



Where Have

All the

Leaders

Gone?



Developing Lay Leaders for Your Church



Roger N. McNamara





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Introduction

"God, you know we can't build this church without your help, and you know we can't build it without the help of others either. We need godly men and women to step into leadership roles. Please, Lord, send us some lay leaders to help us develop this ministry."

Have you ever prayed something similar to this? I have, and if you are a pastor or a church planter, so have you. We all realize there is little chance of our ministries succeeding unless spiritually mature lay people step into leadership roles. If the church is to function like a New Testament church should, then lay people are going to have to become deacons, teachers, youth workers, and helpers in a variety of areas.

And so we pray fervently for God to send us lay leaders, and we ask our prayer partners to do the same. As a result, tons of prayer ascend toward heaven, often to little or no avail. If there is one thing I have learned in more than forty years of ministry, it is that God does not do for us that which he expects us to do ourselves.

We want God to bring us godly people who are spiritually mature, trained, committed, and ready to serve. We're looking for a Moses or a Paul, but we'd settle for a Timothy or a Titus. We want someone else to do the hard work of shaping and molding the lives of individuals into useful tools for the Master's hand. We want God to do the same thing for us that he did for Israel - bring us a ready-made Moses - someone who has already gone through the maturation process on the backside of the desert.

God seldom answers our prayers to raise up lay leaders, simply because that's not his job - He has already assigned that responsibility to us. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus instructed us to, "go and MAKE DISCIPLES of all nations (people groups)." A "disciple" is more than a convert, it is a person who is learning to "observe all things whatsoever I (Jesus) have commanded" (vs. 20). Discipleship lies at the heart of lay leadership development. You cannot have one without the other. The terms *discipleship* and *leadership development* are virtually interchangeably and are so used throughout this manual.

This concept is reinforced in II Timothy 2:2 where Paul told Timothy, "And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Timothy was to develop lay leaders who would faithfully communicate those same biblical principles to others. If you want lay leaders in your church, you have to exercise leadership by training them yourself, and you do that by teaching them the things Jesus commanded.

Discipleship isn't primarily God's job. He has given that responsibility to US. Developing lay leaders isn't something God does FOR us, but rather THROUGH us. WE are to disciple people into leaders.

Instead of fretting, wringing our hands in frustration, and pouring out our hearts in meaningless prayer, we need to search the Word of God for scriptural principles and examples to follow, and then roll up our sleeves to develop a biblical process designed to produce the kind of lay leaders we want.

Most books on leadership deal with *pastoral* leadership, and discuss how to manage the affairs of rather large churches. These manuscripts are needed and can be very helpful. The focus of this manual, however, is on developing lay leaders within the context of smaller and newer church plants. Larger churches usually come with some lay leaders already in place, but what do you do when you are just starting out and don't have any lay leaders? That is the focus of this volume.

The following pages are divided into three sections: First, we will deal with the *problems* that result in and from the lack of lay leadership. Some items may cause you distress because they will come uncomfortably close to home and may indicate an area of weakness in your ministry. I hope that is the case because most of us are unwilling to change until our comfort level becomes unsustainable. Change is what I am after.

Second, we will deal with some of the *principles* of leadership and leadership development. You can't produce something that you do not understand or cannot describe. So, what is it that you are looking for in lay leaders? What characteristics, skills, and talents do you want them to possess?

Finally, I will suggest a *process* (there are many available) for developing the kind of lay leaders you are looking for. You have to know how to get from where you are to where you want to be. You'll never develop lay leaders unless you have a plan for doing so. We will give you that plan in this manual.

This material was developed over a number of years by trial and error, as well as through reading and research. It was gleaned from personal experience and from the writings of numerous men such as Jim Berg, Jay Adams, Ed Stetzer, Aubrey Malphurs, John Maxwell, Rick Warren, Tom Nebel, Elmer Towns, Thom Rainer, and many others. You will undoubtedly recognize some segments as coming from a particular author. I have sought to footnote my sources as much as possible without becoming too tedious.

Lay leadership development doesn't just happen. It is always intentional. It happens because somebody planned, worked, and was determined to make it happen. That somebody has to be YOU! If you do not get anything else out of this booklet, get this - Lay leadership development is always intentional.

Do you want godly, mature lay leaders to come along side to help you? Then don't just ask God to send them to you. Roll up your sleeves and get to work developing them through your own ministry. I will be glad to help you walk through the process.

Your Servant in Christ,

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Section 1

The Problem of Leadership Development

"Houston, we've had a problem!" Those five words spoken on April 13, 1970 by Apollo 13 astronaut John Swigert galvanized the world's attention and focused it on a crippled spacecraft some 200,000 miles from earth. Astronauts John Swigert, James Lovell, and Fred Haise had lifted off two days earlier from Cape Canaveral on a lunar mission. The trip had been relatively smooth until a sharp bang and vibration altered the crew at 10:08 p.m. EST that something had gone terribly wrong. The No. 2 oxygen tank had exploded blowing away the side of the spacecraft and destroying most of their oxygen and fuel supplies.

Stranded in space with a crippled spacecraft, the crew would almost certainly die either from a lack of oxygen or from their own carbon dioxide. The ensuing saga of the next four days will go down in history as one of the greatest achievements of American ingenuity as Mission Control worked feverishly around the clock to analyze the problem, come up with innovative solutions, and bring the crew safely back to earth alive.

If you listen closely, a similar foreboding sound can be heard today as we view the ecclesiastical landscape of North America. *"Mr. Church Planter, we have a problem!"* Both existing churches and newly planted congregations are struggling for survival, crippled by a devastating lack of lay leaders! Without godly men and women to step into leadership roles these churches will never reach their destination of being healthy, growing congregations that are able to impact their communities for Christ.

The most important thing you can learn from this manual is that the system you have in place is perfectly designed to produce the results you are getting. To a large degree, your way of doing ministry governs the type of response you are getting. The product you produce (or don't produce) is exactly what can be expected from the things you do. If that is true, and we believe that it is, then something is seriously wrong with both our church planting system and the way that we do discipleship because they are not producing the kinds of lay leaders needed for our mission to succeed.

If the system you have in place is not producing the results you want, then like Mission Control, you need to analyze the problems with the system, and make the appropriate changes in order to get the results you want. This can be painful and embarrassing at times, but it is essential if we are to stabilize our ministries and start on the path to recovery.

You can't fix something until you know what is wrong with it. Thus, before we explore how to develop lay leaders in your church, it is necessary to first look at some of the systemic problems that contribute to the lack of lay leaders. Not every problem discussed will be found in every church or church plant, and some may argue that a particular "problem" is not a problem at all, at least not in their church.

For this reason, I have phrased each problem area in the form of a question rather than generalizing and making categorical statements that may or may not be true of your particular church. I would simply urge you to look at each problem, evaluate it honestly, and ask yourself, "Is this an area in which we need to make some adjustments?"

Before we begin, let me assure you that each of the problem areas we will discuss can be rectified through careful analysis and the application of biblical principles. There is no problem that cannot be

solved and there is no situation that cannot be fixed. So, take heart. It is possible for you to have sufficient trained leaders to enable your church to become the healthy, vibrant church God wants it to be.

Problem Area # 1 - Is there a shortage of lay leaders and workers in our church that keeps us from doing the things we want to do?

Few churches have enough trained leaders and workers to do everything they would like to do, but the sad truth is that a significant number (perhaps a majority) of churches in all parts of the country are struggling just to keep their ministries afloat. It is estimated that as many as eighty-five percent of churches in North America are plateaued or declining. Ten to twelve congregations a day close their doors and go out of business permanently. Thousands of others carry on valiantly without enough people to staff their various ministries.

Many churches function with only one or two deacons, or in some cases, none at all. Sunday School classes go untaught or are lumped together because no one is willing to teach them. Youth groups are non-existent because no one is willing to invest the time and effort needed to make them work. Nursery workers are frustrated and overwhelmed by the fact they have to serve several times in the month.

Jonathan and his wife Susie are six months into their first church plant and frustration is growing. It wasn't supposed to be this way. They are constantly tired. It seems like there aren't enough hours in the day to do everything that needs to be done. The core group seemed so enthusiastic and excited when they launched public services, but now everyone just sits back and watches as the church planter and his wife try to do the work of the ministry. There simply aren't enough hours to do the visitation, the sermon preparation, wash the nursery toys, clean the building, set up the equipment, write the advertising copy, and the million and one other things that need to be done to get ready for the next service. Why aren't these people willing to help? Can't they see one couple can't do everything themselves?

Nothing hinders a new church plant more than the lack of trained lay helpers. The strength of your church is a direct result of the strength of its leaders.¹ A strong church will have a growing core of lay leaders who see that ministry gets done. They teach classes, they staff the nursery, they visit prospects, they count money, they keep records, they clean the building, and they help recruit and train workers.

No church is ready to launch public services until it has five key lay leaders in place. These include a *worship leader* to lead music that directs people's attention to God, a *preschool leader* to oversee quality childcare, an *assimilation coordinator* to channel people into a discipling small group, an *evangelism networker* to oversee outreach, and a *ministry mobilizer* to help people discover how God has gifted them for ministry.² You also need a *welcome coordinator* to organize greeters, ushers and others to ensure that visitors receive a warm, friendly welcome to the church, and a *financial organizer* to oversee the reception, counting, and distribution of monies.³

Unfortunately, many churches have launched public services before developing the lay leaders needed to be successful. Consequently, the church planter (pastor) and his wife try to fill several of the leadership roles themselves that should be occupied by lay people. This sets up a vicious cycle of frustration in which the pastor (and his wife) is expected to do the work of the ministry while the people sit back and watch.

Leadership development must begin during the prenatal stage (the time prior to the launch of public services) when the core group is being formed. It is during this time that the church planter recruits, trains, and empowers future lay leaders to help him. He does so by sharing a compelling vision of the

future church and its ministries as he believes it can and must be, and by taking his core group through a leadership-training program.

Church planters are often in a hurry to get started. Consequently, they tend to minimize this important prenatal phase of church planting. Rather than taking the time to develop believers into leaders, they rush ahead and launch before they are ready to do so. They need to understand that the success or failure of their ministry is often determined during this prenatal stage and is dependent in great part on their ability to develop the key leaders needed for their ministries to succeed. Without adequate lay leaders, their church will lose momentum, and struggle to survive with inadequate personnel and resources.

Problem Area # 2 - Does our church have a leadership culture?

If this question leaves you scratching your head wondering what a "leadership culture" is, the answer is most likely "no." Too often church planters look to God to send them mature, godly lay leaders who are fully equipped and ready to serve rather than creating an atmosphere of expectation in which new believers are provided with an opportunity to be mentored in areas of spiritual formation, multiplication, and ministry leadership skills.⁴

Ben is one of the hardest-working church planters you will ever meet. He has a passion for souls, does meticulous sermon preparation, faithfully preaches the Word of God, and has good standards. The only problem seems to be the immaturity of the people who attend his church. They do not seem to grow spiritually in spite of sitting under sound preaching week after week, and few are willing to pitch in to help even after meeting the six-month leadership requirement.

Jerry's new church, on the other hand, is growing by leaps and bounds even though he does not work nearly as hard and is not as good of a preacher as Ben is. All the talented people seem to go to his church. Before you know it, they are serving faithfully in leadership positions. Ben can't figure out why Jerry is so successful while he struggles to make any progress at all.

Every church needs to create a leadership culture that views each person as a potential leader and seeks to help that person "grow in grace" (II Peter 3:18) toward spiritual maturity and involvement in ministry. The time to start involving people in ministry is not when they have become spiritually mature, but as soon as they are saved and start attending the church. Every time someone walks through the church door you need to be thinking, "There is someone who can become a leader."

As soon as a person makes a profession of faith or starts attending the church or a small group meeting regularly, you want to do two things: Get them involved in a discipleship study, and give them a job to do. They need to develop a heart for God and they need to develop a heart for ministry. Don't let them sit and soak. People learn in the context of doing.⁵ So, put them to work. Find something for them to do even if it is nothing more than emptying wastebaskets, straightening songbooks in the pew racks or folding bulletins. You want them to develop a servant heart while growing in their understanding of spiritual truths.

Maturity doesn't come with age, but with acceptance of responsibility.⁶ As people grow spiritually and demonstrate faithfulness in one area of ministry you can give them additional responsibilities. Jesus taught this principle when he said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 19:10). This concept is illustrated in Luke 19:17 where a man who had been faithful in handling the "pound" entrusted to him was given authority over ten cities. Another man who was also faithful in carrying out the task assigned to him received authority over five cities (vs.19). As you follow this

practice over a period of time, you will find you have developed a core of godly people with servant hearts who are willing and ready to serve in a variety of lay-leadership positions.

God will not do for his people what is their responsibility and within their realm to do.⁷ So, stop praying for God to send you mature lay leaders, and start working to create a leadership culture in which people can grow into the godly leaders he wants them to be.

Problem Area # 3 - Are our membership expectations too low?

It is a well-known axiom that people rise to the level of that which is expected (or required) of them. This is seen in every avenue of life including the military, business, education, and the church. We tend to get what we expect. Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). In other words, God gives us no more and no less than what we expect of him. If we expect him to do great things for us, he does. And if we don't expect much from God, he doesn't do much for us.

Jim is excited about starting a new church. He knows the people in the target area will be difficult to reach, so he decides to go easy and not to expect too much too soon. After all, it takes time to change lives and grow disciples to maturity. In the meanwhile, he is willing to accept help from just about anyone who offers to participate. This has caused some problems with teachers not showing up on time (or not at all), and he's finding it hard to persuade people to join the church, but he's sure they will come around in time if he is patient and isn't too demanding.

In contrast, Joe's church plant has experienced slow, but steady growth in spite of (or perhaps because of) the high standards and rigid requirements placed upon members. They expect members not only to make a profession of faith and to be baptized, but they must also accept a ministry assignment, attend regularly, tithe, and participate in on-going discipleship classes. Jim wonders why people are willing to jump through so many hoops in order to go to Joe's church while so few are willing to join his church with far fewer requirements.

The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthian believers that "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). If they demonstrated their expectations by sowing little (through their giving), they would receive little, but if they demonstrated their expectations by sowing bountifully (by giving sacrificially), they would be rewarded accordingly.

The same thing is true of church members. If we expect little and require little of them, they will give us little. If we think, "These people won't ever be leaders," they most likely won't.

If, however, you see every person as a potential leader, and if you say to them, "If you want to be a member of this church you must meet such and such requirements and be willing to accept ministry training that will lead to a ministry assignment," then people will rise to the occasion by meeting those requirements, taking the training, and accepting the leadership responsibilities given to them.

The lack of lay leaders in churches is attributable in part to the low expectations placed upon church members. Over the last thirty years, church membership has been "dumbed down" to the place where more is required of soccer Moms than of church members. If you want your child to play soccer you have to fill out a registration form, take the child for a physical, purchase uniforms and equipment, have the child at every practice, travel long distances to games, take your turn supplying drinks and snacks, pay for trophies, contribute to a gift for the coach, and contribute to a "end-of-the-season" party. Moreover, you are expected to cancel appointments, rearrange your schedule, and take off work in order to fit into

the soccer program.

Compare that with membership in the average America church today. As unbelievable as it may sound, half of the churches in North America do not even require their members to be Christians⁸ and forty percent of Baptist churches do not require their members to be baptized.⁹ People can join a church and be members in good standing without believing what the church believes, attending services or contributing financially to the support of the church.

This, of course, is not true of all churches. Independent Baptist and Bible-believing churches generally require a profession of faith, baptism by immersion, and verbal agreement with the church's doctrinal statement and constitution, and yet many have such low expectations of their members that it undermines their very existence.

Researcher Thom Rainer has written a book called *High Expectations* in which he demonstrates that growing churches tend to have much higher expectations of people both BEFORE they can join and AFTER they have become members. They not only retain more people, but more of their people become ministry leaders because of the expectations that are placed upon them.

Expectations need to be communicated prior to people joining the church. They need to understand what will be expected of them if they join your church. This can be done from the pulpit, in Sunday School classes, in private conversation with prospective members, and by requiring that people complete a membership application form. The application form can request information about the applicant's past ministry involvement while at the same time asking them to check the areas of ministry in which they would be interested in participating. You also can include a simple statement about ministry on the application form such as: *"Membership means ministry - All members are expected to participate in the ministry of this church and to accept training for a ministry assignment."*

In addition, every church should require that prospective members complete a pre-membership class that includes instruction concerning the church's philosophy of ministry, its various ministries, and its process for training leaders. The class should help people understand how God has gifted them for ministry. This can be done by giving them a spiritual-gift inventory or by having them complete a "SHAPE," "DESIGN" or "SERVE" evaluation form.*

Church has become a spectator's sport in which little is required of those in the pew. This must change if churches are to grow into healthy, vibrant congregations with a group of trained lay leaders working along side the pastor. One of the first changes needed is to raise the expectation level of your congregation.

Problem Area # 4 - Does our church have a clearly defined vision that is articulated regularly to the people?

Vision is defined as a clear, challenging picture of the future of the ministry as it can and must be.¹⁰ It is a mental image of where the church is going and what its ministry will look like when it gets there. It visualizes what ministries will be functioning, how people will be participating, and how the community is being impacted by the church. Without vision a church will seldom grow and the people will rarely be excited about what God is doing in their midst.

* Samples of these forms are at the back of this manual.

Dave was a "go-getter." He was "Mr. Personality." If there was ever anyone who could be a successful church planter, it was Dave. He was innovative and full of ideas. Excitement permeated the room when he was present. He was constantly introducing new ideas and new programs into his church plant. There were lots and lots of activity and noise, but little progress. That didn't bother Dave. If something didn't work, he just discarded it and replaced it with something else he hoped would work. Everyone liked Dave, but he was like a ball in a box bouncing from one program to the next, from one activity to another. No one, including Dave, knew where the church was headed. Everyone was busy, but there was no single objective toward which the congregation was moving. Dave wanted to plant a church, but he had never taken the time to think about what that church would look like, how it would function, what leaders were needed or how he would achieve his goal of planting a church. He didn't know it, but he lacked vision.

The sad truth is that a large number of churches and church planters lack vision. They may have a vague idea that they want to "plant a church," but they have never taken the time to think through the process for doing so, nor pictured in their minds what the finished project might look like. If the pastor (church planter) doesn't know where he is going or what he is trying to build, how in the world are the people supposed to know?

The most powerful tool a leader possesses is a dream or a vision.¹¹ People follow vision. Vision excites. It focuses attention. It stimulates giving. It encourages participation. It attracts workers. It motivates people to get involved. At the burning bush, God gave Moses a vision of a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8,17). That vision was so powerful it compelled him to return to the land of Egypt where he shared it with the people of Israel. Their hearts were so stirred by that vision that they willingly followed Moses through forty years of wilderness wandering in their pursuit of the "land of milk and honey."

Vision led Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem when everyone else said it couldn't be done. His vision of the future galvanized the people to action so that they worked from sun up to sun down mixing mortar, laying brick, standing guard, and sacrificing sleep to complete the job in just fifty-two days.

Vision is a powerful motivator for ministry. It will cause people to change plans, sacrifice their time, accept training, and endure incredible hardships. Just look at the disciples. They were twelve ordinary men who gave up their hopes, their plans, and their dreams to buy into the Savior's vision. They willingly underwent three and a half years of ministry training. They slept in the open. They walked countless miles. They labored tirelessly to accomplish the vision that had been laid out before them.

If you want to plant a church, you need to have a clearly defined vision of the future that you can articulate to the people. It must be clear and it must be challenging. Sadly, the failure of pastors and church planters to articulate clearly their vision of the future is one of the main reasons for the shortage of lay leaders in the church. If you cannot articulate your vision of the future in clear and compelling words, people will not be attracted to your church, they will not follow your leadership, and they will not step into lay leadership roles. Vision is a critical component in the development of lay leaders.

Problem Area #5 - Do we have a process in place for developing lay leaders?

Leaders are not born. They are made. While some people seem to have greater skills in this area than others, leadership can be taught and learned.¹² According to First Corinthians 12, God gifts every believer for ministry and then places him or her in the Body of Christ (the church) to enable that organism to function properly. Everything that is needed (eyes, ears, noses, hands, feet, etc.) has been, is being or will be provided. People with leadership potential already exist in every church.

It must be realized, however, that like a developing fetus these leadership skills take time to identify and develop so they are fully functional. A newborn child cannot run and jump, but he has the potential for doing so as he grows and matures. In the same way, many in your church family have leadership potential that needs to be identified, developed, and turned loose.

Greg knew discipleship was one of the key factors leading to a successful church plant. You cannot build a church without mature believers and a group of committed lay leaders. He repeatedly asked God to send him one or more of the key leaders he needed to build the church, but God never seemed to answer that prayer. He tried training leaders on his own, but he wasn't sure what to teach them. He had tried using several published booklets. They were good and people enjoyed them, but nothing seemed to change. Something was missing, but he didn't know what it was. There had to be some way of systematically moving people through a discipleship process from the time they get saved to growing spiritually to becoming involved in ministry to faithfully exercising leadership in the church. He just hadn't found it yet.

As pointed out in Ephesians 4:12, the primary task of a leader is to equip and mobilize the people for ministry.¹³ To do this, there must be a simple, direct process in place for moving people from where they are to where you (and God) want them to be. Every program and every ministry should be geared to moving people toward spiritual maturity and the development of their leadership skills. This is what discipleship is all about.

A weak, poorly designed or non-existent discipleship program leads to ministry schizophrenia and a scarcity of lay leaders. If spiritual growth is a process (and it is), and if our goal is to produce spiritually mature lay leaders (and it ought to be), then it makes sense for a church to design its ministries around the process of spiritual growth.¹⁴

Church planters and pastors need to decompartmentalize their churches. All too often, each ministry activity functions like an entity unto itself, totally unrelated to whatever else goes on in the church. There is little correlation between ministries. There is no plan in place to move people systematically through a process of leadership development. Each department is a self-contained box competing for the attention of members. People are pulled in first one direction and then in another.

Every church and every church planter needs to have an overall plan in place that governs how ministries function, how they collate with each other, and how they contribute to the process of developing people into spiritual leaders. Many churches need to do less rather than more. They need to simplify their ministries by eliminating anything that does not produce forward movement toward spiritual maturity and the development of ministry skills. Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger have written an excellent book entitled *Simple Church* that outlines how churches can enhance their ministries by simplifying their ministries and streamlining their discipling program.* They define a "simple church" this way:

*"A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus)."*¹⁵

The issue of having a simple discipleship process in place that produces lay leaders is so important that we will spend the last third of this book describing how to do it. You cannot build a church without lay leaders and you cannot build lay leaders without having a simple process in place for producing them,

* The terms *discipleship* and *leadership* are used interchangeably throughout this manual.

and then following it faithfully.

Problem Area #6 - Is the pastor willing to give away ministry?

Most pastors and church planters try to do too much. They preach the sermons, format the bulletins, visit the sick, fix the plumbing, mow the lawn, paint the walls, clean the floors, teach the classes, and in general try to carry on the "work of the ministry." While they complain about the lack of helpers, most men in ministry wouldn't have it any other way because in America a person's worth and significance is often determined by what (and how much) he does.

Jack was truly a "jack of all trades." He could do almost anything, and he often did. He was mechanically inclined and could fix virtually anything that broke down. Not only that, but he could preach, and sing, and teach. He was a good administrator. He even handled the finances both at home and in the church. Jack was ideally suited to handle the multi-tasking that was required of church planters. No one was as capable or could do as good of a job as he could. Whenever people offered to help, Jack thanked them and said, "I've got it covered." He didn't trust other people to do the job right, and so he did it himself. He didn't know it, but he had become a "bottleneck" that all but ensured the failure of his church plant.

Over the past hundred years or so, an erroneous teaching has taken hold in churches that is based on a misunderstanding of Scripture. Both pastors and lay people have bought into this false concept--and it is killing our churches as well as their pastors.

The problem passage is found in Ephesians 4:11,12 where we are told:

And he (God) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

God has given gifted men to lead the church including pastors and teachers or teaching pastors. At first glance, it looks like they have three primary responsibilities:

To perfect the saints
To do the work of the ministry
To edify the Body of Christ

Faithful pastors and church planters wear themselves out trying to fulfill these three responsibilities while the majority of laymen sit back and watch the frenzy that ensues. We even call these men "ministers" indicating that they are the ones who should do the work of the ministry.

A careful examination of the text reveals a major flaw in this thinking. Most people understand that the New Testament was written primarily in the Greek language and then translated into English. Many, however, don't realize the ancient Greek language did not include punctuation marks. The punctuation in our English versions was provided by the men who translated it into English.

Normally this is not a problem, but in this case, it gave the text a meaning that was not present in the Greek manuscripts. The words were not changed, but the meaning was. This certainly was unintentional, but it nevertheless led to a misunderstanding of the text.

The problem centers on the two small commas that were inserted after the words "saints" and "ministry." The insertion of those commas transformed the pastor/teacher's singular responsibility into

three separate responsibilities. Moreover, it also took the responsibility that belonged to the people and gave it to the pastor/teacher. If you remove the two commas that were inserted by the translators, you can then see the text as it appears in Greek. It now reads:

And he (God) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ.

A casual observer might say, "I don't see any difference. All the words are the same." That is true, but the content of the message has changed and so has the pastor/teacher's responsibilities. Without the commas, the pastor/teacher has only ONE responsibility in the text rather than three! Whereas before, he was to perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, and edify the Body of Christ, he is now to "perfect the saints for the work of the ministry" so that the body of Christ can be edified.

It is the people ("the saints"), not the pastor who are to do the work of the ministry. God never intended him to do the work of the ministry. God gifted THEM (the people) to do that, and when they do it the body of Christ is edified, strengthened, and built up. The pastor's (church planter's) job is to "perfect the saints."

The word translated "perfect" is *katartismos*. It carries the idea of providing the equipment that is needed to do the job, of repairing, mending or restoring to usefulness something that is torn or broken, and of bringing someone to full maturity so they can function as they should.¹⁶ It describes a fisherman mending his net, a doctor setting a broken leg, and a coach training his athletes.

The pastor/teacher's (church planter's) job is not to do the work of the ministry FOR the people, but rather to equip, train, and teach them HOW to do the work of the ministry themselves. THEY (the people) are to be the ministers of the church while the pastor/church planter is to be the teacher and administrator. The problem is that these roles have been reversed so that many pastors are trying to do the work of the ministry while the people have become the administrators. They are trying to do his job while he tries to do their job. This seldom works well since it is based on a misunderstanding of Scripture.

Sadly, some pastors are unwilling to give up the work of the ministry. They feel no one can do it as well as they can (and that is true in some cases). It is easier to do it themselves than it is to train someone else to do it. By doing it themselves they can regulate what happens. They are often reluctant to delegate responsibilities to others who may not do the job as well, and are even more reluctant to delegate the authority required to do the job.

