the relevant scriptures:

- List each of the different churches' strengths and weaknesses.
- Evaluate the strategies of each of the churches and make a Biblical comparison to that of the New Testament apostolic/prophetic model. Include Biblical references to verify your answers.
- What adjustments could they make to be more effective as an apostolic/prophetic church?

[Total length, approximately 1000 words]

Perspectives of a Healthy Church
Dudley Daniel

There are some signs, or characteristics that are indications of a healthy church to be gleaned from Scripture. As we look at these, they should help to motivate us toward doing something for the Kingdom in our own churches. They will help us to look at those areas of the church that we are involved in and make the necessary adjustments to bring about a healthy church.

We begin with a brief summary of what a number of different church leaders have indicated are signs of a healthy church. Some of the statements included we may not necessarily agree with and with some our own comment is included.

Christian Swartz – "Natural Church Development"
He says that every successful church has 8 characteristics:

- Empowering leadership.
- Gift-orientated ministry.
- Healthy spiritual life.
- Functional structures.
- Inspiring worship.
- Holistic small groups.
- Need-orientated evangelism.
- Loving relationships.

While we agree with most of these things, his interpretation of certain words and our interpretation are quite different.

Steven McKaya – "What Makes A Church Healthy"
He lists the following as aspects that healthy churches have in common:

- *A sense of God's presence.*
- *God honouring worship.*
- *Training programmes.* A place where people can develop their gifts.
- *A safe, affirming community.* How safe we feel in the church we are in? What happens when we slip up? What happens when we confide in someone about those things that are so costly for us to even recognize, never mind tell another human being? Is it a place where new people can grow?
- *Caring relationships.* Building loving connections between people.
- *Servant leaders.* Always looking for and identifying those who have the gift of leadership.
- *Outward ministry.* (Nigel Day-Lewis says, "We need to spend a good 50% of your prayer time outward".)
- *Efficient administration.* This is important. He may mean something different to what we do, but in the Kingdom of God when we talk about a wineskin we are primarily talking about the new wineskin suitable for the Kingdom of God, and that is administration. If it is not effective, it is not a wineskin suitable for the Kingdom of God.
- *Accountability partners.* Relationships that enable pastors to vent when times get tough with someone or a group outside the church.

We are not a altogether sure about this one. The best place to 'vent' is on your knees in front of the throne, because God understands but very seldom does anything about it. He says, "I am not for or against you or them, but I do understand."

- *Sacrificial generosity.*

Duck Manton – An article

He writes that he believes that the health of a pastor is as important as the health of a church, and a healthy pastor is someone who has 7 ingredients:

- *He is someone who is intimate with God*.
- *Has a vision for the future*.
- *A passion for the lost*.
- *One who is willing to sacrifice.* (We become partners because we are willing to sacrifice. Then we get there and we want the people to sacrifice!)
- *Someone who can endure through difficulties*.
- *Someone who has good people skills*. Very few of us were born with them, so most of us have to develop them with God's help. Do you remember the book by Tim LeHay on transforming the temperaments? Most people do not read the first word – 'transform.' Paul and Moses were choleric and God did not put up with them, so why should we? God transforms us. Likewise God transforms the phlegmatic who is always chopping and changing and is not quite sure about anything.
- *Maintains a positive attitude along the journey*.

Paul Woolks - "Common Traits Of Excellent Churches"

In this book he talks of what he considers to be, "traits that stand out as practically indispensable." These are:

- *Attitude*.
  - Excellent churches have a spirit of excitement, taking our entrepreneurial attitude and using it creatively. They are willing to reach out beyond their own comfort zones and periodically to confess how well they are doing. Periodically, not all the time, not continually occupied with morbid introspection, but unafraid of making mistakes.
- *Mission*.
  - Successful churches have a pure sense of mission; they know what they are about, and the deity of the leadership practice forgiveness and acceptance.
- *Ministry*.
  - An excellent church sees itself as a unique community, uniquely positioned to serve the Lord. They expect to transform the culture and hold government and institutions accountable for their actions.
  - God has placed the church in the unique position of being responsible to hold governments accountable, and yet the church must gain its credibility back to be able to do this, because we have lost a lot of ground.

