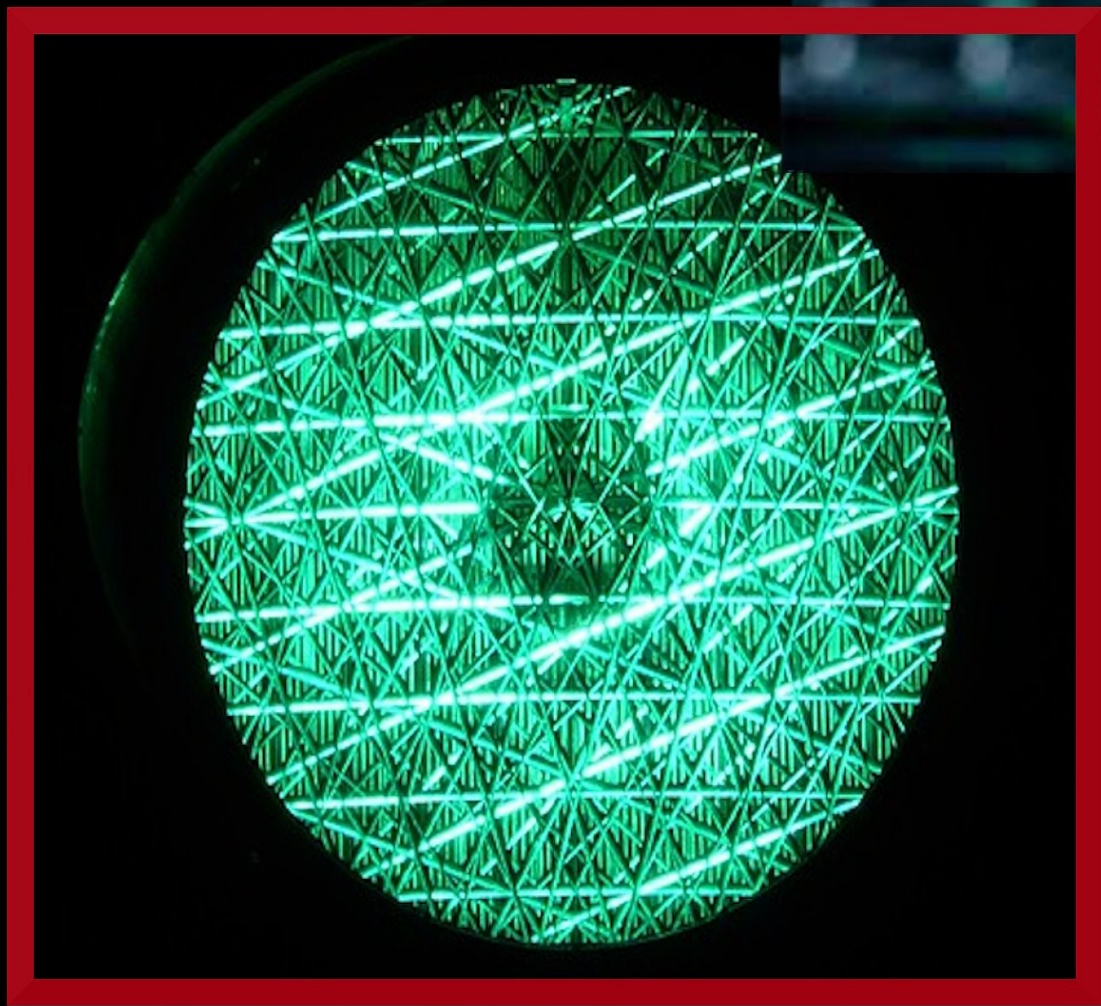


CHURCH EXPANSION *Program*



Dealing with the negative impact of COVID-19

ASR MARTINS

CHURCH EXPANSION PROGRAM

This manual was compiled to help Church Leaders to deal with the negative impact caused by COVID-19 and the subsequent financial implications

FIRST EDITION (JULY 2020)

BY

ASR MARTINS

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own copy at your favorite eBook retailer. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Take note that the name satan and related names are not capitalized. Like many other Christian Authors, I too choose not to acknowledge him.

The content of this book was given in the form of a spoken message that was recorded for a radio program broadcast on Lighthouse Radio. For this reason, the style of the book reflects the spoken form.

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Introduction

This book is all about church growth and church planting and discipleship, and we will be exploring the ways and means that all churches can follow to expand and to advance their congregations and the kingdom of God. We are going to do something that I believe nobody else did before. We are going to deal with these topics the way God wants us to do it, and that is by tackling the issues and the challenges that all churches experience, as a closely-knit unit. All churches and denominations together, as one united effort and project to advance the kingdom of God. So all churches and denominations are welcome to take part in this project.

We want to embrace all Christian churches and we are going to analyze the different challenges and difficulties and experiences that affect us all, and as a group, united in Christ, we are going to work together to improve and advance, not only the kingdom of God but all Christian churches. We are brothers in Christ. We serve the same God and we all have the same goal. We all want to change this world for Christ. We all want to see the world saved. We all want our congregations to grow and to prosper. We are all children of God. We love each other and we understand that we have differences but, with this series, we are not going to look at the differences. We are going to find solutions and strategies that work for all of us. This is where the focus will be. Of course, everything will be able to be customized to fit each congregation and each church or denomination. Everybody will be able to use or to take what they feel will be beneficial for their denomination or congregation or church structure.

There will be a pool of resources and strategies and best practices and ways and means available that anyone can use. Each church or denomination or church leader can take a look at all these strategies and best practices and suggestions. It is up to each church or denomination whether they want to utilize or incorporate these strategies and how they want to do that.

We are going to look at the successes that different denominations have achieved and we are also going to discuss the failures of the church in general. We are going to look at ways and means that denominations and congregations can utilize to help them to expand their congregations and to advance the kingdom of God. The focus will not be on denominations but rather on the strategies and the best practices and so on. So nobody will be put in an awkward position and nobody will be humiliated.

There will not be references to specific denominations but everything will be dealt with in a general sense. I am excited about this. It is time that we all work together and forget about the things that separate us. We should never focus on our differences. As Christians and as church leaders we should focus on our combined and individual goals.

To ensure that we achieve our goals, we will have to ask a lot of questions. As a minister or a pastor, what do you want to achieve in your ministry, in your congregation and in your life? As a Christian, what do you want to achieve in the congregation that you are a member of and in your own life? People join congregations because of a specific need or a specific goal. So church leaders cannot ignore the needs and the goals of the members. Church leaders should attempt to help people achieve their goals. On the other hand, church members should help the congregation and the church leaders to achieve their goals. We are supposed to function as a closely-knit unit, always aware of each other's needs and goals.

If church leaders ignore the needs and goals of the members and the members ignore the needs and goals of the church leaders as well as the congregation as a whole, we will all hinder church growth, spiritual growth, and spiritual development. By doing so we will jeopardize the well-being of the congregation and its members and the church as a whole.

So to start this series, I think the first objective should be to determine what our goals should be before we make decisions. We first need to determine what we need to achieve before we decide

how we should achieve it. If we don't start with the former, but with the how, the how might not allow us to achieve what we should.

I think that there are two very important factors that we need to consider to make sure that we are successful in this regard. The first factor or requirement or goal that we should address, is the instructions of Jesus Christ. He said that we should go out, preach the gospel of Christ, and that we should make disciples. Jesus instructed the early church to make new converts and to teach the new converts what He has taught them. So for us to be successful, we need to look at what Christ Jesus has taught the early church, and we need to make sure that we teach the new converts the teachings and methods and ways of Christ, just like the apostles did.

The second factor to consider is that church members and every addition to the family, every new convert, is a disciple that needs to be taught the ways and teachings and methods of Christ, but, we need to understand that all these people have different characteristics, personalities, gifts, ambitions, and goals.

We must not forget that apart from the common functions and goals and work of the ministry that Christ Jesus laid on us all, all these new converts and all these church members do need help and support with their individual ministries or gifts and interests and desires. All these people often do want to achieve specific and different goals. We need to consider those goals. We need to make sure that as church leaders or as the five-fold ministry, that we assist and support all those people to help them achieve their goals, in an effective and life-changing way.

Of course, the instructions of Christ are our primary goals and should be a priority but often, the personal desires and goals of different church members might be different ways that can be utilized to follow Christ's primary or core instructions in different ways and means and methods. As leaders, we cannot dismiss people's desires and ambitions if it appears to be different from

what Christ Jesus expects from us. It might be very compatible with the instructions that Jesus gave us.

So we might have church members with no personal desires or no ambitions or who simply do not want to do what they are supposed to do. We might have church members who desire to do things that just cannot be utilized in any way to advance the kingdom of God. As church leaders, we need to support all these people. We need to guide and to help them all to be obedient to Christ. We need to point them in the right direction without rejecting or ignoring their desires and gifts and ambitions.

When church members do what the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, instructed them to do, you will have the happiest church members that you can get. Because they do the right thing, they will know that God approves of their actions and the way that they perform the work of the ministry. That will cause them to feel fulfilled. They will witness God at work among them simply because He will be faithful by working with them. He will be with them and they will know it. We give the first step in the right direction and God will do his part. He will work with us. Church members will see the results and they will see the kingdom of God and the congregation itself advancing and growing right in front of their very eyes.

As church leaders we all attempt to consider the requirements and the factors that I mentioned, but, we are all guilty of falling short quite often when it comes to these aspects.

Many people know this already but I must say it to make sure that I have your attention. There are just a few congregations that really consider and who really address these two aspects or requirements. Church leaders do not really make new converts, they do not really teach the new converts what Jesus taught the early church and they do not really support their members by making sure that they grow and develop in these two areas.

Every church leader should ask himself the following questions: Do I develop the congregation and empowering the members to go out to make disciples and to teach the new disciples the teachings and

methods and ways of Christ? Have I put the necessary tools and programs in place that will ensure such development? Have I got an effective program in place to identify the different needs and desires of each member in my congregation and does this program include the support, assistance and evaluation, and measurement of progress made by each member?

We as church leaders are servants. We serve the members of our congregations. They are not serving us. We should know each member almost as well as we know ourselves. We should know their strengths and their weaknesses. We should be able to benefit the kingdom by utilizing their strengths and in the process, fulfill their needs and advance the kingdom of God. It is a win-win situation. However, we cannot do that if we did not involve them in practical evangelistic programs and outreaches. It is only after we have seen people in action that we will start to observe and understand how they operate or function.

We should find ways to address their weaknesses and by doing so, support them in this by developing them and causing them to grow spiritually. Of course, we need to develop the mature Christians in our congregations so that they can help us with this. The church leader cannot do everything. We are assisting everybody in our congregations to be obedient to Christ and to develop their skills and gifts. Part of this is to get them to help you, as a church leader, to carry out all these duties and responsibilities. Church leaders do need to delegate. They cannot do all the work.

In the first chapter of this series, we do need to lay a strong foundation. We do need to have a divine and a clear comprehension of what is exactly expected from us as church leaders. This will help us to put the right strategies in place.

To be an effective minister or leader in the church, you just cannot ignore the great commission and you cannot ignore the personal desires and gifts and callings of your members. If you have ignored these two aspects, you have failed. There is only one way to test if you have succeeded in this. Is the congregation constantly growing and expanding? Are the members of the church constantly busy

with evangelical outreaches during the week? Can you see the smiles and the zeal and the enthusiasm on the faces of your members when you see them in a Sunday morning service? Are your members happy?

If the answer to these questions is no, you have failed. Remember, we cannot put our focus on how we like to or want to do things. We need to put our focus on determining what we need to do. What does God expect from us? What do the members of the congregation need? What can I do to help people to be more effective in achieving their goals? What can I do to help people to be obedient to Christ by helping them to fulfill the great commission in their lives?

If you have considered these aspects, and if you have made these issues and these aspects the foundation on which you have built your church activities, you have succeeded. The proper foundation will keep everything standing. The proper foundation will cause you to build a huge and strong structure that will never collapse, as long as you keep building on that foundation. Once you have started building on this foundation, never deviate from it. This will ensure everlasting success.

The whole purpose of this book is to help you as a church leader to put this foundation in place. The whole purpose is to help you to put all the programs and activities and methods and ways and means in place that you need to get this divinely inspired machine to get in motion and to run like a well-oiled machine. The whole purpose of this series is to help you grow and develop and expand your congregation. The whole purpose of this series is to help you to address the needs and the challenges of all your members in a way that ensures their spiritual development and growth in the church. The purpose of this series is to advance the kingdom of God.

If we are committed to this, the body of Christ will benefit greatly in ways that we have never seen before, all this because of you, man of God, because of you woman of God, who are willing to consider and to make the necessary adaptations in your life and in

your congregation or area of responsibility. If you have the influence that can impact a whole denomination, just think of how the kingdom of God can advance by your actions.

Never forget, it all starts with you. In most cases, this cannot be done by church members. It starts with us, the leaders of the church. It started with Christ Jesus, the Head of the church, and it will not happen if we do not change things or if we do not get the wheels rolling. The ball is in our court. We have to be willing to get this thing off the ground in our congregations. Without you, nothing is ever going to change. This is what God wants and this is what He needs.

Remember, God will not or cannot carry out the work of the ministry for us. He delegated his power and authority to us. That is why Jesus gave us the great commission to fulfill. We need to do the job. That job will not be carried out if we do not carry it out. If we don't do it nobody will. This is what God is looking for:

1 Samuel 2:35

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

This Scripture referred to Samuel. Samuel became exactly what this Scripture said. Samuel replaced Eli because God was not happy with Eli. The work of the ministry was not important to Eli and he did not do what God expected from him.

Although it referred to Samuel, this Scripture also referred to Christ Jesus. Jesus became exactly what this Scripture said. But this Scripture also refers to people like you and me. Ministers of God who are willing to be obedient to him just like Samuel was and just as Jesus Christ was. Ministers who know what is in the heart of God. Ministers who allowed Christ Jesus to put those same things in their hearts. Ministers who only say what they heard God say and who only do what they have seen God do. Faithful ministers who want to be obedient to God.

These are ministers who do not want to be in the limelight. These are ministers who do not want to attract attention to them and their sermons. These are ministers who are focused on the work that needs to be done. Their focus is on the people in their congregations. Their focus is on the ways and means and methods that will help them to develop their members and to achieve their goals and to fulfill the great commission. They are focused on two things, the great commission and the needs of their members in this regard. This is the primary focus. The secondary things that they need to deal with from day to day are always secondary. It never takes the place of the primary focus.

These ministers stay faithful to the cause of Christ. The cause of Christ is making disciples and teaching them what He taught the early disciples. It never changes. They will die for this. They will not allow anything to cause them to deviate from this. These ministers are like David. And this is what God said about David:

Acts 13:22

And when he had removed him (Saul), he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

Just like David, these ministers fulfill the will of God. These church leaders keep the focus on the great commission and by helping their members to fulfill the great commission they are faithful to God. This in itself is very fulfilling. It is amazing how good people feel about themselves when they are obedient to Christ and when they know they are. It is a wonderful feeling.

What made Samuel and David different from Eli and Saul? Simply their attitudes. That was all. There was not something great or noteworthy about Samuel or David. They did not possess any amazing quality or gift or ability or anything of the kind. These guys were just ordinary people but they were humble people with wonderful attitudes. Attitude is very important. Attitude makes a huge difference. Attitude determines whether a minister will be successful or a failure.

It all starts with a humble minister with the right attitude. These ministers often appear not to measure up but they are exactly what God needs to get the job done. They are always willing, never overconfident, never arrogant, never judgmental, never lazy, never above anyone else, and never above the work of the ministry. They just get the job done. They fulfill the will of God. They are always cooperative without seeking any credit and without feeling humiliated because the job is not fitting for a man of such an important position in the church. On the contrary, ministers like this have laid everything down for the cause. Just like Jesus, they paid a price to be obedient and to please God:

Philippians 2:7-8

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is the only thing that motivates ministers like this. They want to be obedient to God and his will no matter what it takes from them. They humbled themselves so that they can serve well. This is their only motivation. They have no hidden agendas. They have humble attitudes. Whatever you want Lord. Not my will but let your will be done in my life. They say this and they mean this, knowing that it might not be so easy.

They do not seek honor. They do not seek fame. They want to honor God and they want him to be glorified. This attitude opens all the doors. Just like with David, God will say, I have found “whatever your name is” and he shall fulfill my will. Because of this, I will work with him or with her.

This is all God is looking for. When He has found a person who is humble and who is willing to do his will, He will work with such a person and they will get the job done. They will build the church and they will advance the kingdom of God.

1 Peter 2:1-9

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone as declared in verse six but, humble and willing ministers who are motivated to fulfill the will of God, are cornerstones in the body of Christ. They can be relied upon. They do what needs to be done to build that magnificent glorious and divine building which is the spiritual house of God, the church, or the body of Christ. To be a cornerstone means that you allow God to put you where He needs you. You have unique abilities that are needed somewhere in this glorious building. And you can only be used as a cornerstone if you are willing to do the will of God. You must have the right attitude and that is all. God does not need anything else. He needs a good attitude and then He

empowers the person with such an attitude with his power, his ability, and his authority.