Without realizing it, this issue of trust leads God's servants to shoot themselves and their churches in the foot. People are reluctant to get involved when they are not trusted or when they are not given the authority to do the job along with the responsibility. To expand ministry, pastors must be willing to give away ministry. While there are different levels of delegation, and not everything can be delegated, pastors and church planters must be willing to teach people what needs to be done and how to do it, and then relinquish control to those lay leaders they have discipled. Failure to do so ensures a scarcity of the very leaders they are seeking.

Problem Area #7 - As a church planter (pastor), am I a leader or a manager?

All church planters and pastors occupy leadership positions, but some may be more suited to managing than to leading. Being in the top position can give a person authority and prestige, but it does

not make him a leader. How do you know whether you are a leader or not? Simple. Just look behind you. If no one is following you, you are not leading. You are just taking a walk! It is a pretty strong indication that a man's skills are those of a manager rather than a leader if he has difficulty recruiting lay leaders in his church.

There is nothing wrong with having management skills. Managers can be good pastors and good church planters, but they will have greater difficulty recruiting other leaders, and their ministries are likely to develop more slowly.

Floyd was meticulous. He was a "detail" man if there ever was one. Nothing escaped his watchful eye. No matter what he did, it was always well designed and carefully thought out. His church plant was the epitome of efficiency. The schoolroom floor where they met was immaculate. Services started right on time. The advertisements were first-class. The teachers (he and his wife) were always prepared. The constitution he wrote would serve as a shining example for any church anywhere. Floyd's only shortcoming as a church planter was that he wasn't a dreamer. He was so focused on the "trees" at hand that he never saw the "forest" around him. He could do just about anything except see the big picture. He was a great manager, but came up short as a leader.

There are significant differences between leaders and managers. Leaders devote themselves to the issue of goals and strategies while managers concern themselves with stuff. Managers ask *how*, leaders ask *where* and *why*?¹⁷ Managers are results oriented. They are concerned with procedures and processes. Leaders are concerned about people and how to inspire them. They build on their strengths and protect against weaknesses.

Managers focus on the bottom line: How can I best accomplish certain things? Leaders deal with the top line: What are the things I want to accomplish? Managers want to do things right; leaders want to do the right things. Managers are concerned about efficiency in climbing the ladder; leaders are concerned about whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.¹⁸ Leaders attract leaders. Managers seldom do. Leaders train others to be leaders. Managers seldom do. Leaders can train managers to be leaders, but managers can seldom train others to be leaders.

Leadership is spelled I-N-F-L-U-E-N-C-E. Through his influence, a leader takes people where they would never go on their own.¹⁹ He instills in them a vision for the future and convinces them that with God's help they can do things they never thought possible. It may be teaching a class, leading a worship service, directing Vacation Bible School or heading up a youth group.

Many times churches have difficulty recruiting lay leaders simply because the pastor is a very efficient manager rather than a visionary leader. This does not mean he can't develop a host of lay leaders to help him. It only means he will have to work much harder to recruit and train them while at the same time working to improve his own leadership skills.

Remember, leadership skills can be taught and learned. You can become a better leader than you currently are, and your people can learn to lead in various ministry areas. Leadership is not confined to the pastoral office. There are many levels and many styles of leadership. Sunday School teachers are leaders. Choir directors are leaders. Youth workers are leaders. Nursery workers are leaders. Greeters are leaders. They don't all have the same responsibility or the same authority, but because they occupy positions of influence, they are leaders. Your job as pastor is to identify, recruit, train, and deploy these people in those leadership positions.

Understand that not all leaders function the same way. Different leaders have different styles. Thom Rainer identifies ten styles of leadership present in churches. These include:

Delegator oriented - leads by assigning tasks in nearly every situation.

Dream oriented - spends a lot of time dreaming big dreams with little concern for completion.

Goal oriented - has high interest in setting goals and pushing for completion.

Knowledge oriented - leads by superior knowledge and understanding rather than by example.

Loner oriented - would rather work alone and risk accomplishing little.

Organization oriented - is organized above all else, every detail checked.

Relationship oriented - has high interest in people, feelings, and fellowship.

Suggestion oriented - leads by making suggestions to others.

Task oriented - has high interest in production and getting things done.

Team player oriented - must work in a group or be a part of a team effort, leads primarily by example.²⁰

Regardless of whether you are a leader or a manager, if you are planting a church or serving as the pastor of a church, you are functioning as a leader. It is your job to enhance your own leadership skills so you can help others develop their leadership skills. You cannot teach people that which you do not know, and you cannot inspire them to be what you are not. Read books on leadership. Go to seminars. Talk with other men in leadership and learn how they attract and train leaders in their churches. Even managers can become good leaders if they work at it.

Problem Area #8 - Does our church focus more on program development or people development?

It is a simple fact of life that most churches tend to be program oriented. They have youth programs, ladies' programs, men's programs, children's programs, nursery programs, music programs, Senior programs, Christmas programs, Sunday School programs, Day Care programs, visitation programs, AWANA programs, camp programs, mission programs, building programs, and training programs.

We have a program for almost every night of the week, and sometimes multiple programs on several days of the week. We have something for everyone. No one ever needs to go away lonely or with a need unmet. We have a program just for them. The sad truth is that we are programmed to death with programs that are often ineffective, under funded, poorly staffed, and mismanaged. Every time a problem arises or a need is identified we slap another program in place to care for it.

Programs often take on a life all of their own. Once implemented it is almost impossible to discontinue them even though they fail to achieve their stated purpose any longer. They become someone's sacred turf, and woe be to anyone who suggests their demise. It has been suggested that churches have become so programmed that they will continue functioning long after the rapture occurs.

Bill was an organizer. He could take raw ideas and turned them into workable programs. Structure, procedures, guidelines, and the inner workings of churches fascinated him. He understood the importance of ministry, and was good at motivating people to accept ministry assignments. He gave out job descriptions, held training sessions, and checked to see how people were doing. His church, however, was struggling. People tended to step away from their assignments after only a few weeks or months. It became increasingly difficult to attract new workers. Bill didn't know what was wrong, but part of the problem was that he saw people as a resource to be used to achieve his programming objectives. He was building programs, but he wasn't building people.

Whenever church planters launch a new church they immediately start thinking in terms of program development. They make plans to implement several programs they think will help them build the church

such as Sunday School classes, Junior Church, and children's Bible clubs. The problem with this is that they usually haven't taken the time to develop the lay leaders needed to run those programs effectively. Consequently, the church planter or the pastor and his wife end up conducting most of the programs with little or no help from the people. These poor folks are run ragged, they become frustrated with the lack of cooperation from the people, and as a result, the program is often ineffective. That which was supposed to help the church actually ends up hurting the church.

Most churches don't need more program development. They would be better off with less programming. Rather than focusing on developing programs, they need to focus on developing people. The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.²¹ Rather than starting programs and then looking for people to lead them you need to develop people into leaders and then let them develop the programs. Never start a program unless you have someone else to help lead it. Otherwise, you will end up doing most of the work yourself.

Lay leaders don't materialize out of nothing. They don't just suddenly appear. They have to be trained. They have to be developed. People development and leadership development are always intentional. It happens because someone plans for it to happen and has taken steps to ensure that it happens. That someone must be the church planter/pastor.

There must be a process in place for systematically moving people from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement to ministry leadership. This manual is designed to help you do just that - develop your people into lay leaders.

Problem Area #9 - Is there a lack of commitment among our people?

You hear it almost everywhere you go, at conferences, at pastors' meetings or in private conversations with missionaries and church leaders. The refrain is repeated again and again - "People just aren't as committed as they used to be." "This generation isn't as committed as previous generations." "You can't get people to make commitments today." "I can't get my people to agree to do anything - they don't want to be tied down."

Like so many other church planters and pastor, Eric was convinced people are less committed today than they used to be. They just were not dependable. They would agree to accept a position and then wouldn't show up. They were haphazard in their church attendance. People were so involved in secular activities they didn't have time to serve the Lord. How was he supposed to plant a church when so many lay people weren't committed to be there or to help. Can't they see he needs help? Don't they understand that the "work of the ministry" is their job rather than his? He didn't know about other church planters, but he knew the lack of commitment was a big problem in his church plant.

Over and over we are told that people are less committed, less dedicated, and less dependable than past generations. Consequently, people are less willing to accept leadership responsibilities in the church and the church is suffering as a result.

But, is that really true? Are people really less committed than they used to be or are they simply committed to other things that they think are more important? The problem is not a lack of commitment. People are willing to give of their time, money, and energy to those things they value. They will go to almost any length to achieve something they believe in.

The problem of commitment is two-fold: First, many churches have lost their vision and their vitality.

People are not going to make a major commitment (such as becoming a lay leader) to a church that doesn't know why it exists (purpose), what it is supposed to be doing (mission) or where it is going (vision), especially if there is little excitement or enthusiasm evident in the services. All too often churches today are bound by tradition, have poorly planned services, use outdated equipment and methods, and stifle innovation and creativity. Why would anyone want to be a leader in a church like that?

People respond to things that give their lives meaning and purpose rather than to needs, suggestions, weak appeals or requests for help. They are looking for a challenge. They want something that gives them significance, something that has life-changing value to it. They are seeking for that which will give them a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

If you want people to become committed lay leaders in your church you must first develop a clear and challenging vision of the church's future that grips both your heart and theirs. Then you must devise and begin to implement a ministry plan that outlines how you expect to make your vision a reality. Services must be better planned. The quality of your music needs to be improved. Programs need to be evaluated, updated or replaced. Create some enthusiasm and excitement in your ministry. You must revitalize your church if you are going to acquire additional leaders.

The second reason people seem to be less committed is that church planters and pastors often don't know how to ask for commitment from their people. Here are some suggestions that may help in this area:²²

- **Ask for commitment** - James 4:2 says "ye have not, because you ask not." If you don't ask for commitment, you won't get it. Suggestions, pleas, and the making known of needs do not elicit commitment from people. Go to people and ask them personally to accept responsibility for teaching a class, leading a group or heading up a project. Forty percent of those not involved in a ministry say they would like to become involved, but they have never been asked or trained.²³ If you don't ask them for their commitment, someone else (outside the church) will, and they'll get it.
- **Ask the right people** - The most committed people in your church are those who are already involved in ministry. Go to them and ask them to do more. Raise the leadership standards. Make it tougher to become a leader. Require more training. Expect more from them. When you raise the commitment level of your existing leaders, you raise the expectations for everyone else, especially for new members. This is important because churches tend to receive in commitment what they expect from new members when they join.²⁴
- **Help people clarify the issue of commitment** - Most people are over-committed rather than under-committed. As a result, they are often only half-committed because they are committed to too many things. Help them understand that some things are of greater value than others and that things of lesser importance are to be declined so that things of eternal value can be achieved.
- **Ask for a big commitment** - It is better to ask for too much than to ask for too little. People are looking for things that are challenging and that require sacrifice. They want to do something that is important, something that will make a difference, and give them a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Jesus asked for big commitments. He asked people to give up their careers to follow him. Don't minimize the importance, sacrifice or requirements of the job if you want people to respond positively to it.
- **Be specific when asking for commitment** - Understanding always precedes commitment.²⁵ Tell

people exactly what you want them to do, what training and resources will be available to them, and what accountability will be expected of them. Give them a written job description, tell them how much time will be required of them, and how long the job will last. People are afraid to commit to vague, open-ended appeals for help because they don't want to get trapped into a never-ending situation, so give them the facts up front.

- **Explain the benefits of commitment** - Show them how they will grow spiritually, intellectually, and socially by accepting a particular task. Let them see how the church's ministry will be strengthened. Share how they can influence the lives of others, both inside and outside the church. Let them see the eternal benefits that can accrue from their involvement. Share some of the biblical promises God gives to those who serve him. People are likely to be more committed when they understand how their service contributes to the achievement of the overall vision of your church ministry.
- **Build on commitment rather than toward commitment** - Everyone who attends your church is committed at some level. The fact they show up and put money in the basket demonstrates this. Start where people are and challenge them to move to the next level. They may not be ready to teach a class, but they might be willing to enroll in the next discipleship course. They may not be ready to lead the worship service, but they may agree to help run the sound system. Stretch people. Challenge them to greater involvement in ministry.
- **Reward people for their commitment** - No one serves for nothing. We all desire to hear those wonderful words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The Bible is filled with promises of God's blessing upon those who faithfully serve him. Just as God rewards us for our commitment to him, so you need to reward your church family for their commitment to your church. Thank people for what they do. Commend them for a job well done. Host an annual recognition banquet. Go out of your way to celebrate the various levels of commitment found among your people. You'll find more people will be willing to get involved if you do.

Each of the nine problem areas discussed above contributes to the scarcity of lay leaders in our churches. Some are more critical than others are. For a church to grow and function biblically it must have lay leaders and a system for developing people into the leaders God wants them to be. This is unlikely to happen, however, until the above problems are addressed and corrected.

Church planters are largely responsible for developing the system that exists in their churches. If that system is not working, then they must take the lead in changing it. That may mean some painful self-evaluation, study, and asking for help. It may involve changing your leadership style. It certainly will require a lot more energy and effort. If a church is not functioning properly, the fault does not lie with the people in the pews alone, but with those who are in leadership. Everything, after all, rises or falls on leadership.

So, take the bull by the horns, acknowledge that things aren't working the way they should, and ask for help in taking corrective steps so your church will produce the lay leaders it needs to become a fully functional New Testament church.

In the next section, you will learn some of the basic principles of leadership. You have to know what it is that you are trying to produce before you can design a system to generate that kind of product. What kinds of leaders are you looking for? What skills do you want them to have? What qualities or characteristics do you want them to possess? How do you produce those things in people's lives? These, are some of the issues we will cover in the next section.

Section # 2

The Principles of Leadership Development

Lay leaders don't come ready made. They must be developed one or two at a time. God gives us the raw material in the form of new believers and then expects us as pastors and church planters to mold those people into the leaders he wants them to be. This takes time, energy, effort, and persistence. It also requires that we understand some of the underlying principles upon which lay leadership is built and have a process in place for implementing those principles.

Moses is recognized as one of the greatest leaders in history. The book of Exodus chronicles how God used him to forge two million Jewish slaves into a civilized nation, and lead them to freedom through forty years of grueling journey in the mighty Arabian desert. His leadership skills were magnificent, and yet he almost lost it all until his father-in-law Jethro came to his aid and taught him some basic principles of lay development. Those same principles still apply today.

Principle #1 - Leadership development must be intentional.

Moses' story is found in Exodus 18:13-26 where we find Jethro standing in the shadows watching his son-in-law judge the people. Anyone who had a problem or an issue with a neighbor brought his problem to Moses for resolution. Moses would listen to both sides and then make a decision concerning who was right and what should be done. As soon as he finished one case, the next plaintiff stepped forward to present his situation, and so it went from early morning well into the evening. Moses hardly had time to eat, think, plan, pray or rest because he, like so many church planters and pastors, was so busy.

Moses thought he was serving God by handling every case, listening to every dispute, and making every decision. In reality, he had become a bottleneck through which everything flowed. No one did anything without first consulting Moses. They didn't break camp unless Moses said so. They didn't stop for the night until Moses said so. He decided where each tribe camped and settled disputes over which tent went where. Anything and everything flowed through him. He thought he was serving God, but he was actually hindering the work of God. One man, even a man with Moses' superior leadership abilities, can only do so much.

Although he didn't realize it, Moses' actions placed both him and the nation in jeopardy. Physically, Moses was "wearing away" (18). He was constantly tired and fatigued. He didn't have time to think, to pray or recharge his batteries. If he kept up this pace, he would surely collapse and perhaps even die. Then, where would the nation be without its leader? Being older and wiser, Jethro recognized both the physical and the organizational fallacy of Moses' actions and kindly went to him saying, "The thing that thou doest is not good" (17).

A lot of church planters and pastors function in a similar fashion to Moses - they go full out from morning to night trying to handle all the details of the ministry. Every decision, every action, every thing that needs to be done either comes to them for their approval or is done by them. They often run themselves ragged and are constantly tired because they cannot keep up with the demands of the ministry, and all the while, their people sit back and watch these spiritual Supermen in amazement. Without realizing it, they have become a bottleneck that stifles the growth of their churches. They desperately need a Jethro who will lovingly come along side them and say, "The thing that thou doest is not good."

How did Moses react when his father-in-law inquired as to why he sat alone to judge the people while everyone else stood by? Incredulous, Moses responded, "Because the people come unto me to enquire of God" (15). As far as Moses was concerned, this was what the people expected. It was customary for the leader to make all the decisions. No one else was willing to volunteer for the job. In Moses' mind, the people weren't willing to accept the responsibility. They simply weren't committed enough to take on the task of leadership. Sound familiar?

No one, including Moses, expected anyone other than Moses to function in a leadership role. There were no plans, no expectations, and no intention of developing lay leaders from among the people, and so everything was left up to Moses. They didn't have leaders because they didn't plan to have any other leaders. They thought Moses could and should do it all.

Recognizing the shortsightedness of such a situation, Jethro instructed Moses that if he wanted lay leaders to help him carry the load, then he would have to choose men with leadership potential whom he could develop into lay leaders. Notice in verses 21,22 he said, "THOU shalt provide out of all the people able men . . . and let them judge the people in all seasons." Moses was to take the initiative, it was HIS responsibility to develop lay leaders. He was to be intentional about it.

It was Moses' job to evaluate the leadership potential of the people and then help them develop the skills they would need to fulfill the various leadership roles. Leadership development is always intentional. It doesn't just happen. It takes place because someone intends for it to happen and takes steps to insure that it happens. Intentionality, you see, requires developing a plan in advance.²⁶

Bill knew he would need help planting a new church in the upscale community south of town. He understood that certain ministries needed to be in place if he was going to attract and retain new families. He would need a good worship leader, someone to head up the children's ministry, an outreach coordinator, an assimilation director, and someone to help people discover their "ministry shape" and to plug them into appropriate ministry slots. He and his wife could handle some of those responsibilities initially, but he would be further ahead if other people were available to fill these leadership positions. Bill also knew that godly lay leaders do not grow on trees. He would have to win these people to Christ, help them to mature spiritually, and train them to become the godly leaders God wanted them to be. Leadership development would have to be one of his main priorities from the very beginning.

One of the primary responsibilities of leaders is to identify and develop potential leaders.²⁷ If Moses wanted godly men to help him judge the people, then he would have to be intentional in seeking them out, providing them with training, and hold them accountable.

The same is true of church planters and pastors. If you want a team of godly people to help you build your church you must be intentional in seeking them out and developing them. This should be reflected in your statement of core values. It should be part of your planning during the prenatal phase of development. You should have a plan and materials for training lay leaders already available before you start forming your core group. You should be constantly on the lookout for potential leaders. Ask people to make this a major prayer focus during the formative months leading up to the public launch of the church.

If your church already exists, step back and look at your people. Who has the potential for being a lay leader? What training do you need to make available to them so they can develop their leadership skills? How can you get them involved in ministry so they can develop their talents? Be intentional. Don't sit back and wait for people to come to you, go to them. Share your heart and vision with them and ask for their help. If you are intentional in developing lay leaders, you will soon find that God has already placed these people in your church or will soon bring them across your path. Your job is to recognize

their potential and to intentionally develop it to its fullest.

Principle #2 - Leadership development must be based on a spiritual foundation.

The missing key to leadership development in the church is spiritual formation.²⁸ Too often people are given leadership positions because of their relationships, membership longevity or job skills. Unqualified people are sometimes elevated simply because they are willing to accept the position or do the task at hand. In many cases there is little thought given to the person's spiritual qualifications, giftedness or walk with God. This almost always proves unsatisfactory because godly character is the foundation of any leadership.²⁹ If you want godly lay leaders who are teachable and reliable, you must build godly people.

Joel's study of Paul's church-planting methods recorded in the New Testament had convinced him that discipleship and building godly character into people's lives was one of the keys to developing a strong church. He reasoned that a strong church required godly lay leaders, and having godly lay leaders required people with godly character. That meant he needed to develop a discipleship process that would produce the godly character people needed in order to fulfill a leadership role in the church. Joel determined early on to make spiritual development a major emphasis in his church plant starting with the core group and moving forward from there.

How important is this issue of character? Aubrey Malphurs lists this as first in importance when he says the three characteristics of a leader are: he is a godly person (character), he knows where he is going (vision), and he has followers (influence).³⁰ John Maxwell lists character first in a list of ten leadership qualities.³¹ It was high on Jethro's list as well. He told Moses that he was to pick men who feared God, men of truth, and men who hateth covetousness (Exodus 18:21). Jethro understood that character and attitude are the most important factors in choosing leaders. Skills can be taught.³²

It takes time to build godly character, but it begins by laying a biblical foundation upon which to build and then teaching people the habits they will need to become spiritually mature, godly people. Character is shaped by the habits people develop while spiritual maturity is demonstrated more by their behavior than by the beliefs they profess to believe.³³

Leadership development begins the moment a person receives Christ as personal Savior. Every new believer is a potential future leader that must be nurtured and taught to grow spiritually if he is to develop the character qualities you want lay leaders to possess.

Spiritual growth can be described as the process of a believer being transformed into the image of Christ.³⁴ It is spelled D-I-S-C-I-P-L-E-S-H-I-P. Jim Berg defines it as one believer helping another believer make biblical change toward Christ likeness. Our biblical mission as church planters, after all, is to evangelize lost people and then to equip them for usefulness to Christ, which is in essence, discipleship.³⁵

You cannot develop a healthy church without developing healthy lay leaders, and you can't have healthy lay leaders without developing a simple discipleship process that moves people toward maturity. The healthiest churches in America tend to have a simple process for making disciples with godly character.³⁶ While churches often talk about discipleship, little discipleship appears to be taking place because so few are experiencing true spiritual growth that results in godly character and acceptance of leadership roles.

There seems to be two basic reasons for this dearth of discipleship. One is a lack of understanding

concerning what discipleship is and what it requires. All too often discipleship has been reduced to little more than a mere profession of faith and occasional church attendance. The self-sacrifice, commitment, and devotion taught by Christ have been largely lost. The reading of Jim Berg's book *Changed into His Image* would do much to help people understand what is involved in biblical discipleship.

The second reason little discipleship takes place even in Bible-centered churches today is the lack of a simplified process for making and growing disciples. Few churches emphasize outreach and witnessing to the lost, and even fewer have a mechanism in place for developing those people into spiritually mature lay leaders. Rainer notes that churches without a process for making disciples are floundering.³⁷

Every church needs to focus anew on outreach, evangelism, and the winning of the lost to Christ while at the same time developing a discipleship process that will move people through the various stages of growth toward spiritual maturity. People must be taught godly habits that build Christian character and be put into some ministry role where they can develop a servant heart as they exercise their spiritual gifts in service to others.

The scarcity of lay leaders is not an administrative or organizational problem alone. It is also a character problem that reveals the weakness of our discipling ministries. To be effective, leadership development must be built on a spiritual foundation.

Principle #3 - Leadership development requires a culture of leadership.

Moses lacked people to help him judge the nation of Israel simply because there was no anticipation or expectation of anyone helping him. It wasn't on his or their radar screens. He and Aaron were the leaders and that was it. Their core values, their philosophy of ministry, their vision of the future didn't call for the development of lay leaders, and so there was no one to help him. There was no culture in which leaders could develop. Consequently, Moses was wearing himself out serving the people from morning to night just like a lot of church planters and pastors do.

The lack of a leadership culture has already been identified as one of the major reasons (see Problem #2) for the shortage of lay leaders in churches. I don't want to repeat the same material here, but I do want to expand upon it. The simple truth is you have to develop a culture of leadership in your church if you want to develop lay leaders.

When I was a boy, growing up on the farm my mother used to have "hot boxes." They were made of twelve-inch wide planks that were set on edge and nailed together at the side of the garage facing the morning sun. The boxes were perhaps two feet wide, twenty or twenty-five feet long, and twelve inches high. Old window frames with the glass still in place covered the tops allowing the warm morning sun in while keeping the cold out. Here she would plant her "early starts" of flowers, tomatoes, and other garden vegetables. She regulated the temperature by raising and lowering the window frames with sticks. Anything planted in those "hot boxes" was expected to grow simply because of the ideal climate in which they had been placed.

In the same way, a leadership culture (or lack thereof) is seen in the expectations of your church. Every church has certain expectations of its people. In some churches, those expectations are fairly low while they are much higher in other churches. Growing churches tend to have higher expectations than non-growing churches. One of the things they expect is that people will accept a ministry assignment and thereby start on the path to lay leadership.

Don was wise beyond his years. Growing up in a pastor's home, he learned a lot about the

importance of lay leadership and how to develop people into leaders. He knew that his attitude would set the tone for the whole church. If he saw people as gifted individuals and potential leaders, they would respond accordingly. If he viewed them negatively with suspicion, they would respond by holding back. Knowing that several passages in the Bible teach that God distributes spiritual gifts to each of his children, and that his job as a church-planting pastor was to equip people to do the work of the ministry, Don determined to create an atmosphere in which ministry and leadership development could flourish.

He began by creating a list of entry-level service opportunities he could plug people into as soon as they began to attend a core group meeting or a church service. It was important to get people involved in order for them to develop a servant heart. Don also made a mental note of the leadership indicators he would look for in people's lives, things like giftedness, integrity, faithfulness, availability, a teachable spirit, and a willingness to obey God. Starting with just one or two people, Don went on to develop a discipleship course that moved people rapidly through the various stages of growth while at the same time they were gaining hands-on experience through their involvement in a variety of ministry opportunities.

In churches with a leadership culture people are expected to be involved in ministry. It is anticipated that every member will be a minister. People are seen as gifted by God for service. Every visitor is viewed as a prospective leader. Leadership classes and training are offered. A process is in place for moving people from one level of maturity to the next. Standards have been raised and faithfulness is expected. There is often an atmosphere of self-sacrifice that is invigorating. This leadership culture is reflected in the core values and in the mission and vision statements of the church.

Service, ministry, involvement, and leadership are not viewed as strange or abnormal in churches with a leadership culture. The pastor is not afraid to say "yes" when people inquire about starting some new outreach venture. He is not afraid to delegate the authority as well as the responsibility to others for getting things done. He willingly gives away ministry and empowers others to develop their ministry skills. Leadership development is part of the warp and woof of their ministry. It permeates their philosophy of ministry. It is the goal of their assimilation process. It is the expected norm in their church.