- *Relationship with God*.
    - Excellent churches are traditional without being traditionalist, they do not intend to re-invent Christianity; Scripture is at the heart of whatever they do.

Darryl Robinson – "Total Church Life." He argues that strategy is the key component for an effective church.

Bill Hall - "Seven Steps To Transform Your Church." He stresses renewal and evangelism.

Rick Warren - *"The Purpose Driven Church."* He urges us to define our purpose and to organise around these purposes.

Bret Schuller and John Bryce - "Growing A Healthy Church"
They say that we need to keep the following things to in mind:

- *A passion for Christ*.
  A growing church is one that is lead to a personal encounter with Christ. This happens when a congregation is lead deep into word and prayer.
- *Getting along*.
  When we are in tune with the Lord, we are in tune with others. People who walk around saying, "I am in tune with everyone," when in reality everyone dislikes him or her, are deceived. When we are in tune with God we will be in tune with others. Relationships within a church can be contentious a debilitating, that is why a pastor must find ways of encouraging a spirit of love and respect. Small groups are an excellent way of doing this.
- *Meaningful evangelism*.
  Jesus was always interested in the whole person. He saw their needs and responded to their neediness. Meaningful evangelism identifies the need of a community among church friends and fashion or defines a well thought out methodology to meet those needs.
- *Small groups*.
  Many churches have no systematic approach to involving their members in small groups. The value of groups is enormous. It helps us to do nurturing, fellowship, evangelism and leadership development.

Genorawitch Genora - "Church growth"
He says that the secrets in growing a church locally and globally are found in Acts 2:42 following. Church growth is not likely to happen if believers do not devote themselves equally as the disciples devoted themselves to:

- *Teaching*.
  The study of the apostles' teaching appears to be the early churches' first priority. They emerged themselves in the Word of God. Today believers seem to know very little about what they believe and why.
- *Fellowship*.
  The early church was well known for its fellowship. It was a fellowship they enjoyed both with each other as with the Lord. The church must provide a context in which the believers can get to know each other.

- *Prayer*.
  The early church invested a lot of time in prayer. they had a willingness to pray and to fast.
- *The breaking of bread*.
  When the early church ate together, they made sure that they gathered around the table as people who were one in the Lord. At the Lord's Table, all walls and barriers were broken down as the church came together as one.

Glen Martin and Deon Gunter - "Powerhouse"
They write about the Belmont church in Nashville that grew from 60 members to 3500. They say that the secret is prayer, prayer from the pulpit. Prayer is crucial for the worship experience of the Church. When members pray with the pastor before the service, during the service and they are available after the service for prayer. When prayer is always on the agenda; no meeting or gathering in the church begins without it.
When prayer is taught and the church has a leader whose ministry is prayer, a prayer culture develops in the church.

Jack Hayford – Article on "The Essentials Of Church Health"
Here is a man of integrity who has done the church a lot of good worldwide. The questions Jack Hayford puts to his pastors are:

- *What teachings do I need to put before my people in order to produce a spiritually mature congregation?*
- *Do we preach about spiritual empowering?*
- *What about healing?*
- *What about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues?*

The following is a tentative list, gleaned from what Jack Hayford writes, that can be a useful tools and an evaluation of current teaching and ministry.

1. *Divine revelation*
   We must teach our people the scope of, the response to, the exercise of the resources available to the Spirit filled believer, which includes the inspiration and revelation of Scripture and the existence and the nature of God.
2. *Redemption*
   This includes what it means to be a child of God. Many of the words we use are Scriptural, but we do not know what their Biblical background is. A part of redemption has to do with slavery. A slave master would own you but when you were redeemed you were taken away from the master who enslaved you, to serve another master who had set you free. We take bad models of redemptions and adoption. Parents are so often portrayed as adopting a child to make them a slave. Basic disciplines including stewardship, walking in faith and the sacraments are all a part of redemption.
3. *Spiritual empowering*
   This includes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of healing.
4. *Spiritual con*flict

> We need to teach our people about spiritual conflict, including the origin and nature of demons. Some people are scared to even speak of demons, and heaven and hell these days. Why? Because a certain sector of fanaticism says that if you speak of the devil you are being negative. Weigh up how much Jesus preached about hell, punishment, and demons, and then think how often He preached about self-image. Jesus spoke about hell and demons and it was not negative.