Can you do this? Will you be able to do this?

Mathews 20:25-28

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them."

26 "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;"

27 "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:"

28 "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

As soon as these ministers of God realize what is needed to advance the kingdom of God, they change their views about many activities in the church. As soon as they understand that the only way that they can be obedient to Christ, is to fulfill the great commission, they accept the fact that they must change their methods and their priorities. They understand that nothing can replace the great commission. They understand that the instructions of Christ were clear and cannot be misunderstood. We are supposed to make new converts. We are supposed to teach them how to follow Christ by teaching them everything that He taught the early church.

They understand that it means that they will have to follow the examples of Jesus Christ and the apostles. They will have to take up the towel and they will have to wash the feet of those that they serve. They will have to become servants.

We as church leaders will have to lead by example. We will have to practically show the members of the congregation how to fulfill the great commission. We cannot teach them through theoretical knowledge. We will have to go out with them and show them the work of the ministry. God is currently busy raising ministers who

are willing to go out and teach people what the great commission entails. Right there in their communities. This is what Jannie van Zyl says about these ministers:

Through his Spirit, God is currently busy raising men and women who do not follow their own programs and their own wisdom. In their hearts, they cherish what is in God's heart. They are not ambitious at all. They are saturated with a divine and heavenly vision. They are conquerors because they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. They do not follow old methods and old programs. They keep their eyes on Christ. They follow his instructions.

- Jannie van Zyl

Their vision changed from program-driven to relationship-driven. They know that it is the personal input through deeds and through actions that change people. Not the sermon only. A good sermon is followed up by practical training. A good sermon is followed up by putting in practice what was taught theoretically. By spending that extra time with people, these ministers have a tremendous impact on them. It makes them feel appreciated and loved. It is for this reason that these ministers treat other people with respect and esteem. They empower people through their actions and their attitudes and the way they treat them.

Look at this aspect the way that the members of the congregation experience it: For a few weeks they have heard their pastor or their minister teach them how to fulfill the great commission. They became very excited, and also a bit concerned when he promised them that after the theoretical chapters, he will go out with them to show them how to fulfill the great commission practically. What a wonderful experience it will be when they experience their minister going out with them and teach them practically how to do the work of the ministry. By the way, in chapter 2 and chapter 3 we deal with these practical steps and strategies of the great commission. These chapters will equip and empower us all to teach and to equip other people how to fulfill the great commission. It is quite easy to master and easy to empower others to do the same.

What a wonderful experience it will be for the members of the congregation to see and observe how their leaders implement methods and strategies that help and enable them to be obedient to God in this regard, not even mentioning how excited they will be to see how they help them to achieve their goals within the framework of their personal abilities and gifts. Just imagine how fulfilled these church members will be.

This is a reality. This is not just a dream. This will be the result if church leaders are willing to pursue these possibilities. It starts with you. You can change the lives of many people if you are willing to step out and put these strategies and methods in place. It means that church leaders will have to evaluate their current situations and strategies and methods. They will have to determine if their current strategies really fulfill in the needs of the members of the congregation and if it addresses the instructions of Jesus Christ.

If it does not address the needs of people and if it does not empower people to fulfill the great commission, then these strategies and methods and programs need to be changed or replaced with strategies and programs that do fulfill these needs and do empower the members of the congregation to fulfill the great commission. We have to be courageous in this regard. We have to stretch the boundaries a bit. Sometimes things that we thought would be impossible may suddenly become a reality. Things that were impossible in the past might suddenly be acceptable and can be implemented without any hassles. We should never stagnate and just accept things without pushing the boundaries a bit. If we don't, we are not advancing but going backward. If there is no progress it does not mean that we are keeping the status quo. No, if there is no progress we are regressing. That is a fact.

In many cases, people do not advance because they are scared of the unknown. People do not want to advance because they are scared of failure. As children of the most high God, we are not supposed to fear anything in life. We need to go out and fulfill the great commission fearlessly. In Luke 10:17-19 Jesus has sent the seventy out on an outreach. When they returned they were very

excited. Just pay attention to what they said and what Jesus promised them:

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

19 "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

Isn't this wonderful? Jesus said that when we go out to fulfill the great commission, nothing shall by any means hurt us.

We need to make disciples and teach them all that Christ taught the early church. We need to teach them that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will be with them all the way.

Discipleship in the Christian sense is the process of making someone become like Christ. The disciple of Christ is to become like Christ in everything. The primary purpose of Jesus' coming to the world was to establish the kingdom of God through his death. Christians have to be taught how to become like Christ because this will result in the great commission being fulfilled. When Christians do not fulfill the great commission yet, they are not yet like Christ.

In the world of the Bible, a disciple was a person who followed a teacher, or rabbi, or master, or philosopher. A disciple is first a believer who has exercised faith. This means they have experienced conversion and put Jesus at the center of their life.

Discipleship encompasses all the services we provide for the new convert in the early stages of his Christian life to retain him in the faith. Discipleship is just as important as the very act of preaching to win souls.

Discipleship is much like exercise. It is so beneficial that the benefit alone is enough to make it attractive to us. Many church leaders are under the impression that new converts are completely

like natural babies and that they are not of any use because of that. Of course, new converts are like babies in the kingdom of God but do not be misled by this fact. If they are incorporated into the great commission program of the church immediately, they can be teenagers in a month and completely capable to carry out the great commission within three months. This is a fact. I am not exaggerating.

However, discipleship can only be done effectively when new converts are introduced to the work of the ministry immediately. They need to be incorporated in the church programs and evangelical outreaches immediately and correctly. As I said, chapter 2 and chapter 3 explain exactly how to do this correctly.

This is what "SalvationCall" says about discipleship:

Do mothers care for their babies for nothing? After years spent feeding them, cleaning them, protecting them, and spending on them, they grow to become healthy and strong adults, capable of taking care of themselves. Discipleship should produce the same results. After the time spent taking the new convert through discipleship, the new convert should grow spiritually to become a mature Christian, capable of managing his own spiritual life. The mature Christian is Spirit-filled; he has developed a daily prayer habit; he has developed a daily Bible study habit; he is victorious over trials and over the temptation to sin and he can face the difficult challenges that life brings his way. Therefore, one benefit of effective discipleship is the spiritual growth of the new convert.

Discipleship is supposed to be a solution to a problem. The problem is that some new converts do not hold on to Christianity for long; they backslide a few days, or a few weeks or a few months later. Therefore, discipleship which includes the services of helping the new convert to develop the habit of praying, studying the Bible, and fellow-shipping, is supposed to equip the new convert to have a foothold in the faith and not backslide again. In other words, discipleship helps to retain new converts in the faith and in the church.

Discipleship creates the opportunity for the new convert to socialize with other Christians. Initially, the only person the new convert knows in the church is the soul-winner and discipler. As part of discipleship, the soul-winner must introduce his new convert to the church so that other Christians will accept and welcome him as a brother and also show concern for his welfare.

During such times as mother's day and father' day, many are those who say a lot of wonderful things about their parents. This is due to the wonderful childhood experience they had with them. Their parents have done something in their lives that they would ever remember to their credit. Do you think such adults who have had good parental care would grow up to be bad fathers and bad mothers? Very unlikely. When the new convert is discipled effectively, this will make a lot of difference in his life. The new convert is likely to appreciate discipleship later on in his life and he will extend the good discipleship experience to other souls he will win.

Paul was the spiritual father of Timothy. Paul's letters to Timothy suggested how proud he was about Timothy. It was Paul who converted Timothy, discipled him, and made him a pastor. It would put a smile on your face to see that a person you discipled has grown to become a staunch Christian. Your Christian life becomes rich and enjoyable when you impact others positively.

Discipleship helps in the spiritual growth of the soul-winner and discipler. In an attempt to disciple the new convert, the soul-winner would have to step up his games. Since he would have to teach the new convert the word of God, he would have to study all the more. Since he would have to help the new convert attend church services, he would have to attend church services regularly too. Since he would have to intercede for the new convert, he would have to extend his prayer time or pray regularly. By and large, all these lead to the spiritual growth of the soul-winner and discipler.

Discipleship is part of the big command 'Go and make disciples of all nations'. Therefore, you are not doing the new convert a favor when you disciple him. Rather, you are obeying the command of

your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Since embarking on discipleship is an act of obedience, you open doors of reward and blessing to yourself, for the Bible says that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

You earn the title of being the spiritual mother or father of other Christians. Paul was the spiritual father of Timothy because he made Timothy become the good Christian that he was. You are the spiritual father to the Christian you disciplined to grow and remain in the Christian faith.

Discipleship sets the stage for the new convert to grow spiritually toward spiritual maturity to become a mature Christian. The church is better off when it is having spiritually growing or spiritually mature converts, for such converts understand their need for salvation; they would come to church without the ordeal of church leaders reminding them, begging them, convincing them, and sometimes bribing them. Such mature converts are resourceful to the church; they are ready to contribute to running the affairs of the church, they make themselves available for evangelism programs intended to win more souls, and they are ready to partake in anything which is of interest to the church.

As part of its benefits, discipleship is a solution that prevents the new convert from backsliding and retains him in the church. Once the new convert remains in the church, he increases the church membership by one. If the church successfully disciple more new converts, its membership will grow over time, becoming a large church. Moreover, when you retain a new convert in the church, you have actually won and retained an entire family, for he, most likely, will impact the church membership positively by coming along with his wife, or husband, or children, and friends, making the church membership grow exponentially.

The heart desire of God has always been that the sinner should repent. Therefore, when the soul-winner leads an unbeliever to Christ, then takes him through discipleship and establishes him firmly in the faith, and in the church, it is a great victory - a victory that moves God to rejoice. He rejoices because His heart's desire

has been met; His enemies have reduced by one and his children have increased by one. Benefits of Discipleship – discipleship, as in following Jesus Christ.

Discipleship also refers to the act of following Jesus – where Jesus becomes your Lord, Savior, Mentor, Teacher, and Master, and you are His disciple or follower. How? Having believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, if you live in obedience to His word, which is the teachings of the Bible, you are in discipleship and you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Disciples of Jesus give up their all to follow Jesus. In times past, they were persecuted in various ways; they were killed, arrested, tortured, beaten, and lynched, but that did not deter the disciples from following Jesus. So what were their benefits for following Jesus? The earliest twelve disciples, being rational as we are, were smart enough to ask Jesus of their benefit for risking their lives to follow Him. And Jesus answered them saying... Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.

Today, we Christians are the disciples of Jesus Christ just like the twelve disciples of old. We became Christians or disciples through faith; that is, believing in Jesus and obeying His word. Now the teachings of Jesus and those of his earliest disciples, as recorded in the Bible, leave us with a lot of assurances of greater blessings here on this earth and hereafter.

First of all, anyone who came to follow Jesus Christ as a Christian and disciple was attracted by one very important thing which money or wealth cannot buy – salvation. Salvation is the state where God has forgiven you your sins, set you apart for good works, adopted you as His son, reconciled you to Himself, etc. Eventually, it is only those in discipleship who shall be saved. All those who once said the sinner's prayer to accept Jesus, but

refused to be true disciples by living in obedience to this word shall be counted among apostates and they shall not be saved.

Disciples of Jesus have hope beyond this earthly life. Jesus Christ attached the benefit of eternal life to discipleship when He promised His disciples of receiving eternal life in. Truly, every disciple will inherit this eternal life for he shall coexist with Jesus in a city that Jesus has built and partake in an everlasting blissful life void of sorrow, hunger, and death.

Apart from you, there are other people following Jesus as disciples or Christians. Some of them are young; some, old; some, women; and some, men. You and the other disciples belong together as one big family in Christ, and you are never alone as a disciple. Now in the course of your discipleship, you will inevitably fellowship with them, and you will enjoy their company, for they will be mothers, brothers, and sisters, to you.

Through discipleship, you become a kinfolk of Jesus Christ, for Jesus deems His disciples as His kinfolks – the older women are His mothers, the younger women are His sisters, and the men are His brothers. Therefore, disciples of Jesus receive the blessings of being kinfolks of Jesus.

Moreover, the Bible is full of many other blessings and promises for discipleship than you could imagine. The disciple ought to believe in them to receive them. Here are a few:

You have access to Divine healing.

God hears and answers the disciple's prayer.

God provides for the disciple.

The disciple has access to 'rest for the soul'.

Disciples have access to know mysteries.

Disciples have access to spiritual blessings.

Disciples receive the Holy Spirit who is the Helper, Comforter

Disciples receive Divine protection.

Discipleship is of great importance because it is beneficial. For these reasons, we have to try as much as possible to take the new converts through discipleship.

Count it as a blessing that you have been called into discipleship, that is, to follow Jesus Christ, for the blessings in store for you are beyond your imagination.

- Salvation Call

Discipleship is all about developing and advancing the family of God. As a family, closely knit into one, we as church leaders and we as children of God should impact each other's lives in love and in peace. This is what God expects from us all, and if we are not doing a good job, we should make the necessary changes. We should adapt and we should compromise in a Godly way. Paul did it and so should we.

By looking at and comparing all the different ways and methods and strategies that different churches and missionaries have implemented through the years, when it comes to church planting, church growth, and expansion and fulfilling the great commission, we have discovered one particular method that has proven to be extremely successful and Biblical as well. The early apostles used this method quite often. So next week we will be discussing this method in detail. It has the potential of expanding church membership tremendously.

The Great Commission

In this chapter, we want to take a closer look at the great commission. We want to answer typical questions like the following: What is the great commission? What does it entail? What did Jesus Christ mean when He gave the church the instruction to go out to preach the gospel of Christ? What strategies should the church follow to carry out this instruction? Is the church on the right path in this regard? How are other churches fulfilling the great commission? How successful are other churches' strategies in this regard? Can I implement these strategies in our congregation? What strategies should be changed? What causes us to fail in this regard?

To answer this last question, I think false doctrines are to blame. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, false doctrines or doctrines of devils are created for a purpose. It causes havoc in the lives of people and the church. It has devastating effects on people. It destroys people's lives. This is why the great commission is not carried out as we are supposed to. Ignorance hurts the body of Christ tremendously.

In the light of recent changes all around us in the world, let us as church leaders consider the possibility of making changes in our congregations and denominations to support our members. Because of increasing challenges in the lives of people, things like pestilences and crime and financial challenges and social challenges, and who knows what else people will have to face in the future, Christians are struggling with many issues and challenges in their lives. We as church leaders need to help the members in our congregations to cope with such challenges. To do that we need to make sure that our doctrines, programs, and support systems can do just that.

The world does not have borders anymore. Because of technology and cheaper travel and more reasons to travel and many other factors, things like pestilences and other hidden dangers are going to become increasingly more difficult to be controlled or prevented. This is going to have an impact on the whole world,

including the church. Churches need to adapt and they need to prepare to deal with all these challenges. Churches that do not keep up with the times are going to become irrelevant at such a pace that they will rapidly disappear right in front of our eyes. Pastors and church leaders will have to explore ways and means to stay relevant. This is what this course is all about.

Let us start this chapter by briefly discussing what God commanded us to do when it comes to fulfilling the great commission. Please take note that we are going to discuss different steps that can be followed by any denomination or church leaders in this regard. These steps are excellent and it works very well. It puts the focus on the right actions and the right methods and it addresses the needs of people. In light of the ever-increasing challenges that people are facing right now, my recommendation is that church leaders should not be too skeptical about some of the suggestions. It is up to you to consider these suggestions but do not forget to consider the positive impact that these suggestions might have on the members of your congregation.

So to start this chapter appropriately, we need to look at what Jesus Christ taught his disciples in this regard. He has taught them how to fulfill the great commission. You will notice that not only Jesus himself but all the disciples and all the apostles and all the other Christians in the Bible, were all focused on doing this very thing. They were all focused on this and they all did the same thing and they were all very successful doing this. Before we discuss the steps, let's lay a bit of a foundation by explaining what the great commission entails:

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Matthew 28: 18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 4:19

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Mark 16:17-18

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

These Scriptures tell us what God wants us to do. He wants us to go out to preach the gospel of Christ and to deliver people by healing them and casting out demons and to make disciples. This is the core function of the church. This is what we should do. This is what Jesus did, this is what the disciples and the apostles did and this is what all believers in the New Testament did. Nobody was involved in any other activities.

Even the institutional church agrees and admits that the church is not what is going on between those four walls on a Sunday. They agree that the church should be in the streets or wherever we find people. In the marketplace or at the movies or in a park or wherever we find people. The church should be constantly looking for unsaved people, preach the gospel of Christ to them, convert them to Christianity, teach them the ways and will of God. Teach them the word of God, and help them to do the same. This should be our focus.

If every pastor and all church leaders focus on the basics of the gospel of Christ, we can get Christians to focus on the great commission again like it was in New Testament times.