Thom Rainer says the three keys to assimilation are: expectations, relationships and involvement³⁸ while Ed Stetzer teaches that if you want to keep people in your church and grow them into leaders you need to teach them habits that lead to growth, help them establish relationships, and put them to work.³⁹

You lay the groundwork for leadership development by frequently announcing the church's membership and ministry expectations. You communicate these expectations by what you tell visitors and new believers, by what you say in the Sunday School class or small group, and by what you preach in your Sunday message. More than anywhere else, expectations are taught in pre-membership classes where people explore what the church believes, how it functions, what it requires, and what it expects of its members. New members must understand that their acceptance into the church is accompanied by clearly established expectations.⁴⁰

It is not enough to encourage people to grow spiritually or to volunteer to teach a class, work with a group or accept some leadership role. You must create an atmosphere in which people are *expected* to do these things, one which provides them with the opportunity and the means for doing so. Ministry, involvement, and leadership must permeate the fabric of your church. Start early. Look for ways to get people involved in some form of ministry as soon as they get saved or start attending the church. Let them mow the lawn, set up tables, pick up trash, straighten up hymnbooks, fold bulletins, and move equipment. Let them know early on that if they attend your church involvement is expected from the very start. By doing so, you are building a culture in which leaders can develop.

Not everyone has the same leadership potential. Some people will avoid all involvement. They don't want the responsibility. They may stop coming all together. That is fine. Don't worry about it. They probably would not be a help to you anyway. Focus on teachable people. Focus on people who are willing to follow biblical principles. Look for people who are growing spiritually and who are willing to accept mentoring.

Just as cream rises to the top, so people who are developing into lay leaders will step to the forefront as they engage in ministry. Keep your eyes open for indications of leadership ability. Look for people with servant hearts and teachable spirits. Bob Logan advocates that you look for these six qualities in people:

- *Look for evidence of giftedness* - their gifts may not yet be fully developed.
- *Look for character rather than social standing* - they may be a leader in the world, but that doesn't mean their character has been refined.
- *Look for faithfulness and humility rather than flashes of talent* - consistency to follow through with assignments demonstrates endurance.
- *Look for obedience rather than knowledge* - being faithful to do what they know is better than knowing a lot but never putting it into practice.
- *Look for willingness to learn rather than experience* - someone who has "done it before" may not be willing to learn new ways of doing things.
- *Look for available people rather than the overworked leader* - too few leaders are carrying too much of the load. Find people who are ready for a new challenge.⁴¹

You want people who understand and agree with your vision for the church. Ask them to sign on to your values.⁴² Few things are as important as this point. Both workers and potential leaders must buy into your philosophy of ministry if there is to be unity, harmony, and success. Everyone must march in the same direction to the same drummer. This is not the place for independent contractors who do their own things. Disagreement over objectives, methods, and means can tear the best team apart just as it did with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15.

The very first question John Maxwell asks when considering a person's potential for leadership focuses on this very issue. He asks, "Is this person compatible philosophically with the organization and my leadership?" Then he says,

*"If the answer is no, don't even consider equipping or mentoring this person. There must be compatibility first; otherwise, no amount of training in the world will make this person the type of leader you want and need."*⁴³

There are seven C's you should look for in people as you develop your culture of leadership.

- *Competency* - Do they have the skills to do the job and does the job fit them?
- *Compatibility* - Are they the right person for the job? Are they teachable?
- *Chemistry* - Do they fit with the organization and agree with our philosophy of ministry?
- *Compensation* - What will it take to train them? What will it cost to have them here?
- *Character* - Can we trust them? Are they reliable and dependable?
- *Conduct* - Do we see Jesus in them? Are they Christ like?
- *Call* - What is their motive for wanting this position?⁴⁴

Leadership is defined as the discipline of deliberately exerting special influence within a group to

move it toward goals of beneficial permanence that fulfill the group's real needs.⁴⁵ As a leader, every church planter (and pastor) should use his influence to develop a culture of leadership that enables the potential leaders in his church to develop their gifts and skills so that the church can be healthy and function properly.

Principle # 4 - Leadership development requires a vision to motivate.

Our churches are filled with potential leaders who have been gifted by God for service, and yet the vast majority of people sit back and refuse to get involved or are engaged at a level far below their capabilities. Why? What are their reasons for this reluctance to serve? One of the primary answers is that in many churches there is no compelling vision that motivates people to serve.

While Moses had articulated his vision of a "land flowing with milk and honey" to motivate the people to follow his leadership out of slavery toward the Promise Land, he failed to break that vision down into smaller parts that included the people's involvement. After four hundred years in bondage, they saw themselves as slaves, people who followed the instructions of others and did whatever they were told. They didn't see themselves as leaders. They needed a vision of the future as it could and must be.

And that was exactly what Jethro gave them. He described a picture in which Moses chose hundreds of men who feared God, men of truth who hated covetousness, men who he could train to be judges over Israel (Exodus 18:20,21). Then he set before them a scene in which these godly men made the day-by-day decisions and only brought the hard questions to Moses (22). Using his multi-colored palate, he envisioned the people contentedly going to their places in peace having had their problems solved in timely and equitable manner. People were functioning in their areas of giftedness having received adequate training, and Moses was portrayed as leading the nation joyfully into the future rather than wasting away under the heavy load he had been carrying.

This mental image was so galvanizing that both Moses and the people embraced it completely and "did all that he had said" (24). Vision was the motivating factor. People respond to vision rather than to need. You must lead with vision. It provides guidance. It stimulates. It galvanizes people to action.

Bob, like so many other church planters, is a dreamer. Every time he drives by the open field on South Henry Street he can see in his mind's eye the gleaming white pillars, the luscious green lawn, the tall steeple reaching into the heavens, and the parking lot filled with cars, Jeeps, and SUV's of a growing congregation. Inside, eager faces listen attentively as Bob ministers the Word of God to hurting hearts. In another part of the building, kids of all ages and sizes sing, laugh, and listen to the thrilling tales of David and Goliath, and Daniel in the lion's den. A counseling program is available for those in need of help. A discipleship course moves people through the stages of spiritual development. Leadership classes are taught. Opportunities for ministry abound. Visitors often frequent the services, and it is not unusual to hear of people accepting Christ as Savior. A number of the teens participate in summer mission trips every year. Some of the men periodically take part of their vacation time to journey to far away places to help build a school, a church or a Christian camp.

The picture in Bob's mind is so real that he can paint it in vivid colors using just a few words. In his thinking, it is already a reality. This is the future as it can and must be as far as he is concerned. His enthusiasm is contagious. His vision is catching, so much so that the people around him are able to see the same thing he sees. Bob's vision of the future is just as motivating to him and his people as Moses' vision of a land "flowing with milk and honey" was to him and the people of Israel. Bob has discovered that people will follow him anywhere if he keeps his vision in

front of them all the time.

Malphurs points out that a good, well-articulated vision motivates.⁴⁶ If people aren't responding to your vision, you need to go back and take another look at it. Do you have a vision of what the church will look like one, three, five, and ten years in the future? Do the people know what it is? Have you articulated it within the past three weeks? Can it be stated in two or three sentences? Do you have a memory hook you can hang it on? Are you consumed with your vision? Does it excite and motivate you? Can you articulate it right now without stopping to think about it?

Churches that are struggling because of the lack of lay leaders usually do not have a compelling vision, if they have one at all. They have never taken the time to think through what they are doing or where they are going. They haven't defined their purpose, they often don't know what they are supposed to be doing, and have no idea where they will be in five years. They lack vision. The writer of Proverbs, in reference to a different kind of vision, said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). The same thing is true today, without a challenging mental image of the future as it can and must be people in our churches will languish and not become the leaders God wants them to be.

Do not underestimate the importance of vision. As the leader, you must dream (visualize, meditate, contemplate, think about) what God wants to do through you and the church you are planting or are going to plant. Ideally, what would this church be like if it was everything you wanted it to be? What kind of ministries would it offer? What kind of facilities would it possess? What qualities and attitudes would the people display? What kind of leadership-development process would be in place? What kind of impact would it have on the community?

Your answer to those questions describes your vision - IF that is really what you believe God has called you to do. If you don't believe it is possible to develop a church like the one you just described, then your vision is less than you say it is. Your vision is whatever you believe your church will be like in the future.

If your vision is too small it will not grip your heart or the hearts of your people. If it doesn't excite you, it won't excite them. A visionless leader will have few followers. You must show people your heart and your passion. Great leaders lead by planting dreams in the hearts of their followers.⁴⁷ You must lead with vision or you will not lead at all.

Principle # 5 - Leadership development requires a simplified training process.

People learn best by doing, but they are often reluctant to undertake a ministry assignment unless you provide them with the training and the skills they need in order to do what you want them to do. To do this you will need to develop a simplified training process that moves people from where they are spiritually to where God wants them to be.

Mark has discovered that busyness and a full slate of programs are not the answer. His people are involved in all kinds of ministries, the church has programming for every member of the family, and activity is occurring all over the building. When families walk into church on Sunday morning Mom goes to the ladies' class, Dad makes his way to the men's fellowship group, the teens head for the youth room, and the smaller children are escorted to the Tiny Tots assembly hall.

After several months of scrambling to keep all the leadership slots filled (some of the time), and negotiating one too many turf wars, Mark decided something had to be done. As he analyzed the situation, he realized that almost every ministry in the church was a self-contained unit. There was

no correlation between what went on in the adult classes with what transpired in the youth or children's ministries. Workers were competing with each other for space, time, resources, and personnel. Even worse, there was no way to tell if all this hubbub was having any real impact on people's lives. They were being exposed to biblical truth, but nothing seemed to change.

While watching football one afternoon, Mark realized that everyone on the team, the coaches, the quarterback, the linemen, the running backs, the wide ends, all had the same objective - to move the ball down the field to score a touchdown. Everything they did was coordinated to move the ball forward. When Mark opened his Bible for his devotions later that evening, Matthew 28:19,20 virtually leaped off the page at him. The making of disciples was the primary focus of Jesus' Great Commission command. All the other aspects of the Commission contributed to the goal of making disciples.

Mark could hardly wait to get to his office the next morning. Sitting down with pen and paper, he listed all the ministries and activities of the church along with the objectives of each. When he finished, he had a hodge-podge of conflicting ministries that basically undermined each other. Praying for wisdom, he started sketching a simplified process designed to move people through the various stages of spiritual growth. He was careful to build elements of leadership development into his plan. Some of the existing programs would need to be modified in order to contribute to the objective of making disciples. A few might even have to be discontinued entirely since they did not serve the stated goal of making disciples. With a simplified program people would know where they were going, how they were going to get there, and how their ministry contributed to the objective of making disciples. Mark wished he had implemented a training program like this when he first planted the church. It would have been so much easier with a lot less ruffled feathers.

- **A simplified training process overcomes fear.**

The lack of knowledge creates fear, and fear causes people to hold back from stepping up to the leadership plate. They are afraid to accept a leadership responsibility because they don't know what it will involve or because they lack the training needed to do it right. They may not know what their spiritual gifts are or may have tried their hand at ministry in the past and failed miserably. Many Christians honestly think they lack the capacity to be leaders and thus are fearful to get involved. This fear and reluctance to serve can be overcome with a simplified training process that provides people with the training, know-how, and opportunities to gain experience and confidence.

- **A simplified training process helps develop ministry skills.**

God has gifted his people for ministry (I Corinthians 12). He has given them skills, talents, and gifts of his grace ("charismatons") that enable them to see and meet specific ministry needs within both the church and the community. In addition, he has given them the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to empower them, and pastor/teachers to equip (train, outfit, prepare, ready) them to use those skills and gifts to further God's work. Your training program should be designed to help people discover how God has gifted them, and provide them with the training, know-how, and opportunities to deploy those skills in ministry to others.

- **A simplified training process builds confidence.**

Knowledge is power. Knowing what you are supposed to do, how you are supposed to do it, when you are supposed to do it; having watched others do it; and having done it yourself all combine to create the courage and confidence needed to become a lay leader. Jesus used this very process to prepare the disciples to step into various ministry roles. First, he taught them what he wanted them to do, then he

showed them how to do it. Next, he sent them out to do it themselves. Then he brought them back to evaluate what they had done before finally turning them loose. A simplified training process provides people with knowledge, and knowledge gives them the confidence they need to move into positions of leadership.

- **A simplified training process should be natural.**

Training and ministry should be a natural part of the Christian life. Service is the very essence of being a follower of Christ. Membership ought to be synonymous with ministry, and it can be if you develop a simplified training process in your church plant from the very start. People should begin to hear about it the very first time you meet them or the first time they attend a service. Anyone contemplating membership should expect to be directed into a discipleship course that includes training for a ministry assignment. You want to create an atmosphere in which spiritual growth and ministry involvement are as natural as Mom, apple pie, and Independence Day.

- **A simplified training process should be central.**

A simplified training process should be an integral part of your church's ministry. Everything that is done, every class that is taught, every activity that is planned, every sermon that is preached should be tied into the leadership training process. Air-conditioned homes have a central duct that runs the length of the house. Other ductwork then branches off the main duct feeding cool air throughout the house. In the same way, all ministries and activities of the church need to be tied into a simplified leadership-discipleship training process that helps people grow spiritually and equips them for a level of ministry consistent with their spiritual maturity and training.

- **A simplified training process should be simple.**

The healthiest churches in America tend to have simple processes for making disciples.⁴⁸ They determine what qualities, characteristics, skills, and knowledge they want lay leaders to possess at various stages of development, and then design classes and programs to produce those very things. Their goal is to produce a spiritually mature believer who will be involved in some level of ministry within one to two years after the person accepts Christ or begins attending the church. The focus isn't on teaching them everything a Christian ought to know (that will take a lifetime), but rather on teaching them what they need to know in order to take the next step in their spiritual development. You want their training to be thorough, but it doesn't have to be complex. Keep it simple.

- **A simplified training process should start early.**

The training of lay leaders begins the first time you meet a person. You want to start planting the seeds of servanthood in their minds from the very beginning. This is done by sharing your vision of the church you are planting, the kinds of ministries it will have, the discipleship courses and ministry training classes that are available, and the importance of serving others. Enroll people in the first level of discipleship classes as soon as they are saved, or if they are already believers, as soon as they start attending the church. Begin teaching them basic Bible doctrine just as the apostles did in Acts 2:43, and just as Paul did in Hebrews 1-5 (see Hebrews 6:1,2).

Find out what skills they already have, and put them to work by giving them an entry-level or "shallow end" ministry assignment. These are areas of service that do not require spiritual maturity, and which contain minimal risk of damage should the person "mess up." You aren't going to give them a class to teach or let them work in the nursery at this point, but you do want to involve them in some form of ministry even if it is nothing more than folding bulletins, mowing the lawn or sweeping the floor. The

goal is to tie learning and doing together so that they develop a teachable spirit and a servant heart. Do not wait until people have "sat and soaked" for a couple of years before involving them in ministry. If you do, you will have stunted their spiritual growth and all but guaranteed that they will rarely become lay leaders in the church.

- **A simplified training process should be on going.**

Discipleship is a process. It is linear in nature. Spiritual growth and the leadership development are never-ending tasks. Maturity constantly seeks to become deeper. We are to build precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:10). Once you plug people into an entry-level ministry, provide them with the spiritual nourishment they need to keep growing spiritually, and the technical training they need to improve and expand their ministry skills. Give them books to read, periodically run skill enhancement classes, send them to seminars, provide them with videos, assign them to work along side other leaders, take them with you when you engage in ministry. You want to expose them to new ideas, new opportunities, and new skills that will allow them to grow in the Lord while enhancing their ministry skills.

Gradually expand the scope of their ministry assignments. Give them more responsibility and bigger jobs. Jesus said, "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). As time progresses, people will grow in their relationship with the Lord, their confidence will expand, and their ministry skills will improve. Leaders never stop growing, so provide them with on-going training to keep them moving in the direction God wants them to go.

- **A simplified training process may require revamping.**

If a person attends three religious gatherings in a week totaling four hours, he will have attended a cumulative total of 8,320 hours of religious training by the time he is forty years of age. By contrast, the average university student receives his bachelor's degree after spending but 2,176 hours in the classroom!⁴⁹ It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that something is tragically wrong with the discipleship/leadership development process in many churches. After all that exposure to biblical truth, the lack of lay leaders seems to indicate that what we are doing isn't working very well.

Churches are busy. Schedules are full. There is a lot of activity going on, but it is often disjointed and unrelated to everything else that goes on. There is no central objective designed to move people into maturity, ministry, and leadership. There is a disconnect between what is taught and what is caught. If that is true, then we must rethink and revamp the way we disciple people and train leaders. If what you are doing is not producing the result you want, then you must change what you are doing or the way you are doing it. Remember, the system you have in place is designed perfectly to give you the results you are getting. If you don't like your results, then change your system, and replace it with something that is more biblical.

Principle #6 - Leadership development requires trust.

Church planters and pastors must remember that their primary task is not to build a church, but to build (disciple) people into fully functioning followers of Christ. The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.⁵⁰ We must not only win them to faith in Christ and provide them with spiritual nourishment so they can grow to maturity, but we must also equip them for ministry and service to others. Doing so consistently results in a healthy, growing church. Without this equipping and involvement in ministry, they will never reach spiritual maturity regardless of how long they sit under your preaching.

Harry felt uncomfortable. His melancholy personality made it difficult for him to trust people, but he knew that he couldn't plant a church successfully without trusting his fellow believers. His reluctance was based partially on the fact that he was a highly skilled perfectionist. He could do most things a whole lot better than other people. Turning responsibility for teaching a class or handling the offerings was scary business as far as Harry was concerned.

Harry realized, however, that his trust would have to be in the Lord. The church, after all, was God's church, and not Harry's. But there were some things Harry could do to ensure that people would do well and carry through on their commitments. He set up a training program that taught people how to recognize their "ministry shape," and then sought to give them ministry assignments consistent with their giftedness. When he delegated a task to someone else, he gave them the authority and training required to do the job right. He let people know he was available to advise them if they needed help, and built accountability into the process by scheduling regular periods of evaluation into it. To his utter amazement, Harry found that people blossomed and grew in their relationship with God, and were much more faithful in carrying out their assignments when he trusted them. A few even exceeded his high expectations by doing a better job than he could have done himself.

- **Trust is scary, but essential.**

John Maxwell points out that trust is the single most important factor in building personal and professional relationships. Trust implies accountability, predictability, and reliability.⁵¹

It is at this very point, however, that church leaders often come up short. You see, involving people in ministry involves trust. Whenever you give a person a ministry assignment, you are also putting them into a place of leadership. In doing so, you are giving them the right to exercise a certain amount of authority while relinquishing an equal amount of control. That is scary for many leaders, including church planters and pastors.

More often than not, failure to trust people is the result of fear. 1) *First, there is the fear that people will let us down.* Every church planter and pastor has had people who promised to do something, and then didn't do it. Perhaps they agreed to teach a class and came unprepared. Maybe they said they would help set up the sound equipment and then didn't show up. It may be they committed to check the price of some piece of equipment, but failed to carry through.

People are not always reliable. They do sometimes let us down. You can't always depend on them, but if you are going to develop lay leaders in your church, you must work with the shortcomings of people. When people let you down, lovingly hold them accountable. Find out why they didn't carry through. Were they over-committed? Was the task too big for them? Did they not understand the assignment? Did you fail to provide them with the resources, training, and guidelines needed for carrying out the task?

Even if people fall flat on their face and let you down, don't give up on them. Help them evaluate what went wrong. Show them what they should have done, and then give them another opportunity to fulfill an assignment. God is a God of second, third, fourth, and multiple chances. How many times have we failed to live up to our responsibilities as Christian leaders? God is patient with us and keeps giving us additional opportunities to serve him. We need to do the same with our people if we expect them to become dependable lay leaders.

2) *Second, there is the fear that people won't do as good of a job as we can do ourselves.* This is probably true. Most church planters and pastors are capable of doing a better job than the average

layperson. And why shouldn't they? After all, they have been to Bible college and perhaps seminary, they have had years of ministry experience, and they are (or should be) constantly honing their skills. They had better know more than their people about teaching a class, leading a service, planning a worship service, leading people to Christ, overseeing finances, preaching a sermon, counseling the hurting, and advertising the church. If they don't, they ought not to be a church planter or a pastor.

We are in the people business, and we must believe in people and their potential. They are capable of becoming spiritually mature, godly leaders. God has gifted these people for ministry, so stop focusing on what they can't do, and start using them to do what they can do. You develop leaders by using them. Teach them what they ought to do. Show them how to do it. Let them try doing it. Evaluate with them how they did. Show them how they can improve, and let them try again. As you go through that process several times with people you'll find some of them will become very proficient, even to the point of doing a better job that you can do.

We also need to recognize that lay people often are more skilled than we are in some areas. They may have music skills, graphic art capabilities, managerial experience, carpentry know-how, child-care training, and a host of other talents that we don't have. Plug these people into ministry. Provide on-the-job training for other, less experienced people. Send them to seminars. Provide them with the opportunities to develop their ministry skills. Jesus could have done a better job of evangelizing the world than any of the millions of disciples who have followed him in the past two thousand years, but he turned that task over to us and trusted us to do it. Church planters shouldn't continue doing any task that someone else can be trained to do, even if that person doesn't do it as well as the church planter can.

3) *Third, is the fear of losing control.* Being a church planter places one in a position of influence, control, and power. To a limited extent, leaders can influence what does and doesn't happen. They can schedule or cancel meetings, they determine programming, they oversee events, they decide who speaks and who doesn't, they have a significant say in how funds are expended, and they set the tone and cast the vision for the future direction of the church. As the point man in the church, the church planter or pastor exercises a great deal of control over that ministry.

Whenever you train other people to take over some aspect of ministry you automatically give up some of the control you previously had. Some of the decision-making authority you exercised is transferred to the person receiving the assignment. They will begin to make some of the decisions you used to make. Some men fear that loss of control simply because they don't trust their people.

Church planters and pastors must remember that this is not their church - it is God's church. It belongs to him and not to them. If we are going to be used of God to plant churches successfully, then we must be willing to give up control while training people to exercise increasingly greater responsibility in various aspects of the ministry. The church planter will still have plenty of supervisory influence in the church as the people mature spiritually and step into responsible leadership roles.

- **Trust requires training.**

Trust is built on relationships and training. People often start attending a church because someone with whom they have a relationship invited them to visit. They will not continue to come, however, unless they like the pastor and his preaching. Thus, it is critically important for you as a church planter to begin building a relationship with people the first time you meet them. Be enthusiastic about what God is doing and share your vision of the future. You'll find that as your relationship grows, people will begin to trust you and will be more open to accepting a ministry assignment.

People are sometimes reluctant to get involved in ministry because they don't know what is

involved, how much time it will require or how to carry out the assignment. By the same token, church planters and pastors are equally reluctant to give people a ministry assignment because they are unsure whether the person can carry it out well. Training provides the answer to both dilemmas.

Ministry training is part of the discipleship process. The concept of ministry, service, and training should be taught in some form at every level of your discipleship program starting with your basic 101 classes. As people move through the various stages of discipleship they will learn to recognize their "ministry shape," acquire habits to help them grow spiritually, be exposed to the church's philosophy of ministry, and receive training for ministry assignments. As people undergo this training, both they and the church planter will become more confident in their ability to serve well. The church planter (pastor) feels more comfortable in assigning them a ministry task because he knows he can trust them to do the job he has trained them to do.

Training produces knowledge. Knowledge breeds confidence. Confidence leads to trust. Trust results in ministry delegation. Delegation brings about lay involvement. Lay involvement produces lay leaders. Lay leaders bring about healthy, growing churches.

- **Trust involves delegation.**

Nowhere is the issue of trust seen more clearly than in the practice of delegation. It is rooted deeply in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation starting with God placing man in the garden and delegating to him the responsibility to "dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). It is seen in Jethro's counsel to Moses to choose "able men" and to place them over the tribes of Israel to judge the people at all seasons (Exodus 18:21,22). Delegation was exemplified by the Lord Jesus when he appointed the seventy and sent them out two by two (Luke 10:1). The Great Commission delegates to every generation of believers the responsibility for making disciples from among all people groups (Matthew 28:19). Delegation is an integral part of developing lay leaders. You cannot do the one without the other.

Delegation involves giving another person the job of carrying out a particular task. The purpose isn't to get rid of something you don't want to do or don't have time to do, but rather to develop people. Delegation not only gets the job done, but it helps people to grow in the process. You build responsible people by giving them responsibilities. You develop leaders by letting them lead.

Stephen Covey points out that there are two kinds of delegation: *gofer delegation* and *stewardship delegation*.⁵² Gofer delegation occurs when the church planter tells someone, "Go for this, go for that, do this, do that, and let me know when you are finished." The person doing the delegating controls everything that is done, how it is done, when it is done, by whom it is done because he does not trust the person to whom he has delegated the task. While this form of delegation may be helpful in the early stages of training, it will seldom produce lay leaders unless it is followed by stewardship delegation.

Stewardship delegation focuses more on results than methods. It is more concerned with *what* is achieved rather than *how* it is done. That doesn't mean the *how* isn't important. It is just not as important as the *what*. Rather than detailing every aspect of the assignment, explain what you want accomplished. Then establish the parameters within which the person is to function, provide them with the resources to do the job, set up the standards of performance that will be used in evaluating the results, and specify what will happen, both good and bad, as the result of the evaluation.⁵³

Trust is the highest form of human motivation. You display trust in people when you give them ministry assignments (an act of delegation). Show that you trust them by giving them three things: responsibility, authority, and accountability. John Maxwell calls these "the big three."⁵⁴ Too often leaders shoot themselves in the foot by delegating the responsibility for a task without giving the other

two elements. While the task may get done, you will not develop lay leaders who are capable of handling a ministry assignment without you holding their hand.

Responsibility involves a description of the task that needs doing and the desired results. Every ministry assignment should come with a job description attached that describes the duties to be performed, the outcome desired, the accountability expected, the qualifications required, and the resources and training available. It is unfair to give a person a responsibility without telling them what you expect of them.

Authority involves telling people what they can and cannot do. It includes telling them how much money they can spend, what space they can appropriate, which people they can direct, what decisions they can make, and how much control they have. It is important that people have the freedom to carry out their assigned task without having to check with the leader each step of the way. Giving people decision-making authority is a sign that you really do trust them. One pastor points out that you bring out the best in people by giving them a challenge, giving them control, and giving them credit.⁵⁵

Accountability establishes the lines of reporting. It sets up the standards of performance and provides for a time of evaluation. People tend to do what we inspect rather than what we expect. Without accountability, people naturally drift away from the declared purpose.

- **Trust involves giving people the freedom to fail.**

The "school of hard knocks" can be painful, but very enlightening. Sometimes people won't listen or do not see the need of doing a task in the prescribed manner. They may think they know better than you do or that the task doesn't require as much attention to detail as you have indicated. Human nature is such that some people simply won't listen until they have fallen through the ice a couple of times.