Our contribution

Because New Covenant Ministries International has been so radical on so many issues in the past that we tend to want to try and recreate Christianity, some of us have the attitude that we are so great and everyone else is a bunch of charlatans and compromisers and only New Covenant Ministries International is on “the-cutting-edge”. This will never be true!

Whatever ‘cutting-edge’ means, we do not want to re-invent Christianity and we do not want to ever be a group that thinks that everything that has been done in the past is hogwash. There are people that have come and gone who, in their exploits in the past, have done for God more than we have ever done in our corporateness. All this must be kept in mind as we present our own view on what the signs of a healthy church are.

To begin with, we certainly do need healthy churches. If we do not have healthy churches, then we are not going to bring about a healthy expression of the Kingdom of God here on the earth, but when we have healthy churches, we will also have healthy converts. I am not talking about physical health, but spiritual health. We want to have converts that are spiritually healthy in God, who are experiencing the Kingdom and Jesus in everything that they are and do.

We used to speak years ago about the tube-of-toothpaste law: when you take the cap off the toothpaste tube and apply pressure, only what is inside comes out. Not what we claim to be inside, but what is really inside. In the same way, our converts need to really have Jesus on the inside. Our converts need to be firmly grounded in the Word of God so that their responses, reactions, and everything they do and say are Christ-like. When this is true, they will not drift in and out of the Kingdom of God and the life of Jesus.

So, what are the signs of a healthy church?

1. Fulfilling the Great Commission
Fulfilling the great commission includes the following:

Planting New Testament churches with and for new converts
A healthy church is a church that is fulfilling the Great Commission by planting New Testament churches in every village, town and city of every country, both in our corporateness and also as local churches (Matthew 28:19 "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations").

In Acts Chapter 8 we read, "on that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered" - not the apostles but the everyday people – "preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city."

Overnight Philip had the kind of church that every one of us dreams of having: a church born out of miracles, and signs and wonders, a church where the devil himself knew that he had no stronghold.

The scripture tells us that, "demons came out of people with shrieks." Now who does not want a church like that? Is that not the longing of most leaders? If Philip had been living in our day and had followed the model that so many do, he would have immediately had the finances to travel the world and tell people how to have the same thing happen in their area. He would never have had another financial problem.

The whole city was saved because of the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Yet there is an interesting thing that we read here. God was at work to reveal His way of doing things. We read that God took Philip away, but before He took him the apostles came. They were all relaxing, drinking coffee, and talking about their exploits, reminiscing, having a good time in general, because they had stayed behind in Jerusalem, but "when they heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God; they sent Peter and John to them." Peter and John were apostles. In other words, the apostolic was injected straight in to the new church plant.

In Acts 11, picking up in the nineteenth verse we read, "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem" What did they do? Again they sent apostles to establish a new church with these new converts They went to make sure that there was a real church established, built on apostolic/prophetic foundations. That is a sign of a healthy 'New Testament' church.

Planting churches that keep people free

The early believers knew nothing of looking for other churches to send the new converts to (in the example of Phillip in Samaria given above there were

most probably no churches there yet anyway as you never find that alluded to at all in Scripture). When they planted, they planted churches that would keep the people free; that is the New Testament pattern.

A healthy church will do the same today. While we must always recognise the validity of other expressions of the Body of Christ, we cannot take a chance of simply sending new converts away to somehow find a church for themselves. If we are responsible for seeing them saved because God sent us to them for that purpose, then we should also take the responsibility to, where necessary, plant a church and keep them saved. Not saved in the sense of their eternal destiny, but saved in the sense of the expression of their effectiveness as Christians and in keeping them free from bondage and empty traditions.

The first time something that was going to bring bondage came on the early church (we read about it in Acts 15) it was dealt with very radically. They made sure that they did not bring any bondage to any of God's people. We need to remember that what we get saved into is more important than what we get saved out of.

So, when I talk about a New Testament church, I am talking about a church that keeps people free without saying, "Do as you please". It keeps living only within the parameters of Scripture – nothing added to it, nothing taken away from it, only the Scriptures. A New Testament church will stay away from licence and legalism. If a man wants to wear pink shirts you do not say one word about it. If they want to wear pink shorts (like I did when I first arrived in Australia) you do nothing. You let them wear that those things because the Scripture does not command us about the length, size, or colour of shorts, or of women's dresses for that matter. What it does talk about is modesty. You have got to keep people free.