We should equip new converts to start doing the same immediately. They do not have to be mature Christians. They should be taught to be obedient Christians right from the start. They can play a big part in the great commission immediately. The problem is that false doctrines stand in the way. False doctrines hinder the great commission.

If they know and understand the basic principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they can immediately be a useful instrument in the hands of God and of course, they can be a great help to the five-fold ministry. As soon as they know what the pure and true gospel of Christ entails, they will immediately be able to start with the great commission. It is basic stuff. Teach them the basics, and show them how to go out into the streets.

This is the best time to get Christians on the right track in regards to this. New converts are eager and ready and willing and excited about Christ and their faith. This condition will wear off if we don't exploit it right away. It does not hurt them at all. It actually benefits them a whole lot. You will do every new convert a wonderful favor if you get them on the right track immediately. This will be the best time in their lives for this and it will have an everlasting effect on them. They will thank you for this.

Teach all new converts the basic principles of the gospel. Make sure that they understand all these aspects. The aspects that must be included will be discussed in detail. It is very important that all these aspects are included and thoroughly understood.

To have a meaningful discussion about the steps, I need to lay a bit of a foundation. In the beginning, God created the universe, including the earth and the human race. He created us in his image. Unfortunately, sin came into this world and the human race lost its glory and those characteristics that made us like God, resulting in all sorts of bad things coming into our lives. So sin came into the world followed by the results of sin. Death, sicknesses, diseases and calamities and toil and hardships and all sorts of undesirable things and situations became a reality in our lives. We lost quite a lot on that day. Adam and Eve sinned but if

anyone on this earth were in their shoes, the same would have happened. This is what the Bible says about it:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:10-18

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Romans 3:23-25

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

What we see in these Scriptures is that we all have sinned before God. None of us is good. We all sinned and as a result of that, the human race faced the wrath of God. We faced eternal judgment.

Fortunately for us, God had a plan. His plan was not only to save us from judgment but also to restore us completely. He loved humanity so much, He could not allow us to be lost and destroyed forever.

So He gave his Son Jesus Christ, not only to pay the penalty of sin, by taking the chastisement and the punishment that was supposed to be on us. When you read the whole chapter of Isaiah 53 you will understand what Jesus did. He took everything on him so that we can go free.

Isaiah 53

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his

seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In this Scripture, it is clear that Jesus brought complete reconciliation between God and us. It is also clear that healing is part of the reconciliation. This means that God did not only let us go free, He also completely restored us but there is a condition. He removed sin but He also removed the results of sin. We receive it all through faith. It only comes by believing. Everything comes through faith by believing every word and by living by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.

So for the salvation of our souls, we need to believe the word of God, that proceeded out of his mouth, that deals with salvation and for restoration, we need to believe the word of God, that proceeded out of his mouth, that deals with restoration.

Let us look at a few Scriptures that deal with salvation:

Luke 19:10

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

1 Peter 1:8-9

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Acts 16:31

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

2 Timothy 1:9

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

When we look at these Scriptures, and there are hundreds more, we can see that by believing the word of God we are saved. And that it comes by grace. Yes of course we do need to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior but it all comes just because we believed the word of God.

Now let us look at a few Scriptures that deal with restoration:

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Jeremiah 30:17

For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord...

1 John 5:4

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Acts 3:19

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

James 5:16

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Psalms 103:1-5

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Luke 4:18

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and

recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Faith makes our salvation a reality and faith makes our restoration a reality. It is so true and so clear that God wants us to live victorious and blessed and full lives.

3 John 1:2

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

After the fall of humanity, God immediately “made plans” to save us and to restore us and to make sure that it is well with our souls. He knew what was going to happen even before the creation of the universe. His plans were aimed at benefiting us and to make us prosper. He made sure that evil does not destroy us and He removed the consequences of sin from us.

That is why Jesus came. John said that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world. His blood did not just cover the sins of people, it took it away. In him is no sin and we are in him. That is why John said in his letters that the regenerated spirit of man can't sin. The moment we are born again, our spirits are born again. John said that the spirit of man cannot sin because we are born of the Spirit of God, to be more specific, and because we keep our eyes on Jesus and by doing so, we keep ourselves pure, just as pure as Jesus himself, by the way.

This is also the way that God dealt with sicknesses and diseases and calamities when it comes to the penalty of sin. He took it away so that we do not have to be sick and so that we do not have to suffer.

Isaiah 53 says that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Remember that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about Jesus many years before Jesus came. It was pointing to the future. That is why it said that by his stripes you are healed. In 1 Peter 2:24 Peter said that *Jesus bared our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*. Peter understood that our sins were taken away and he understood that we were healed two thousand years ago on that cross. Both are in the past. Jesus saved us two thousand years ago by taking our sins away. The moment that He took our sins on him, that moment it left all people who were alive at that time and it is true for everybody, even people who are living today.

According to the custom back in the time of the Roman Empire, Jesus probably received thirty-nine lashes with a whip before He was crucified and that is when He took the penalty of sin away in regards to sicknesses and diseases. By his stripes, we were healed. That is when He took sicknesses, diseases, and calamities away from us. He does not heal anymore, He healed us two thousand years ago on that cross. As soon as Christians understand this it opens a whole lot of doors for them.

This is what all church leaders must pay attention to. If your church or denomination does not give people hope in the sense that you are making them aware of the availability of complete redemption and restoration, then you do not give them hope for the future. If the church cannot support its members in this regard, you are failing and you are not relevant anymore. The gospel of Christ is always relevant. There is always hope.

Christians who know that there is hope are better equipped to go out to fulfill the great commission. They have a message of hope. They have the full gospel of Christ at their disposal. This is why they can go out to fulfill the great commission with boldness and confidence. Do the members of your congregation have this confidence and boldness and the gospel of hope to their disposal? I know of a denomination that did not have this and the leaders of

that denomination decided to make it available to their members. They have made the necessary changes and they have been reaping the benefits for years.

So how are people supposed to fulfill the great commission? Even if they know the gospel of hope, they will not be able to go out on their own yet. They will have to be accompanied by a few seniors but they will be ready, excited, and willing to step out in faith. The question is, how do we go out? What do we do when we go out?

What did Jesus Christ teach on this subject? One of the most profound revelations to me was to discover that Jesus Christ and the apostles always used new converts to do the work. These converts were equipped as they carried out the work of the ministry. They were not equipped through extensive training, Bible courses or Bible school, or anything of the sort. In the book of Luke, we read that Jesus sent out his twelve disciples and later the seventy to go preach the gospel all over Judea. Please take note according to Luke 10:1-24, that the disciples went out two-two.

Nowadays there is this belief that we should first and foremost invest some material resources in the area or in the community that we want to evangelize. Please note that in Luke 10 Jesus told the disciples not to take purses with them or anything else for that matter. Yes at a later stage Jesus told them that they may take purses with them but that was only for personal use. The church in New Testament times did not invest material resources in the area that they evangelized.

Also, note in verse two that the seventy had to pray for laborers to assist them to gather in the harvest. Just picture it in your mind; two people on their way to a small town to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. On their way, they pray to God to help them and to send laborers into the harvest. Apart from others, these laborers were not only the two disciples but also the new converts that will hear the call of God and who will make themselves available to work in the fields to bring in the harvest with the disciples. These new converts will, without any delay, be taught by the two disciples

on basic Christian doctrines and principles to prepare them for the in-gathering of souls.

These basic principles will immediately enable these new converts to do the work of the ministry almost from day one. What were the basic doctrines or principles the new converts were taught? Let me summarize these principles:

The first principle is Salvation. Teach them the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His crucifixion for our sins, His death and burial, repentance and faith in Christ, His restorative work, healing, and deliverance.

When you go back to a house that was visited during an outreach, the first thing to do is to affirm what happened to them when they asked Jesus into their heart. Share with them John 1:12-13:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

Make sure that they understand that Jesus is in their heart and that their sins are forgiven. Also have them read from John 3:1-6 about Nicodemus and being born again. Explain to them after they read these verses aloud to you, that they are now born again.

The second principle is water baptism. Explain to them what happens when they follow Jesus Christ. Explain the importance of getting baptized immediately.

Explain everything about water baptism, how they associate with the death and the resurrection of Jesus, and that it is the cut-off point from their old life according to Romans 6. Go through bible study material on water baptism before the visit to refresh your own knowledge.

Then make arrangements with them to be baptized, either in a friend of theirs’ pool or Jacuzzi, a big bathtub, a river, lake, or the swimming pool at a local hotel or, they can be baptized at the local church. Encourage them to invite their family and friends to

celebrate this awesome act of obedience with them. This is important. The family and friends can be part of the newly planted house church or they can be incorporated with the family into the local church.

The third principle is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Explain to them the purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit and with fire and the ministry of the laying on of hands to deliver people who are in bondage. We have found new believers to be very open, so explain to them that Jesus has saved them and that He wants to give them His Holy Spirit to empower them to walk in this new way. Think of when you've made New Year's resolutions. It did not last very long, because they did not have the power to change. This is why Jesus wants to baptize them with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will fill them and empower them. Lay hands on them and pray for them, and they will start speaking in tongues. Explain to them that tongues are a new way to communicate with God.

The fourth principle is the importance of prayer. Explain to them the importance of the personal relationship that every believer is supposed to have with Christ and the Father through prayer.

Share a few basic things about prayer. Share with them that prayer is simply talking with Jesus and telling Him what is in your heart. Encourage them to thank Jesus for every good thing that comes their way.

The fifth principle is to explain to them the importance of the word of God. Explain to them the amazing power of the word of God. Explain to them that the word of God is spirit and life and that it has the built-in ability to produce faith automatically.

Make sure they have a KJV or a Bible translated from the original and authentic "Textus Receptus" translation of the Bible. If not, give them one. Explain to them how to read and study the Word of God.

Have them open their Bible and start reading from Mark 1:1. Demonstrate the method as you go along. Reaffirm salvation, baptism, and baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is all there in Mark 1.

So here you are with last week's new converts, in the house of this week's new converts, teaching them the word and the will and the ways of God. Teach them the basics just like the apostles did. In Biblical times, the rest was imparted into their spirits by the Holy Spirit whilst they were advancing the kingdom of God along with the five-fold ministry. The new converts were taught within a few weeks as they took part in the process of church planting. They were equipped while doing the work of the ministry. This was the secret then and it still is today.

The only experienced workers were the two apostles or disciples that planted the church.

The initial focus

What was the initial focus of the two disciples when they approached the city or marketplace or the places they were visiting? This is a keyword in church planting. The answer is in Luke 10:6 where we read that they had to find a man of peace:

And if the son of peace be there...

Why a man of peace? What is a man of peace? A man of peace is a person who is willing to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a person who is willing to receive the disciples of Christ in his house. This house will be the "base" of the particular evangelical outreach and church planting process. This man of peace is not saved. It is a person who is willing to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Firstly this man will be led to Christ. Then his family staying with him will be led to Christ. Then his friends and family in the area will be led to Christ.

The disciples will waste no time in leading them to Christ, baptizing them in water, and laying hands on them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. After this, the disciples will, if necessary, cast demons out of these people and lay hands on the sick. This is the full gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:2, Matthew 6:12-13, Mark 16:17-18, Matthew 10:18, Acts 10:38, and Matthew 10:1 all emphasize that what I described here is what the apostles were supposed to do when they plant a new church.

This is the basic gospel of Jesus Christ: Preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, heal the sick and cast out demons. Of course, some of these things will be difficult when you initially embark on this mission. We all have to start somewhere and we do what we can. We do not allow the difficult stuff to prevent us from doing the easier stuff. We can find a man of peace and we can give him and his family a lot of hope and deliverance, although some of us might still be struggling to give them complete deliverance.

This man of peace is like Cornelius of Acts who accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. Cornelius and his whole family converted to Christianity after Peter visited them in his house. They were all baptized in water and they were all baptized in the Holy Spirit immediately. They were filled with the Holy Spirit even before they were baptized in water. We never deserve to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are filled or baptized so that the Holy Spirit can help us develop spiritually.

There is another very important comparison or similarity between Cornelius and his family's conversion and the instructions that Jesus gave the seventy. Cornelius did not go to Peter. He did not go to the man of God. The man of God went to him. That is how the Holy Spirit orchestrated Cornelius and his family's conversion.

Jesus sent the seventy to the cities. They were to look for a man of peace and they had to go to his house once they found him. The church has this all wrong. We invite people to church. We invite people to our home. So nowadays we invite people to become part of us. Nowadays the five-fold ministry invites people instead of going to people. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the fig tree, what were his words to him? Luke 19:5, *Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down for today I must abide at thy house.* This is a very important key. Jesus Christ invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. This is exactly what we must do. We must invite ourselves to the man of peace's house. We need to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people.

What is the work of the ministry?

Now it is very important to understand that what I described above is the work of the ministry. This work takes place in houses and in the marketplace and the streets. It does not take place in a church building. Secondly, it is very important to understand that everybody is involved in this. This is the core function of every believer and every worker in the body of Christ. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what the apostles did. This is what the evangelists did. This is what the teachers did. This is what the pastors did and this is what the prophets did. They were all involved in the work of the ministry mostly in houses, in the marketplace, or in the streets.

The five-fold ministry all did the same thing. Although their focus differed they all worked together to equip the saints (laborers) for their work of the ministry. The laborers were equipped by the five fold ministry as they ministered. Even the greatest apostle of them all, Paul of Tarsus, went from house to house and street to street to advance the Kingdom of God. Acts 20:18-20 is proof that Paul preached the gospel in public places and in every house.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house

Note the words “from house to house” in this scripture. Paul himself preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and he planted churches in houses all over Asia.

This puts the five fold ministry back on the ground level. The five fold ministry should not be busy with administrative duties. They should not be busy managing people. They should all be busy with

the core function of ministry. The work of the ministry or the great commission. They should be busy doing what every believer is supposed to do. That is visiting people in their houses, leading them to Christ, baptizing them in water, laying hands on them so that they may receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They should deliver them from diseases by the laying on of hands, they should cast out demons and lastly, they should teach them what Christ taught them. In the process, they are planting New-Testament based churches in houses. In the process, they are building and advancing the kingdom of God.

Now take note that all these actions may be carried out and must be carried out by all believers. In the institutional church, the work of the ministry is a function or a job description of the five-fold ministry. God's instruction was however given to all believers to carry out this work. The five-fold ministry in the institutional church should teach all believers and all new converts to do the work of the ministry.

I do understand that a church and the community should pursue holiness as a congregation and as the church of Christ. We should focus on helping each other to grow and to mature in Christ. We should however not forget about bringing in the harvest. Our focus to grow spiritually and to flow in the gifts of the spirit cannot replace a constant focus on bringing in the harvest. Maybe the whole point is to learn to bring in the harvest so that we can mature and grow spiritually. We should not learn until we can bring in the harvest. No, we bring in the harvest so that we can grow and mature in a spiritual sense. The church has this wrong. The work of the ministry equips us and makes us grow. Theoretical knowledge cannot equip us or make us grow so that we can go out and bring in the harvest. It is the wrong way round.

Many church planters focus on gathering people from the ranks of the institutional church. This is not the right decision. We need to plant a church and expand a church with new converts. Maybe true spiritual growth and true holiness are founded on the basics of the gospel. If the basics are the foundation that we build upon, maybe that causes real growth and in the process the kingdom of

God is advanced. I know that many people prefer growth and development in terms of quality and not quantity, but just maybe this model that Jesus taught his disciples does accomplish spiritual growth in terms of quantity and quality.

In Luke 10:2 we read that we must pray that God sends laborers into the harvest. The Greek word for “send forth” in this scripture means to “eject” or to “throw” or to “cast” or to “thrust”. To effectively plant churches and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, laborers need to be “thrown” into the harvest. The laborers must all report for duty so that God can “cast” them into the harvest. This implies that these people must be equipped for the work of the ministry and then taken into the field to harvest the fruit.

The “laborers” are those that are equipped by the five fold ministry. This is exactly what Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us. It suggests that the five-fold ministry is there to equip the saints (laborers) for their work of the ministry. It implies that there are more laborers than five fold ministry members. It implies that the five-fold ministry needs the laborers to bring in the harvest. That is why Jesus Christ told the seventy (five-fold ministry) to pray for laborers.

The five-fold ministry needs the laborers to gather the harvest. They must bring in the harvest. That is why the five fold ministry must equip them for this work. God cast, eject, or throw these laborers into the harvest. He does it through proper, effective, and progressive church planting. There is this “structure” that needs to be put in place to evangelize the community. He cannot do this through a bunch of believers who sit on a church pew. He cannot do it through a house church of believers who are focused on perfecting themselves in terms of their personal spiritual growth. He does it through a handful of believers who are actively gathering in the harvest while teaching others how to mature in Christ.