Understand that when you give an assignment to a budding leader he may or may not be successful in carrying it out. You want him to succeed, but he may fall flat on his face (just as Peter did on a couple of occasions) either through his own shortsightedness or though no fault of his own. Too often, church planters are reluctant to assign ministry tasks to people because they think those individuals may not complete the assignment successfully.

They forget that people often learn more from doing a job wrong than by doing it right. You must give people the opportunity to learn from their mistakes by giving them the freedom to fail. If there is no possibility of failing, there is no real possibility of success either. People learn to do right by suffering the consequences of doing it wrong. A man learns to prepare well for teaching a class by showing up unprepared and suffering the embarrassment of not being prepared. The soundman learns to arrive early to set up by being late a couple of times.

The only thing worse than failure is not being allowed to try. People learn by doing, even when they do it wrong. Proverbs 24:16 says, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." He doesn't give up just because things didn't go as expected. He learns from his experience and tries again and keeps trying until he gets it right. Every so-called "failure" is really a teaching experience in which he is learning to do it right. Trust your people enough to give them the right to fail.

- **Trust is built around accountability.**

Accountable people are trustworthy people. They do a better job because they know someone either is watching or will be evaluating their work, and holding them responsible. Your church workers and the people you are grooming to become lay leaders need to know you love them enough to confront them if

they don't do their jobs properly. Some pastoral leaders are reluctant to do so because they find confrontation distasteful. Failure to confront, however, is a great disservice both to the individual and to the ministry. The loving thing to do is to meet privately with the person in question, point out the problem, and show him how to make the needed corrections. John Maxwell gives these ten steps for confronting a less than productive person:

- Confront as soon as possible - don't put it off
- Separate the person from the wrong action
- Confront only what the person can change
- Give the person the benefit of the doubt
- Be specific
- Avoid sarcasm
- Avoid words like *always* and *never*
- Tell the person how you feel about what was done wrong
- Give the person a game plan to fix the problem
- Affirm him or her as a person and friend⁵⁶

Accountability is not restrictive, but liberating. It opens the lines of communication for honest dialogue. It implies that partnership and help is available. It motivates people to do a better job. It provides a basis for evaluation and allows for mid-course corrections so that success is more likely. Build regular evaluation times into every ministry assignment. Let the person know up front that you will meet with them periodically to review their progress. People will do a better job if the lines of accountability are clearly established at the beginning.

Leadership is built on trust. The people must trust their pastor, but their pastor must also trust them if he is to develop a partnership of faithful lay leaders. At some point, you must let them "solo," even if it means you have to pick up the wreckage afterward. They will never learn to fly unless you let them fly on their own. This truth was brought home to me when as a young missionary appointee I began taking flying lessons. After just eight hours of training in the cockpit (plus a little reading), my instructor hopped out of the plane and said, "O.K., you're ready to solo. Take it up by yourself and bring it back."

My hands were sweaty as I taxied out to the runway and my heart was in my throat when the tower gave the "cleared for take off" signal. I maneuvered onto the runway and after a final check of my instruments gunned the engine to full throttle and lifted off smoothly into the wild, blue yonder. It is not hard to get an airplane off the ground. Just about any fool can do it if he tries. Neither is it difficult to put a plane back on the ground again, unless you want to live to tell about it.

I could hardly believe I was in that plane all by myself. No one else was there to help (except the Lord, of course. I wasn't sure how much he knew about flying and landing planes). My instructor had put his full trust in me. He not only gave me the keys to the plane, he gave me control of the plane. It was up to me either to land it or to crash it. I knew he was trusting me to land it safely. What a confidence booster that was. If he thought I could do it, I knew I could do it too.

It may not have been pretty with wings fluttering, flaps not extended (they should have been), and bouncing down the runway like a jackrabbit, but I managed to get that bird back on the ground all in one piece. My instructor had trusted me with a very valuable piece of equipment, and his trust had given me the confidence to do the job. You'll find the same thing is true if you provide your people with the training they need, and then show you trust them by setting them free to "solo" on their own.

Principle #7 - Leadership development requires mentoring.

The development of lay leaders is a multi-layered process. It begins the moment you meet a person and start sharing your vision of the future as you believe it can and must be. It then progresses through the stages of winning that person to Christ, incorporating him into the membership of the church, and shepherding him from one phase of discipleship to the next. Mentoring plays an important role in this development process.

George grew up under the watchful eye of his pastor. The pastor had taken George under his arm when his Dad died unexpectedly. He became a surrogate father to him and taught him much of what he knew about ministry. Thus, it was no surprise when as a church planter in his own right, George placed a high priority on both seeking outside counsel for his own ministry, and providing the same type of help to his lay leaders in the church.

A good shepherd knows his sheep. He knows their strengths. He knows their weaknesses, and he knows where they need help. George sought to help all his people, but he provided extra care to anyone who showed even the slightest sign of leadership. He taught them spiritual habits that stimulated spiritual growth. He counseled them about the importance of forming biblical values upon which they could build godly character qualities. He helped them discover how God had shaped them for ministry. When they became discouraged, he lifted them up. When they needed someone to talk to, he listened sympathetically, and suggested possible ways to resolve the issue. When they triumphed in some area of ministry, he rejoiced with them. Because of his mentoring mentality, George's church plant grew and blossomed right along with his people.

Mentoring has been defined as "a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources."⁵⁷ Usually it involves an older, more experienced person who has done what you are trying to do. People who mentor others are unique in that they are willing to give of themselves and their time to listen to your hopes, dreams, and problems. They share what they have learned from their own experiences through the years. They provide you with godly counsel and serve as a resource person. Every pastor and church planter can benefit from seeking advice from other godly men who have engaged in similar ministries with success. As a church-planting pastor, you need to mentor your own people, especially those who show the potential for becoming lay leaders in the church. Doing so will enable you to multiply your effectiveness.

Nebel and Rohrmayer point out that there is a slight difference between mentoring and coaching. The difference is in who initiates and sets the agenda.⁵⁸ In coaching, the church planter or pastor sets the agenda and determines where the lay leader needs help and what to share with him. In mentoring, the layperson comes to the planter and seeks counsel concerning how to handle a situation or where to find the solution to a particular problem. Developing lay leaders requires both coaching and mentoring, and for our purposes, they involve very similar activities regardless of who initiates the contact.

In the beginning, you as the church planter will initiate most of the training through your discipleship program. You will decide what they need to know, what skills they need to have, what needs doing, and in many cases, how it ought to be done. As the person grows spiritually and gains ministry experience, you need to let them know you are available to advise them any time they need help. If they are unsure of how to handle a situation, encourage them to seek you out. If they don't know where to find some resource they need, let them know they can ask for your input.

A good church planter will seek to coach or mentor his developing leaders in four critical areas:⁵⁹

- 1) He will guide them in the formation of biblical values that will guide their thinking.
- 2) He will equip them with the spiritual habits that are critical for their spiritual growth.
- 3) He will train them in the essential life and ministry skills to focus their giftedness.
- 4) He will seek to build critical character traits into them that will ensure their future effectiveness.

- *The formation of biblical values* - Virtually everyone who comes to Christ comes with a secular worldview. They view life from man's perspective rather than from God's viewpoint. This is both natural and is to be expected. That is all they have ever known. Once they come to faith in Christ, however, you need to teach them to look at life, the world, and their existence in the world from God's perspective. They need to understand that God is in control of his universe and that he has a purpose for their lives that transcends making a living and enjoying their kids and grandkids. They must learn to see the hand of God at work in their lives as he transforms them into useful tools to accomplish his purposes.

Joseph is a good example of a man who grew up in a dysfunctional home where he was a pampered "spoiled brat" that was hated by his siblings, but became a leader and a spiritual giant with a biblical value system. God instilled those values in him and transformed his life by taking him through some heart-wrenching experiences that none of us would want to repeat. It was through those experiences that he learned to view life from God's perspective. That is why in Genesis 50:20 he was able to say to his brothers:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

He was able to see the hand of God at work in the midst of his trials because he had developed a worldview with biblical values. You must teach people to think theologically, to become God-centered in their thinking, to embrace a biblical value system. Sadly, the vast majority of Christians never develop a biblical value system simply because no one has taught them how to do it. While this is a life-long process, it ought to be a primary focus of the first level of your discipleship ministry. Your people will not become godly lay leaders unless you help them view life from God's perspective, and adopt it as their own.

- *The development of spiritual habits* - Life is largely habitual. We are creatures of habit. We tend to do the same things over and over without thinking about what we are doing. We wake up about the same time every morning, we eat the same basic breakfast day after day, we drive the same route to work, we follow the same routines, we respond to stress the same way, and we sit in the same place in church - all out of habit. We are creatures of habit.

If a person is to grow spiritually and become a lay leader in the church, he must unlearn some of his or her past habits and replace them with new godly habits that stimulate spiritual growth and ministry involvement. This is known as *dehabituation* and *rehabituation*. It is what the Apostle Paul refers to as "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man" (Ephesians 4:22-24). The Bible provides us with a lengthy list of habits to be "put off" such as adultery, fornication, lustful thinking, covetousness, anger, wrath, bitterness, theft, corrupt communication, evil speaking, malice, lying, idolatry, drunkenness and many others. Depending on their lifestyle, some people will have more to "put off" than other folks will. You can help them do this by teaching them replacement habits that promote a growing relationship with Christ.

There are seven basic habits you need to inculcate into the lives of your people if they are to mature into healthy, growing believers. These are:

- 1) The habit of growing spiritually
- 2) The habit of a daily quiet time
- 3) The habit of talking to God through prayer on a daily basis.
- 4) The habit of listening to God through regular periods of Bible reading.
- 5) The habit of spending time with God's people through church attendance.
- 6) The habit of giving to God through tithing.
- 7) The habit of serving God through involvement in ministry.

These seven habits need to be taught to new believers early in their Christian life before they learn some of the less healthy habits exhibited by the more mediocre segment of the congregation. The place to do this is at the second level of your discipleship program, although you may reference some of these habits as soon as people get saved. By having a progressive discipleship program designed to move people through a growth process, you can build godly habits into people's lives more easily because you have already helped them to develop a biblical value system or worldview.

- *The teaching of ministry skills* - As pointed out previously in this manual, the work of the ministry is to be carried out by the people of the church rather than by the pastor or church planter. God has given his people gifts of his grace ("charismatons") to enable them to fulfill various ministry roles both within and outside the church. In addition, he has given them the ability to learn skills that enable them to be more efficient and effective in carrying out their ministry assignments.

It is your job as a church planter or pastor to help ("equip") your people recognize how God has gifted them, and then provide them with the training they need to use those gifts and skills in ministry to others. God shapes people's lives for ministry. He does this in five ways:

- 1) He gives them **S**piritual Gifts of his grace.
- 2) He gives them a **H**earth (passion) for a particular area of ministry.
- 3) He gives them **A**ptitudes (skills) they can use in ministry.
- 4) He gives them a unique **P**ersonality that fits them for a particular ministry.
- 5) He gives them life **E**xperiences that help prepare them for ministry.

These five areas define a person's "ministry shape" or design. You need to help them recognize their "ministry shape," and then provide them with the "how-to" training that allows them to hone their skills and thus fulfill a particular ministry role that corresponds to the way God has shaped them. Much of this training will be provided on the third level of your discipleship program although you will want to plug people into entry-level ministry assignments (setting up chairs, folding bulletins, etc.) shortly after they are saved or begin attending your meetings.

- *The building of critical character traits* - Character traits have to do with our inner motives, desires, and attitudes. Who a person is on the inside is far more important than what he or she is able to do. You can have the most talented person in the world serving in your ministry only to discover that they have a serious character flaw that undermines their effectiveness.

Character determines why we do what we do. Is it to be seen by others? Is it the feeling of power and authority? Is it because it makes us feel good? Why do we teach the class? Sing in the choir? Clean the church? Oversee the youth group or take part in any of the other leadership roles in the church? What is our motivation?

We want people to become lay leaders in our churches, but we want them to serve for the right reasons. They can only do that as we build character traits into them such as integrity, honesty, and a genuine love for God and people. While some of this will be touched upon throughout the discipleship

process, the fourth level especially should focus on helping people develop these qualities by showing them how they fit into God's redemptive plan for the world.

A progressive discipleship plan will have already laid a foundation of biblical values early in the discipleship process. Doing so provides you with a basis upon which you can build the desired character qualities into those who are becoming lay leaders. There are four general concepts you will want to teach them:

- 1) Teach them they were created to fulfill God's purpose rather than their own. (Proverbs 16:4)
- 2) Teach them that God has a life mission for them to accomplish. (Ephesians 2:10)
- 3) Teach them that they glorify God by fulfilling their life mission. (John 17:4)
- 4) Teach them that their primary task in life is to please God. (Acts 20:24)

It is important for people who are becoming leaders to understand that they are part of something much bigger than themselves. God has an overarching plan in which they play a significant role. Realizing this truth will help them serve out of a heart of love for God and for other people rather than for selfish or self-centered motives.

Mentor your leaders intentionally. Teach them the things they need to know. Show them how to do things more effectively. Tell them where to find help and resources. Meet with them periodically to monitor their progress. Model the right attitudes for them. Let them see how you handle similar problems. Encourage them when they get discouraged. A simple phone call, a note of encouragement, a pat on the back may be all it takes to encourage that fledgling leader to blossom into the effective, productive person God intended them to be.

Conclusion

Take heart. God is still in the church-planting business and continues to build his church. He gifts his people with the spiritual resources they need to fulfill various ministry tasks within his Body. Much of the building material God sends us is in raw form and must be shaped and molded before it becomes useful. Our job as church planters and pastors is to help people discover how God has gifted them, and then to equip them so they can use their God-given gifts and abilities effectively in the church.

Regardless of whether you are looking for lay leaders who can teach a Sunday School class, lead a song service, plan a banquet or serve as deacons, you must fashion them out of the raw material God sends you. The problem isn't the lack of lay leaders. The problem is the failure to develop an effective discipleship process that moves people through the various levels of spiritual growth and leadership development. A well-thought out discipleship program that is consistently taught to every person you win to Christ or who comes to your church will produce the lay leaders you need to build a healthy, growing church. This will be the focus of the next section of this manual.

Section # 3

The Process of Leadership Development

Leadership and discipleship are inseparable. You cannot have the one without the other. You will never have the lay leaders you need to complete your church-planting project unless you develop an effective discipleship process for moving people from the point of salvation to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement. Yet it is at this very critical juncture that many church planters come up short. Churches without a process for making disciples will almost always flounder.

Leaders are not born. They are made. If you want your people to become leaders capable of fulfilling various ministry roles in the church, then you, the church planter, must create both a culture and a process for moving them from where they are to where they need to be. This section of the manual will describe in detail how you can do that.

Creating a Leadership Culture

We have already touched upon the importance of creating a culture in which leaders can develop in each of the previous sections of this manual. This area is so critical and so often overlooked by church planters that I want to expand on what was said previously.

A leadership culture is simply a mindset, an atmosphere or a setting that is conducive to developing people into leaders. It is expected that people will engage in ministry and receive leadership training. It is part of the fabric of the church. Here are eight things you can do to develop a leadership culture in your church plant:

- *Develop a philosophy of ministry in which the people do the work of the ministry* - Jesus taught that a house built on the sand cannot stand (Matthew 7:26,27). The same is true of churches. Unless that church has a biblical philosophy of ministry built on the solid foundation of God's Word, it will not stand. To be biblical, that philosophy must accurately reflect the scriptural concept of ministry involvement and leadership development.

Two problems often arise at this very critical point that place the church planter's ministry in jeopardy. First, is the failure to develop a well-defined philosophy of ministry that he can easily articulate to other people. Without it, the church will have no clear direction and will gyrate erratically like a Ping Pong ball in a box. There will be a lot of movement, but little progress will be made. Church planters are busier than ever, but much of their effort is wasted because they have never taken the time to develop their philosophy of ministry nor to develop a ministry plan based upon it.

The second problem encountered at this critical point involves how the church planter sees himself and his people. Many planters have a "proprietor" mindset. A proprietor is someone who establishes a business. He orders the goods. He stocks the shelves. He serves the customers. He keeps the books. He pays the bills, and sweeps the floor. He is there to serve the people. Church planters often reflect the same attitude. They plan and conduct the services. They order the Sunday School materials. They teach the classes. They print the bulletin. They do the visitation. They place the ads. They are there to serve the people. After all, Jesus said he came to serve rather than to be served, didn't he? We want our church planters to be servants, don't we?

While the answer to both of those questions is a resounding "yes," planters need to realize there is more than one way of serving. You do not do service to people by doing their job for them while neglecting your own responsibility. Too many planters are enablers when they ought to be equippers. God never intended church planters or pastors to do the work of the ministry. Instead, he expects them to "perfect" or train the people to do the work of the ministry according to Ephesians 4:11,12. The people are to be the ministers of the church. They are the ones who are to carry out the work of the ministry. The planter/pastor is to model ministry for them, motivate them to ministry, mentor them in ministry, and monitor their progress in ministry.

Few churches will succeed without a philosophy of ministry that includes a focus on lay ministry and leadership development. If you do not have such a philosophy in place currently, you must go back and develop it. You will make little progress without it.

- *Raise your expectation level* - Most church planters and pastors expect too little of their people. If you think your people are poor and can't give, they won't. If you are convinced they will not participate, they most likely won't. If you do not believe they will accept leadership training, it is unlikely they will. People live up to or down to whatever is expected of them. Your attitude and your expectations will significantly influence the way you do ministry and the response you receive.

This was graphically illustrated to me when I took over a thirty-year old church that had four people left in it. "These people are too poor to support a pastor," I was told. The last pastor had left because the church's income didn't cover his \$15.00 a month salary. I agreed to take the church on the condition they pay me a salary of \$100 a month, PLUS another \$50 to cover the salary of an assistant I could train to become their pastor. The church rose to the occasion and never once failed to meet the salary requirement even though it was TEN TIMES higher than the previous level. During the two years I was there, they also completed construction of the church facility, called my assistant as their pastor, built a parsonage for him, and sent eight young people to Bible college. Yes, God blessed, but the people also lived up to our expectations. We expected them to do it, and they did it.

Less is expected of church members today than of most civic organizations. Just try being a "soccer Mom" for a week and you will find there are very high expectations for anyone whose child is involved in the sport.

Church membership has been reduced almost to meaninglessness in many churches. All you have to do is claim to be saved, agree with the church constitution and doctrinal statement, get dunked, and you're in - and that is in fundamental churches. Liberal churches don't even require that much. Once you're in, you don't have to do anything other than sit and soak, and perhaps throw a couple of dollars in the plate now and then. According to many church constitutions, you only have to show up once or twice a year to remain a voting member.

If you want your church to grow, raise your membership requirements and expectations. Make it tougher to get into membership. Require people to complete a pre-membership class, and to participate in the first level of your discipleship course. Require them to write out and read their testimony of salvation. Let them know members are expected to accept a ministry assignment and to become part of a small group.

Teach your people that members are expected to be present for the services and can lose their membership privileges if they are absent frequently. Instruct them concerning giving and participation in ministry. Let people know up front what is expected of them.

"My people would never stand for that! I'd lose half my congregation if I tried to set up standards

like those." That might well be true of some churches. Unfortunately, too many planters with low expectations have spent so many years training their people not to be involved in ministry that any change now might be cataclysmic.

Change, however, is possible and even palatable when it is gradual and grows out of biblical teaching. Rather than acting like a bull in a china shop, acknowledge to your people that mistakes were made when the church began. Show them how Jesus prepared the disciples for ministry and for leadership. Explain the need to raise expectations and the benefits of doing so. Help them to see how higher standards will produce growth. Go slow. Be patient. Implement changes gradually. It will take time to undo the habits of the past. And yes, you may lose a few people along the way, but you will also attract others who will meet the new standards and live up to the higher expectations. You may lose a few friends, but you will be better off with the replacements God will send to you, as your church begins to move forward once again.

- *Develop your purpose, mission and vision statements* - Churches are often like a herd of cattle milling in endless circles with nowhere to go. There is a lot of activity, but no progress. If a church is to grow and develop lay leaders, it must know why it exists (purpose), what it is supposed to be doing (mission), and where it is going (vision). If the church planter cannot articulate these three things, his people won't be able to either. Their growth will be stymied and they won't be able to get past twenty to fifty people in attendance.

People need a reason for doing what they do, and they need their hearts stirred to do it. Your purpose, mission, and vision statements do exactly that.

A *purpose statement* gives them a reason for being involved in ministry and for accepting leadership training. Although it may be expressed in different words by different churches, there is only one reason for planting a church, and that is to glorify God. That is why we exist. That is why this church exists. That is why we accept ministry assignments and leadership training. Everything we do should be done to glorify God (I Corinthians 10:31). This can be expressed in a simple statement such as:

*Our church exists to glorify God
through the lives and ministries of its people.*

Such a statement posted on a plaque or printed in the bulletin serves as a constant reminder to the people that the church doesn't belong to them, but to God. It elevates service and ministry from the mundane to a spiritual level. It focuses attention on serving God rather than just serving people.

Ministry involves doing. It implies service to others. The problem arises in the fact that people either aren't participating in ministry at all or are involved in competing ministries that offset one another.

A *mission statement* focuses attention on what a church is supposed to be doing, not on what it is doing. Churches (including church plants) often get wrapped up in doing many good things while neglecting the primary things. Maintenance ends up taking precedence over multiplication. Edification replaces evangelism, and activity supplants progress. A mission statement draws the church's focus and efforts back to the biblical role God has assigned to it. It helps us evaluate what we do and helps us keep our ducks headed in the same direction.

Churches are not free to develop whatever ministries they want. The Chief Shepherd of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ has already mandated in Scripture the things he wants done. As you read through the New Testament, notice the things Jesus did. Where was his focus? What types of ministries did the apostles engage in? Read through the Epistles and jot down the different types of ministry churches

engaged in. The ministries of the apostles and the New Testament churches were simply extensions of the Savior's ministry. Your church's ministry should reflect the same emphasis also.

It is not difficult to determine what the church should be doing. Jesus outlined it for us succinctly in two well-known passages. The first is the Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-39 where Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Loving God is called **WORSHIP!** Worship and bringing people into the presence of God should be a primary focus of your church's ministry. It is an essential element in developing the character traits you want to see in your future leaders.

Jesus went on in verse 39 to say: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Loving people, especially unsaved people, is called **MINISTRY**. Service and participation in ministry should be a priority in every church plant. Doing so helps your people develop a servant heart that is so important to becoming a lay leader.

Jesus highlighted three more aspects of the church's ministry in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19,20 where he told us: "Go ye therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations." The making of disciples, winning people to faith in Christ is called **EVANGELISM**. Every leader should be a soul-winner. They should know how to share their faith effectively with the unchurched. Evangelism and outreach must play a major role in every church's ministry if it is to grow to maturity, and develop the lay leaders it needs.

Jesus proceeded to say: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is the first step of obedience for every believer. It pictures his union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. But it does more than that. When accompanied by the vote of the church, baptism becomes part of the process by which newly saved individuals unite with other believers in the common bond of a local church. This is called **MEMBERSHIP** and is a vital step in developing lay leaders.

Jesus ended by saying: "Teaching them to observe (do) all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This is known as **DISCIPLESHIP**. It involves teaching people how to live in obedience to Christ while developing the skills to carry out the instructions for ministry that he gave. It is the essence of leadership development.

Your mission statement should reflect these five aspects of what the church is supposed to be doing through its ministry. It serves as a straightedge by which you can evaluate what you are doing, both individually and as a church. Knowing why you exist and what you are supposed to be doing is no guarantee people will do it. They need something to stimulate them to action. Something that can excite them and stir a passion in their hearts to get involved.

A *vision statement* does exactly that. It paints a mental image of where you are going and what it will be like when you get there. It is a vivid picture of the future as you believe it can and must be.⁶⁰ It excites passion, involvement, and sacrifice. It keeps you focused on the goal and encourages you to keep going when you want to quit.

Vision statements are as old as time. God used the vision of becoming a great nation to motivate Abraham to leave his father's house and journey into an unknown land (Genesis 12). Moses used a vision of a "land flowing with milk and honey" to stimulate the children of Israel to persevere through forty years of wilderness wanderings in order to reach the Promised Land (Exodus 13:5; Deuteronomy 6:3). Jesus used the vision of "building my church" to provide the disciples with a mental image that would turn the world upside down (Matthew 16:18). Scripture paints a picture of heaven with pearly gates, streets of gold, and eternal bliss to keep believers motivated and focused on our eternal destiny.

What do you envision your church being like when it is fully developed and graduated? What kind of ministries will it have? What will the facilities look like? What kind of lay leaders do you see serving? What kind of impact will it have on the community? What will its children's ministry be like? If you haven't thought about these things, you don't have a vision, and you don't know where you are going. If you do not know where you are going, how in the world do you expect people to be excited about going there?

Church planters must be graphic artists. They must be able to create verbal images of what the church they are planting will look like when it is complete. They must be able to see that church in their mind's eye, and then be able to transfer that image to their people. It must grip the church planter's heart and stir his passion as he preaches and talks about it, if it is to stir the hearts of his people. He must be able to boil his vision down to a few simple words (like "a land flowing with milk and honey") that conjure up the mental image of the future as he believes it can and must be. Those few words will form your vision statement.

- *Develop a ministry statement* - A ministry statement simply outlines the church's view of ministry, especially as it relates to the involvement of lay people. The vast majority of church members view themselves as spectators rather than participants. They don't know God has gifted them for ministry and that he expects them to use their gifts, skills, and talents in ministry to others. A ministry statement focuses attention on this vital area of need.

Make the ministry statement part of your pre-membership class. Go over it with them. Explain that every member is expected to go through the discipleship process, and to accept a ministry assignment consistent with his gifts, skills, talents, personality, and experiences. Post a copy of your ministry statement on the bulletin board or in each classroom so people see it often and are reminded of their responsibility to serve. You are trying to create a culture, an atmosphere in which ministry and leadership development are an expected part of church membership.

Your ministry statement might look something like the following, although you should tailor it to reflect your own views and circumstances:

***The Ministry Statement
of
My Town Baptist Church***

The Ministry of Believers

1. We believe salvation through faith in Jesus Christ includes a call to ministry and that God has uniquely shaped every believer for a specific ministry.
2. We believe God has given all his children spiritual gifts that can be developed and used in ministry.
3. We believe you discover your gifts through ministry instead of discovering your ministry by identifying your gifts.

The Body of Christ

1. We believe the local church represents the Body of Christ and that God intends for ministry to be performed within the context of the local church.

2. We believe the Holy Spirit provides the Body with the spiritually gifted people needed to do everything He wants done.
3. We believe a person's "ministry shape" should determine where and how he serves within the church body.
4. We believe the greater good of the entire church must always take priority over the needs of any single ministry.