On the issue of long hair: I would like to know what long is, and what short is? Who knows? It would seem to me that in the Old and New Testament times most men had, what we today would call long hair. There would not have been any short back and sides. The Bible does not say anything about what colour their hair was dyed either; these are all personal preferences.

As soon as the church was planted in Samaria, apostles were sent to ensure it kept a New Testament foundation, keeping the people free. Do you get the picture? This is how we have tried to work as New Covenant Ministries International. If you are instrumental in someone being saved, and you get some people that are interested in planting a church, we will try and do our best to help you get a church planted. That is the way God patterned it; when the apostles heard of the people being saved, they sent someone to see that a church was planted that would keep them free.

So, it is has never been just about soul-winning or crusades, but about ensuring that new converts are planted in a church that believes the Bible plus nothing, and the Bible minus nothing. A church that does not hold to legalistic rules; like not being allowed to purchase anything on Sunday because it is the Sabbath. It is not the Sabbath anyway! The Sabbath will never change – it is

on a Saturday. Sunday is the Lord's Day. We all need a Sabbath day that is the way God made us. "Six days shalt thou labour...Exodus 20:8 (KJV)." But Sunday is not the Sabbath for the Body of Christ; it is workday, the real work!

Everyone has a heart to reach everyone - both locally and into the nations

Being free does not mean we can do what we like, but it does mean that neither legalism nor licence prevents us from reaching those who need Jesus. Legalism would say that we could not mix with anyone unless we can endorse everything that they are doing. By implication, that means we have to quit hanging around with all those that we can influence for Jesus, and only mix with those who have already been influenced by Jesus. What happens, if we only mix in our holy huddle and let the world go to hell, is that we become as irrelevant as they are! Jesus would never have made it on the basis of that view. He was constantly picked on for being seen with people who were sinners. But let us be clear, He did not do what they did, He was there to influence them.

We have been commanded to plant New Testament churches. Sometimes that means we sit with people while they are drinking, or smoking, and we sit with them while they are doing other things that we do not endorse. There may come a time when we have to say, "I cannot cope with this, I have to leave now," but we do not leave simply because they are doing things we are a little uncomfortable with.

Many conferences are centred on these kinds of things and emphasise the following: “Come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing”. This is indeed truth, but I do not think it was referring to distancing ourselves from unsaved people altogether. We read in Scripture that whoever wants to be a friend of the world is the enemy of Christ, but we err if we interpret that to mean that we should not go to the movies and wear make-up and many other things that are in fact not Kingdom issues. From time to time it could include these things, but I do not think that is what God means. We cannot reach a community unless we are in their midst.

A part of fulfilling the great commission necessitates that every member be equipped for lifestyle evangelism. Not only those few who generally make the commitment and give their time. Every member, every single person in the church should be involved. We have to do this graciously and wisely in order to help them understand that none can be excluded from God’s requirement in this. God does not exclude anyone and He does not want to hear our excuses, not now or before the Judgement Seat of Christ, as to why you were not involved in every day, every believer, lifestyle evangelism.

Some of us are not evangelists, but we can cook meals. Healthy churches cook meals for people who cannot cook meals for themselves; they do not leave it to Meals-on-Wheels. They do not leave it to the social welfare system. It has been amazing to me to see the poverty in America. One can drive down the streets of almost any city in what is possibly the most affluent country on the planet, where most of the world's millionaires, billionaires, etc. are found,

and see extreme poverty - people sleeping under cardboard boxes, begging for food and pulling dirty, stinking bug-eaten food out of rubbish bins. And the churches still ask what they should we be doing? Many are growing but you will probably find that very little of this is due to real salvations. Most of it is transfer growth.

Any healthy church will have a constant flow of conversions and grow both numerically, and in maturity ("and the Lord added to the church daily as many as were being saved"). This means that people are going to have to be taught, equipped, and encouraged to witness daily. "Neighbour, I see you have just moved in, my name is... While you are moving in and are getting all those boxes unpacked and all the rest of it, we know it is all absolute chaos in your home. So, here is a meal my wife has prepared. We are going to be praying for you that you settle in quickly, and we really are going to pray. We are going to cry to God for you that it is not too stressful. We just appreciate that you have moved into the area and you can count on us to be praying for you".