The Luke 10 method can be followed by all denominations. The house church movement follows this method. They usually plant a house church right there in the house of the man that they found in

the street. Other denominations follow this method and they incorporate the man with his whole family in the local church. The important thing is that the new converts, the man and his family must immediately be drawn in to do the work of the ministry. They are to be taken out by two seniors to reach out to find a man somewhere in the street or market place so that the whole process can be repeated. This is how any denomination and any church can grow and expand. This is the secret of church growth.

This is the best method of church planting and expansion in the body of Christ. It is the best method because it is Biblical. This is how the great commission should be carried out. This is the work of the ministry. I hope that this chapter shed some light on this very important subject.

Consider Much Needed Change

The church is facing challenging issues right now. I think most people would agree that these issues are more challenging than usual and that it might become the new norm. The world is changing rapidly and new challenges pop up everywhere daily. If we don't address these issues the church will suffer greatly. All denominations will suffer. They will suffer financially. They will lose members, and they will lose relevance in an ever-changing world.

People change and the world changes constantly. People experience new and difficult circumstances and challenges every day. Churches and church members will suffer more and more because of that if these things are not dealt with effectively or not addressed at all.

People might say that God is always relevant and that He never changes. The word of God is always relevant and it never changes. This is true. God and his word never change but that does not mean that the church should not change. The church needs to be able to adapt when the world changes. Technology changes and the way that we protect ourselves against all sorts of changes may need to change. The way how we interact with people may have to change. The way how church leaders support the members of their congregations may have to change.

During the past few weeks, I have discussed some of these issues in detail. The first issue was the mediocre way that the church dealt with COVID-19. The church was not ready for it. COVID-19 exposed the church. It was clear that faith lacked in the lives of not only church members but even the five-fold ministry. Many Christians and many church leaders have died already because of COVID-19. This is not supposed to happen.

The second issue that I discussed was the fact that false doctrines hurt the church and its members tremendously. People leave churches and congregations and denominations because of false doctrines. Church leaders need to take a hard look at what they teach and preach. In that discussion, we concluded that church doctrines should be re-evaluated.

Some denominations like the Church of God and the Southern Baptist Convention realized that they cannot carry on the path that they embarked upon so many years ago. Both these denominations decided to change their policies and doctrines. First, after many years, the Church of God decided to become a Pentecostal church. Yes, your ears are not deceiving you. This really happened. The church leaders back then had a hard look into what was going on around them and they decided that they need a major change to stay relevant and in pace with the Holy Spirit and with God. They decided to embrace Pentecostalism and they never looked back. I do not say that your denomination must do the same. I am saying that church leaders need to take a fresh look at their churches, the doctrines that they are teaching, and the challenges that they are facing.

This is what the Church of God did and it proved to be a very fruitful decision. This denomination began on August 19, 1886, in Monroe County, Tennessee, near the North Carolina border. Ten years after the organizational meeting, a revival at the Shearer Schoolhouse in nearby Camp Creek, North Carolina, introduced the doctrine of sanctification to the community. This was a new doctrine that was embraced by the church leaders. They did make the necessary changes. Twelve years later, in 1908, the Church of God accepted Pentecostalism under A. J. Tomlinson. So this was a church that made significant changes since it began. For over 125 years the Church of God has been a distinctive movement focused upon communicating the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Presently, the Church of God has a world-wide membership of over 7 million with a presence in nearly 180 countries.

After decade-long resistance, the Southern Baptist Convention now admits missionary candidates who speak in tongues, a practice associated with Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The new policy was approved by the denomination's International Mission Board just recently, in 2019.

Speaking in tongues is an ancient Christian practice recorded in the New Testament in which people pray in a language they do not know, understand, or control. The practice died out until

Pentecostalism emerged around the turn of the 20th century. In Pentecostal churches, it is considered one of many “gifts” of the Spirit, including healing and the ability to prophesy.

Allowing Southern Baptist missionaries to speak in tongues, or have what some people call a “private prayer language,” speaks to the growing strength of Pentecostal churches in Africa, Asia, and South America, where Southern Baptists are competing for converts and where energized new Christians are enthusiastically embracing the practice.

According to Bill Leonard, professor of church history at Wake Forest Divinity School, in many parts of the world, these charismatic experiences are normative. Religious groups that oppose them get left behind evangelistically.

Why did these denominations make these major changes? I think that they were keeping up with the times and they were addressing the challenges that they were facing. The successes that they achieved speak for themselves. Church leaders should ask themselves this question: Is it such a bad idea to embrace Pentecostalism or at least tolerate Pentecostalism? You may ask why am I even discussing this aspect? Well, the answer makes a lot of sense. Since the 1960s, Pentecostalism has increasingly gained acceptance from other Christian traditions, and Pentecostal beliefs concerning Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts have been embraced by non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches through the Charismatic Movement. Together, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity numbers over 500 million adherents.

Pentecostals are one of the fastest-growing religious groups in the world. While it’s hard to estimate just how many Pentecostals are in the world, a Pew Research Center study found that of the roughly two billion Christians in the world, about a quarter of that identifies as Pentecostal. Pentecostalism has long been considered one of the fastest and largest growing forms of Christianity.

Apart from this, people feel that Pentecostalism gives them hope. In this world, with all its challenges this gives them something that they can cling onto. The gifts of The Spirit is the hope that I am referring to. According to Pentecostalism, God still speaks to his

children, He still heals his children, He still delivers his children. The Pentecostal message is a message of a living God that wants to be part of his children's lives. Other denominations will say that they have the same message but without the gifts of the Holy Spirit, people know or at least feel that this is just talking and not a reality. Many church leaders say that they have the love of God as if they do not need the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To them, love is enough. However, the undeniable reality is that love cannot replace God. Nothing can replace the Holy Spirit. The gifts are the Holy Spirit in action. Churches need to allow the Holy Spirit to move in their midst. Those who do will be blessed because the Holy Spirit attracts people to such churches. Pentecostalism is becoming more popular by the day. This is why Pentecostalism grew so much and still growing.

It could be very beneficial for church leaders and denominations to consider being more open to Pentecostalism. There is a reason why it grew so much since the 1960s. It especially appeals to younger generations and this is something that should not be ignored.

Another aspect that I discussed recently is the possibility of implementing some of the methods that the house church movement embraced, especially those methods that deal with evangelism. I mentioned that the Luke 10 method of evangelizing and expanding churches and planting churches is the closest to what Jesus instructed us to do. It is the great commission in its purest form. I think although the house church movement is struggling with other issues, this method is one of their best practices. By the way, do not be mistaken, many house churches do not follow this method. Many are basically on the same page as many other denominations and that is a pity.

The Luke 10 method focus on finding a man of peace, somewhere in the marketplace or a street or a park or in a house or anywhere where we find people. Once they have found the man of peace, they visit him and his family in his house and they preach the gospel of Christ to them. They usually lead him to Christ first, then his family and then his friends and extended family. The Luke 10 method means that the church goes to the people and after the

initial outreach is completed, they incorporate these people into the local church or they plant a house church in the house of the man of peace. This method was explained in detail in a previous chapter.

The house church movement makes use of this method and it has proven to be the best method that any church can utilize during evangelical outreaches, church planting, and church expansion efforts. The house church movement initially scared the institutional church. Church leaders were initially very concerned that this movement might stir a lot of controversies and cause a lot of instability within the church. This did not happen. The institutional church is still safe and sound and still functioning as it always did. There is no need to be concerned. My opinion is that the house church movement should be treated as just another Christian denomination and therefore part of the body of Christ. These people are our brothers and just doing the best they can. Being part of the Christian church and the body of Christ, they are facing the same challenges that we all do. They are experiencing their own challenges and they are struggling too. We are all in the same boat.

So my opinion is that the initial scare has caused church leaders to distance themselves from house churches entirely. I think this is a mistake. You do not have to become part of the house church movement but it will not harm anyone at all by looking at some of their methods. I can see a lot of benefits in some of the things that they do. Church leaders should at least look at some of those things. It might just be what they need to bring the change that they need in terms of growth, expansion, and spiritual development. The strategy that some of them follow when it comes to evangelism is one aspect of the house church movement that we cannot ignore. It will be a grave mistake if we do.

As I said, the initial focus is to find a man of peace. This is what Luke 10 tells us to do. This is what the disciples did and what the seventy did and all Christians in the New Testament did when they went out to carry out the great commission. In Luke 10:6 we read

that they had to find a man of peace. Luke 10:6 says, *And if the son of peace be there...*

Now why a man of peace, you may ask? What is a man of peace? Well, a man of peace is a person who is willing to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a person who is willing to receive the disciples of Christ in his house. This house will be the “base” of the particular evangelical outreach and church planting process. This man of peace is not saved. But it is a person who is willing to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Firstly this man will be led to Christ. Then his family staying with him will be led to Christ. Then his friends and family in the area will be led to Christ.

The disciples wasted no time in leading them to Christ, baptizing them in water, and laying hands on them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. After this the disciples did, when necessary, cast demons out of these people and lay hands on the sick. This is the full gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:2, Matthew 6:12-13, Mark 16:17-18, Matthew 10:18, Acts 10:38, and Matthew 10:1 all emphasize that what I described here is what the apostles were supposed to do and also exactly what they did when they planted a new church and expanding the church.

Of course, you do not have to do everything that I described. You do what you can and you do what you have faith for, but, do not prevent anything that I described from happening. Allow it all. This is basically what the Church of God did and what the Southern Baptist Convention did. The Church of God embraced it and the Southern Baptist Convention allows it. Yes, there is a difference but both are reaping the benefits for taking these decisions. The Church of God benefited greatly and the Southern Baptists, who embarked on this path fairly recently, will reap the fruits of this decision in the years to come.

The bottom line is, church leaders need to be willing to change. More and more challenges and difficulties in the lives of people and church leaders demand changes like this. We cannot go on as we have been for the past fifty years. In case you haven't realized it yet, the church is not in a good spiritual condition. We are actually

in a bad state. Most of us miss the mark completely. We are far from what God wants us to be. COVID-19 exposed us. We are weak and we failed to develop our congregations as we should have. Church members are not mature. We have failed to build up faith in the hearts of the members of our congregations. We have failed to promote spiritual development in the lives of our members. They are struggling with things and challenges that should not have been a problem. We are struggling as church leaders and we are causing our congregations to suffer. This needs to change. We need to change.

Let us carry on describing the Luke 10 method: What did Jesus Christ teach on this subject? One of the most profound revelations to me was to discover that the apostles always used new converts to do the work. These new converts were equipped as they carried out the work of the ministry. They were not equipped through extensive training, Bible courses or Bible school, or anything of the sort.

In the book of Luke, we read that Jesus sent out his twelve disciples and later the seventy to go preach the gospel of Christ all over Judea. Please take note that according to Luke 10:1-24, the disciples went out two-two. So we need to do the same. We sent out mature Christians to look for a man of peace. They do not have to be full-time ministers. As long as they are fairly mature. As long as they know the basic principles of the gospel of Christ. As long as they are bold and willing. As long as they are not ashamed to boldly declare the gospel of Christ, these Christians are ready to go.

Just like the disciples or the seventy had to pray for laborers to assist them to gather in the harvest, so these mature Christians must do the same. Just picture it in your mind; two people on their way to a small town or to the marketplace to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. On their way, they pray to God to help them and to send laborers into the harvest. They will have the laborers that they need very soon. The new converts that they are about to preach to will be the laborers that they are praying for. They will find a man of peace. They will lead him to Christ. They will lead his

family and friends to Christ and all these people will be part of the outreach teams very soon after they led them to Christ. Within a week or two.

These new converts will hear the call of God and they will make themselves available to work in the fields to bring in the harvest with the disciples or the mature Christians. These new converts will, without any delay, be taught by the team (disciples/mature Christians) on basic Christian doctrines and principles to prepare them for the in-gathering of souls. They do it by them being physically present during this initial outreach, and they do it by accompanying the mature Christians with the next outreach. So the equipping process mainly takes place as practical exercises, whilst the gospel of Christ is preached to people and people are being led to Christ, and people are being delivered and baptized and taught.

These basic principles will immediately enable these new converts to do the work of the ministry almost from day one. They will be drawn into the work of the ministry immediately and this is why this method is so successful.

This is the best time in the life of every believer to be drawn into ministry. Just after they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior is surely the best time to get Christians on the right track in regards to this. New converts are eager and ready and willing and excited about Jesus Christ and their faith. This condition will wear off if we don't exploit it right away. It does not hurt them at all. It benefits them a whole lot. You will do every new convert a wonderful favor if you involve them immediately. This will be the best time in their lives for this and it will have an everlasting effect on them. They will thank you for this.

This is the secret of successful evangelism: Teach all new converts the basic principles of the gospel. Make sure that they understand all these aspects and start using them immediately.

When you go back to a house that was visited during an outreach, the first thing to do is to affirm what happened to them when they asked Jesus into their heart a few days before. It is important that you bring the new converts of the previous outreach with you so

that they can be equipped to do the same. Make sure that they know and understand the basic principles of salvation and to be a disciple of Christ. They must know what salvation is all about and how it impacts people's lives. They must know what the water baptism is all about and why we need to be baptized immediately. They must know what the baptism in the Holy Spirit is all about and why we need to be baptized in the Spirit immediately. They need to know how important prayer is in the lives of believers and how we should pray. They need to know that prayer is simply talking with Jesus and telling Him what is in your heart. They need to know the importance of the word of God. They need to know the amazing power of the word of God.

Make sure they have a KJV or a Bible translated from the original and authentic "Textus Receptus" translation of the Bible. If not, give them one. Explain to them how to read and study the Word of God.

So here you are with last week's or last month's new converts, in the house of this week's new converts, teaching them the word and the will and the ways of God. Of course, you must make use of as many new converts as you can. As soon as possible. New Converts learn by observing mature Christians. This is how they are equipped for ministry. This is the Biblical way of equipping people. To do this you have to use quite a few groups of mature Christians. Church leaders need to send quite a few teams out on outreaches daily. They always go out two-two and remember that they can only be accompanied by a few new converts. Most of the time, such outreaches take place in houses, and houses cannot accommodate many people.

Teach them the basics just like the apostles did. In Biblical times, the rest was imparted into their spirits by the Holy Spirit whilst they were advancing the kingdom of God along with the five-fold ministry. The new converts were taught within a few weeks as they took part in the process of church planting. They were equipped while doing the work of the ministry. This was the secret then and it still is today.

All churches and denominations will be able to embark on this strategy. Although there are some differences, not that much needs to change to adopt this method. The house church movement usually plants a church right there in the man of peace's house. The denominational church goes through the whole process of involving the man of peace's family and friends and then when this process is completed, they incorporate this man, his family, and his friends into the local church. However, it is of the utmost importance that the new converts must be part of evangelical outreaches as soon as possible.

The best way to accomplish this is to give them theoretical training on the basic aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ within a week. It is important that they understand the basic gospel of Christ. After this initial theoretical training, they must be part of an outreach team as soon as possible to follow this up with practical training. One way to ensure that they are equipped with the correct and all the necessary information about the gospel of Jesus Christ is to compile a training manual that contains everything that they need to know. Such a manual will be available on my website in due time. See my post about the great commission that I mentioned earlier. It gives you insight into which aspects they need to be familiar with.

This manual needs to include the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only the aspects that deal with salvation but also those aspects that deal with restoration. The part about restoration is what gives people hope. This is why Pentecostalism is so popular and why Pentecostal denominations grow so much. It is time that all denominations take a hard look at these aspects and make the necessary changes.

When the pastor and the leadership of a congregation push their fears out of the way, this can be achieved. It only takes a small group of people, who decided that they are going to trust God, and to be obedient to God, to take the first step, and to lay the foundation for a successful evangelism plan. The right attitude and trusting God to see them through, usually pave the way to achieve just that.

Exactly what are the conditions that the leadership of such congregations will have to conform to?

They will have to be able to be a little bit more lenient and open and tolerant. They will have to allow things that they did not allow in the past. As soon as church leaders realize that those things do not hurt the body of Christ, the more of them will be willing to at least tolerate those things or some of it.

Although the services on Sundays carry on, as usual, church leaders and mature Christians will have to make time for evangelistic outreaches during the week. Do not let the same people go out every time. Rotate the mature Christians and the new converts so that everyone gets a chance to go out reasonably often and that everyone gets enough rest as well.

Of course, at first, this will not be easy for both the leadership and the members of the church but this can be achieved if everybody is willing to stick to it and stay committed to the task.

For the leadership, there will be two challenges: To give up a little bit of control and to allow things that they previously opposed. They will also have to play a part in the development and the teaching of the congregation. This is not a big deal because, as I already mentioned, it entails just basic training from a manual and it can be done by mature Christians as well.

The leadership will have to abstain from panicking when something goes wrong. Yes, something might go wrong but this is when the leadership and the pastor of the congregation will have to stand strong and trust God to see them through.

What may go wrong? Some church members may be dissatisfied because of the things that were previously not allowed now to be part of their new experiences. My advice to church leaders is to tell such people that we sometimes do need to tolerate certain things in life, especially if it does not hurt us. We may prefer not to have these things but it surely does not hurt anyone to allow people to do things that they feel they do not have a problem with. Appeal to them to be more tolerable in this regard.