The Role of the Pastor

1. We believe a pastor's priorities are prayer, the preaching of the Word of God, and the equipping of the members for ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12).
2. We believe the pastor's objective should be to develop a core of lay ministers who are maximizing their unique array of gifts and talents in a meaningful place of service through our church.

The Accountability of Workers

1. We believe we become what we are committed to. Therefore, we encourage growth in commitment to Christ and his Church.
2. We believe those involved in ministry must have a "*servant's heart*" and a "*teachable spirit*," and should be accountable to those in authority over them.
3. We believe periodic ministry evaluation is a crucial part of developing and maintaining an effective ministry.
4. We believe every leader should be a learner. All workers should participate in regular periods of training to encourage, sharpen, and enhance their effectiveness.

The Diversity of Ministry

1. We believe it is possible to have unity without uniformity, and that diversity in ministry illustrates the unique giftedness of individuals.
2. We believe ministries have life cycles. If a ministry is no longer effective or isn't meeting its stated objective, then it should be discontinued or replaced.
3. We believe most ministry assignments should be given with a one-year commitment, but people must be allowed to change ministries gracefully, and without guilt.
4. We believe a member's primary ministry commitment should be in the area where they are gifted, and that their secondary ministry includes serving in any other area where they are needed.

Job Performance

1. We believe in creativity and innovation in ministry while recognizing that not every experiment may be productive.
2. We ask for excellence in ministry rather than perfection. ("*Excellence*" is simply doing your best.)

Doug had been a church planter for more than twenty years and had been involved in several church plants during that time. None of his ministries had really taken off. Most were small struggling works that managed to maintain a testimony in the community, but had little real impact. A couple had closed shortly after he left. He could never figure out why his churches struggled so much while other men's ministries seemed to blossom. Now, as he returned from his first church-planting conference, he understood some of the things he had done wrong, and was determined to make some changes.

Doug had never taken the time to sit down and think through his philosophy of ministry. He had always just "winged it" and trusted the Lord for the best as he went along. He now realized that the nebulous idea of "planting a church" was insufficient as a goal. He needed something a lot more concrete than that, and now he knew where to start.

The next morning Doug was in his office early with pen, Bible and notepad in hand. After spending considerable time in prayer seeking the mind of God and asking for wisdom and guidance, Doug began jotting down ideas. The first thing he needed to do was change his approach to ministry. He had always seen himself and his wife as "doers." If something needed done, they did it. They prepared the bulletins, rented the building, did the repairs, swept the floors, set up chairs and equipment. After all, who else is there to help when you are starting a church? It is usually just the church planter and his family, and so they end up doing most of the work.

As Doug read the various church-planting accounts recorded in Scripture he noted that almost every new church was started either by a team ministry or with a sizeable core group. Moreover, the church planter didn't do all the work. He taught the people Bible doctrine, how to pray, and the importance of fellowship with other believers. People were channeled into various forms of caring ministry to one another. People served in keeping with their giftedness and "ministry shape."

Doug determined that he would give up his "proprietorship" approach to church planting and develop a core of growing believers that could help him launch his next church. That might mean he would have to spend six months or more on site before holding his first service, but if that is what it took, so be it. He was determined to change from being an "enabler" who does the work of the ministry for the people to being an "equipper," someone who trains the people to do the work of the ministry themselves.

Next Doug studied every passage he could find on why God created man and placed him here on earth, and concluded that there was one overriding reason - that man might glorify God in everything that he does. THAT, the bringing of glory to God, would be the purpose for which he planted churches. Carefully, Doug crafted that thought into a single sentence that became his purpose statement. It would become the underpinning for everything they did as a church in the future.

Doug proceeded to list all the activities, all the ministries, all the things Jesus, the apostles, and local churches did in the New Testament. He and his wife had always been extremely busy running here, going there, and doing this, but it never seemed to produce much results. He had always suspected it, but now he knew that "good things" must not be allowed to push aside the really important things. A pattern began to develop as he categorized under different headings all the different ministry activities listed in the gospels and epistles.

He eventually boiled everything down to five areas: worship, ministry, evangelism, membership, and discipleship. He later discovered these same five areas were singled out by the Lord Jesus in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Once more, he crafted these

five ministry areas into a single statement that explained what a church is supposed to be doing. This became his mission statement.

As he sat back in his chair, Doug began to think about the church he was going to plant. What would it be like? What ministries would it offer? What would the physical plant look like if he could build his dream church? What leaders would be needed, and how would they be identified and trained? Doug had never allowed himself to think that far ahead before, but as he contemplated what he would like God to do through him and his wife, a picture began to emerge in his heart of people coming to Christ, being disciplined and plugged into all sorts of ministries.

He could almost see the building, the classrooms, and even the faces of the people. Without realizing it, Doug could almost visualize the future as he believe it could and, yes, must be. He wrote furiously describing in detail the mental image that had formed in his head, and then he refined it, reworded it, and simplified it until just a few words conveyed the picture he had sketched in his mind. This simple phrase would be his vision statement that he would use to enlist and motivate people to accept discipling and ministry training.

Doug went on to revise the ministry statement he had received at the conference so that it fit him, his church, and his people. Later he developed a multi-level discipleship course that encouraged people to move through several stages of spiritual growth even while they were engaging in various sorts of ministry. Doug was well on his way to the most fruitful church plant of his entire life - in part, because he had taken the time to develop a solid foundation upon which to build it.

- *Be committed to plugging people into ministry early* - The time to start using people is as soon as they get saved or start attending your church. Find something for them to do. It is not a crime to have a new believer set up chairs, make coffee or put out songbooks. Churches often do not allow people to get involved in any type of ministry until they have been members for six months or more. This is a tragic mistake because it will take ten years (or more) to undue what you have taught them since they started attending the church - namely to sit and soak rather than serve.

Obviously, you are not going to put new people in as Sunday School teachers, deacons or youth leaders, but you do want to use them. That is part of the process of creating a leadership culture in which people see themselves as serving rather than being served. Let them know right up front that ministry involvement is expected of everyone who joins your church. Explain that every person is encouraged to go through the discipleship and leadership programs.

But won't this scare away people and keep them from joining the church? Yes, it most likely will scare away those who don't want to serve and those who aren't serious about their relationship with Christ, but it will attract far more people than it repels. Moreover, the people who are attracted by your stance will be a far greater assistance to you than the people you lose.

An added benefit is the fact that people who are busy rowing the boat seldom have time to rock the boat. They are more cooperative, they tend to be more supportive, they are more willing to help accomplish goals rather than sitting on the sidelines complaining. If you want to develop lay leaders in your church, plug them into ministry early in the process, and then increase the scope of their responsibilities as they mature spiritually. They'll be healthier and happier Christians, and so will you.

- *Develop a list of entry-level ministries* - The qualifications for pastors and deacons are outlined clearly in the Word of God. These are two high-profile positions of leadership that involve great authority and responsibility. Only the most biblically qualified people are eligible to serve in these

capacities. Some church planters mistakenly teach that everyone who serves in any ministry capacity within the church should also be expected to meet the same standards. Such a view is not consistent with Paul's teaching in First Corinthians 12 where he teaches that every believer has been equipped by God to fill some ministry role within the Body of Christ. This is especially true when you look at the lives and backgrounds of some of the Corinthian believers as outlined in First Corinthians 6.

Different levels of ministry require different ministry standards. Someone who mows the church lawn does not have to meet the same requirements as someone who teaches the adult class. Someone who empties the waste can does not need to be of the same spiritual stature as a deacon. It would be wonderful if everyone was as godly and spiritual as the pastor, but they are not, nor should we expect them to be. They have not had the years of training and ministry experience that he has.

Ministry assignments and their qualifications should be consistent with a person's spiritual development. As people grow and mature spiritually, the scope of their ministry can be increased by giving them greater responsibilities. The question here is, "What entry-level ministry assignments can be given to a new believer or to someone who has recently begun attending the church?" The answer to this question will vary from church to church depending on size and scope of the ministry as well as the church planter's openness to using people in ministry.

Here is a partial list of entry-level ministries that a new believer can be plugged into without damaging the church's testimony:

- Put out songbooks before services and pick them up after the service
- Set up and take down church signs in front of your meeting place
- Set up and take down chairs, tables, and equipment for meetings
- Sweep and mop floors at the school you rent for services
- Repair broken equipment (if they have the expertise)
- Pick up trash and cigarette butts in the parking lot
- Help decorate for banquets and special occasions
- Help set up audio and video equipment
- Mow the church lawn, plant flowers
- Empty waste cans after the services
- Fix your computer when it crashes
- Help with painting and decorations
- Direct traffic in the parking lot
- Type, print, and fold bulletins
- Shovel sidewalks, rake leaves
- Provide flowers

Depending on your situation and the availability of other people, you might even use someone new with musical talent to play the piano if no one else is available. You could train a new believer to run the sound system or even to be an usher. A word of caution is due here - DO NOT use non-members as nursery workers, teachers, or teacher helpers. These are not entry-level ministries. Those positions should be filled only by members who have gone through the proper criminal and sexual offender background checks.

If a person has a warm body, find a place to use them. As the church grows, standards and requirements can be raised. The goal is to move people from one level of ministry to the next as they grow spiritually. You will develop a whole host of lay leaders to help you by doing so.

- *Require every person to attend a progressive discipleship course that will lead them into the realm of leadership* - Enroll people in your discipleship ministry as soon as they start attending the church. You should teach a Discipleship 101 class to your core group even before you launch public services and then work your way through each level. Hold off on starting Sunday School classes until you have completed all four levels of your discipleship course. By then you should have several people who are ready to teach some of the classes themselves.

Make your adult class your discipleship class. Start out by teaching the level 101 classes again. If you are reaching out to the community, you should have new people to teach. Encourage people who have already been through the course to take it again, especially if they have not yet gotten involved in ministry. Your discipleship course will take about a year to cover all four levels. It should be taught continuously so that new people are constantly being moved from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement. Let someone else teach the adult Bible class or go without one. You, as the church planter, need to teach the discipleship course. No one else can communicate your vision and passion for the church as well as you can. Don't let people go to the adult class until they have completed all four levels of the discipleship course. Put the discipleship class in the auditorium or main meeting area so that when visitors walk in and sit down, they will be sitting in the discipleship class. You must be intentional in planning your ministry so that people can develop into the leaders God intended them to be.

Will everyone complete the discipleship course? No, they won't. Some will drop out. Some won't apply the principles you teach to their lives. Some will hold back because of fear. But you will have exposed them to biblical truths they may never have heard before, and you will have given them the resources wherewith they can grow and mature into leaders if they choose to do so. Some will go further than others will, but they will all progress further than they would have otherwise.

- *Commit to not starting any ministry until you have someone to lead it* - One of the major mistakes church planters make is trying to do too much too soon. They try to be a full-service church when they lack the families, finances, and facilities for doing so. The pastor and his wife end up being "Jacks of all trades" running themselves ragged while the people stand on the sidelines watching. Rather than doing a few things well, they do many things poorly in spite of their best efforts. God never intended it to be that way.

First Corinthians 12 teaches that God gifts his people so they can perform a particular ministry functions. He then places them in the Body where they are needed, and where they can find fulfillment by doing what he designed them to do. Just as it takes time for a baby to develop all the skills needed to function as a mature adult, so it also takes time for a group of believers to develop the programs and ministries associated with a mature church.

Launching ministries for which God has not yet provided leaders and workers is not only premature, but leads to frustration, discouragement, and ineffectiveness. Church planters would be far better off to launch with just one Sunday service (and perhaps a mid-week Bible study), and then work hard to make it the best service in town. As people are added and trained, additional services and ministries can be added. Your job as a church planter is not to do the work of the ministry. Your job is to train other people to do the work of the ministry, and you cannot do that if you are trying to keep too many balls in the air at the same time without adequate help.

Leadership development begins with creating a leadership culture that progressively moves people through a discipleship process that results in spiritual growth and ministry involvement. You must create that culture if you are going to develop the leaders you need.

Identifying the Leaders You Need

You can't get to where you want to be unless you know where you are. Church planting takes place in stages. Churches go through various phases of development much like a baby does. It starts with conception and moves to the prenatal phase which leads to birth followed by adolescence and adulthood or maturity.

In church planting the *conception stage* corresponds to the time when the idea, burden, and vision for planting a new church is conceived in the heart and mind of the church planter. It is during this time that God places a desire in his heart to start a new church. It is accompanied often with a burden for a particular town, place or segment of the population. He becomes convinced that God is directing him to take the gospel to the people in the target area and begins praying for God to open the way for him to do so. He shares his burden with his spouse, his pastor, and any ministry partners he may have.

Survey trips may be undertaken. Prayer partners will be enlisted. Plans are made for moving to the area. A passion is beginning to stir in the planter's heart as the vision of a new congregation comes into focus. It is during this time the wise planter begins thinking about the number and kinds of leaders he will need to attract or develop if his vision of a new church is to become a reality. It is here that he formulates his plan for moving people through the various stages of discipleship so they can become leaders in the church he is going to plant.

Sadly, it is at this very point that many planters fall short. They don't take the time to think through the planting process to determine how much money they will need, what workers and leaders they will need to develop, and how they are going to make it happen. Many have no plan at all other than to move to the area and to start holding meetings. Such an approach is doomed to failure more often than not. The old adage is true that "he who fails to plan, plans to fail." Jesus warned against such an approach in Luke 14:28-30.

Jason was young, but he was determined to get it right the first time around. He had read every book on church planting he could get his hands on. He'd taken the church-planting class in Bible college and had attended two or three church-planting seminars. He seized the opportunity to visit a couple of experienced church planters to see how they did it and what mistakes to avoid. He was familiar with the five-tiered "life cycle" of churches and knew he was approaching the end of the conception stage and would soon move into the prenatal phase of his ministry.

Jason recognized the importance of preplanning and had worked hard to develop his philosophy of ministry with its purpose, mission, vision, and ministry statements. He was committed to making this a team effort. He had identified key lay leaders he would need at each stage of development. He knew it would be difficult to recruit experienced leaders since most of them would already be involved in ministries elsewhere. Most likely, he would have to train his own leaders from among those he won to Christ.

As he thought about the kind of leaders he needed to train, Jason was determined that everyone in leadership should be growing in his or her relationship with God. He wanted godly leaders, rather than just warm bodies. They would need to be teachable, have servant hearts, and be people of integrity. Those qualities would have to be taught to new converts since people do not often possess them on their own.

From his study of several New Testament books, Jason knew that God shapes people to fulfill different ministry roles through the spiritual gifts, the heart (passion), abilities, personalities, and life experiences he gives them. As he thought about the leaders he would need to train, Jason

realized he needed to devise some sort of process to help people grow spiritually and to develop their ministry skills.

That process would need to be simple and easy to understand. It would have to be multi-leveled and progressive since it takes time to develop spiritually mature leaders. People might become discouraged if they had to climb the entire ladder at once. Dividing the process into stages or levels of achievement would encourage folks to keep moving forward in the development process.

The development of lay leaders is so important that Jason determined that everything done in the church would need to be aligned with the discipleship process in some way. He would have to say "no" to some good ideas and ministry suggestions in order to stay focused on his main priority of training leaders. Knowing that there is no substitute for hands-on experience, Jason decided to combine classroom instruction with practical ministry assignments that correspond to each person's level of maturity and giftedness. Although he was months away from the launch of his first public service, Jason's preplanning placed him miles ahead of many other church planters.

During this early conception phase, the church planter and his wife will be the key leaders, but they need to know how many other leaders they will need to recruit and train before they launch public services. Earlier in this manual, we identified seven key lay leaders that should be in place before going public. These include:

A worship (song) leader

A preschool (nursery) leader

An assimilation coordinator to channel people into a discipling small group

An evangelism networker to oversee outreach

A ministry mobilizer to help people discover how God has gifted them for ministry

A welcome coordinator to ensure that visitors receive a warm, welcome to the church

A financial organizer to oversee the reception, counting, and distribution of monies

Obviously people can and do start churches without having these people in place. Those ministries, however, often struggle to survive. They would have been much better off if they had these trained leaders in place before launching their ministries. That will not happen unless the planter takes the time to identify the number and kind of leaders he needs, and then develops a plan for securing them.

The second phase of church planting is the *prenatal stage*. This is the time when the planter lays the groundwork for launching the new church. It involves moving to the target area, building a solid core group, recruiting and training the leaders needed, securing a meeting place, and getting ready for the first public services of the new congregation. This phase will last anywhere from six to eighteen months and is vitally important to the success of the church. Planters who skip over or rush through this stage of development put the future of their ministry in jeopardy. They will end up giving birth to a premature, underdeveloped baby that lacks the essential organ systems to sustain life.

The recruitment of a solid core group and the development of lay leaders are the two primary objectives of the prenatal stage. It is essential that you build a core group of people who are committed to help you develop the new church. This group should number anywhere from twenty to sixty adults who have bought into the planter's vision and who are in agreement with his philosophy of ministry, his objectives, and his doctrinal positions. The larger the group prior to launch, the stronger the church is likely to be.

It is during this period of core group development that the planter starts developing the lay leaders he needs. He does this by implementing his multi-level discipleship plan and shepherding his people

through the various stages of growth and development. As he does this, he is establishing a pattern and creating expectations that will carry on once the church is launched. He will begin to identify people's "ministry shape" and will start to plug them into ministry roles consistent with the way God has gifted them. It is said that the cream rises to the top. That will be true as he takes people through the discipleship course. Those with the leadership skills he needs to fill the seven critical leadership slots mentioned above will become evident. As a result, he will be in a much stronger position to go public, and the likelihood of having a successful church plant will be greatly increased.

The *birth phase* of church planting occurs when the first public worship services are held. The timing for this will be different for every church plant, but it should not take place until the prenatal phase is complete and trained leaders are in place. We recognize, however, that babies (and new churches) are not always subject to arriving on schedule. Sometimes planters jump the gun and launch before they are fully prepared to do so. The fact is, however, the more lay leaders you have in place and the larger the core group, the stronger the church is likely to be.

In addition to the seven recommended lay leaders, you will need people to help set up chairs and equipment, someone to work in the nursery, someone to play the piano and provide special music, and someone to take up the offering. You and your wife can fill some of these roles, and the other leaders can help with some as well. For example, the worship leader can help set up chairs and the sound equipment. The assimilation director can be a greeter and help usher. The evangelism networker can assist in the nursery. And the ministry mobilizer can provide special music. It is conceivable that three or four people can fill all these leadership slots initially, but it will become more difficult to do so as the church grows.

It is far better to involve as many people as possible. Ministry involvement is an essential ingredient in creating a culture in which leaders can develop. So, spread the responsibilities around. Give people the opportunity to serve. Find as many ministry slots as you can and plug as many people into them as possible during this short phase of development.

The fourth stage of development in a church plant is known as the *adolescence phase*. This corresponds to the childhood and teen years in human development. The adolescence period is a time of development and maturing. It is the era when the church grows to adulthood in terms of spiritual, numerical, and leadership development. The wise church planter looks ahead to determine what additional leaders and workers he needs to develop in order to have a stronger Sunday School, a better youth program, and a more effective outreach ministry. These will be forthcoming if he has implemented a progressive discipleship program that moves more and more people through the discipleship paradigm enabling them to discover their gifts and hone their skills.

The length of this stage varies widely from a couple of years to decades depending partially on what was done during the prenatal period and partly on whether a ministry plan is followed. Church plants that did not take the time to develop a ministry plan, build a core group of twenty-five or more adults, and train key lay leaders during the prenatal step will be in the adolescence phase much longer than churches that did those things. We are aware of church plants that still have a missionary planter twenty years after being launched. They never "grew up." It is unlikely they ever will because they didn't receive proper prenatal care. One can only question the wisdom of continuing to pour personnel and resources into such ministries.

The fifth stage in church planting is *maturity* or adulthood. This occurs when a church plant is able to function on its own without any outside assistance. It is able to pay its own bills, staff its own ministries, support its own pastor, and reproduce itself in another community. Reproduction is a key element of maturity in both humans and churches. Healthy churches reproduce by planting other churches in new localities. That will not happen unless the church has developed a core of lay leaders who share the pastor's vision and enthusiasm for doing so.

It is important that the church planter know what phase of development he is in and what key leaders he needs during that phase in order to progress to the next level of development. If you don't know where you are, you won't be able to get to where you want to be. So, stop and look around. Are you in the prenatal, birthing or adolescence stage of development? What leaders do you now have? What leaders are you lacking? What foundational timbers were left out? Do you have an effective discipleship program that moves people from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement? If not, you must go back and shore up those areas of weakness. You cannot move forward until you rectify the mistakes of the past.

If you don't have an effective discipleship program that is producing the lay leaders you need, then stop what you are doing and get one. This manual is designed to help you develop just such a program. If you don't know what to do, reach out to an experienced, successful church planter who is willing to mentor you. There are many that will be glad to assist you in getting on track.

A lot of activity occurs in churches, but much of it is wasted. Planters, pastors, and people are often involved in a wide range of ministries that do not contribute to the main objective of bringing the church to maturity and graduation. They are doing good things, but those good things have become substitutes for the necessary things. If a ministry is not contributing directly to the goal of developing leaders and bringing people to spiritual maturity, it should be discontinued. The same is true of ministries that are done poorly or that lack adequate lay involvement. It is far better not to offer a ministry at all than to offer something that is poorly done or poorly staffed. Many planters lack the objectivity to make these evaluations and need the assistance of an outside set of eyes to help see the problem areas.

There is no reason why your church plant cannot become a healthy, growing congregation, but you need to know where you are in the planting process and what leaders you need to be training to help you.

The Characteristics and Skills of Leaders

Once you know which and how many leaders you need at each stage of your church plant, you need to decide what characteristics and skills you want them to have. Church planters make two mistakes at this junction: Either they have no leadership standards at all or they set such high standards that no one is able to meet those standards. On the one hand, anything goes while nothing goes on the other hand. We need to have a realistic balance between the two.

People are not perfect. We all have faults and shortcomings. Everyone in leadership has feet of clay. We all fail to measure up in some way. Some church plants, such as a mother/daughter plant, are blessed with an abundance of mature, godly lay leaders. Other new congregations may be composed almost completely of newly saved individuals who are just starting out on their spiritual journey.

The requirements for leadership and ministry involvement will vary from church to church depending on the type of ministry and the maturity of the people. For example, the requirements for teaching a Sunday School class will be higher than those for setting up chairs. More is required of someone who handles the finances of the church than someone who runs the sound equipment. In some cases, a warm body may be the only requirement for involvement while a thorough knowledge of the Word of God might be required for another position. Be realistic in setting up your standards for involvement in ministry and leadership.

Here are five things John Maxwell recommends you take into consideration when evaluating potential leaders:⁶¹

- *Assessment* - What needs to be done? What ministry assignment is being considered?
- *Ability* - What skills are needed to do the job?
- *Assets* - Who is available that might be able to do the job?
- *Attitude* - Who has a cooperative spirit and would be willing to do the job?
- *Accomplishments* - Who has a track record of carrying through on assignments?

Other questions you might ask include:

Is this person compatible philosophically with our church and my leadership?

Does this person show a potential for growth?

Do I have lingering questions about this person?

Am I selecting this person because of obvious strengths or because I don't see any glaring weaknesses?

Does this person "fit" into what we are trying to accomplish?⁶²

Years ago, Dr. Elmer Towns became the dean at a graduate level theological school. Shortly after arriving, he called the department heads together and asked this three-fold question: "What do we want a graduate of our school to look like? What do we want him to know and what do we want him to be able to do?" He then put together a program designed to produce the type of graduate that had been described. The same is true of church planters. What do you want your leaders to look like at various stages of development. What do you want them to know and what do you want them to be able to do? In other words, what qualities, characteristics and skills do they need? Give special consideration to these four areas:

- ***The Spiritual Qualities of Leaders*** - This is obviously the most important area of consideration for anyone who is going to be involved in any type of church ministry. While we might allow an unsaved person to help with custodial and maintenance activities, anyone who is going to occupy even a minimal leadership position must possess some basic spiritual characteristics. Among these would be:

1) *A godly character* - Character is defined as the person you are when no one is looking. It is the real you. A person's character is based on his relationship with God and is shaped by the habits he develops. One can only possess a godly character if he has received Jesus Christ into his life through faith and then is seeking to live in accord with the principles laid out in the Word of God. Does the person profess to be saved? Has he taken the first step of obedience by submitting to believer's baptism? Is he seeking to develop the habits of Bible reading, prayer, tithing, church attendance, and serving others? People don't have to be perfect, but they do need to be moving in the right direction.

2) *Integrity* - Here the person's walk matches his talk. He is reliable and dependable. He carries through on his commitments and keeps his promises. Integrity carries the idea of wholeness, completeness, entireness or undividedness. If someone has integrity, his heart is not divided. He has no hidden agenda. He has a reputation for being trustworthy.

3) *Growing spiritually* - God knows that none of us are perfect, but he does expect us to be growing in our relationship with him, and to be becoming more like his Son (Romans 8:29). People will be at various levels of maturity depending on how long they have been saved, how much exposure they have had to the Word of God, the readiness with which they have applied what they have been taught, and the training they have received. Different ministry assignments will require different levels of spiritual maturity, but in each case you want people to be growing in grace and moving ahead in their relationship with God. This will be seen in how they react to trials in their lives, their understanding of what the Bible teaches, their level of obedience to God's Word, and the habits they form.

4) *A servant's heart* - Jesus taught that leaders are to serve rather than be served (Matthew 20:25-28). We are commanded to have the "mind of Christ" or the same attitude as Jesus had when he took upon himself the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5,6). Everyone in ministry needs to see himself as a servant to Christ and to others. He needs to have a humble, helpful attitude that motivates him to give of himself to others with little or no thought of return. He does whatever he is asked to do simply out of spirit of love for Christ and for people.

5) *A teachable spirit* - Look for people who are teachable and open to new ideas and suggestions. They should be willing to attend training classes, and to fit into the ministry wherever needed. Avoid people who have a "know it all" attitude or who insist on doing things their way. Teachability is a key factor in identifying future leaders in the church.

- ***The Gifts and Skills of Leaders*** - God bestows gifts of his grace ("charismatons") upon his people that make them sensitive to particular needs while at the same time giving them the ability to meet those needs. These are known as spiritual gifts. He also makes it possible for people to acquire skills that enable them to do things with ease and accuracy.

What skills, abilities, and gifts are required for each job that needs to be done in church? What does a person have to know? What does he need to be able to do? It doesn't take a lot of knowledge to move chairs and to put out songbooks, but it does take some know-how to teach a class. Certain skills are needed to count the money and to keep the financial records. Leading a song service requires some musical ability. Make a list of every conceivable job and ministry you can think of and then list along side each one the skills and talents needed in order to perform that task. Part of your job as a church planter is to help your people discover and develop their spiritual gifts, and then to plug them into ministries that are consistent with their giftedness and the skills they possess.