A heart for the nations and a church planting mentality

It is also necessary that in our training, equipping and mobilising we help the people to understand that God expects them to play a vital, effective and real role in fulfilling His Great Commission both where they live and into the nations; because you cannot have one without the other.

It is also necessary to train, equip and release home cell leaders to go to other countries, to get jobs where they can start home cells and be involved in discipling the nations.

God has given the church some incredible entrepreneurial men and women, and we need to try and help them to see that God wants some of them to go and plant a home cell in another nation. They can go and hold down a job and make money to underwrite a budget for when others come in and a church is established. In that way there can be a wonderful and complete transition from home cell to local church.

Recently Bill Bright of Campus Crusade, with pipes sticking out of his nostrils to keep his lungs clear, was saying to the pastors in the United States, "we want to come into your church to help equip your entrepreneurial men and women to go out and plant churches or plant home cells everywhere across the globe." He is a great man of God, great man of faith. Who knows how many men and women he has led to Jesus? And now at the end of his life he is saying, "I see the importance of equipping men and women with entrepreneurial gifting to go into these places to plant home cells.

I believe that if you have more than 15 people in your church you should be looking to God for direction about where you can plant, or a least help with a plant. After all, we have to work as a team. God has provided each and every church that relates to New Covenant Ministries (tens of thousands across the earth) with a wineskin that includes a mindset that says, "There is no more

excuse for us, no matter how small the plant is, people will come in to help with that plant."

We have to have a church-planting mentality if we are going to fulfil the Great Commission the Biblical way. How small our church is and how little money we have, or how few resources we have is not an excuse for anyone.

Dignity for all

Jesus is interested in the whole person. He is interested in them having food and housing; he's interested in their families; He is interested in their finances; He is interested in their dignity. And so we could go on and on and on.

It's wonderful to walk downtown or to walk into the village that you live in and just give people respect. To walk up to an old black man in Africa, an old Indian in India, an old Chinese man with a pony tail hanging down the back of his head and to walk up and acknowledge him: "How are you, sir?" In Texas you constantly hear, "Yes, Ma'am", "No, Ma'am", "Yes, Sir", "No, Sir." This brings respect.

We may mock the Texans – all around the world they mock them - but there is much we can learn from an unsaved Texan. God is interested in the whole person and showing respect is simply agreeing with Him with regard to the dignity of each individual. It is still a wonderful thing anywhere in the world to stand up when a woman comes in, even a prostitute, and show her some respect. Never ever put Mary in the place that Roman Catholicism does, but you know, God did not say, "I am going to do this thing so wonderfully that I will by-pass a woman." He would not let a man be involved in the birth of Jesus, but He did involve a woman.

Yet in many churches women are treated badly and one can see why women are fighting for their rights in the Body of Christ. It is because of the way they are being treated in the church. That is not a sign of a healthy church. We can argue as much as we like, but in our heart of hearts we know that this is the truth. Men can be as macho, but when a woman walks in they should stand up and say "Hi, Ma'am". Let her know that she is respected. Then we are exhibiting the redeemed lifestyle that is a sign of a healthy church.

It is not about how many verses of scripture we can quote, it is not about how well we can sing and jump and scream and prophesy. A healthy church is a church where they show respect and bring dignity back to older people, women, children, and to men. Men are the brunt of so many jokes today; their dignity has been absolutely undermined. And we cannot focus on stopping this in the world; we must start in the church. This is a sign of a healthy church. That is what we are talking about when we talk about planting New Testament churches - every person being involved in the wholeness of the whole person.

A Biblical understanding of leadership

A healthy church necessitates training, equipping and mobilising all its members, bringing them to maturity, and into a fuller understanding of what

leadership is and how to use their gifts and talents. It is no use preaching about those things – people want to know how they can be effective and where to use their gifts.

That in turn means that every person in every church must understand Biblical leadership, both in the church and in the home. We can never have a healthy church without Biblical leadership. We all need to understand something of the authority that God has put on our leaders.