Church leaders might experience a situation where some people in the congregation are more open to certain things and others not. This is not a problem. As long as everybody understands and accepts that this is acceptable. Personal preferences within a group of people can be accommodated by everybody in harmony. This is already the case in most denominations right across the world. I have seen that many Christians believe different doctrines and live out their faith differently although they are serving God in the same congregation.

Many church leaders know this. They know that some members in their congregations do not believe everything that they teach and they have made peace with that. Church leaders teach whatever they believe to be true and by doing so, they have done their job. This is the right thing to do. It is not up to them to decide what church members should believe. They cannot force people to believe whatever they teach. That would be wrong. But, if they teach what they sincerely believe to be the true and authentic word of God then they have done their job.

Two things that I believe are of the utmost importance in this regard are the following: Denominational constitutions and church leaders may believe what they feel is right and they may teach and preach what they feel is right. However, there are two things that I believe church constitutions and church leaders may not: They cannot force people to believe what they teach and preach and they cannot expel or reject people who do not believe what they teach or preach. There should always be a place in the church and in a denomination or a congregation for people who believe differently. This means that people should accommodate each other and accept each other and tolerate each other. This should be taken into consideration by all denominations and church leaders.

Another thing that might happen when church leaders embark on the Luke 10 strategy is the following: During an outreach, someone may make a mistake or say something inappropriate. This can happen but it is not the end of the world. I have not seen anything in this regard in my life that devastated the lives of people. People are strong and they can deal with such incidents. Nobody is going

to lose his salvation because of this. Nobody is going to get hurt because of this. Things like this happen. The best way to deal with undesired incidents is to address the people involved as soon as possible, give some suggestions and direction and send them out again, immediately.

We should trust God and persist. Nobody does things on purpose to hurt the body of Christ. Undesired incidents, unfortunately, do happen but everything can be dealt with appropriately and successfully. Things like this should not stop us from doing good.

At the end of the day, we will all benefit a lot when this strategy is carried out successfully. The pastor and the church leadership will benefit because they submitted themselves to the will of God and they are introducing the congregation to the Biblical way of carrying out the great commission. This on its own is very satisfying because believe me, this makes you feel good about yourself. Church leaders will be able to observe their congregations growing and developing in Christ Jesus like never before. All aspects of church growth should be guaranteed if this strategy is carried out correctly and successfully. Churches will grow and members will develop spiritually like never before.

This strategy is nothing new. I think many church leaders know about the Luke 10 strategy. The problem is that up to now, church leaders were not yet motivated to embark on something like this. They were not yet convinced to do so or they did not yet consider it.

Now is the time that all denominations work together like never before in this regard. What I mean by this is that we should tolerate each other and consider and embrace the methods usually followed by other denominations that proved to be successful. Now is the time that we should stop being suspicious and jealous. I think that it is already clear that there is no need to be suspicious or jealous. The house church movement is never going to replace the organized church. Nobody is going to lose anything in this regard. There is a place for everyone and there are more resources available to all denominations than we can ever imagine. The harvest is ripe and the harvest is vast and great. Nothing can stop

anyone, no matter who you are or whatever denomination you represent. It is time that we work together. It is time that we function in unity.

We do not have to work together if we do not want to but I know that God will bless us if we do. Even if we do not work together, let us at least accept and tolerate each other. Even if we do not work together, let us acknowledge the work and the efforts of each other although we might do things differently. Even if we do things differently, let's try things out that we observe in other groups. Things that work in one group will probably work in another group as well.

But above all, let us be willing to change and to accept and to tolerate. We might be pleasantly surprised when we realize that those things might not be so bad after all. We might be surprised when we see the change that it might bring in our congregations.

When churches embark on this evangelism strategy, it will be the first time that many of them follow the Biblical method of evangelism. It will be the first time that people will be incorporated into activities that God instructed us to do. It will be the first time that people focus on the things that really matter. Just think of it, how would people experience church life when they witness people getting saved and led to Christ daily? How would they experience church life when they see people being delivered daily. This should become a way of life. Church leaders and mature Christians should report for duty automatically every day for evangelical outreaches.

Just think of all the activities in the community. Day in and day out. Just think of the daily input into people's lives. Almost every day different teams go out into the community to find people who need God. They stop to talk to people. They inquire about their well being. They ask people if they need help. They talk about God and they attempt to find people who are willing to listen to them. They ask them if they may visit their houses to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. People who were not willing to do so a few times before suddenly agrees to be visited at his house.

People are sharing the love of God. The more they focus the more they become focused. They get used to this new lifestyle. It gets

easier and easier. They become very familiar with the ins and outs of the evangelical outreaches. They get better and better and bolder. Their confidence grows. Their faith grows and they succeed more and more to get people saved and delivered and healed. In the meantime, they are equipping more and more people and churches start to grow rapidly. The local church gets very much involved in the community. They have a huge impact on the lives of people in the community. All this because they are reaching out to unsaved people daily. They have feet on the ground. They go out every day except on Sundays. Sundays are a day of rest when they celebrate their faith and their fellowship in Christ, together as a congregation.

This is true Biblical faith-life and community-life and church-life in action. This is the true gospel of Christ.

It will be difficult for many churches and people to start this lifestyle. People are not used to this. People are afraid of the unknown. People do not have confidence in themselves. I think the biggest problem is that nobody ever showed Christians how to carry out the great commission. However, this can suddenly change for the better. When people see somebody carrying out the great commission right in front of their very eyes it will change this. If people become a silent observer but truly part of such evangelic outreaches, it will change them.

People are very good at mimicking other people. This is by far the most successful way of being equipped. This is how I learned most things I know. I watch people do things and then I do it myself. When people know what to do, fear disappears. People usually realize very soon that they can do the same. They just need to be part of such outreaches a few time and they will never be afraid again.

Church leaders need to act. The church needs to act. We all need to stand up and be counted. A lot of things have changed during the past few years and the church needs to change as well. We have entered a new era. Not only the church needs to realize it, but the world also needs to know that something is happening. And I can assure you that it has nothing to do with the end times. It has

everything to do with God wanting to change a lot of things in this world and the church.

Many church leaders have been very reluctant to change in the past. Many felt that the church should cling to tradition to stay relevant. This had devastating effects on the church already. I once saw a list of Christian churches and denominations that do not exist anymore. I could not believe my eyes. It took me quite a while to go through that list. These were churches and denominations that once thrived but since then completely vanished from the face of the earth. Nobody remembers most of them anymore. What a pity that was. Just think of the disappointment and emotional turmoil those people must have experienced.

Unfortunately, this is what happens when church leaders are not willing to adapt to changes. This is what happens when church leaders do not want to be lenient or more tolerant when it comes to the feelings and desires and needs and preferences and views of the members of their congregations.

Nowadays it is common to find that people with different beliefs are serving God in the same congregation. People and church leaders have become more tolerant and lenient toward their members when it comes to doctrines and personal beliefs. Unfortunately, most have not made the necessary changes yet that will benefit the congregation and the lives of their members.

To be tolerable and lenient alone does not bring the necessary change. It does not produce any fruit unless practical changes were implemented. Programs and systems and projects and activities in a denomination or church must reflect the fact that real changes have been made and embraced and that people are not only allowed to act out their beliefs but even encouraged to do so. Church programs should actually accommodate and promote such actions.

Of course, the church should not throw open their doors and allow anything to be acceptable and to be embraced when it is wrong or unacceptable. However, things that one member may not like but which is acceptable to another member should be allowed. People need to accept each other's preferences. People should learn to

accept each other in spite of their differences. One person may be involved in breaking generational curses and another not. Is it right for the pastor to condemn the one and prevent him from doing what he believes is the right thing to do? Isn't it better to allow both to do what they believe is right? One person may pray for the sick and another person may want to lay his hands on the sick when praying for them. The one asks God to heal the sick person and the other person may do what Jesus did by speaking to the sickness and commanding the organ or body part to be healed. Does it really matter if someone does it different than us?

One person may pray in tongues and another not. Why shouldn't it be allowed? It cannot hurt anyone. So even if the pastor or if church leaders prefer the one method, why shouldn't they at least tolerate the other method? By doing that, more people are accommodated in a congregation or denomination and that will help a lot with many challenges that churches have to deal with. That makes a specific congregation more relevant. It is actually already happening in many denominations but it is not yet accepted officially. This hinders church growth and spiritual development. As soon as people know that the church leaders are officially comfortable with certain practices in the church, people will slowly but surely live out their faith like they always wanted to.

This will stop people from leaving churches. I wonder if church leaders realize how many people left their congregations because of them being intolerable toward certain beliefs. I wonder if church leaders realize how many people are out there not part of any church or congregation at all. Millions of people are serving God in their homes. They are serving God at home because they do not feel welcome in any church. That is not what they want to do. They long to be part of the church again. But, because of them knowing that they will not be accommodated or accepted, they do not bother looking for a church anymore. They have learned to accept things as it is. This is a pity. They could have made a big difference in the church. They could have served the church. They could have been of great help in the body of Christ.

We can change this just by letting people know that they are welcome even though they might not believe what we do. People need to know that what they believe and what they want to do will be accepted and allowed. It will not be prevented unless it is really a problem.

This does not change Sunday services. Nothing changes at all on Sundays. On Sundays, we are celebrating Christ Jesus and our faith-walk with God and the Pastor or minister preaches and basically, we do what we always have done. These people have an impact on the congregation during evangelical outreaches. They lay hands on the sick and they heal people. They lay hands on people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. They even cast demons out if they can. Things that were previously not allowed in the congregation. These things bring hope in the lives of people. It confirms that we can be restored by God. It is a message of hope. This will improve evangelical outreaches tremendously.

There is nothing wrong with these things. It won't hurt anybody and it will have wonderful results. These people will have a very positive impact on the congregation. The church will grow. The congregation will expand. It will bring life to the congregation. It will bring hope. This very thing was done in the past and it proofed to be a very good decision with wonderful results.

People and even church leaders are often under the impression that changes like this are impossible. This belief makes it impossible. The reality is that nothing is impossible. Anything and everything can change. Denominations went this far in the past. They did allow things to happen which were previously opposed. They have made the necessary changes and it had wonderful results.

If anything ever needed to be changed, now is the time that the church needs to change. It is time to take stock. It is time to do introspection. It is time to evaluate a lot of things. The church needs to grow. The church needs to excel. The church needs to become victorious. Church members need to grow. The kingdom of God needs to advance. The church needs to change this world.

We can do it but it will take some effort to succeed. Let's rise to the challenge. Let's do it. We can do it and we will succeed if we are committed. We cannot do it halfheartedly though. If we jump into this with our whole hearts, we will be successful and at the end of the day, it will be smooth sailing. We will never look back again. The smallest and most insignificant congregation or denomination can turn everything around again if they take heed of what I said in this chapter. They can completely alter their vision and they can embark on the most successful journey ever thought possible by considering and implementing the suggestions that I have made in this chapter. The important thing is not to fear. We should never fear change. We need to be courageous and we need to trust God.

The Power Of the Laborers

In the previous chapters, we discussed how to identify our focus and purpose as a congregation and as church leaders. We need to determine what we are required to do before we can decide on the strategy that we should follow. We also discussed the Luke 10 method of evangelism which is all about finding a man of peace, making him and his family and friends disciples of Christ whilst we are practically equipping the previous outreach's new converts. We have seen that success is all about the way that the new converts are utilized. We also discussed the need for church leaders to make the necessary changes to enable leaders and denominations and congregations to accommodate as many people as possible, even people who do not necessarily agree with their doctrines and the way that they do church.

This is all about the need for more leniency when it comes to Christian doctrines and practices which were previously not accepted in particular denominations. It already happens in many churches and denominations but it is not yet officially approved, which complicates things and causes a lot of hindrances in the body of Christ. Many ministers know that some of their members believe differently than they teach and they have accepted that. In many denominations already, people who believe differently are all serving God in the same congregation and there is nothing wrong with that. This is a reality. More and more church leaders understand that the more lenient they are the more people they are able to accommodate.

It is definitely not a case of allowing outrageous doctrines and practices. It is allowing people to make choices and then allowing them to live out their faith. We have seen that particular denominations who have initially opposed Pentecostalism have decided to embrace Pentecostalism. We have seen denominations who were not willing to go that far decided to at least accept people within their ranks to practice Pentecostalism. These denominations benefited tremendously by being more lenient and more tolerant in this regard. They took note of the pros and cons

and they convinced their leaders and members to be more lenient and more tolerant with regards to things previously opposed. Pentecostalism does not damage the church and it does offer the laborers the opportunity to preach a gospel of hope and deliverance. We have discussed this aspect in chapter 3 and we did explain the benefits that this has. It is for this reason that Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world and its popularity is increasing tremendously every day. It is because of this that the denominations that I mentioned have decided to become Pentecostal or to at least allow it to function within their structures.

In this chapter, we will be analyzing why the new converts are quickly evolving into this soul gathering machine that God intended them to be. Why are the laborers so powerful? Why is this aspect of evangelism so powerful? Why does it change a church or congregation so dramatically? What causes this aspect to be the most important resource in the hands of God and in the hands of church leaders? What can we as church leaders do to utilize the laborers to their maximum potential? How do church leaders hinder or block this resource? In this chapter, we are going to look at this aspect and we are going to answer all your questions in this regard.

When we go out to fulfill the great commission, we always pray for the laborers of God to report for duty. We do this because we cannot fulfill the great commission without the laborers. These laborers are not only the mature Christians that will oversee the evangelistic outreaches. The vast majority of the laborers will be new converts and they will be bringing in the harvest. This vast majority is the key to success.

People often wonder how new converts can play such an important part when it comes to evangelism. They just do not understand that new converts are in reality far more valuable than most old Christians in this regard. The reason for this is because most Christians have been failed by the church. We have failed to utilize them according to the instructions that Jesus gave us. We have failed to equip them the way that we were supposed to. They have

never learned how to fulfill the great commission and they were spoiled because of this. Many of them will be willing to accept this new way and new methods that we are going to teach them but many of them have been spoiled beyond repair, and this is a shame.

Many people, including church leaders, just cannot grasp the fact that new converts can be taught to do the work of the ministry within a week or two or in some cases within a few weeks. I know of a person who accepted Jesus Christ on Thursday. On Friday he was baptized. On Saturday he was baptized in the Holy Spirit and a few days after that he already healed a few people, led some of them to Christ, and interpreted tongues. This happened because this person was taught in the way that I am describing in this book.

I do understand that some denominations will need help in this regard. The good news is that there are resources out there that can be a great help. There are ministries out there that offer assistance in this regard. For instance, Great Commission resources has teams and online resources available who help to activate and mobilize people in this regard. On the website, **Great Commission Resources**, you will find all the information and resources that you need. Click on the **GCR Activation Teams Resources Map** to find the closest contact person in your area. Just contact them and they will help you to get the people in your church activated and mobilized. They usually send a team to your area, usually over a weekend (from Friday morning until Sunday morning) and they get as many people as possible activated. More resources in this regard are available on my website and a comprehensive training course is already available at the online [Lighthouse Discipleship Bible School](#).

This Bible School offers a Certificate in Discipleship, a Diploma in Discipleship, and a Bachelor's Degree in Discipleship. Everything you need is available to you, as I said, even the practical assistance that you need is available through Great Commission Resources. You just reach out and get the people in your congregation equipped and ready to fulfill the great commission in your area. Do not focus too much on the structures and the differences when it comes to the way that these people do things. They might do things

differently but do not allow that to hinder your efforts to get your congregation activated. Just ask for assistance, allow them to help you and then you do what you feel you can implement in your congregation based on your structure and your ability.

We want all churches and all denominations and all congregations to benefit from this. We want all to prosper and all to move in the right direction. This attitude will ensure success. The Christian church and the kingdom of God will advance and we will all benefit from this.

COVID-19 caused real damage in the world and even in the church. Churches and Christians have suffered financially and even in other areas. Just like the world, the church was not ready for this pandemic and we as church leaders need to change that. This course gives every pastor or minister the opportunity and the ability to change this whole thing. We can go out and turn this whole thing around. Instead of dealing with all these issues in the way that we have always done it, let's try something new. However, it is important that we do the right thing. We need to follow a strategy that will be successful. The Luke 10 method is the right strategy. It works and it is Biblical. If it is done correctly you will never look back again. With this course and the resources that I mentioned you will be able to carry out this strategy successfully.

The Lighthouse Bible School is interdenominational and they cover all aspects of Discipleship and church planting. They even cover house churches. Re-Forma Outcomes is also available on the Lighthouse Ministries Discipleship Bible School platform. It is an online Bible School and therefore available to everybody right across the world. So I think everything and anything that anybody needs in terms of resources, are available and can be accessed by everybody, no matter where you are or whatever denomination you are part of. With the help of these resources, you will be able to equip the laborers for the work of the ministry and you will be able to utilize them to advance the kingdom of God successfully.