Skills can be learned and gifts can be developed. The best place to do this is not in a classroom listening to lectures and watching videos, but by practice and experience. People can best discover their giftedness and hone their skills by doing rather than by merely listening. Tell people what you want done, show them how you want it done, and then let them try their hand at doing it. After they have done it a few times, sit down with them to evaluate their efforts. Give them lots of encouragement and ideas on how they can improve their effectiveness.

- ***The Personality and Experience of Leaders*** - Every person is unique. No two of us are exactly alike. God shapes us for ministry not only through the gifts and skills he gives us, but also through the personality and the experiences that are uniquely ours. Some people are decisive and goal oriented. They are "take-charge" individuals who can get things done, but sometimes leave a trail of wounded helpers in their wake.

Others have "happy-go-lucky" personalities that lighten up a room when they walk in. They are friendly, loveable, and sympathetic. Everyone likes them. They readily volunteer to help, but have difficulty following through on their commitments. Still others are quiet, reserved, and methodical. They are reluctant to get involved, but usually do an excellent job once they agree to take on a responsibility. Then there is the highly capable, but sensitive individual who needs lots of encouragement. His dedication and attention to detail ensure that everything he does will be exceptionally well done, in spite of his own misgivings and fear of failure. You will find some people are high visibility extroverts while others are introverts who prefer to work in the background. Each has great potential for good when controlled by the Holy Spirit.

People's personalities need to be taken into consideration when making ministry assignments. For example, someone with a sanguine personality might make an excellent teacher or song leader, but you

would never want to place him in charge of keeping the financial records because of his lack of attention to detail. A person with a phlegmatic personality would make an excellent record keeper, but would feel very uncomfortable leading the music. Need someone who is creative and innovative to plan your Christmas program or to develop a discipleship ministry? Look for a person with a melancholy personality. Do you need someone who sees the big picture and can organize and motivate people to achieve a difficult task? The man or woman with a choleric personality is your person.

Not only does God use people's personality to shape them for ministry, but he also molds them through the trials and experiences of life. This can be clearly seen in the lives of Moses, Joseph and Daniel. God took each one of them through unique experiences that prepared them for very specific ministries that would have been impossible if they had not experienced what they did.

Second Corinthians 1:3,4 teaches that God allows us to go through various tribulations (trials, heartaches) so that he might comfort us in the midst of those trials. It is during these times of trial that God teaches us valuable lessons about life, values, relationships, and dependency on him. He does that not just for our benefit, but so "we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." In other words, God wants us to take those life experiences and the lessons we learn from them, and use them to help other people learn the same lessons.

No one can comfort a broken-hearted parent whose child has died better than someone who has been through a similar experience. No one can encourage a woman going through a divorce better than someone who has gone through a divorce of his or her own. No one can help someone overcome the bondage of alcohol or drugs better than someone who was enslaved by the same things. No one can warn a teen of the dangers of premarital sex better than someone who had a child out of wedlock. God allows us to go through tough times in order to learn spiritual lessons that can be used in ministry to others. Look at the people God brings your way through the lens of experience and plug them into ministries where those experiences can be used to help other people learn similar lessons.

- ***The Passion of Leaders*** - Passion has to do with our motivation, interests, desires, and inclinations. It is what excites people. It is what stirs them to action. It is seen in sports arenas, political rallies, pro-life marches, and evangelistic campaigns. We all have different interests that catch and hold our attention. Some people are passionate about children and seeing that they are well cared for. Other people are concerned about music and having it performed well. Still others get excited about teaching and communicating biblical truth to others. Some people are passionate about order and structure, and seeing that everything is done decently and in order. You will find some people who desire to see the church clean, neat, well lighted with the grass mowed and the flowers weeded.

People serve willingly in those areas about which they are passionate. Find out what they are enthusiastic about and what their heartbeat is, then plug them into those ministries they care about. Don't try to force square pegs into round holes.

Structuring a Leadership Development Process

Leaders are made, not born. If you want people in your church who can teach a class, lead a service, handle the finances, direct the youth program, and oversee the outreach ministry, then you must define the process by which you are going to produce those leaders. Rarely will God send them to you ready made. Saying that your goal is to "disciple people" doesn't make it happen. That is just empty rhetoric. You must have a means for moving people from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement and leadership. Without a well-planned process for doing so, your church will flounder just like so many other churches which do not have an effective process in place for making disciples.

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger have produced one of the best books available on how to develop a unified process for moving people through the various stages of discipleship. It is called *Simple Church*.⁶³ You would profit greatly from reading it. Some of the material that follows was gleaned from this helpful church-planting tool.

To produce lay leaders in your church you need to develop a plan or process for doing so. You need a blueprint that will guide you through the successive stages of development. Every successful process will have four key elements: clarity, movement, alignment, and focus.⁶⁴

- *Clarity* is the ability to communicate the process to people so that they understand it.
- *Movement* involves the sequential steps people take to move from one level of maturity to the next.
- *Alignment* is the arrangement of all ministries and workers so that they each contribute directly to moving people through the process.
- *Focus* is the commitment to not becoming involved in anything that does not move the process forward.

We need to examine each of these in greater detail if we are going to understand what is involved and how it impacts the discipleship process we want to put into place in order to develop lay leaders in our churches.

- **The process for developing lay leaders needs clarity** - People must understand what you are trying to do and how you plan to do it before they will follow your leadership. You can have the greatest plan in the world, but people are not going to move through the process you have outlined unless they see the benefit and the value of doing so. Rainer and Geiger point out that there are four things you can do that will clarify your process and help people buy into it:

1) *Define your process* - Always explain your process in terms of your mission statement. How does discipleship and the training of lay leaders tie into what you have outlined in your mission statement? What are the sequential steps people need to take to move from birth to maturity to leadership? Keep the process simple. Streamline your ministry so that every program and activity is tied into the process. You clarify your process as you formulate your strategy in terms people can grasp and understand.

2) *Illustrate your process* - A picture is often worth a thousand words. If people can see it, they can understand it better. Visualize your discipleship process with a picture, a diagram or a metaphor. It may be in the form of a flow chart, a series of concentric circles, a baseball diamond, a set of stairs or some other graphic that illustrates your discipleship process. Moses used the metaphor of a "land flowing with milk and honey" to move the children of Israel toward their objective. Use some of the creative people in your church or core group to come up with a concept that illustrates your discipleship process, but keep it simple and make sure it shows progression.

3) *Discuss your process* - To be effective, a discipleship process that moves people into leadership and ministry involvement must be a central focus of the church. It cannot be something on the periphery that pops up every now and then. It must be kept front and center with everything else moving around it. You must preach on discipleship. You must teach about spiritual growth. You must talk about ministry and leadership development frequently. It should come up in almost every conversation. It should be mentioned in every meeting. When you visit people, when you share your vision for the future, when you write prayer letters, when you meet with your deacons, talk about the discipling process. It needs to be part of the fabric of your church. If you don't keep it in front of your people, it will quickly drift into the back of their minds where it will be forgotten.

4) *Measure the process* - We measure things that are important to us. We count our money. We check to see how many kids are sitting at the dining table. We gauge how much fuel we have left in the tank. We estimate how many hours a trip will take. We take our temperature to see if we are sick - all because we value whatever we are measuring. Measuring involves evaluation. Where are we in terms of where we want to be. Are we making progress? Are we standing still? Or are we falling behind? Are people progressing spiritually as they move through the discipleship process? Are people accepting greater responsibilities and becoming more involved in ministry? Are more people stepping up to the leadership plate and utilizing their gifts and abilities to help others? People value what they measure because measuring indicates value. If you do not measure the progress of your people in the discipleship process, they will think it isn't important and doesn't matter. Measuring helps to clarify the process as something that is highly valued.

- **The process for developing lay leaders needs movement** - People tend to mill around when they don't know what to do or where to go next. Most Christians want to grow spiritually and to be used by God, but they don't know how to get from where they are to where they want to be. To them, the Christian life is like a four-way intersection clogged with cars that can't move because of the congestion.

You build movement into your process by dividing the process into three or four sections or segments. Decide what you want people to learn, how you want them to change, what skills you want them to acquire, and what kind of commitments you want them to make at each segment or stage of development. Then arrange the components of your process into logical, sequential order and determine what you need to teach at each level to achieve the results you want.

Once you have the process laid out, designate a clear entry-point to your process. People need to know where to start. The place for them to start is at the beginning on Level One of the process. Everyone starts at the same place. As they move through each stage, help them to identify the next steps in the process. The vast majority of people will keep moving forward if they know what to do next.

- **The process for developing lay leaders needs alignment** - Successful ministries are successful in part because those in leadership are all moving in the same direction. A church will seldom grow if people are pulling in different directions or working independently of each other. Every activity must be seen as contributing to the whole rather than as an end unto itself. You cannot compartmentalize your ministry and succeed, especially if you are trying to move people through a discipleship process that results in the development of lay leaders. You need to have everyone aligned in the same direction and working to achieve the same objective. As the leader of the church, you as the church planter are responsible to establish and reinforce the culture of the church.

People need to be in agreement not only with the planter theologically, but philosophically as well. Theology governs what the church believes while philosophy governs what the church does and how it does it. Without philosophical agreement, people will drift away from the declared ministry process to do their own thing, and the process will become ineffective in producing lay leaders and workers.

Thus, it is important that all members of the leadership team and those who work and direct various aspects of the ministry be committed to the discipleship process. Each one of them either should be in the process currently or should have completed it already.

Seek to instill your philosophy of discipleship into everyone who goes through the process. Only put people in supervisory roles who are committed to the process. Keep the process in front of the people. Don't let it get pushed aside or dropped. Keep it front and center. Check up on people to be sure they are following through with their commitments. Highlight how the process is benefiting the church and its ministry. Be sure new ministries fit into the discipleship process.

- **The process for developing lay leaders needs focus** - *Focus* involves in saying "no" to anything that undermines or detracts from your primary objective of developing spiritually mature lay leaders. Although the Apostle Paul was involved in many ministry activities, he stayed focused on just one objective. In Philippians 3:13 he said, "This ONE THING I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." He didn't allow himself to get distracted from what he was doing. He stayed focused on his objective and said "no" to the many good things he could have done, but which would have weakened his resolve to reach his goal.

You must do the same. Winning people to Christ and moving them progressively through the various levels of maturity to become lay leaders must be your primary objective. Nothing can be allowed to undermine this single-mindedness. In some cases, this means eliminating some of your existing programming because it does not contribute to the process. Most planters need fewer programs in order to stay focused on their primary objective. It also means you must limit the number of new programs you add or at least delay them until you have the leaders and workers trained to lead them. While it may be painful to say "no" to people who want you to develop particular ministries, you will be wise to do so. One recent study of churches showed that the more programming churches have, the less they grow.⁶⁵ If you want your church to grow to maturity, you must develop godly lay leaders. To do that, you must stay focused on your objective of developing them through your discipleship process.

- **The process for developing lay leaders needs to combine involvement with instruction** - Your discipleship process must include more than an on-going lecture series taught during the Sunday School hour. Your goal is not to simply impart knowledge, but to bring about life change that results in spiritual maturity and acceptance of leadership responsibilities.

- 1) *Give people formal instruction* - This can be done in a new believer's Sunday School class, a one-on-one Bible study or in a small group setting such as the 101 classes of your discipleship program. You are teaching them about how to grow spiritually, about ministry, and about how to become a leader as you shepherd them through the various levels of your discipleship process.

- 2) *Give people informal instruction* - Jesus not only instructed his disciples about what they needed to know, but he used the "with him" method to show them how to function as believers and how to be the godly leaders he wanted them to become. Take your people with you when you visit, when you counsel, when you run errands. Let them watch you do it. Invite them over for lunch or a barbeque and simply share tidbits of information that will help them take the next step in their development.

- 3) *Give people ministry assignments* - Throughout this manual I have advocated that you put people to work as soon as they are saved or as soon as they start attending your church. Plug them into an entry-level ministry where they can begin serving. People not only learn from doing, but they develop that all-important servant heart as well.

- 4) *Give people periodic evaluations* - Help people evaluate what they do. Let them know at the time you give them an assignment that you will be checking with them from time to time to see how they are doing and to discuss any changes that may help them be more effective.

Instruction by itself will not get the job done, but instruction combined with ministry involvement will help people grow to maturity much more rapidly.

The Four Stages of Leadership Development

The discipleship process for developing lay leaders described in the remainder of this manual consists

of four stages or levels. The process you choose may have more or fewer steps in it. Regardless of how many steps may be involved, there are three questions you should ask at each level:

- 1) What do we want to accomplish at this level? What changes do we want to see in people's lives as a result of completing this stage?
- 2) What are we going to teach during this phase? What material are we going to cover, and what skills are we going to teach?
- 3) How are we going to involve each student in ministry? What do we want them to be able to do?

If you do not know where you are headed you probably won't get there. You need to have specific objectives in mind for each lesson you teach and for every level of spiritual growth you want your students to attain. Spiritual growth, ministry involvement, and leadership development are measurable, but only when you set benchmarks toward which you move. I will suggest a number of objectives for each of the four discipleship phases I describe. You may use the same goals or you can establish your own as you tailor the program to meet the needs of your particular church.

Level One - Catch the Vision (Membership)

Level One is the entry-point of your discipleship/leadership development ministry. This is where the process of developing lay leaders begins. Regardless of whether the person is a new believer, a first-time attendee or someone transferring into your membership from another good church, you want to direct them into your discipleship process as soon as they start attending the church. It is here that you begin teaching your philosophy of ministry and laying the foundation for spiritual growth and development.

Level One serves both as an introductory new believer's class for those who recently trusted Christ as Savior, and as an exploratory pre-membership class for those who are considering joining your church. It is called "Catch the Vision" because that is exactly what we want them to do. We want them to catch the vision of growing spiritually in Christ, of becoming involved in ministry, and of becoming lay leaders in the church. These are the Level 101 classes. They can be taught as a Sunday School class, a small group study or even one-on-one. The setting is not nearly as important as the fact of getting people started in the process. Now, let's visit the three questions that need to be asked at every level of our discipleship-leadership process.

- **What do we want to accomplish at Level One?** - There are actually several objectives we want to pursue on this first level of our discipleship process. Even if they have been saved for a number of years people may never have been discipled and may not have grown a great deal in their relationship with the Lord. These classes will help them move forward spiritually. If nothing else, Level One explains what the church believes and how ministry is done in your church. Everyone needs to acquire this foundational information if they are to become future leaders in the church. There are seven objectives we want to accomplish on Level One of your discipleship course:

- 1) *To bring people to a saving faith in Christ, and to give them assurance of salvation* - Level One is the entry-point into which everyone who attends the church is channeled. That will be true of new believers, first-time visitors, regular worshippers (non-members), and people transferring from other churches. Some of these people (especially visitors and people coming from other churches) may be totally ignorant of the Bible way of salvation through faith in Christ. Never assume people are saved until you have heard their personal testimony of salvation and they are able to give you a biblical reason for knowing they are saved. Other people never had anyone disciple them and may be in need of assurance of salvation. Still others have not been taught how to grow spiritually and thus haven't progressed very far in their relationship with the Lord. One of the objectives of Level One classes is to help people

resolve these salvation issues in their lives.

2) *To have each person commit to attending the church faithfully on Sunday mornings* - It is important to have people in the house of God where they can hear the Word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). The more often they are there, the more opportunities you will have to win them to Christ and to teach them the things they need to know in order to grow spiritually and to become lay leaders eventually. We recognize the modern work schedules prevent some people from being in church every week. One of the objectives of Level One is to get as many people as possible committed to attending the church on a regular basis.

3) *To have each person take the first step of obedience (baptism), and to become members of the church* - Once a person is saved, we want them to take the first step of obedience to our Lord's Great Commission command to be baptized and to become part of our fellowship of believers. Baptism identifies them both with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, AND is part of the process for uniting them with the local body of believers. Baptism is a church ordinance and should only be administered to those who are uniting with the church. Bringing people into the membership of your church is one of the primary goals of the first level of the discipleship process.

4) *To enroll each person in a small group*- The vast majority of people who start to attend church do so because they already know someone in that church. Relationships are the glue that hold a church together. The more relationships people establish with other people in the church, the more likely they are to stay in the church. Thus, it is important to capitalize on relationships by connecting people to one another. This is best done in a small group setting. Thom Rainer points out that people who become active in a small group are five times more likely to remain in the church five years later.⁶⁶ The Level One classes themselves constitute a small group, but so do other Sunday School classes, the youth group, the men and ladies groups, and the choir to mention a few.

5) *To have each person engaged in an entry-level ministry* - Throughout this manual we have advocated putting people to work in some elementary ministry as soon as they start attending the church regularly. Plugging people into ministry gives them a sense of belonging. It creates ownership. It starts them on the road to spiritual growth and possible eventual leadership. It is part of establishing a leadership culture. Set the goal of having every person doing something by the time he or she finishes Level One of your discipleship process.

6) *To help each person begin developing a biblical value system* - Nearly every person who starts attending your church will come with a secular worldview. One of the objectives of your discipleship program is to replace that secular worldview with a biblical worldview by the time they finish all four levels of the training process. Your goal is to change the way people think and the way they view life. We want them to look at things from God's perspective rather than man's. The process of changing their value system begins on Level One as you move through the lesson material.

7) *To lay the basis for future leadership development* - Leadership and discipleship are inextricably linked. You cannot have one without the other. Level One lays a biblical foundation upon which leadership principles can be taught and developed. People become leaders over a period of time as they grow spiritually and accept increasing amounts of responsibility. Some people will begin to show unmistakable signs of leadership ability by the time they complete their Level One classes.

Everything was so new to Glenn and Barbara since that night the pastor and his wife knocked on their door. Glenn's investment company was doing very well and as a result they enjoyed a nice home, the latest model cars, and vacations at beautiful resorts around the country. Nevertheless, there was an emptiness in their lives in spite of having achieved the American dream. Something was missing, but they did not know what it was until the pastor shared the Good News of the gospel

with them. They realized they had been living their lives entirely apart from God's purpose and plan for them. They prayed to receive Christ into their lives and into their home. Everything had changed since that night, and now they were excited about what God was doing in their community through the new church the pastor and his wife were planting.

Even though the church was only a few months old and met in a storefront with a just a handful of people, Glenn and Barb felt right at home from the very first time they visited. The people were friendly. Someone was always at the door to greet everyone who came. On their very first visit, someone invited them to lunch at a local restaurant. Pastor had explained that a special class was available for new Christians and visitors to the church. It actually was taught in two sections. The 101 Classes explained what had happened to them when they accepted Christ as Savior. It covered things like sin, salvation, assurance, baptism, church membership and ministry. It was just what Glenn and Barb needed in order to get oriented to their new life in Christ.

Even though they had only attended a couple of times, Glenn was asked to help set up chairs and equipment on Sunday mornings. Barbara came along to make coffee and help one of the other ladies arrange donuts and other goodies for the fellowship time between Sunday School and church. Being involved made them feel right at home and gave them a sense of belonging almost from the start.

They didn't really know much about this new church, so they were delighted when they were offered the opportunity to participate in a 102 course that examined the basic beliefs and philosophy of this new church. Here was a group of people that were willing to be transparent. They put everything right out in plain sight where it could be examined inside out. Rather than resenting questions, they welcomed them and openly shared what they believed and why they do things the way they do. They learned that the 101 and 102 classes were just the first step in a series of classes they could take that would help them grow in their relationship with the Lord while discovering the way God had shaped them for ministry.

The church had some pretty high standards for getting into membership, and even higher expectations of people once they became a members. Here was a group of people who knew what they believed, where they were heading, how they were going to get there, and what it would look like when they arrived. Glen and Barb liked that, so when the opportunity came to become members of the church they readily signed the membership covenant, and eagerly moved on to the next stage of the church's discipleship paradigm.

- **What are we going to teach at Level One?** - Having determined your objectives, you must now decide what you are going to teach in order to reach those objectives. A wide range of materials are available for new believers and for pre-membership classes. Much of it is good, but may not be geared to helping you achieve the objectives you have established for Level One. I would recommend you conduct two series of classes at this level.

1) *An introductory class for new believers (Class 101)* - The length of this class will depend on how much material you choose to cover. I would recommend that the class last no more than four to six weeks. You would be wise to spend a week on each of the following topics:

Sin
Salvation
Assurance
Obedience/Baptism

Membership Ministry

You can write your own material, use a portion of Melvin Lacock's "Won By One" booklet,⁶⁷ adapt other published course material or contact this author for help. One of the goals of Class 101 is to find out if the person is truly saved, lead him to Christ if he is not, and help him understand what he has done in accepting Christ as his personal Savior. This is not a "meat and potato" course in theology for mature believers, but a "milk" course for babes in Christ. Most mature believers will not object to setting through this class if it is of short duration. Besides, you want them to be familiar with what is taught in Class 101 because THEY may end up teaching it at some point in the future.

2) *An introductory pre-membership class (Class 102)* - Start teaching this class as soon as you complete Class 101. Simply move right into Class 102 without any interruption or break between the two. These classes are taught as a unit rather than as separate individual classes. The goal here is to acquaint people with your church and its philosophy of ministry. You are going to give people an inside look at your church, what it teaches, and how it functions so they can decide whether or not they want to become members of it. Some people will decide they don't like what they see or don't want to be a part of it. They may drop out of the class or leave when it is over.

While this is sad, it is far better to have them leave at this preliminary stage than to have them join the church and then leave six months later when they discover things with which they disagree. Understand that not everyone who starts this class will finish it, and not everyone who finishes it will join your church. Those who do finish the class and decide to become members do so because they like what they see and have already begun to buy into your philosophy of ministry involvement and leadership development.

The 102 classes will take about nine weeks to teach. Here is a look at some of the things you should cover:

A Look Inside (Exploring our Philosophy of Ministry)
Enabler or Equipper? (Our View of the Pastoral Ministry)
The Work of the Ministry (Our View of the Ministry)
God's Gifted People (Our View of Spiritual Gifts)
The Heart-Beat of God (Our View of Outreach and Discipleship)
This We Believe (Our View of Bible Doctrine and Baptist Distinctives)
Men With Servant Hearts (Our View of Deacon Ministry)
The Partnership Concept (Our View of Church Membership)
How To Experience Consistent Spiritual Growth (Our View of Growing Spiritually)

These materials may be ordered from the author or you can develop your own.

- **How are you going to involve people in ministry at Level One?** - It is vital that you begin involving people in some form of ministry as soon as possible after they start attending your church. What you do in this early stage is precedent setting and will significantly impact the level of people's commitment and involvement in the future. You cannot afford to spend several months teaching people not to serve, and then expect them to commit to some ministry role further down the road. If you want people to serve, put them to work NOW! If you want them to develop into leaders, give them something to do.

As has been pointed out already, you would not place new believers or new people into positions of great authority and influence, but you can use them in service ministries of various types. These entry-

level ministries are things that anyone can do regardless of their spiritual maturity. They are temporary and introductory in nature. People will either grow spiritually, and move on to bigger assignments or they will drop out. Either way these positions will be constantly recycling as people move on or move out and new people move in to them. Here is a list of some of the entry-level ministries you can plug people into shortly after they start attending your church. I'm sure you can think of others that are particular to your ministry:

- Set up chairs and equipment
- Tear down chairs and equipment
- Put out songbooks prior to service
- Collect songbooks after the service
- Hand out literature door to door
- Help run the sound equipment
- Make canvassing phone calls
- Direct traffic in parking lot
- Help clean the building
- Set up literature table
- Shovel sidewalks
- Visitation partner
- Fold bulletins
- Stuff envelopes
- Run errands
- Do repairs
- Mow Lawn
- Paint rooms

Every ministry position is a leadership position. You are beginning to train people to become leaders by giving them something to do. New believers and people who have recently started attending your church should not be given responsibilities involving children, teaching or finances. These are positions of great importance that should be given to more mature believers who are members of the church and who have gone through the proper screening channels.

- *Ask each person who completes Level One to sign a Membership Covenant* - You want to see people saved, baptized, and be ready to unite with the church the time they complete this first level of your discipleship course. Sadly, not everyone who enrolls in Level One will complete it, and some will decide not to become members once they have completed these preliminary studies. That is o.k.. Only those who are in agreement with the church's doctrine and philosophy of ministry should become members.

Membership covenants are important because they put expectations into writing. Go over the Membership Covenant in your 102 class and explain each of the four things members are asked to commit to doing. These include:

- 1) Protect the unity of the church
- 2) Share the responsibility of the church
- 3) Serve in the ministry of the church
- 4) Support the testimony of the church⁶⁸

You'll notice in the sample Covenant below that specific biblical references are given for each area of commitment. You want people to understand that what you are asking them to do when they become members of the church is biblical. Ask each person to sign the Covenant and give it back to you. Then

make a copy of the signed Covenant for your membership file, and have their copy framed for presentation to them at the time they are officially welcomed into the membership. Only those who sign the Covenant should be allowed to become members of the church.

Those who sign the Membership Covenant are already showing signs of spiritual growth by making the commitments they have just made. Their involvement in an entry-level ministry is another sign of growth. Their willingness to serve and to accept training for future assignments is evidence of a developing servant heart and a teachable spirit. These leadership qualities are already becoming evident in the lives of these people. They are progressing in their relationship with God and in the development of their leadership skills. They are off to a great start, but this is just the first step in a four-part process of turning people into lay leaders in the church.

Membership Covenant

Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and having been immersed upon my confession of faith, and being in agreement with (name of your church) Baptist Church's statements of faith, constitution, and philosophy of ministry, I now choose to unite with this body of believers. In so doing, I commit myself to God and to the other members of this fellowship to do the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church
 - ... By acting in love toward the other members (Romans 14:19)
 - ... By refusing to gossip (Ephesians 4:29)
 - ... By following and cooperating with my pastor and the spiritual leaders of this church (Hebrews 13:17)
2. I will share the responsibility of my church
 - ... By praying for its spiritual and numerical growth (I Thessalonians 1:2)
 - ... By inviting the unchurched and others to attend its worship (Luke 14:23)
 - ... By warmly welcoming those who visit our services (Romans 15:7)
3. I will serve in the ministry of my church
 - ... By discovering my spiritual gifts and talents (I Peter 4:10)
 - ... By accepting training and equipping for ministry from my pastor (Eph. 4:11,12)
 - ... By developing a servant's heart and a teachable spirit (Philippians 2:2,4,7)
4. I will support the testimony of my church
 - ... By attending its services faithfully (Hebrews 10:25)
 - ... By living a godly life (Philippians 1:27)
 - ... By giving regularly (I Corinthians 16:2)

Date

Signature

“And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved.”
(Acts 2:47)

Level Two - Going on to Maturity (Maturity)

Pete Rose made his living hitting singles. He hit more singles than any other player in the history of baseball. Crowds cheered every time he got on base. Most church planters and pastors would cheer also if they could get the majority of their people to complete Level One of the discipleship paradigm. Their churches would be stronger, bigger, and healthier if that were the case.