It is a real problem that we have women deacons in the churches around the world who do not even know how to respect their husbands. They do not even know the chain of authority that God has established.

For some this has been perverted because they have been so suppressed and oppressed that they have not been able to let God work out the security that comes from knowing the unshakable Jesus. Every husband who is guilty of this and takes advantage of his authority will one day have to stand before almighty God. We all need to live in the light of eternity.

2. Truly Knowing God

One of the vital signs of a healthy church is that the people know God; they truly know God – who He is and how He operates, what He has done, is doing and what He wants to do through His name, His attributes and His deeds.
Most of these will come from the word of God, especially the first two, and many of the deeds: how He parted the Red Sea, fed the multitudes, raised the dead, changed water into wine, protected His people, was quick to forgive them, etc.

3. Going for Gold

In the parable of the sower the crop returned 30, 60 to a 100 fold. Going for Gold means that we aim for the 100 fold.

Going for Gold in Conversion - know what it truly means to be born again.

In Acts 2:1-4 there is little word 'all' that is used when of the first disciples. Some people say that this scripture shows the birth of the church, and some people say that John 17 is the birth of the church. If Acts 2 is the birth of the church, all of them were empowered, from day one, right at the outset all of them spoke with other tongues, all had cloven tongues of fire settle upon them and all of them heard the sound as if of a mighty wind, which was the power of God being made evident in their midst. This is the all-factor.

Read on to verse 36 and we see this: "God has made this Jesus both Lord and the Messiah, that is the Saviour, the Christ. " You cannot have one without the other. God the Father, never ever said that you could have Jesus as Saviour without having Him as Lord as well. The church that has made us unhealthy because it preaches a gospel that allows us to receive Jesus as Saviour without Him being Lord.

In verse 38 we read: “Peter replied, ‘repent…’” Most people in the body of Christ today need to repent. A large percentage of tongue-speaking people have never actually been born again the Bible way. Being born again requires and absolute conviction that Jesus is the only way. The modern mindset, as typified by the New Age, can influence the way we see the new birth and then we may accept Jesus because we see Him as simply best way for now, and so we should give him a chance, give him a shot. That is why we backslide so quickly, because we only give Jesus a chance, we do not make Him Lord.

There are signs that accompany being born again that are written down for us in 1 John. Signs that I believe we preachers need to preach once every 3 months. These include:

1. **A New Life**
   We have the promise of a new and different life, chapter 1:1-4, 2:6, 17, 3:24 and 5:11.

2. **A New Liberty**
   Chapter 3:6-10, 5:1-5, 18, and 2:1 “these things have I written unto you that you sin not”. This is liberty, so that I do not have to go on sinning forever.

3. **A New Light**
   Chapter 1:5-10 says that if we have fellowship with him we walk in light. Also 2:7-11.

4. **A Hatred for the World**
   What we mean by this is a hatred for the world’s system, not for the people in the world. If we are born again we do not put up with the world system, we do not go to taste it every now and then, and we absolutely hate it - Scriptural.
   The New Age way, which is actually and age-old idea, will put up with anything. It is tolerant. The church has been influenced by this and has become tolerant as well and tries not to offend anybody. So we do not say anything when people dress immodestly. We do not want to upset the applecart in case someone leaves the church. You cannot be born again and put up with this approach. This applies to all of our conduct in the church and in the world. We are to be different to the world.
   For example, there is no fear of God when a woman stands up to minister and her navel shows every time she moves. That is not modesty. Likewise, there is no fear of God when a man stands up to minister with pants so tight that it leaves little to the imagination. That is not modesty.

5. **A New Longing and love for Obedience**
   Chapter 2:15-17 and 3:16. When we are saved the things we desire change and we have a new longing, a longing to be pure, clean and righteous, clean for God, and a longing not to sin, not even once.