As I said, your most powerful resource is the new converts, the laborers that we should always pray for. In chapter 2 of this book,

we addressed one of the ways that we should utilize the new converts. New converts are very excited about Christ Jesus and their experience with him. Some have been delivered or healed of disease during the outreach and they are just over the moon with joy. They just love Christ and at this stage, nothing is impossible in their eyes and by the way, nothing is impossible. This wonderful experience happened just a few days ago in their life. So it is important to take them out with you with the next outreach, which should be a day or two after they decided to follow Jesus Christ. This allows them to see and observe the same experience from another perspective. They see what happened to them a few days ago and they learn a lot more. Show the new converts that they can immediately pray for the sick by laying hands on them and they can immediately lead people to Christ. Allow them to do both as soon as possible.

Get as many teams out as possible at different times and different areas in your town or city. There should be different teams going out every day. Very soon you will experience a lot of breakthroughs in this regard. The mature disciples will get better day by day. The new converts will get better day by day. Things will be easier and easier day by day. Before you know it, within a month or two, some of the new converts will be overseeing outreach teams. This is the power of true Biblical discipleship. Your congregation will grow rapidly and new churches will be planted.

The fact that new converts will be able to oversee new teams in such a short period ensures that churches expand fairly quickly. This is powerful but as I said, we have discussed this in detail in chapter 2 of the book.

I want to discuss the second aspect that makes the laborers such a powerful resource in the hands of God. By allowing these laborers to start cell groups on Wednesdays or any other day of the week, we give them yet another platform where they can have a wonderful impact on even more people. This is how we get their extended families and friends involved as well. During such meetings, they share their testimonies and they share their experiences with people who would not have been reached in the

street or in the marketplace. Yes, they can probably find a man of peace in the marketplace or in a park somewhere but that is not always possible. They sometimes return empty-handed. At least, they always have a meeting on a Wednesday when they can reach out to a person they know.

These midweek meetings might be different in different denominations. In house churches, it will probably be less evangelical orientated but utilized to allow Christians to grow and equip each other to mature in Christ. Even in house churches, they will always be focused on the great commission. The great commission should always be the first priority in all denominations. However, spiritual development through the gifts and workings of the Holy Spirit according to 1 Corinthians 14:26 needs attention as well:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

So house churches put their attention on the great commission during the week but on Sundays, or any other day, they come together as a congregation, in a house, different houses actually, to celebrate their faith and to edify each other and equip each other according to 1 Corinthians 14:26.

The institutional church does this on Sundays during the Sunday meetings when the pastor or minister teaches the congregation or exhorts the congregation through a sermon. So, in a big congregation, the midweek meetings can be utilized for sharing testimonies and sharing their experiences and leading their friends and extended families to Christ. This also has a major impact on church growth and development. By allowing this we allow the laborers to reach many more people. We also allow them to experience church in more than just one way: They experience the Sunday celebrations, they experience midweek sharing and they experience the fulfillment of the great commission.

All these experiences are significant and a huge thing. On Sundays, they celebrate all these things. On Sundays pastors and ministers

give a bit of feedback on all these activities. They should not address specifics but they should give a report or feedback on the successes of the outreaches and achievements of the congregation as a whole. Pastors and ministers should also address the challenges that they are facing and specific issues that need to be addressed regarding the outreaches and the midweek meetings. So in a sense part of the Sunday gatherings can be utilized to do a bit of training and equipping. Guidance and training is always a good thing. The pastor or minister can achieve a lot in this sense during the Sunday gatherings.

This brings clarity and it brings vision. It also brings unity because the whole congregation feels part of something great. They are drawn in and they just cannot resist doing their part of achieving the vision and the goals of the congregation. The reason why this is so successful is the fact that this ensures that the instructions of God are fulfilled. Because the primary vision is to fulfill the great commission, and because the congregation is focused on exactly that, God works with the congregation. As soon as the focus of the congregation is on the great commission, God works with them. This is what causes it to be so successful and such a powerful resource in the hands of God. Just look at what Ephesians 4:11-12 say about this:

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

So the five-fold ministry is given to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. This is how they do it. They show them how to fulfill the great commission and then they allow them to carry out the great commission. They teach and guide the laborers so that the laborers can fulfill the great commission. This is the work of the ministry. This empathizes the fact that the five-fold ministry should always be focused on equipping the laborers for their work of the ministry. As soon as church leaders are focused on equipping the laborers, these laborers suddenly become a great and powerful

tool in the hands of God. This is when things start to fall in place. This is when people get excited and focused and when they suddenly see the vision. In chapter 1, we have discussed the fact that church leaders cannot be focused on how they want to do things in the congregation or in the church. They should rather determine what is expected from them first.

Christ's instructions about fulfilling the great commission are their primary focus. It is for this reason that the laborers need to be equipped for their work of the ministry. Their second focus should be to accommodate all laborers and to identify and utilize their specific gifts and abilities and strengths. These two things determine the focus of church leaders. If you don't address these issues you have failed.

The laborers do the work of the ministry and the five-fold ministry equips them to do so. They equip them through teachings and guidance but they also equip them by taking them out and show them how to do it. So there is a theoretical side which is done on Sundays (in the institutional church) but there is also a practical side which is done during the week when the outreach teams go out. This is when the five-fold ministry goes out and teaches the laborers. Very soon and sometimes even from the start, mature Christians are utilized to help the five-fold ministry with this. This is where the kick-start resources that I mentioned can be of great value. Pastors and ministers should try to involve as many Christians as possible during such kick-start chapters. Church leaders will immediately be able to identify people who will be able to go out with teams.

A mature Christian in this regard is a person who showed during the kick-start chapters that he will be able to oversee a team during an outreach. Remember, such a mature Christian is accompanied by another equally mature Christian. They always go out two-two. This helps them a lot because although God is with them, they do not feel alone because of them assisting each other. This is how the apostles did it in Biblical times and it is still the way that we should do it. Also remember, nobody has to be perfect to oversee a team. We all start at the bottom or at the starting

point. We are all scared and nervous when we go out the first time. We all make mistakes when we start. All this is not a problem at all. As long as we persist and as long as we do not give up. Like anything else, it does get easier and easier and before we realize it we will function as Paul and Peter did. Remember, it is not us doing the job. It is us with the help of the Holy Spirit doing the job. God always works with us.

As from the second follow-up outreach (visiting a specific family for the second time), these mature Christians will be accompanied by new converts as well. With the third outreach, which is a new outreach to find a man of peace, the process is repeated. So as from the second outreach, the two overseers will not be alone again. They will always be accompanied by a few new converts from previous outreaches. A team of four or five people will be able to get the job done. In the process, they all assist each other and help each other to do the job as well as they can. They all learn whilst practically doing the job. This is the Biblical way of equipping disciples. This is how we make disciples and how we teach them what Christ Jesus taught the early Christians.

There is another aspect that needs to be addressed by church leaders as well. We need to develop the congregation in another way as well. We need to allow them to help and assist each other in other ways as well. This is done through the midweek sharing chapters. Although people can be allowed to share their testimonies and experiences with Christ on a Sunday during church meetings, there is usually not time to do that. This is where the midweek sharing meetings come in.

Although the midweek meetings are primarily focused on reaching out to unsaved family and friends, there is also time for sharing their testimonies and experiences. This emboldens the members of the congregation. This magnifies God and this equips the members of the congregation. This is another aspect of Christianity that the house church movement has proven to be of great value. It just works. It empowers people and it causes them to grow spiritually. Do not forget, the purpose of this course is to help all

denominations to use strategies and methods that other denominations have tried and found to be very successful.

Now I know that many churches and denominations have tried to implement the cell group strategy in their congregations but it failed quite often. I will tell you why it failed. It failed because the way it was implemented was completely wrong. The focus and motivation were completely wrong. Another reason why it failed was the fact that church leaders did not trust this strategy. They were scared and they feared that things would happen that they had no control over. They were afraid that they might lose members and that these groups will form new congregations and that some of them will evolve into house churches and fall away and so on. They were afraid that things might happen in these meetings that might be wrong and that it might damage the reputation of their congregations or hurt people in their congregations. A lack of faith and fear are both our biggest enemies in this regard.

Because of fear, in the past, church leaders have applied too much control and pressure on the members that attended these meetings. They hindered the members of their congregations so much that these members just gave up. The meetings became as dead as dead can be. In some cases, the meetings were stopped because there was no fruit. Nobody benefited at all from these meetings. In some cases, oversensitive church leaders were very quick in abandoning the strategy at the slightest hiccup. Their fears were just too much to deal with and so most of them abandoned the cell group strategy fairly quickly.

This is not how we should deal with church members. This is not equipping them, this is hindering them from growing in the body of Christ. This is not making disciples. This is preventing people from becoming disciples. Church leaders should trust the system that God has put in place. They should trust God. They should trust people. They should trust the Holy Spirit. They should not allow their personal fears to hinder the work of the ministry and the great commission.

Just think of it. If you as a church leader implement all these strategies that I discussed in this book correctly, what are you afraid of? The church will grow tremendously fast. More people and more cell groups will be added to the congregation daily. Are you really afraid that some people and some cell groups will leave the church when these wonderful opportunities are available to them? The members of the congregation will enjoy these strategies and the programs and methods and facilities that you as a church leader has made available to them. They will not give this up. People like to be a part of a whole network of people or groups of people who have a specific identity, who are all interconnected and part of a united body. People want to belong to something. They want to be part of something bigger. Together, as a united body, on a Sunday they like to celebrate Christ Jesus and their combined achievements and their experiences in the kingdom of God.

Church leaders should understand that even if the members of a particular cell group decide to be disloyal to the congregation by doing their own thing, it is not the end of the world. Of course, this is a very unethical thing to do. People should stay loyal to the congregation that they are part of. If they wanted to do their own thing, they should have left the congregation before they started a cell group. They should have considered the consequences of their actions before they did it. This type of behavior is not acceptable but, if it happens, church leaders and the rest of the congregation should forgive such people and carry on with the work of the ministry.

Of course, let everyone understand that you consider such behavior to be unethical and not acceptable but do not make a big thing out of it. Forgive and forget. Let those people go. I can assure you that this type of thing will probably not happen or it will be extremely rare. Should this be a cause of concern? Definitely not!

Unfortunately, many church leaders are oversensitive when it comes to incidents like this. This is really not a problem at all. There is no need to worry about incidents like this. Think of this whole strategy as a big investment. You invest a lot of resources

and time in the lives of the people in your congregation. You do this because this investment is extremely good. It is extremely successful. You have a hundred percent return now and then and then when you suddenly lose one percent you abandon the whole thing?! Of course, that does not make sense at all. The system works and it will empower you and it will allow you to keep going.

However, I do admit that part of the reasons why this failed in the past, is because of ignorance and a lack of experience. Many church leaders have heard about this strategy and they implemented it incorrectly. As I said, their motivation and focus were wrong. It was not built on the right foundation.

In chapter 1 we discussed the fact that we need a proper and Biblical foundation when it comes to discipleship. We need to implement the instructions of Christ. We need to teach people the instructions of Christ. We need to teach them what He has taught the early disciples. We need to accommodate and assist and develop the laborers, the church members, and the new converts of our congregations. We need to put strategies and methods and projects and programs in place that address these goals.

This is the proper and Biblical foundation that we need to build upon. This is what you as a church leader will have to put in place. This is what you as a church leader need to make available to the members of the congregation that you serve. You need to focus on the right things and you need to help your congregation to focus on the right things. The first focus or priority is Jesus Christ. The second priority and focus is the great commission, the third priority or focus is the equipping of the members of the congregation and the last priority is the administrative aspects of the church.

If you have this right the congregation will prosper. The balance will be right. You will all be part of a healthy and happy church. Everything will fall in place the way God wants it. Nothing else will work. This is what God implemented in his church. Whatever we implement will not work, no matter how good we think it is. God knows what is best for us. He knows what is best for the church.

Christ Jesus is the Head of the church. He will only bless what He has implemented. The Holy Spirit will only work with us when we do what God instructed us to do.

Let us look again at what you as church leaders have put in place by summarizing what we have learned and dealt with in the four chapters so far: You have put the focus on Christ Jesus. You have made a training manual available that deals with the full Gospel of Christ. This training manual is used by the five-fold ministry and the mature Christians in the congregation to teach the new converts. The training manual is important because it contains all the relevant information that new converts need to know so that they can start the work of the ministry. It contains the basic stuff. It contains the basic information that they need to know. This training manual is significant because it contains those aspects that deal with salvation and it contains those aspects that deal with restoration.

By using this training manual, you have empowered your outreach teams with a message of hope. In a previous chapter, we have discussed the fact that this message of hope makes a congregation or a church relevant. It makes a huge difference. It is not just about salvation but the possibility of restoration as well. Churches that ignore this aspect will struggle to advance or to be successful because they start with a serious disadvantage. I am in the process of compiling a proper training manual that will contain the necessary information about the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the laborers need to know and understand. It will be available on my website soon.

Let's carry on with the summary. You have put programs and strategies and methods in place that will ensure the fulfillment of the great commission. Evangelical outreach teams go out daily, seeking for a man of peace, preaching the gospel of Christ, casting out demons, inviting themselves to his house, healing the sick, and praying for people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

You follow up with follow-up outreaches. You immediately utilize the new converts, who are the laborers of God. You involve them

immediately. You kick-start them so that they can become disciples who immediately start to make more disciples of Christ. On Sundays, you hold celebration meetings or services. You give feedback on the achievement of the whole congregation. You teach the congregation and you give guidance and you address problematic issues.

On Wednesdays or any other day of the week, you allow the members of your congregation to gather in houses to reach out to unsaved family members and friends and to share their testimonies and spiritual experiences with each other. You allow the members of the congregation to interact with each other and to become family. They become family because during these meetings they learn more about each other and they share their struggles and challenges as well.

They learn to help each other with difficult or challenging issues in their lives and they learn to pray for each other. During these midweek meetings, they become the ekklesia of God. They start to love each other. They start to look after each other. They start to exhort each other. They start to edify each other. They start to teach each other. They start to reprove each other. They become a true and real family.

They cannot do this during Sunday meetings. There is no time for that and it is not the right place for that. They need to get together more informally to ensure that this strategy is successful. During Sunday services people become acquaintances very slowly. It literally takes years for people to know each other this way. During midweek gatherings people become more than acquaintances, they become family. This is a very important aspect of our faith-walk in Christ. When we become part of the family of God, God wants us to live together as a family. That means that we interact with each other as family. Not as acquaintances.

This makes us grow spiritually. This makes the word of God relevant in our lives. We are used to applying the word of God in our way of life. We take his word and we adapt it to fit in the way

that we are doing church and that does not work. That is not how God intended his word to be dealt with.

It is always amazing to me to know that Jesus Christ spent another forty days with his disciples after He was raised from the dead. So He appeared in his glorified body, to many of his disciples, every day for forty days before He ascended to heaven. During this time, He taught them everything that they needed to know so that they were prepared and able to plant and advance the church of Christ and his kingdom. He could not do that like He wanted to before the crucifixion. He had to pay the price first. He had to die for the sins of the world first, and then the disciples were able to comprehend the significance of it all.

This is when Christ Jesus really could teach the disciples what they needed to know. He taught them how the church should be planted and how they should fulfill the great commission and how they should live together in unity as the body of Christ. During the forty days, He equipped them for the work of the ministry. He taught them how they should experience God together as a family. He taught them how they should do church. This is what He commanded them to teach the new converts. He wanted them to make disciples and to teach them what He taught them.

Let's read Acts 1:3

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

So what did Jesus teach the disciples those forty days? Well, the disciples have written the New Testament and what they have written down, is exactly what He has taught them during the forty days. I know that Paul was not part of this forty-day experience but Jesus Christ has similarly visited him and He did for him what He did for the other disciples. This is why Paul has written most of the New Testament.

When we teach the church what is written in the four gospels and in the rest of the New Testament, we are teaching the new converts what he has taught the early church.

However, the word of God, the New Testament, is a letter or a manual addressed to people who follow Jesus Christ, who are focused on fulfilling the great commission the way that I described in this book, and who regularly meet and experience life together as a family in an informal way. The body of Christ is the ekklesia of God. It is when the members of a congregation experience church the way that I described here, that the Bible suddenly makes sense to them. This is when they truly understand what the Scriptures say and mean about everything that they experience in life and in the kingdom of God and in the church in this regard.

I want to put your attention on some of these Scriptures that are addressed to a family who experiences life and Christ together as a family:

Acts 2:42, 44, 45 and 46

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

We do not have to sell everything we have to live like this but we should live as a family. Everything that Paul has written to the churches was written with this truth in mind. This is what he told them to do: Be warm to each other, honor each other, confess your sins to each other, be humble to each other, be unanimous, love each other, have peace with each other, edify each other, accept each other, admonish each other, be friendly to each other, be hospitable to each other, have mercy for each other, cry together

and laugh together, be submissive to each other, exhort each other, build each other up, support each other, be patient with each other, visit each other, discipline each other, wait for each other, look after each other, teach each other, motivate each other, serve each other, tolerate each other and carry each other's burdens.