It needs to be noted, however, that you don't win many ball games if you strand your runners on first base. In order to win, players must advance to the next base. The same is true when it comes to discipleship and the development of lay leaders. You can't leave your people stranded on Level One. You must move them forward to the next level which we call "Going on to Maturity."

Level Two deals with spiritual maturity and involves higher levels of commitment and greater involvement in ministry. Maturity is measured not only by what we profess to believe, but also by how we behave. Jesus emphasized the importance of teaching the people we disciple to "observe" whatsoever things he commanded (Matthew 28:20). The word "observe" (*terein*) means to keep, to preserve, to watch over so that nothing is lost or left undone. It carries the idea of putting into practice and doing the things Jesus taught. In Luke 6:46 Jesus indicated we have no right to call him "Lord" if we do not the things which he said we should do. If people are going to grow spiritually, then they need to translate what they are learning into life-changing actions that will both produce and reveal the spiritual growth that is occurring in their lives.

- **What do we want to accomplish at Level Two?** - Godly character is the foundation of leadership. Godly character, however, doesn't just happen. No one becomes godly by accident. The spiritual growth and maturity that results in a godly character are always intentional, and are dependent on the choices we make and the habits we develop. We become whatever we are committed to. Level Two seeks to help people do this by building on the foundation laid on Level One. There are four basic things you want to accomplish on this level:

- 1) *Replace sinful habits with habits that promote spiritual growth* - Human beings are creatures of habit. A habit is simply a learned response or way of doing things that has become automatic through repetition. Many of the things people do, they do without thinking. When people get saved, they come with sinful habits they have spent a lifetime learning. These habits hinder and limit their ability to grow into spiritually mature individuals with a godly character.

It is not enough to tell people to stop their sinful habits. They may do that for a short period of time, but they will be drawn right back into the same unbiblical conduct unless you replace those habits with other habits that promote godly behavior. The Apostle Paul taught in Ephesians 4 that we are to "put off the old man" (stop the sinful behavior), and "put on the new man" (start responding in a godly manner). He illustrates this by instructing believers to put away lying (the sinful habit) and to speak truth (the godly habit), and to stop stealing (the sinful habit) and to start working with their hands (the godly habit).

We want to instill eight godly habits in people's lives that will help them grow spiritually. If these habits become ingrained in their lives, spiritual maturity and a godly character will soon begin to emerge. The eight habits are:

Growing Spiritually
A Daily Quiet Time
Worship
Prayer
Bible Study

Church Attendance
Tithing
Ministry Involvement

2) *Give people an overview of the five foundational books in the Bible* - The Bible is the Word of God. It is inspired (God-breathed), inerrant (without error), and sufficient for life and godliness. Many people, including many Christians, simply are not familiar with its contents. They don't have any real grasp on its meaning or its message. They don't know how it applies to them. It is virtually impossible for people to grow spiritually without a basic grasp of God's Word (I Peter 2:2). Level Two is designed in part to help them begin to acquire an elementary understanding of the Scriptures. Everything cannot be covered at once, but you can start with an overview of the most important books. These include Genesis, John, Romans, Ephesians, and James.

3) *Help people become familiar with God's perspective on life* - A biblical worldview is based upon seeing life the way God sees it rather than the way sinful man sees it. God's perspective is much different than man's perspective. In Isaiah 55:8 God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." People can only become the godly leaders God wants them to be as they gain God's perspective on things. Like the disciples in Luke 24:45, they need their understanding opened so they can see the big picture of what God is doing in the world. There are at least nine areas in which they need help. These will be discussed in the "What are we going to teach?" section below.

4) *Help people become more actively involved in ministry* - You don't want people to remain in the entry-level ministries to which they were assigned. Spiritual progress is measured in part by the degree of commitment people are willing to make and the extent of their involvement in ministry to others. Jesus taught that "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). As people grow spiritually and demonstrate a servant heart by faithfully fulfilling their assigned tasks, give them a bigger job with more responsibility. Some of the people may need more time to develop in this area than others depending on their rate of growth, gifts, talents, personality, and life experiences.

Dennis and Peggy had been Christians for years and had attended a good church during most of their married life. They had difficulty finding a new church since Dennis was transferred to this area. They were a little hesitant when they heard of a new church meeting in the local school, but they decided to visit to see what was happening. As soon as they walked through the door they knew they were "home." They had found what they were looking for.

This new church wasn't exactly like the one back home, but it had a strong commitment to the Word of God, winning people to Jesus Christ, and helping them to mature into servant leaders in the church and community. They knew a lot of churches talk about discipleship, but this new church actually had a discipleship process in place to move people through the various stages of spiritual development.

Dennis and Peggy had joined the church a couple months earlier after completing the Level One classes. They were now about two-thirds of the way through the second tier of classes. They had never experienced anything so helpful. For the first time in their lives, they learned how to grow spiritually by developing eight habits that actually stimulate growth. The survey course on Genesis, John, Romans, Ephesians, and James opened their eyes to new truths they had never seen in all their years in church.

Best of all though were the 203 classes that examined nine areas of life from God's perspective. Life looks so much different when you look at it from God's vantage point. The Bible had come alive for them through these small group Bible studies. Moreover, Glenn was now serving as an usher and Peggy was working in the nursery after completing the required screening process. They found

themselves eager to serve and to learn more about becoming the godly leaders God wants them to be. They had no problem at all signing the Maturity Covenant when they completed all their Level Two classes, and could hardly wait to move on to the next tier of studies in the discipleship process.

- **What are we going to teach at Level Two?** - Level Two will have three successive courses of study that correspond to the objectives listed above. Once again, you can write your own materials, order published materials⁶⁹ or you can seek help from the author of this manual.

1) *Growing through Godly Habits* (201) - This eight week course is designed to help people develop seven habits that will help them to grow into spiritually mature individuals if they practice them habitually. They involve the way people talk, listen, give, serve, and use their time. Ironically, most people don't know how to do these things when it comes to their relationship with God. You must teach them what to do in each case as well as how to do it.

a) *Teach people the habit of growing spiritually* - Since spiritual growth is intentional, people cannot and will not grow spiritually if they do not know what to do. Begin by defining what is meant by "spiritual maturity." Explain that maturity is a process requiring commitment on their part. Review what a "disciple" is and go over the various habits they need to develop in order to keep moving forward in their Christian life.

b) *Teach people the habit of a daily quiet time* - You will need to explain what you mean by a "daily quiet time." This will be a new concept for most people. Tell them it is a time for nurturing their relationship with God by giving devotion to God, talking with God, and listening to God. Show them the importance of doing this daily, and of having a specific place and time for doing it. List some of the tools they will need such as a Bible, notepad, and songbook.

c) *Teach people the habit of talking to God through prayer.* Many have little experience in this area. Teach them how to address God, and what to include in their prayers. Show them that God is anxious to listen and will respond to those things that are according to his will. The acrostic A-C-T-S provides a useful format for teaching them how to pray. It stands for:

- A - Adoration and ascribing praise to God for who he is and what he has done for us
- C - Confession of any known sin in our lives
- T - Thanksgiving for God's goodness and blessings
- S - Supplications and requests for things we want God to do for us

If people are reluctant to pray extraneously at first, have them write out their prayers in advance, and then read their prayers to God. This may go on for several weeks, but they will soon gain the confidence to talk to God on a daily basis without recording what they are going to say beforehand. Encourage them to have a regular time and place where they can go to talk to God every day. Stress the daily nature of prayer.

d) *Teach people the habit of listening to God through regular periods of Bible reading and study.* We talk to God through prayer and God speaks to us through his Word, the Bible. Teach your students how to read, study, memorize, meditate upon, and apply God's Word to their lives. Show them how to use a Bible reading schedule and what resources are available to help them interpret and better understand this precious book.

e) *The habit of spending time with God's people through church attendance.* Believers are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). Regular church attendance is not only obligatory, it is necessary. Show your class the benefits of

being in the house of God on a regular basis. Demonstrate to them how we all need fellowship, encouragement, accountability, and opportunities to exercise our gifts in ministry to each other. Stress the importance of the fifty-two "one another" commands in the Bible. Explain the value of participating in a small group setting and how this can help them grow spiritually.

f) *The habit of giving to God through tithing.* Help your people understand that every thing they possess comes from God and belongs to God. They are merely the managers of God's resources. Show them the seven benefits of giving back to God a portion of what he has given them. Explain what a tithe is and the biblical guidelines for giving. This will be a major shift for many of your people that will help them grow significantly in their relationship with the Lord.

g) *The habit of serving God through involvement in ministry.* Ministry involvement is a major part of training lay leaders. While many of the people in your 201 Class will already be involved in some type of entry-level ministry, you want them to move on to greater levels of involvement. Remind them that they are not just serving the church or helping other people when they fulfill a ministry role (as important as that is). They are serving the Lord Jesus Christ himself when they carry out their ministry assignments. In Matthew 25:40 Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Encourage them to look for more opportunities to serve, and let them know that Level Three will focus on helping them to discover how God has shaped them for ministry. For now, we want to keep them involved in ministry while they are developing the habits that will help them grow spiritually.

2) *Getting the Big Picture (202)* - The second objective on Level Two is to help the people being disciplined gain a basic overview of the five foundational books of the Bible. You want them to get the big picture of what the Bible is all about. Class 202 is a brief survey of Genesis, John, Romans, Ephesians, and James. This is not an in-depth study of these books, but a survey course to help your students gain an overview of the general thrust of Scripture. Each class should only be one or two weeks in length.

Genesis - explains the origin of man and his basic problem (sin)

John - explains who Jesus Christ is and what he did

Romans - explains Bible doctrine and what we are to believe

Ephesians - explains the church and our part in it

James - explains how to live a Christian life in a fallen world

These books, along with all the other books of the Bible, can be taught more in depth in the adult Sunday School class or as part of a small group Bible study once people have completed their discipleship/leadership courses. As soon as you complete the 202 survey classes, move seamlessly into the 203 series relating to seeing life from God's perspective.

3) *Seeing Life from God's Perspective (203)* - Time passes quickly as you move through the discipleship course. You will already have spent six months teaching people how to grow spiritually and how to serve the Lord and others. Some will progress faster and further than others. The majority of your people taking the course will be more spiritually mature and will be more involved in ministry than those who do not take the course or who drop out of it. You are no longer feeding people on the "milk" of the Word. Instead, you are nourishing them on the living "bread." The 203 classes will be a major step forward on the road to leadership in ministry.

Perspective involves seeing things from a particular vantage point. It is looking at life through a specific set of lenses. You want people to learn to see life from the larger frame of God's

perspective as compared to the narrow, self-centered view of mankind. I'm talking about changing people's worldview and their basic philosophy of life. That process has been going on ever since they trusted Christ as Savior, but it is about to accelerate considerably with this class. There are nine areas in which students need to see things from God's perspective:

Life - its origin and purpose

God - who he is and what he is like

Jesus Christ - who he is and what he has done for us

Holy Spirit - who he is and what he wants to do in our lives

Human Beings - their origin, the source of their problems, and their destiny

Sin - its effect on the human race and its solution

Relationships - how people can be in right relationship with God

The Church - its purpose, its mission, and how it is to function

The Future - where the world is headed and what is going to happen

God's perspective is found in his Word, the Bible. If you want to know how he views things, you must go to the Bible. You may have noticed by now that these nine areas of God's perspective correlate to basic Bible doctrine. We have simply removed the theological names and replaced them with every-day terms. Class 203 is an introductory class to Bible doctrine.

Some planters and pastors are concerned about teaching doctrine to relatively new believers, but it should be noted that in Acts 2:42 new believers were taught the "apostles doctrine" almost immediately upon trusting Christ as their Savior. Bible doctrine is essential for continued spiritual growth. All the people in the 203 Class have been saved for at least six months or more (it takes that long to reach this point in the discipleship process). They are already more spiritually mature than many believers who have been saved much longer. They should have no difficulty handling this material. Since this is an introductory course, each subject should be taught in just one week.

- **How are you going to involve people in ministry at Level Two?** - Each stage of the discipleship/leadership paradigm advocates increased levels of responsibility and commitment. As people's understanding of God's Word grows and their maturity level expands, elevate them to positions of greater importance. This is important not only for their continued growth, but it also opens up the entry-level ministries to new people coming into the discipleship process. Your list of Stage Two ministries might include:

Usher

Greeter

Nursery

VBS helper

Record keeper

Banquet helper

Sound equipment

Visitation partner

Computer/graphics

Choir and special music

You can add other ministry opportunities to this list that are specific to your church. The important thing is to keep people involved in ministry. You want them to maintain a servant heart as they grow spiritually.

It will take four to five months for people to complete this second level of your leadership-training

course. Your students will have reached a milestone by the time they arrive at this point. Their knowledge of the Word of God and their commitment to serving the Lord will be greater than that of the average Christian in most churches. It is important that you seal this new level of commitment by having them sign a Maturity Covenant similar to the one below.

• **How can you tell if people are growing spiritually on Level Two?** - What indicators exist that point to continued growth in people's lives? How do we know if they are truly becoming followers of Christ? Here are five questions you can ask that will indicate whether or not people are growing spiritually:

- 1) Are they learning more about the contents of the Bible? Do they know more about God's Word now than they did six months ago?
- 2) Are they seeing things more clearly from God's point of view? (ex. - the purpose of trials?)

Maturity Covenant

Recognizing that I am to “*grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:18), and that I am to take the time to keep myself spiritually fit (I Timothy 4:7), and that it is God’s desire for me to become a mature believer (II Corinthians 13:9), and realizing that spiritual maturity is a process resulting from my obedient walk with Christ, I commit myself to do the following things with God’s help:

1. I will have a daily quiet time with God
 - ... By setting aside a time and place to meet with God (Mark 1:35)
 - ... By talking to God through prayer and worship (Ephesians 6:18)
 - ... By listening to God as I read His Word daily (Revelation 1:3)
2. I will seek to live by the truths of God
 - ... By studying God’s Word regularly (John 5:39)
 - ... By applying Christ’s teachings to my life (Matthew 28:20)
 - ... By embracing the truths taught by my church (Acts 2:42)
3. I will give a weekly tithe to God
 - ... By recognizing everything I possess belongs to God (Exodus 19:5)
 - ... By giving at least a tenth of my income to the work of God (Malachi 3:10)
 - ... By developing a joyful attitude toward giving (II Corinthians 9:7)
4. I will participate on a team for God
 - ... By joining a small group within this church (Acts 12:12)
 - ... By attending its functions regularly (Hebrews 10:25)
 - ... By cooperating with its programs and philosophy (Hebrews 13:17)

Date

Signature

“Till we all come . . . unto a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”
(Ephesians 4:13)

- 3) Are they valuing more the things that are important to God? (ex. time with God, the church, fellowship with other believers, witnessing)
- 4) Are they more obedient to what God wants them to do? Are they involving themselves more in ministry than before?
- 5) Are they becoming more like Christ in their attitudes and actions?⁷⁰

Not everyone will progress at the same rate, but if the answer to these five questions is "yes," then that person is growing spiritually, and will continue to do so as long as he or she continues to move through the discipleship process.

People will be showing definite evidence of spiritual growth by the time they complete Level Two. You will also see signs of leadership ability manifesting themselves. These will be more prominent in some people than in others. These will become more pronounced as you move to the third tier of the leadership development process.

Level Three - Discovering my "Ministry Shape" (Ministry)

Remember that everyone who is involved in ministry is a leader. It doesn't matter whether they direct traffic in the parking lot, greet people as they enter the church, escort them to a seat, teach a class, direct the song service, count the money or preach the sermon. They are all leaders. Their responsibilities and level of commitment may vary, but they all serve in a place of leadership by virtue of doing whatever they are doing. They are using their gifts, talents, personality, and experiences to serve Christ, the church, and the people with whom they come in contact. That makes them leaders, even though all leaders and all leadership positions are not equal.

Everyone who takes the Level Three classes should have completed Levels One and Two already. They have learned how to grow spiritually and should be involved in some form of ministry. It takes about nine months for people to arrive on Level Three. Some folks who are not serious about their relationship with the Lord will drop out before reaching this advanced level of discipleship, but a good number will continue on faithfully because for the first time in their lives they are growing spiritually, and are serving the Lord in a meaningful way. They have progressed further in a few short months than many believers do in a lifetime, and are well on their way to becoming leaders in your church.

- **What do we want to accomplish at Level Three?** - This third level of discipleship is ministry oriented. Although ministry involvement has been encouraged at each of the previous levels, this is the place where it all comes together as we help people do several things that will enable them to serve with greater confidence and effectiveness. Here are some of the things we want to accomplish on Level Three:

- 1) *Help people develop a servant heart and a teachable spirit* - We have been working on this since the beginning of the discipleship process, but it comes front and center on Level Three. Few things are as important in ministry as having a servant heart and a teachable spirit. Attitude in ministry is more important than aptitude. It doesn't make any difference what a person is capable of doing if he or she can't get along with others and won't follow instructions. A spirit of humility and a willingness to do whatever needs doing is essential to becoming a leader.

- 2) *Help people understand how God has shaped them for ministry* - God uses five things to shape people's lives for particular ministry. These are:

- a) The **S**piritual Gifts he gives them
- b) The **H**earth (passion) he gives them
- c) The **A**ptitudes (skills) he gives them
- d) The **P**ersonality he gives them
- e) The **E**xperiences he gives them⁷¹

Everyone has a different "ministry shape." No two people are exactly alike. First Corinthians 12:11 tells us the Holy Spirit "divides to every man severally (uniquely) as he will." While God enables people to fulfill a variety of ministry tasks by giving them multiple skills and talents, he molds each one for a particular area of ministry where they can serve with ease, effectiveness, and a sense of fulfillment. One may be an "eye." Another serves as an "ear" while still another functions best as a "foot." Our job as church planters is to help them discover how God has shaped them for ministry, provide them with the training they need, and then to plug them into that ministry slot.

3) *Provide people with ministry training for specific ministry tasks* - Virtually every gift and skill needs development. It is one thing to know that God has given you a passion and gift for teaching, but it is quite another thing to know how to use those things effectively in ministry. A person who is good with details still needs instruction concerning how to keep records properly. Level Three not only helps people determine their "ministry shape," but also provides them with the resources they need to develop the attendant skills fully.

4) *Plug people into ministry slots that are consistent with their "ministry shape"* - Ministry is living and dynamic. It is constantly shifting and changing. People move from one ministry slot to another as they grow spiritually and hone their ministry skills. Up to this time, you have sought to involve people in ministry wherever they were needed depending on their willingness to serve. The goal was to get them accustomed to giving of themselves in service to others. People were given bigger and more important ministry responsibilities as they grew and manifested increasing levels of maturity and commitment.

Sometimes people do not "fit" in the ministry slot assigned to them. They may be ineffective or feel uncomfortable doing what they are doing. Allow them to change to something more suitable to them. Your goal is to collate people's ministry assignments with their "ministry shape." You want to plug round pegs into round holes and square pegs into square holes rather than visa versa. Seek to create an atmosphere in which people are free to switch assignments if what they are doing is not working for them. People often discover their spiritual gifts by trying their hand at several different ministries until they find the one that matches the way God has shaped them.

Sadly, not everyone who professes faith in Christ will become a mature believer or a servant leader. Some will fall back into sin. Others will be unwilling to pay the price of discipleship, and will stop growing as they fail to implement the truths they are taught on Levels One and Two of the discipleship process. Sami and Clarissa, however, are different. Although they may not have as many talents and skills as other people, they have teachable spirits and servant hearts. Because of that, they have grown rapidly since trusting Christ a few months ago, and are eager to learn how God has shaped them for ministry.

The Level Three classes are designed to do just that - to help people discover how God has shaped them for ministry through the gifts of his grace, the talents they have developed, the unique personalities they possess, and the difficulties they have gone through. Sami and Clarissa were excited as they studied how the gifts of the Spirit enable people to fulfill particular ministry roles in the Body of Christ. They eagerly participated in a spiritual gift inventory, and laughed and teased each other as they identified their particular temperaments.

They learned about ministry and leadership opportunities that are available to people who have completed the Level Three courses. Clarissa was invited to be the nursery supervisor while Sami headed up the outreach ministry of the church. They had always been willing to serve, but now they were moving into the real world of lay leadership. God truly had shaped them for the ministry roles in which they were functioning. They found great satisfaction and contentment in what they were doing and the whole church benefited as a result.

- **What are we going to teach at Level Three?** - What you teach should be geared to achieving your objectives. In other words, your objective should determine what you teach. Go back and look at what you just said you want to accomplish on Level Three of your discipleship process. What needs to be covered in order to achieve these results? The 301 classes are titled "Discovering My Ministry Shape" because that is the main objective of this third level. Here are some of the things you should cover in this series of studies:

1) *What the Bible says about ministry* - You already will have done some preliminary teaching on ministry in Levels One and Two. Here you want to define what is meant by "ministry" and explain how they can be used of God to meet people's emotional, financial, spiritual, and physical needs. Show them the benefits of ministry to themselves, the church, and others. Explain that God created them for ministry, saved them for ministry, called them to ministry, gifted them for ministry, authorized them for ministry, commanded them to minister, prepared them for ministry, holds them accountable for ministry, and will reward them for their ministry. The goal is to help them see themselves as ministers with servant hearts.

2) *How God has uniquely shaped me for ministry* - Spend one week on each of the five things God uses to shape their lives for ministry.

a) *Spend one week on spiritual gifts.* Give them an overview of the purpose for which gifts are given, a description of each gift and how it can be used, and guidance on how to determine which gift God has given them. While gift inventories can be helpful, spiritual gifts are best determined in the context of ministry. What does the person enjoy doing and where is he/she most effective? People may have to experiment with several ministry opportunities before they discover their area of giftedness.

b) *Spend one week on the "heart."* A person's "heart" is the driving force behind what he does. It is what he is passionate about. It is the control center of his life. What does he enjoy doing? What does he care about? God is going to place desires in his heart that are consistent with the gifts he has given him and the ministry he wants him to do. There is a great sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in serving in accord with the "heart" God has given us.

c) *Spend one week on aptitudes.* Aptitudes are learned skills. They are things we have learned to do either in a classroom or in life. What skills do they already possess? What skills do they need to learn in order to perform a particular ministry? Prepare a list of as many skills as you can think of and show how they can be used in ministry. Discuss what classes need to be taught in order to provide people with the skills they need.

d) *Spend one week on personality.* Our personalities influence what we do and how we do it. Show how God can use a choleric like Paul, a melancholy like Moses, a sanguine like Peter, and a phlegmatic like Abraham. Some people like to be out in front in the spotlight while others prefer to be in the background in the shadows. List the different temperament traits and show that God uses all kinds of people in all kinds of ministry.

e) *Spend one week on life experiences.* Everybody's experiences are unique. Some

have experienced great success while others have suffered great heartache. Every experience of life shapes and molds us for ministry. We are able to relate to people because of our experiences. We learn valuable life lessons through the things that happen to us. We are able then to pass those lessons on to others who are going through similar experiences.

3) *The importance of evaluation and accountability in ministry* - Now would be a good time to pull everything together for your students by reviewing the church's purpose, mission, and vision statements along with the ministry statement found on pages 45-46. You might even explain the discipleship process of which they are a part. You want them to see that they are part of a team working together rather than individual contractors who do their own thing. Show them how Jesus gave his disciples ministry assignments and then evaluated their ministries and held them accountable so they could improve and become more effective (Luke 10:1,17). Explain that every ministry assignment comes with built in times of evaluation. People with servant hearts look forward to these periods of review because they want to fulfill their task as effectively and efficiently as possible.

4) *The opportunities that exist for ministry* - Prepare a list of all the ministries and service opportunities that exist in the church. Include a job description that gives the length of commitment, the gifts and skills needed, the responsibilities and authority that go with the job, who they are accountable to, and how often evaluations will be done. Some churches actually hold "job fairs" with ministry booths to expose their people to all the ministry opportunities available in the church.

5) *Next steps that lead to ministry* - This class explains how people go about seeking a particular ministry slot in which they are interested. It is recommended that application forms be used for all teaching, children, and financial ministries. This is especially important for anyone who will be working in the nursery, Sunday School or youth ministries. Anyone who is going to work with children under the age of eighteen should be required to go through a screening process that includes criminal and sexual offender background checks.

By the time people complete the 301 Level Three classes, they will know how God has shaped them for ministry, have a particular ministry in view, and be eager to get going. Not only will you have a team of willing workers, but you will have people who are ready and eager to lead in a variety of ways. You won't have to look outside your church for lay leaders. You'll already have them.

- **How are you going to involve people in ministry at Level Three?** - It is interesting to note that the first lay leaders in the Jerusalem church began to appear in Acts 6 about a year after the church came into existence and the first converts were saved. It took about twelve months for them to mature spiritually to the point where they were ready for leadership. It takes about the same amount of time to move people through the first three levels of the discipleship process. Not only have people grown to spiritual maturity, but they have a year of ministry training and service under their belts. They have learned the skills and gained the confidence they need to be in leadership. Here are some of the areas in which you can use people completing this advanced level of discipleship:

- Junior Church Teacher/Director
- Sunday School Teacher
- Financial Secretary
- SS Superintendent
- Nursery Leader
- Youth Director
- Secretarial Work
- Treasurer
- Visitation

Ask everyone who completes Level Three to sign a Ministry Covenant similar to the one below. Once again, frame it and return it to the person for display in their home or office.

What a thrill it is to a church planter or pastor to have a group of people who have matured to this third level of commitment and involvement in ministry. Your church will be blessed. A spirit of joy and expectancy will develop, an increasing number of individuals will be moving into leadership roles, and new people will be visiting the church. Your church will be healthier, happier, and better off than the majority of churches in America. You'll be well on your way to graduating this ministry in the years ahead.

The job of training lay leaders is not done when people finish Level Three. Your vision must be larger than your own ministry and your own church. Your task is worldwide. The biblical mandate requires you to train leaders not only to serve within the confines of your church, but in the community at large. This is the focus of the next level in the discipleship process.