There is a new yearning inside that cries out, “Oh my God, forgive me’” – it is broken-heartedness.
There is a phenomenon that is taking place in the United States at the moment, (not only there but everywhere in the world) where clinics are being set up for pastors that are hooked on pornography. This should not ever have happened.
I know that I am perhaps being ungracious towards pastors that have fallen, but when we fall on the Internet it involves a deliberate choice. Even for a computer genius, but when it still takes time to get access to that website. In that time the Holy Spirit is telling you, “do not do this thing.” If you still do you are deliberately resisting God. It does not just happen.
When we are really born again we are quick to call out to God even when we do see something like this. Sometimes we may not even have lusted yet, but we say in our heart, “Oh God, I am sorry that I even saw that”. We do not really have to confess that but that is the kind of heart that accompanies the new birth. Our attitude is, “I do not want to break your heart God, I do not want to grieve you”. That is a Biblical evidence of the fact that we are born again and not the stuff we are tolerating and putting up with in the churches.
Is this really ungracious? If you know in your heart of hearts that this is the Bible way then you have got to fight God to keep doing it. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.” (2Corinthians 5:17)
With the new birth we have new longings.

6. A new loyalty

We are loyal to Jesus in truth, Chapter 2:29. We have a new lawyer, a new advocate, and we do not try to justify ourselves any more. No more patting ourselves on the back and trying to make people think we are innocent of things when we are not. When they accuse us we can say, “I have got a good lawyer”. When you are not born again you are forever justifying yourself, saying, “I did not really mean that, the woman made me do it”. The “woman made me do it” syndrome is a direct result of the fall.
There may be occasions when has somebody takes something we do or say in the wrong way, but the truth remains the same: we have a new lawyer when we are born again. We can say, “If I take care of my relationship with God, He will take care of my reputation with other people.
We could try to fight back, fighting fire with fire, but we should never fight with the same spirit we are attacked with. After all we know it was ultimately Satan, something we did not know when we were unsaved. Then our lord was our self. We looked to ourselves sitting on the throne ruling our lives, with us as the centre of attraction. We were each at the centre of the universe. Now, if I am truly born again, Jesus is at the centre, and I live to please Him and do His will.
Can we slip up? Of course we can, but the scripture says this: “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but for the sins of

the whole world." And then it goes on to say "and if any man does sin…" Not 'when,' but 'if ay man sin.' We are human and we are going to sin, but we do have an advocate.

Going for Gold in Repentance and Baptism

In Acts 2:38, Peter, speaking after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." I believe that this is a sign of a healthy church

In a healthy church we teach those who are being saved to repent and to immediately be baptised. Baptism is a public declaration that we are 'dead.' We mean by this adult baptism by immersion, as that is the only valid interpretation of the word used in Scripture. Sprinkling or pouring water on people only conveys an idea of cleansing. When you go under the water you are saying, "I am dead to my old life, and the old person is dead." Sprinkling or pouring water over someone will never convey that.

When we are baptised as soon as we have been converted then the picture that is portrayed as we come out of the water is that there is a new 'me.' Outwardly we might look the same, but we are not. "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ that lives in me, and the life that I now live, I live by faith of the Son of God."

Baptism is one of those things that we should you simply do. When we are going for gold. It requires no consulting, no praying with your friends, no asking anyone.

Conclusion

It should be clear from all of the above that church health has nothing to do with numbers, and yet we often think that it does. There are few people who have a hundred people in their church who would think that they have anything to contribute toward teaching us how to build a healthy church. That is because they think that you have to have a few thousand people in the church before you have anything to contribute. The truth often is that most people in large congregations never do a single thing to build the Kingdom. They simply sit there, nod their heads, and smile when the pastor wants them to. How can we call that a 'healthy' church?

Numbers have never impressed God! There are churches in small towns that have more than 50% of the entire population attending their church. Now that is success. On the other hand, there are churches that have up to 10 thousand members, but that do not even have 0,001% of the population attending their church; and they think they have a healthy church. All the while, the community around them dislikes them, the neighbours want nothing to do with Christ, and all we can say is: "Look at the numbers, that is a healthy church".

Neighbours are won over by a healthy church because God gives it favour with all people; that is what we read happened in Acts 2. This is not to deny that there will be enemies from time to time or that there will be conflict, but this does not happen all the time.

We need to know how to build healthy churches because it is in God's plan and pattern to reach each individual, and the nations of the world, through the Church. He longs to empower us to do that, but is often prevented from doing so because we have our own agenda and ideas. We need to deal with these in order that healthy churches can be built that will impact their communities, and the nations, with the whole gospel, and reach out to every one with a genuine desire to see them whole in Christ.