This is truly a mouth full. There are hundreds of Scriptures in the New Testament that instructs the family of Christ to do the things that I have just mentioned. It was not given to natural families. It was given to the spiritual family of Christ. These were all instructions that were found in the letters that were addressed to the church.

This will not happen if we as church leaders do not implement this lifestyle in our congregations. It can only happen if this is officially part of the structure of the congregation. When leaders ignore this aspect of our faith-walk in Christ they have failed the congregation.

All church leaders need to empower the laborers. The laborers need a healthy and a divinely inspired balanced Christian experience. As soon as church leaders understand the power and the abilities of well-balanced laborers who are unleashed into this world to do the work of the ministry, they will reap the benefits forever.

Church leaders cannot prevent their members to experience the full Biblical Christian experience as God intended. By doing that they are doing their members a big disservice. We are given gifts to the church to serve them. We serve the members of the congregation and we should give them everything that God intended for them. We should not keep certain things away from them. We also cannot be impartial or ignorant in this regard. We should provide them the things that they need. We should put in place or implement the things that God expects from us and what the body of Christ needs.

Church leaders need to seriously evaluate their programs and methods and motivation. We have arrived at a place in history where we can no longer cling onto old methods and old ways that

failed and that will keep on failing. We need to do something different. How wonderful when that something is not only Biblical but blessed and anointed by God. We need to change. We need to change the way that we do church. We need to be brave and we need to stop accepting things as if it will never change. This is a lie. Change is not always easy but it is always possible. Now is the time to change. We can change and we will change. We need to push the boundaries. We cannot stagnate and we cannot accept to live and experience mediocre lives.

We can make the church the most wonderful experience that Christians ever experienced. We can make a very religious and somber experience a wonderful real-life experience that is so dynamic and so exciting and so relevant. This is what the shared community-life experience does in the lives of Christians. This family-experience so divinely interweaved into the great commission and our experiences in Jesus Christ change the lives of people. It dramatically changes the church experience of the body of Christ.

The church is suddenly exciting and very fulfilling. It brings focus and fulfillment and vision. It makes life worth all the trouble. All the challenges that we face suddenly become less threatening and less serious and insignificant. People start to experience joy and they start to live purposefully. They feel valuable and precious and needed. They feel that they achieve much and they know that they make a huge difference.

This makes people happy and this is what pastors and ministers want in their congregation. They want happy and fulfilled members. As soon as something brings happiness and success, people buy into it and they will do whatever they can to keep this thing going. This is a recipe for success, it is Biblical and it is blessed and it carries the approval of God. This is how the church can make a huge difference in this world.

Are you ready for this? Are you ready to address the issues that I mentioned? As soon as the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted, we should be ready to make this strategy a reality. There is

no time to waste. Now is the time to be obedient to Christ and to fulfill his will.

The Power Of the Baptisms

In the previous chapters, we discussed how to identify our focus and purpose as a congregation and as church leaders. We need to determine what we are required to do before we can decide on the strategy that we should follow. We also discussed the Luke 10 method of evangelism which is all about finding a man of peace, making him and his family and friends disciples of Christ whilst we are practically equipping the previous outreach's new converts. We have seen that success is all about the way that the new converts are utilized. We also discussed the need for church leaders to make the necessary changes to enable leaders and denominations and congregations to accommodate as many people as possible, even people who do not necessarily agree with their doctrines and the way that they do church.

This is all about the need for more leniency when it comes to Christian doctrines and practices which were previously not accepted in particular denominations. It already happens in many churches and denominations but it is not yet officially approved, which complicates things and causes a lot of hindrances in the body of Christ. Many ministers know that some of their members believe differently than they teach and they have accepted that. In many denominations already, people who believe differently are all serving God in the same congregation and there is nothing wrong with that. This is a reality. More and more church leaders understand that the more lenient they are the more people they can accommodate.

It is not a case of allowing outrageous doctrines and practices. It is allowing people to make choices and then allowing them to live out their faith. We have seen that particular denominations who have initially opposed Pentecostalism have decided to embrace Pentecostalism. We have seen denominations who were not willing to go that far decided to at least accept people within their ranks to practice Pentecostalism. These denominations benefited tremendously by being more lenient and more tolerant in this regard. They took note of the pros and cons and they convinced

their leaders and members to be more lenient and more tolerant with regards to things previously opposed. Pentecostalism does not damage the church and it does offer the laborers the opportunity to preach a gospel of hope and deliverance. We have discussed this aspect in chapter 3 and we did explain the benefits that this has. It is for this reason that Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world and its popularity is increasing tremendously every day. It is because of this that the denominations that I mentioned have decided to become Pentecostal or to at least allow it to function within their structures.

We also analyzed and discussed the reasons why new converts are a powerful resource in the hands of God and in the hands of church leaders? We discussed the ways and means how we as church leaders can utilize the laborers to their maximum potential and how we hinder or block this amazing resource?

In this chapter, we are going to look at the Biblical aspects of the baptisms. We are going to discuss the reasons why water baptism is such a powerful experience in the church. We are going to discuss the reasons why it is not merely a symbolic act but actually an act of obedience for the remission of sin that literally rocks the spiritual world. It literally causes havoc among demons and it literally has a powerful impact on the spiritual realm. Just take a look at some of the YouTube videos of water baptisms that were carried out for the remission of sins as an act of obedience and repentance. I have left a few links to some of these videos at the bottom of this page.

There is a huge difference between the two. The symbolic baptism has no power and has no spiritual value. To follow Jesus Christ through the water by dying with him and rise with him is something different. It is not a symbolic act but an act that has a powerful impact on us and the spiritual world. It changes a lot of things in our lives. It brings freedom. It delivers us from a lot of negative things. It sets us free from bondage and it washes away our sins.

In this chapter, we are also going to discuss the power of the baptism in the Holy Spirit but let's start with the water baptism first. To understand water baptism, we need to answer questions like the following: When people are baptized the Biblical way, why are demons putting up a fight and manifesting when people are on their way to be baptized or when they are standing in the water, about to be baptized, and very often, when people are under the water just before they come up out of the water? No, it is not always because of the anointing on the person who baptizes the person.

I had such an experience once. I baptized a man in the name of Jesus Christ and the moment he was under the water demonic spirits started to manifest and I had to grab the man and pull him out of the water. The demonic spirits were then cast out and this person was delivered from bondage. Why did this happen when he was baptized?

We also need to look at questions like, does the water baptism save us? What happens when a person did repent but failed to be baptized? What do I need to do if I am not sure whether I was baptized the right way? I am going to answer all these questions and many more.

First, let us start by looking at a few Scriptures about water baptism:

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

In this Scripture, we see that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born of water and the Spirit. There is a very important "and" between water and Spirit. This Scripture seems to suggest that we need to be baptized to be saved but is it really a requirement? We will answer this question in a minute.

Mark 16:15-16

15 *And he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*

16 *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

Just as the previous Scripture this Scripture makes a similar suggestion. It says that if we believe and is baptized, then we shall be saved. Is this suggestion really the truth? Do we have to be baptized to be saved? We will answer this question in a minute.

1 Peter 3:20-21

20 *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.*

21 *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Acts 2:36-47

36 *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

37 *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

39 *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

40 *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

41 *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

In this Scripture, we see the full Gospel of Jesus Christ. We see all the steps that everybody has to take to be truly saved. We see repentance, we see baptism in water, and we see baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is the full Gospel and this full Gospel sets people free. This saves us completely.

Colossians 2:11-13

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

This Scripture emphasizes the fact that when we are baptized, we are dead to sins. This suggests that the old man was buried and we rose in Christ as a new creature. This is the full Gospel of Christ. This is true repentance.

Galatians 3:26-27

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The previous Scriptures suggested that when we are baptized the Biblical way we die with Christ and we rise with Christ. This Scripture probably refers to our spiritual baptism into Christ and does not refer to water baptism or the baptism into the Holy Spirit. It is a very significant Scripture and needs to be discussed as well.

To understand all these Scriptures, we need to understand the following: Man is a spirit, has a soul and lives in a body. We actually have three "bodies" that look identical and they are exactly the same size yet they are different. Many people do not know this but the three bodies are not saved at the same time and we will include the Scriptures that prove this. Our spirit is saved immediately when we truly repent. So we are saved immediately after we have decided to repent and to follow Jesus Christ. So if we die at that moment we go to heaven, to paradise where Christ is, even if we were not yet baptized in water or the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

So our spirit is saved through grace and not through works.

However, at that moment, our souls and our bodies are not saved yet. We can even be demon-possessed and oppressed in our souls and in our bodies, after we repented, which means that the demons need to be cast out of our souls and bodies although our spirits are completely saved and in harmony with God. Please take note that soul-possession and spirit-possession are two different things but both require the casting out of demons in a similar way. The bottom line is, after we repented, our souls and our bodies still need to come in line with the spirit. It needs to be set free completely and it needs to be healed completely and it needs to be

holy completely. As you can imagine, this is a gradual process. We all know that Paul has written letters to Christians who were seriously involved in sin, although they were saved. They were saved but they lived in sin. Their spirits were in harmony with God but their souls and bodies were acting the same as people who were not saved yet.

1 Corinthians 5:1

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

1 Corinthians 11:18

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

These are all Christians who are still slaves of sins in their body and in their souls although their spirit is set free by the grace of God.

We need to repent and follow Christ through the water and be baptized in the Holy Spirit to be completely free.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Yes, this Scripture does refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit that we all receive when we repent, even before we are baptized in the Spirit. So this is not the Holy Spirit baptism but I do need to mention that the Gift of the Holy Spirit, referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit does occur many times just after people are baptized in water. Is this just coincidence? Might be but still, in practice, the practical experiences of many people do support this Scripture. I am just mentioning this because I believe that the Scripture should support doctrines and what we observe or experience should not be used as proof of our doctrines. It is just interesting that this happens.

The water baptism is not just a symbolic act. It is a powerful act of obedience that causes changes in our lives. It fast-tracks us in our spiritual journey. We experience instant deliverance or at least a lot of success in our spiritual growth and development when we are baptized the Biblical way. It means we are serious about Christ Jesus and our faith and that is why demonic spirits hate it. They know that they won't be able to do whatever they do when they possess or oppress people. When this happens they know that they will not be able to keep such a person in bondage. There is power in obedience and there is power in water baptism.

Symbolic baptism is not an act of obedience. It is just a religious act and therefore it has no power at all. It is just a waste of time. That is why demons have no problem with such baptisms, even if it is done the Biblical way by full immersion in water. That does not change anything at all. It is either a religious act by a person who did not truly repent or it is done by a person who does what the church that he is a member of practices. The former does not intend to follow Jesus Christ and the latter is put in a bad position by his church. Some people are baptized merely to please other people or to feel better about themselves or something similar.

Such an act is similar to the sinner's prayer. The sinner's prayer usually precedes a symbolic baptism. These two acts are very similar. It is just religious acts. The sinner's prayer, as popularly known today, has roots in Protestant Christianity. It was first used in the seventeenth century Methodist church and made popular by Charles Finney. The sinner's prayer is not Biblical. It is not found in the Scriptures and it does not have the same meaning or power as true repentance which is done through water baptism.

This is why demons have no problem with both. However, when a person truly repents and decides to be baptized for the remission of their sins, the Biblical way, demons start to shiver and panic because they know that the person that they possess or oppress will be set free.

In Biblical times, people responded to the gospel by being baptized in water and by becoming a follower of Christ. They usually took all

these steps in one day. Sometimes they are baptized in the Holy Spirit even before they are baptized in water but, the bottom line is that the three acts are linked together.

We need to repent or we will be judged.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

1 Peter 4:17

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

This Scripture says that we are accountable for the sins in our soul and body. Our spirits cannot sin according to 1 John 3:9 and therefore there is no condemnation for us. We are saved and righteous because of that. But our soul is something else. We need to save it by doing something important. It is our job. We read this in James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which can save your souls.

So we save our soul and body by laying apart all sins. We see also that the word of God saves our soul if we receive it in meekness. This Scripture was written to Christians. It is not addressed to unsaved people. So the word in this sense has everything to do with renewing their mind and to submit themselves to the word and the will of God.

Galatians 5:19-26

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

We save our soul and body by walking in the Spirit. We do it by being led by the Holy Spirit. We do it by crucifying the flesh.

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Some Scriptures prove that our souls are saved by ourselves. God saved our spirits but we have to save our souls. Let's look at the Scriptures that support this:

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

We save our soul by looking at how we live and if our lives conform to the word (doctrines) of God.

1 Thessalonian 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This Scripture proves that we have to renew our minds so that we can do the perfect will of God.

We need to save our soul and body, as this Scripture suggests. God saves our spirit through grace. We save our souls and bodies through pursuing holiness and renewing our minds and by being obedient.

So the saving of our souls is not through grace but through works. We read that in James 2:24

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Many people do not know of this Scripture in the Bible. It does not contradict Ephesians 2:8-9 which says that we are saved through grace and not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 refers to our spirit and James 2:24 refers to our soul and body. So if the soul and body are saved by works then it is saved by us. We have to do the job. We need to pursue holiness. We need to crucify the flesh. We need to walk by the Spirit. We need to renew our minds. All these things are not so easy to do.

This is why the water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are required. We need God to help us with this and we need the “tools” that He gave us to help us with this. The baptism in the water helps us to get rid of the old man by crucifying him on the cross and by dying with Christ and rising with Christ and by the washing off of our sins. These things happen in the water.

Many people think that we need to be pure and holy and that we need to deserve the Holy Spirit before we can be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The truth is that the exact opposite is true. We need

the Holy Spirit to help us and lead us and teach us and remind us what the word of God says and what Jesus said and what the Father said and exhort us and motivate us and comfort us and intercede for us and reveal the truth to us and inspire us and build us up. We need the Holy Spirit in his fullness. When we go out to be obedient to Christ and to fulfill the great commission we need the Holy Spirit to empower us to preach the gospel of Christ and to heal the sick and to cast out demons and to do miracles and to raise the dead. Without the Holy Spirit, the nine gifts of the Spirit cannot function in our lives.

This is the true gospel of Christ and if we follow these three steps we are immediately on a path of success, victory and freedom. This is real freedom. This is divine dominion. We repent, we follow Jesus Christ through the water, we are baptized in the Spirit and the moment all this happens, we are free and ready and able to do what God wants us to do. If any of the three steps are missing we are spiritually not at such a good place in our lives as we should be. We are not completely saved when one or more of these things are missing.

We are completely saved when we are obedient in all three of these steps and if we truly pursue holiness. When we do this, our spirit and our soul and our body have all been set free completely. How do we know if a person has been saved and set free completely? We know this when the soul is like the spirit and when the body is like the spirit. This is when the body is completely healed. No more sicknesses and diseases are evident in such a person's life. We know it when the soul is completely submitted to God and his word and his will. This means that there is no more struggle and wrestling and fighting and bad emotions and bad attitudes. The soul has completely submitted himself to the Holy Spirit and allows the fruit of the Spirit to flow through him continuously.

So most of us are still in the process of saving our souls and our body. Some are very successful with this and others not. Some are more obedient and others not. Just think of a person who repented fifty years ago but who was never baptized for the remission of his sins and who was never baptized in the Holy Spirit. How

successfully do you think he is in this area. Did such a person save his soul and his body completely? No, he did not because it is impossible to do these things without the help of God and without making use of the “tools” that He gave us.

Such a person probably experienced quite a lot of turmoil and hardships and problems in his life. Such a person never could reign as a king in the kingdom of God. Such a person experienced quite a mediocre life in Christ. He or she is like the nation of Israel who could only conquer about ten percent of the promised land. Such a person failed to claim his or her inheritance. They are poor in spirit and they lack a lot. They are not spiritually developed like they should have been.

So what happens if our soul is not saved and what are the consequences thereof? It means that you will go to heaven but that you will suffer on earth. You will experience bad circumstances and you will become sick and you will lose and you will suffer defeats. You will not be completely free. You will still be in bondage regarding certain aspects of your life. You will act in ways that you do not want to and you will still be a slave to specific sins and bad behavior and bad emotions. So the water baptism does save us. It does set us free.

There is another consequence which is just as serious, we will not be able to be the instrument of excellence in the hands of God that we are supposed to be. We will not be able to fulfill the great commission as we are supposed to. We will not be able to be used by God as He and we desire. We will fall short.

To come back to the Biblical way of water baptism, if we are not baptized for the remission of sins, we will always struggle to live in freedom. We need to lay down the old man and we need to die with Christ by sacrificing the old man so that we can rise with Christ as a new creature. We cannot carry the old man on our backs. The water baptism is the first step to follow Jesus and at that moment, we are disciples. Not before that. Before we go through the water we are just saved and this statement refers to our spirit. However,

when we are baptized, at that moment we become a follower of Jesus Christ.