Ministry Covenant

Having committed myself to membership in this church, and to developing the habits essential for spiritual maturity, and agreeing with it's ministry statement, I commit myself to do the following:

1. I will discover my spiritual gift(s) and unique S.H.A.P.E. for ministry, and will serve in the area(s) that best express what God created me to be.
 - ... By studying what God's Word says about ministry and spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:1)
 - ... By participating in ministry functions to determine my area of giftedness.
2. I will prepare for ministry by participating in the training programs of this church.
 - ... By attending the equipping seminars. (Ephesians 4:12)
 - ... By accepting the instruction given to me. (II Timothy 2:2)
 - ... By warmly welcoming those who visit our services (Romans 15:7)
3. I will demonstrate a servant's heart by serving in secondary ministries as the Body needs me.
 - ... By joyfully accepting such ministry roles requested of me. (I Corinthians 12:18)
 - ... By enthusiastically carrying out my ministry assignments. (Colossians 3:23)
 - ... By humbly yielding to those in authority over me. (Romans 12:10)
4. I will cooperate with the leadership and other ministries of this church and place the greatest good of the whole Body above the needs of my personal ministry.
 - ... By recognizing my ministry is to be for the "common good" of the Body. (I Corinthians 12:7)
 - ... By fitting into the ministry philosophy of my church. (I Corinthians 12:12)
 - ... By making myself accountable to those who supervise me. (Hebrews 13:17)

Date

Signature

*"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another."
(I Peter 4:10)*

Level Four - Up, Up and Away (Mission)

Mission (not missions) lies at the heart of both discipleship and leadership. God is on a mission of calling a people out of the world unto himself. You and your church are part of that mission. God's mission is to be your mission, and the mission of your people. Level Four of the discipleship paradigm is designed to help your people understand what God is doing in the world, how they fit into it, and how they can be a part of it both locally and globally.

- **What do we want to accomplish at Level Four?** - This is the same question we have asked at each stage of our discipleship process. The objectives are different at each level, but sometimes overlap and are built upon one another. Clear objectives enable you to achieve your goal because you will know where you are going and how to get there. Level Four is the most advanced stage of your training program. Here are some of the things you want to achieve at this stage:

1) *Solidify the Christian worldview that has been developing throughout the course of this training ministry* - One of our objectives on Level One was to help people start develop a biblical value system that looks at life through God's eyes rather than man's eyes. They have been exposed to God's perspective repeatedly throughout the course of this discipleship paradigm. Their spiritual maturity has grown in direct proportion to their acceptance of the biblical values that they have been taught. Level Four seeks not only to bring this godly worldview into sharp focus, but lead people to take personal ownership of it.

2) *Train people to share their testimony effectively* - Discipleship begins with someone sharing the Good News of the gospel with someone else who needs to hear it. Someone shared the gospel with each of your students to start them on the discipleship process. We now come full circle by teaching each student how to write out his salvation testimony, and how to share it effectively with other people so they can come to a saving faith in Christ.

3) *Prepare people to coach others through the discipleship process* - Discipling new believers is the job of every believer, especially those who have completed all four levels of your discipleship program. They should be able to shepherd other people through each stage of the process either one-on-one, in a small group setting or by teaching one or more of the classes themselves.

4) *Have people with servant hearts ready to serve in the highest positions of leadership* - A servant heart is one that seeks to give rather than to get, to serve rather than to be served. We have sought to instill this servant concept in every person who has gone through the discipling process. Some will have progressed further than others will. Their spiritual maturity, their readiness to service, their "ministry shape" will have prepared them for the highest levels of leadership in the church.

5) *Help people develop a heart for missions at home and abroad* - Just as Jesus taught his disciples to lift up their eyes and look on the fields that were white unto harvest, so we must teach our disciples to see the opportunities for ministry that abound in our community and in the world at large. We want them not only to see what God is doing in other places, but we want them to be burdened and involved in what God is doing by participating in various outreach programs, mission trips, and service opportunities.

6) *Help people surrender to full-time Christian service* - Ultimately, discipleship is like childrearing. The goal is to train up the child so he can go out into the world on his own and function successfully. The goal of every church planter should be to send others into the harvest fields to win souls, disciple believers, organized them into local churches, and train others to do the same thing. Level Four seeks to prepare people to take that next step of commitment of becoming involved in what God is

doing in other parts of the world by becoming pastors, missionaries, and church planters in their own right.

Steve and Heidi always knew God had something special for them, although at times they tried to ignore it. They had been on a steady path of progressive growth and involvement in ministry since they started attending the first core group meetings in Ben's living room about a year ago. The vision of a new church, a different kind of church, one that emphasized Bible teaching, soul-winning, and genuine discipleship gripped their hearts. They weren't sure such a church was possible, but they wanted to be a part of it if it happened.

Now a year later, they were deeply involved in several aspects of the church. God had blessed. Souls were being saved on a fairly regular basis as people were taught how to grow spiritually, and how to serve others by using their "ministry shape" to show the love of God in practical ways. The progressive discipleship program made it easy to move people through the various levels of spiritual and leadership development. People were more willing to serve when they were growing spiritually. They grew even more as they served. It was a wonderful cycle of growing and serving, and serving and growing that impacted the church both spiritually and numerically.

Steve and Heidi moved rapidly through the Level Four discipleship course. They learned how to write, memorize, and give their salvation testimonies effectively. They studied how to find common ground with their postmodern friends and neighbors. They got involved in an evangelistic small group and were thrilled to see a couple of people they invited from their neighborhood come to saving faith in Christ. They learned that all unbelievers are not the same. Some are open and ready to hear the gospel while others need to be "stair-stepped" to Christ.

They surveyed the growing dearth of churches in North America and the great need for establishing new congregations to replace those dead, the dying, and the ineffective ones that dot the landscape. They explored what God is doing around the world and how they can get involved in evangelism, outreach, and missions both directly and indirectly. Their love for people and passion for souls grew steadily as they began to share their faith with co-workers and friends. What a joy it was to see some of them make professions of faith, and start moving through the same discipleship course they had participated in only a few short months earlier.

Steve was thrilled when he was asked to teach the 201 course on growing spiritually. Heidi took over the supervision of the Junior Church program, but deep down in both of their hearts they knew God was preparing them for a bigger ministry either as church planters in their own right here in North America or perhaps in some foreign field of service. In fifteen short months their lives had been transformed from "average" Christians into trained, qualified, growing leaders in the church - all because a progressive discipleship process was in place to help people grow spiritually and to become the godly leaders God intended them to be.

- **What are we going to teach at Level Four?** - Once again, your objectives must govern your teaching. The material you teach on this advanced level must be geared to fulfilling your goals. These 401 classes represent the "meat" of your teaching. Classes may be smaller, and the number of students fewer, but those who participate will be well-grounded, mature, growing believers who have completed the first three levels of your discipleship program. These people are the "cream of the crop," so prepare your lessons well. Here are some of the things to cover:

- 1) *Teach them God's purpose for their lives and how they fit into his redemptive plan of drawing a people out of the world unto himself* - Emphasize once again that God's purpose in saving them wasn't so they could enjoy the good life and go to heaven when they die. He saved them to serve him by being a

witness of his grace to all who will hear. Review what God is doing both in North America and in other parts of the world. Show how the gospel is spreading almost everywhere except here in America, and challenge the class to become involved in what God is doing.

2) *Teach them how to write out and share their testimony of salvation effectively* - Most Christians do not share their testimony with others. They don't think anyone would be interested in hearing it and they don't know how to structure it so it can be effective. Show them the power of personal witness. Testimonies are interesting. They are convincing, and they persuade people to change. Virtually all advertising uses personal testimonies to sell their products. It is important you teach people to include four key elements in their testimony:

What their lives were like before they met Christ
 What brought them to the point where they realized they needed Christ
 How they committed their lives to Christ
 The difference Christ has made in their lives

Teach them how to avoid using clichés that unsaved people are unlikely to understand. Show them how to identify common ground with non-Christians by talking about a major crisis or accomplishment in their own lives. Help them pick out a theme around which they can build their testimony. Ask them to write it out and submit to you. Then go over it with them and make whatever changes are appropriate so it accurately reflects biblical truth as well as their personal experience of salvation. Knowledge is power, and when you give people the know-how needed to share their testimony, many of them will begin to do it.

3) *Teach them how to approach people with the gospel* - Unchurched people are not all alike. Some people are more open to the gospel than others are. The Rainer Scale⁷² divides unbelievers into five categories:

U-1 - Highly receptive and open to the gospel
U-2 - Friendly toward the gospel and the church
U-3 - Neutral toward the gospel and the church
U-4 - Resistant to the gospel
U-5 - Antagonistic or hostile toward the gospel

Teach your people to recognize each of these persons and show them how to respond to each one by appealing to their needs, their hurts, their interests or the things they value. What do they have in common with these people that can be used to bridge the gap between them? Remind them that receptivity fluctuates as people move through life. A person that is resistant at one time may become very open to the gospel whenever a crisis occurs in his life.

4) *Teach them how people come to Christ* - While the new birth takes place at a moment in time, giving birth is a process rather than an event. People go through a series of steps as they progress toward faith in Christ. The modified Engel Scale⁷³ below highlights the various steps people experience on their spiritual journey.

The Engel Scale

How People Come to Christ and Then Grow

- 6 Self-satisfied, skeptical, resistant, or spiritually apathetic (Resistant stage)
- 5 Becomes aware of an unmet need or spiritual void in his/her life (Receptive stage)
- 4 Begins looking for answers to questions or solutions to problems (Seeker stage)
- 3 Considers the differences between themselves and believers (Consideration stage)
- 2 Learns why and how to become a Christian (Understanding stage)
- 1 Ready to believe and receive Christ (Ready stage)

Ground Zero: Gets saved - new life in Christ

- +1 Baptized and connected to a church family (Membership - 101 Classes)
- +2 Practicing the habits necessary for spiritual growth (Maturity - 201 Classes)
- +3 Using God-given talents to serve others (Ministry - 301 Classes)
- +4 Sharing the Good News with non-believers (Mission - 401 Classes)
- +5 Living out one's life for the glory of God (Magnification - 501 Classes)

It is important that your students understand this process so they do not get discouraged if a person doesn't accept Christ as Savior the first time they witness to him. While we would like to see people saved every time we share the gospel with them, our witness has been successful if we are able to move the person to the next step in the process. This is known as "stair stepping" people to Christ. Someone else may have the joy of leading them to Christ, but you (or your students) will have played an important part in the process. Show your people how to build bridges of trust that may lead to people being saved at some point in the future.

5) *Teach them how people grow spiritually* - The goal here is to equip your students to coach others through the same discipleship process they are now just completing themselves. They probably do not remember everything they were exposed to as they were being disciplined nor why those things were important. Review the entire discipleship process with your class and encourage them to shepherd a friend or someone new to the church through that process. They could do this in a one-on-one setting or they could teach one of the classes themselves. It is preferable that they not offer to accompany someone through the discipling process as a means of encouragement. Instead, you want them involved in coaching, teaching, and showing the new believer what to do in order to grow spiritually.

6) *Teach them how to survey U.S. and world needs* - Many believers are unaware of the changing world they live in. They think they still live in "Christian" America. They do not. A major paradigm shift has occurred in which we have passed into a Post-modern era within the past few years. Christian influence and the Judeo-Christian ethic are being replaced with secular and Eastern philosophies. North America now has one of the largest unchurched populations in the world.

While Christianity is declining and opportunities for evangelism are expanding in North America, God is at work around the world. The door to China and Southeast Asia is opening to the gospel. Cracks are appearing in the "10x40 Window" that stretches from the west coast of Africa to the east coast of China. Windows of opportunity in the Muslim world are available that were not there just a few years ago. Remind your class that Psalm 67:2 says,

*"That thy way may be known upon earth,
thy saving health among ALL NATIONS."*

Help your students gain a better understanding of what God is doing and the opportunities that abound around the world. Awareness is a precursor of action.

7) *Teach them how to become a world-class citizen* - Involvement, commitment, surrender, and action are the focus of this class. The time for talking is over. Now it is time to decide and to act. Most of these people will already be involved in ministry within the church, but now it is time to step out into the real world to make a difference. Talk about the five changes people must make in their thinking in order to become a world-class citizen. These include:

Shifting their thinking from self-centeredness to God-centeredness.
Shifting their thinking from local orientation to global orientation.
Shifting their thinking from temporary values to eternal values.
Shifting their thinking from security to service.
Shifting their thinking from comfort to sacrifice.

Challenge them to get involved in ministries that reach out into the community. Give them a list of ways they can build bridges to unchurched friends, neighbors, relatives, and business associates. How are they going to invest the rest of their lives? Present them with the opportunity to take a mission trip, to get involved in helping to build a mission church or some other activities that give them first-hand exposure to missions. Challenge them to surrender their lives to full-time Christian service to become a pastor, a church planter or a missionary or to support their husbands in such a ministry.

- **How are you going to involve people in ministry at Level Four?** - The people on Level Four will generally be the most spiritual, the most mature, and the most involved in ministry of all the people in your church. They are the "cream of the crop." What more can be asked of them? These people form the backbone of the church. These are your lay leaders. Here is where you plug them in:

Leadership roles such as SS Superintendent, Nursery Director, Junior Church Leader
Shepherding people through the discipleship process
Teaching and Coaching ministries
Planning and Supervisory positions
Officer of the church
Deacon and Trustee
Mission Trips
Pulpit Supply

These people would be qualified to fill any of the seven key leadership roles mentioned on page 8 in Section 1. These include worship leader, preschool leader, assimilation coordinator, evangelism networker, ministry mobilizer, welcome coordinator and financial organizer. Some will go on to serve in other churches as they transfer to new areas and new jobs. Some will remain faithful to serve in your church for years to come, but hopefully a few will go on to become world-class citizens serving the Lord full-time all over the planet.

Once again, ask people to make their commitment public by signing a Ministry Covenant similar to the one below. It makes it easier to be faithful when we publicly drive down a stake such as this one.

Mission Covenant

Recognizing God created me for a purpose and planned a life mission for me, and recognizing that my primary task in life is to please God by fulfilling his goal for my life and thereby glorifying him . . .

1. And understanding that man was created by God for the 4-fold purpose of . . .
 - . . . Worshipping God and having a personal relationship with Him
 - . . . Becoming more like Christ through daily fellowship and a life of obedience
 - . . . Fulfilling the life mission God has planned for each one of us.
 - . . . Living forever with God throughout eternity.

2. And understanding that because of his sinful rebellion against God, man . . .
 - . . . Became a sinner and faces eternal separation from God in a Christless eternity.
 - . . . Is spiritually dead and needs to be made alive to God by means of the new birth.
 - . . . Has been redeemed through the death of Jesus Christ on his behalf.
 - . . . Needs someone to share the Good News of the gospel with him so he can learn of the salvation God has provided for him.

3. And recognizing God's purpose for my life is to participate in his program of world evangelism by sharing my testimony and the gospel message with those people I encounter, I therefore commit . . .
 - . . . The rest of my life to being a messenger of God's Good News to other people as God gives me opportunity.
 - . . . And to use my time, talents and treasure for His kingdom regardless of where it leads or what it costs.

Date

Signature

“As you are going, be making disciples from among all people groups.”
(Matthew 28:19)

Section # 4

Questions about Leadership Development

- 1. Some of my people are unwilling to participate on any level with any type of discipleship or leadership training. What should I do with them?**

Love them and serve them in spite of their refusal to be discipled. If you have someone who can teach them, set up a separate adult class for those who do not participate in the discipleship course. Ask them to pray for the discipleship ministry and those who are going through it. Perhaps in time, they will see the benefit of such training and will join in the process. Spend your time and energy with those people who are teachable.

- 2. My people are so set in their ways I would lose half my congregation if I tried to implement a program like this. Surely, you don't want me to do that do you?**

No, of course not. Such a scenario is unlikely if you lay the proper groundwork by conducting a series of messages on discipleship, spiritual growth, ministry involvement, and leadership training. Show both the advantages of having spiritually mature believers and trained lay leaders, and the disadvantages of not having them. Talk to people privately and in small groups. Show how many of the problems in the church could be overcome by instituting a progressive discipleship/training process. Talk about it long enough and you will surely win some of the folks over to the place where they will support the process.

You may end up losing some members of the congregation who are against what you are trying to do. If so, count your blessings. The Lord has just removed an obstacle to starting your church on the road to growth and maturity. In time, you will replace those who leave with people who have servant hearts, teachable spirits, and cooperative attitudes.

- 3. Won't it be more difficult to attract people to the church if discipleship and pre-membership classes are required of everyone who starts attending the church?**

No. Just the opposite is true. People who visit your church want to know what it is like, what it believes, and how it functions. They will be attracted to a church that is open and transparent with them, especially if they know they are under no obligation to join just because they participated in the class.

- 4. Some people have a very wicked background before they trusted Christ as Savior. Doesn't that disqualify them from ministry and leadership?**

First Corinthians 6:9-11 gives a long list of hideous sins committed by the Corinthians believers prior to their salvation. Paul makes a point of saying they had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. These were the same people he encouraged to use their gifts in ministry to each other. The only leadership or ministry positions restricted due to past sins are those of pastor and deacons. One of the qualifications for these positions is that the men seeking them be the husbands of one wife. Divorce disqualifies a man from serving on this level of leadership. All other leadership and ministry positions are open to people depending on their spiritual maturity and "ministry shape."

5. If I give people a ministry assignment, how can I be sure they will carry it out?

You can't. People are human and they will let you down from time to time. This is not unexpected. Peter failed his Lord in denying him. Judas betrayed him. All the disciples forsook him, but he kept working with them. You have no right to expect better results than Jesus received. Failure can be an excellent teacher if we help people see where they made the mistake and then help them take corrective action.

6. What do I do if people quit after receiving a ministry assignment?

Roll with the punches. Put someone else into that ministry slot or leave it empty, but don't give up on people. Keep working with them and encouraging them. Find out why they quit. Did they not understand what they were supposed to do? Did they let fear of inadequacy overcome them? Were they too immature for the position? Were they not given adequate time, resources, instruction, and authority to do the job. Give them another chance. Plug them into a different ministry. Some people will need more coaxing and more coaching than others. Remember, people grow at different rates, so adjust the pace to fit each individual.

7. What happens if people are plugged into the wrong ministry slot?

There will be a lack of fruitfulness and fulfillment if this is the case. People in the wrong slot will not be effective and will not be satisfied with what they are doing. Always give people the option of changing ministries at the end of the quarter or at a mutually agreed time. Trying their hand at different ministries is one way people discover their spiritual gifts and passion for ministry.

8. It sounds to me as if you are making the church planter responsible for the lack of lay leaders in the church. Is that what you are saying?

One of the responsibilities of leadership is to develop leaders. That is true in business, education, government, and the church. If you want leaders, then you must attract them or grow them yourself. Church planters often launch their ministries prematurely before they have time to recruit and train the lay leaders they need to succeed. Without an effective discipleship/leadership process in place to produce these leaders, their ministries will struggle for years to come, and may fail in the end.

9. What help is available to assist me in implementing a discipleship/leadership training program such as this one?

There is a wide variety of leadership and discipleship-training materials available today. Numerous online helps can be accessed over the Internet. Many church-planting agencies have coordinators, training specialists, and mentors available to help you set up a workable training program. This author would be glad to advise anyone needing help.

10. Isn't a course like this expensive and time consuming?

It doesn't have to be. This material and the teaching lessons that go with it can be downloaded free of charge to anyone who wants them. The only cost is the expense of running off the material on your own printer. If you teach this material during the Sunday School hour, it will take no more time than goes into the preparation and teaching of any other class.

11. How do I overcome the resistance of my people to change?

Change threatens people. It implies instability and a new way of doing things. You can

overcome the natural resistance that comes with approaching change by showing the benefits of the change. Show them that God is in the change business as he seeks to conform us to the image of his Son. Be patient and give people time to adjust to the changes that a leadership-development process will bring.

12. When is the best time to implement a discipleship/training process?

The best time to launch a discipleship/leadership program is as soon as you begin gathering a core group, preferably six to eight months prior to starting public services. You need to have trained leaders in place or leaders in training before you hold the first public service. If you are currently several months or years into your church plant, you are probably already experiencing the difficulties and frustrations of not having adequate lay leaders to help you. You'll need to make some adjustments in your programming to allow you to launch a training process within the next three to six months. It is more difficult to start training leaders after the fact than beforehand.

13. Conducting a course like this one takes a lot of time and effort. How can I get all the other things done that need doing if I focus on discipling people and training leaders?

It is a matter of priorities. Church planters are notorious for overextending themselves and for trying to do too much too soon. You cannot be a full-service church if you don't have the people and the facilities for doing so. The spiritual growth of your people and the development of lay leaders should be top priorities on your agenda. Discontinue some of the programs you and your wife now conduct, and focus on helping your people to grow into the leaders God wants them to be. You can reinstitute those programs at a later time when you have people available to run them.

14. I'm about ready to launch a new church, but I don't have any of the trained leaders you mentioned in place. What should I do?

Stop right where you are and postpone your launch date until you have a core of leaders in place. While this may be embarrassing and upsetting to some, you will be better off in the long run. Don't make the same mistake so many other planters have made. You'll end up suffering the same consequences they have. The future of your ministry depends significantly on having helpers in place before you launch.

15. Isn't preaching the gospel and winning souls the most important thing? Getting people to heaven is my objective.

Preaching the Word of God and winning souls is certainly a central focus of any church plant, but by itself, it comes short of our Lord's command to make disciples. God wants more than conversion. He wants transformation. God is not only interested in getting people to heaven, but also in seeing them live godly lives of obedience and service here on earth. He wants to see them develop into spiritually mature individuals with servant hearts and a passion for ministry to others.

16. Won't people grow to spiritual maturity and become leaders as they listen to good preaching without having to go through a lengthy discipling process?

No, in most cases they won't. Churches are full of people who have sat under good preaching for years and yet are still spiritual infants. Growth is almost always intentional. People grow because they make the decision to grow by exercising discipline and developing the habits necessary for growth. A discipleship process such as the one described in this manual makes it easier for people to progress from one level of maturity to the next. It stimulates them to grow.

17. Most churches don't have a discipling process in place and they seem to be getting along all right. Why do I need one?

Eight-five percent of churches in North America are plateaued or in decline. They are just barely maintaining what they have or they are losing ground as their influence wanes. They are not healthy and they are not "doing all right." Many are struggling to survive. Effective evangelism and discipleship are missing in many, if not most of these churches. They, like some 4,000 other churches annually, will die unless they take steps to change. Your model of how to "do church" must be the Word of God rather than the typical American church. If you are going to develop a church that is truly a "New Testament church," then you must have a process in place for producing mature disciples who are committed to serving in ministry to others.

18. How many people do I need to have before starting the discipling process you have described?

This depends on your circumstances. If you are just starting to make contacts in the community, you can begin the 101 classes as soon as you win someone to Christ or find a person willing to allow you to teach them in a one-on-one situation. If you already have a core group in place, start discipling these people immediately. If you are several years into your church plant, lay the groundwork for launching your discipleship ministry within two or three months. Go with as many people as are willing to take the course, regardless of whether you have one or twenty people in the class.

Sample

Determining My Ministry S-H-A-P-E

We believe God in his sovereign wisdom has uniquely shaped every believer for ministry. The Bible teaches that he equips each one with different gifts, skills, and insights, and then places him into a ministry slot where those skills can be utilized to the fullest.

Please complete the form below to help us (and you) determine your God-given ministry S-H-A-P-E so we can place you in a ministry where you will find the greatest satisfaction and fruitfulness.

S - What are your spiritual gifts? _____

Have you completed a spiritual gift inventory test? yes no

H - What areas of ministry stir your heart? What do you enjoy doing? What are you passionate about?

A - What aptitudes, skills or talents do you possess? What kinds of things can you do? What are you good at doing?

P - What is your personality type? Are you an extrovert or introvert? Are you outgoing and jovial around people or are you more quiet and withdrawn? Are you a "people-person" or are you project oriented?

E - What major life events have you experienced? What triumphs, achievements, tragedies, and heartaches has God taken you through that have prepared you for the ministry role you are seeking?

Sample

Determining My Ministry D-E-S-I-G-N

We believe God in his sovereign wisdom has uniquely designed every believer for ministry. The Bible teaches that he equips each one with different gifts, skills, and insights, and then places him into a ministry slot where those skills can be utilized to the fullest.

Please complete the form below to help us (and you) determine your God-given ministry D-E-S-I-G-N so we can place you in a ministry where you will find the greatest satisfaction and fruitfulness.

D - What desires or areas of ministry stir your heart? What do you enjoy doing? What are you passionate about?

E - What major life events have you experienced? What triumphs, achievements, tragedies, and heartaches has God taken you through that have prepared you for the ministry role you are seeking?

S - What are your spiritual gifts? Have you completed a spiritual gift inventory test?

I - What is your individual style or personality type? Are you outgoing and jovial around people or are you more quiet and withdrawn? Are you a "people-person" or are you project oriented?

G - What growth phase are you in? Are you a new believer? Saved, but now growing spiritually? Making steady progress in your understanding of the Bible? Spiritually mature and actively involved in ministry?

N - What natural abilities or skills do you have? What are you good at doing?

Sample

Determining How I Can S-E-R-V-E

We believe God in his sovereign wisdom has uniquely prepared every believer to serve in ministry. The Bible teaches that he equips each one with different gifts, skills, and insights, and then places him into a ministry slot where those skills can be utilized to the fullest.

Please complete the form below to help us (and you) determine how God would have you S-E-R-V-E so we can place you in a ministry where you will find the greatest satisfaction and fruitfulness.

S - What are your spiritual gifts? _____

Have you completed a spiritual gift inventory test? yes no

E - What major life events have you experienced? What triumphs, achievements, tragedies, and heartaches has God taken you through that have prepared you for the ministry role you are seeking?

R - What is your relational style? What traits do you have that help you relate to people? Are you outgoing and jovial around people or are you more quiet and withdrawn? Are you a "people-person" or are you project oriented?

V - What vocational skills, aptitudes, or talents do you possess? What kinds of things can you do? What are you good at doing?

E - What ministries are you enthusiastic about? What areas of ministry stir your heart? What do you enjoy doing? What are you passionate about?

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- ⁴ Tom Nebel and Gary Rohrmayer, *Church Planting Landmines* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources 2005) p. 30.
- ⁵ Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, *Leading and Managing Your Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987), p. 110.
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- ¹⁷ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communication Ministries, 1994), p. 186.
- ¹⁸ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 101.
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- ²¹ John Maxwell, p. 111.
- ²² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 343-347.
- ²³ Aubrey Malphurs, p. 146.
- ²⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectation*, p. 106.
- ²⁵ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church*, p. 71.
- ²⁶ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holmes Publishers, 2006), p. 183.
- ²⁷ John Maxwell, p. 37.
- ²⁸ Tom Nebel and Gary Rhormayer, p. 31.
- ²⁹ Aubrey Malphurs, p. 126.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ John Maxwell, p. 65.
- ³² John Maxwell, p. 29.
- ³³ Rick Warren, p. 334, 337.
- ³⁴ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, p. 16.
- ³⁵ Jim Berg, *Changed into His Image* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1999), p. 11.
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