To be sprinkled with water as a baby is a dead and religious act. To be baptized by full immersion for any other reason other than what I explained in this chapter, it is a dead and religious act. If you have not been baptized the right way then you will have to be baptized again. However, when you do, make sure you go to the right person who will do it the right way, preferably go to a person who has the power of the Holy Spirit in his life so that he or she can set you free.

So the baptism in water according to the Bible is a very powerful thing. It delivers us from bondage. It delivers us from sin. It gives us a new life in Christ. It gives us the power to pursue holiness successfully so that we will never be slaves of sin anymore. It empowers us to get rid of sins in our lives. Together with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it changes our lives completely. The best thing that we can do is to take all these steps as soon as we can.

Cornelius and his whole household took all these steps in one day as we can see in Acts 10:42-48

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

The eunuch did not waste any time to be baptized when Philip preached the gospel to him as we can see in Acts 8:35-36. He decided to follow Jesus Christ through the water and he became a disciple immediately.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Let's briefly discuss the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We are not going to deal with this aspect extensively but I do want to discuss the most important aspects of this wonderful experience with God.

God knew that mankind would not be able to fulfill the great commission in their own power. Whatever man possesses and whatever they use to make such an attempt is just a waste of time. We cannot save people. We cannot set people free. We cannot deliver people. We need God to do that through us. That is why we need the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We need power. The great commission is nothing else but preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and power. We cannot even preach the word without the help of the Holy Spirit. We need divine power to set people free. We need divine power to heal the sick and to raise the dead and to cast out demons. Without the Holy Spirit, we just cannot do that.

Jesus paid the price for this world. He has set us free on that cross. He did not only pay for sin, He also paid for the penalty of sin. Because of sin, we are spiritually dead. Because of sin, we are in bondage. Because of sin, we are blind. Because of sin, we are sick. Because of sin, we go to hell. So the sins of man have devastating consequences and effects in and on their lives. Jesus did not only carry our sins, but He also carried the penalty of sin. Those are all the bad things that I have just mentioned.

This means that healing and restoration are in the atonement. That is why Jesus did two things when He walked this earth. He forgave people for their sins and he restored people's lives. He healed the sick, He cast out demons and He delivered people. No wonder that He gave us the same job to do. He said, go, preach the gospel, make disciples, heal the sick, cast out demons and raise the dead. This is what we need to do. This is the great commission. However, this is not easy. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to that.

It is for this reason that Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they have received the power from on high.

Luke 24:49

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:4,5,8

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but "wait for the promise of the Father, which," saith he, "ye have heard of me."

5 "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Remember, they all have received the Holy Spirit already before this happened.

It happened the first time that Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples after his resurrection.

John 20:19-22

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for

fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you."

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

This experience was similar to what every believer ever experienced the moment that they experience the rebirth. This was the beginning of the rebirth. At that moment, when they received the Holy Spirit they were born of the Holy Spirit. That is when they became new creations. However, they lacked something. The power of the Holy Spirit. They received that on the day of Pentecost as is written in Acts 2:1-4

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And so this wonderful experience repeated itself right through the New Testament and even today. It usually happens when the disciples of God lay their hands on people although it can happen in other ways as well.

Lets' discuss an incident that happened after the day of Pentecost:

Acts 19:1-6

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

In this Scripture, we see a few very interesting things. These people were Christians and they were saved but they were not yet baptized in the Holy Spirit. So Paul laid his hand on them and He prayed for them and then they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They immediately spoke in tongues.

This is proof that we all receive the Holy Spirit when we are saved but we are not baptized in the Holy Spirit until somebody prays for us by the laying on of hands. The evidence that we are baptized in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. Of course, there are other manifestations of the Holy Spirit that are also evidence that we are baptized in the Spirit but there is one specific one that we all have, the speaking in tongues as a prayer language. The other tongues and the rest of the gifts of the Spirit manifest randomly in the lives of people and cannot be forced. The Holy Spirit manifests through his gifts and we do not have control over the gifts. The prayer language, the praying in tongues is something that we do have control over, although we do not understand it. This is the general or universal evidence of the fact that we are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit and any child of God attempting to fulfill the great commission without the Holy Spirit is setting himself up for failure. This is the reason why I appeal to

church leaders to accept or at least tolerate this Christian experience. It will change people's lives and it will empower people to fulfill the great commission the way that Christ intended.

Managing the Evangelism Program

In the previous chapters, we discussed how to identify our focus and purpose as a congregation and as church leaders. We need to determine what we are required to do before we can decide on the strategy that we should follow. We also discussed the Luke 10 method of evangelism which is all about finding a man of peace, making him and his family and friends disciples of Christ whilst we are practically equipping the previous outreach's new converts. We have seen that success is all about the way that the new converts are utilized. We also discussed the need for church leaders to make the necessary changes to enable leaders and denominations and congregations to accommodate as many people as possible, even people who do not necessarily agree with their doctrines and the way that they do church.

This is all about the need for more leniency when it comes to Christian doctrines and practices which were previously not accepted in particular denominations. It already happens in many churches and denominations but it is not yet officially approved, which complicates things and causes a lot of hindrances in the body of Christ. Many ministers know that some of their members believe differently than they teach and they have accepted that. In many denominations already, people who believe differently are all serving God in the same congregation and there is nothing wrong with that. This is a reality. More and more church leaders understand that the more lenient they are the more people they can accommodate.

It is not a case of allowing outrageous doctrines and practices. It is allowing people to make choices and then allowing them to live out their faith. We have seen that particular denominations who have initially opposed Pentecostalism have decided to embrace Pentecostalism. We have seen denominations who were not willing to go that far decided to at least accept people within their ranks to practice Pentecostalism. These denominations benefited tremendously by being more lenient and more tolerant in this regard. They took note of the pros and cons and they convinced

their leaders and members to be more lenient and more tolerant with regards to things previously opposed. Pentecostalism does not damage the church and it does offer the laborers the opportunity to preach a gospel of hope and deliverance. We have discussed this aspect in chapter 3 and we did explain the benefits that this has. It is for this reason that Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world and its popularity is increasing tremendously every day. It is because of this that the denominations that I mentioned have decided to become Pentecostal or to at least allow it to function within their structures.

We also analyzed and discussed the reasons why new converts are a powerful resource in the hands of God and in the hands of church leaders? We discussed the ways and means how we as church leaders can utilize the laborers to their maximum potential and how we hinder or block this amazing resource?

We also analyzed and discussed the power of the baptisms. We have seen that the water baptism for the remission of sin is a powerful and life-changing experience in the life of all Christians. It puts new converts on a different path. We have also seen that true evangelism and fulfilling the great commission like God wants us to, cannot be done successfully without us being baptized in the Spirit of God. There is just no power to preach the gospel of Christ and to heal the sick and to cast out demons and to raise the dead and to disciple new converts successfully if we are not baptized in the Holy Spirit. All these things are the basic and core elements of salvation. By ignoring the water baptism for the remission of sin and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we disqualified a huge portion of the gospel. In such a case, we do not preach the full gospel of Christ.

When we do this we actually tell people that they will have to suffer physically, emotionally, socially and in all other areas of life, and in their soul and personal circumstances and in life but, that they must just hold fast onto their faith and salvation because they will end up in heaven when they die. This is not the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ and the price that Jesus Christ has

paid gave us full redemption, body, soul and spirit. It has made full restoration a guaranteed reality in our lives.

In this chapter, we are going to look at a very important aspect of church growth and expansion and that is to manage, evaluate and maintain the evangelism strategy. We need to keep focused and to stay on the right path. If you as a church leader has implemented everything that I suggested in this book, you have done well. You have made it possible for your congregation to grow and to expand tremendously. You have made it possible for your members to grow spiritually and to develop spiritually. They will be able to fulfill the great commission like God wants them to. You have given them the opportunity to preach the full gospel of Christ. You have made it possible for them to minister the full gospel of Christ unto people. Because of your actions, people are now able to go out and preach a message of hope and deliverance.

This is great but this needs to be maintained. Very soon after church leaders have implemented the strategy that we recommended in this book, some people will attempt to revert to the old ways of doing things. Now how on earth is that possible, even when these people are fully aware of the benefits and even though they see the church grow and expand right in front of their very eyes? It happens because of a lot of reasons.

It happens because people are lazy. They do not want to go out to preach the gospel of Christ. They want to sit in the pews and listen to a sermon and then go home to read the Sunday newspaper. Some people do not want to get involved with other people. They do not want to hear the struggles and hardships of other people. It happens because some people attracted a lot of attention to themselves through the old system and the new system has put a stop to that. Such people are not in the limelight anymore. They miss that. They are not popular anymore because the focus has shifted on the great commission and everybody enjoys equal attention or equal lack of attention. All attention is now on the work of the ministry and not on people.

So although the majority of people in a congregation may be very excited and satisfied with the new way of doing things, almost every church leader will have to deal with the few people who want to put a stop to all this. To them, the benefits do not match up to their losses. Some of them do not care whether the kingdom of God benefits or whether the congregation benefits. Some do not even care whether the church expands or not. They have lost something precious to them and they are not happy with the new situation in the church. People are selfish and they will look for all sorts of reasons to motivate the church leaders to revert to the old system.

This is when church leaders will have to stand strong. Do not allow these selfish people to destroy the work of the ministry in your congregation. Do not allow them to hinder the gospel. You just keep everything in place and keep motivating them in a positive and loving spirit. Leave it in the hands of God. If some of them leave, let them leave. Do not push them away. Keep the door open for them but do not allow them to have their way. Try to get them involved in the outreaches and try to motivate them.

The ball is in their court. It is up to them to decide whether they are going to accept the new strategy or not but they should know that acceptance is the only option for them. They should know that the congregation will not revert to the old system. As soon as this message is clear, many of them will cave and they will accept the situation. A word of caution though, from the start, never gives such people the slightest indication that reverting to the old system is a possibility. That could give them the hope they needed and it might motivate them to put up a fight and that is something that you want to prevent.

When any incident comes up which puts the strategy in a bad light, deal with it immediately. Guide and counsel those who caused the incident and let them carry on with the work of the ministry immediately. Never stop the program or even pause the program. This will be a mistake. You just keep everything going and do whatever you can to equip and develop the members of the congregation as best as you can. Fulfilling the great commission should always be the highest priority in any congregation.

One way that church leaders can prevent undesired hiccups and incidents is to go out with the teams regularly. Make sure that everything is carried out the way that Jesus Christ instructed us to. Church leaders should regularly go out with the different teams during outreaches, sometimes as an observer and sometimes as the person who oversees the outreach. You do need to keep track of the actions and methods and performances of all your senior members and the team members that go out to fulfill the great commission. The fact that you are there with them will cause them to respect you and it will also motivate them to carry on and to do whatever is expected from them.

A few things that you need to check are the following:

Always make sure that new converts are utilized and developed immediately.

Always make sure that before they do, that they were trained on the basic gospel by utilizing the training manual that I have mentioned in a previous chapter. This training manual, titled, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Salvation and Restoration" is available for FREE on the Great Commission Resources website as well as my website, ASR Martins Ministries.

Make sure that new converts and the senior members have been trained by utilizing this book. It is available on the Great Commission Resources website as well as my website, ASR Ministries Ministries

Keep a record of all outreaches. Implement a register and ask all members to register the outreaches. The following details should be recorded: The names of the two senior members who have overseen the outreach. The names of new converts or other church members who have accompanied them. The date and time started and completed. The area they visited. The details of the man of peace that they have found and ministered onto. The details of new converts that were led to Christ during the outreach. Any important details about the outreach and events in such a person's house. Any other detail or information that the overseers feel you should know about like undesired incidents and so on.

As a church leader, you should be responsible for all followup actions. You need to check the register every morning and you need to arrange whatever needs to be arranged based on what was recorded in the register the day before.

For instance, any undesired incident should be addressed immediately. Call all the seniors involved and find out what happened. Call some of the other church members who accompanied the seniors to make sure you understand exactly what happened. Address the issue immediately to counter any further negative repercussions. Do not pause or stop the outreaches. Just solve the undesired event or issue and take the necessary steps to prevent it from happening again. All of us are always learning and improving ourselves and nobody is perfect. Incidents will happen and that is not a big issue. As long as it is addressed.

Record the names and addresses of new converts and make sure that training chapters are scheduled and that they are scheduled to be part of new outreaches as soon as they have completed the theoretical training.

As a church leader, you should also be kept up to date with the progress of all members in the congregation. Make sure you know who is not taking part in the outreaches, who did not complete any training and who is completely inactive. Although the great commission is an instruction, there may be valid reasons why people are not partaking. We should not force people to fulfill the great commission but we should at least try to motivate them and encourage them to get involved. Sometimes people just need a bit of motivation and personal assistance to get them started.

As you can see, we need to manage the evangelism program in the church and we have to be committed to make sure that everything stays on track. We cannot relax and let everybody do whatever they want to do whenever they want to do it. Of course, we want to allow the members of the congregation to go out when they want to but there needs to be a little bit of control just to address undesired deviations. It is for this reason that we need to be on top

of things. Not to control people but to prevent undesired events, situations and results. I believe that church leaders should never control the work of the ministry but they should prevent undesired situations. They should keep an eye on everything.

Church leaders should not delegate this aspect of their duties or function. You should personally check the things that I mentioned and you should personally make sure that everything is addressed appropriately, even if you use other people to help you with it. Take stock, evaluate and adjust but never pause and never stop.

What should you as a church leader do when you experience strife and dissension among members?

Teach them the power of consensus. Teach the members of your congregation that consensus is always possible. Arrange meetings and allow the members involved to talk to each other and to reach consensus. Remember, a consensus is a win-win situation. There is no loser when consensus is reached. There is a loser when you as a church leader take the side of one person over another or one group of people over another. The situation might be addressed but there may be a feeling of unfairness and dissatisfaction if a situation was resolved in another way other than reaching consensus.

What should you do when you notice that your members are struggling with the new strategy? Do not hesitate to ask for assistance. Contact any member of the Great Commission Resources Support Team or complete the official Contact Form on the Contact Us page.

When it comes to the midweek gatherings, never pause or stop it. This will turn out to be a great blessing. Not only does it promote the shared community life of the congregation, it also helps the members to look after each other and help each other and pray for each other and most importantly, support each other. It can also be a very important tool during times like we are now experiencing with the COVID-19 lock-down restrictions. In some cases or phases, the church expansion outreaches and the midweek gatherings can proceed as normal when the Sunday services

cannot take place any more. This results in two-thirds of church activities still taking place as usual. This puts less strain on the church in general, even financially because two representatives at each midweek gathering can take up the offerings and pay it into the church's bank account.

During times that the midweek gatherings and outreaches cannot take place, then churches should revert to Whats-app video calls, Zoom meetings, Microsoft teams, Google hangouts, Cisco webex meetings, Skype, Free conference, Jitsi and many other conference facilities out there on the web that can be used for this purpose.

So even with the midweek gatherings, deal with undesired events and incidents immediately. Sort it out just as you did with incidents that occur during outreaches and remember, never stop or pause the midweek gatherings.

COVID-19 has taught us all a very important lesson. It taught us that everything in life is very fragile. Even the church and even the children of God. We are completely dependent on God and his grace. He is the only one that can maintain us. We cannot rely on anything but God.

I think God has used this pandemic to wake us up a bit. The world is changing and the church needs to change as well. If we are not going to adapt, we are not going to make it. I am referring to churches. We will close our doors and the members of our congregations will have to join other congregations that can still keep their heads above water.

God has shown me that He is not happy with a lot of things in the church. He has shown me in a dream that He is going to do something that will cause people not to find the organized church appealing anymore. I do not know what it is. He showed me this a few years ago. It might be COVID-19, I do not know. Maybe it is still ahead of us. What I do know is that, in the dream, the church leaders were absolutely shocked. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the panic-stricken pastors and other church leaders running around in circles trying to find out what happened. It was not a good sight to see. I believe God has given me ways and means to

help church leaders to prevent this from happening in their congregations. If we focus on the right things, God will honor our decisions and He will work with us. Those things are the things that I have shared with you in this book.

This book is all about a program that will help congregations expand. Maybe for many congregations, this program might be more than that. Maybe this program might be the very thing that saves them from closing their doors. I do not know. All I know is that God dealt with me about these things in an urgent way. I knew from the start that this might be the only chance that many congregations might have to survive.

Just to recap what we have discussed in this book, the first chapter was all about the need and the right way that congregations should determine their purpose. What is church all about? What do we have to do to please God? What should our goals be? Are we on the right path? Are we focusing on the right things? Are our priorities right?

We all know that the focus in most churches, even in house churches, is not what it is supposed to be. So God is already not happy just because of us not doing what we are supposed to do. Let alone how He feels about what we are actually doing. I won't even go there.

We have seen that the focus should be on the great commission, the way that Jesus Christ instructed us to fulfill it, not the way that we want to fulfill it. We have seen that we need to address and accommodate the needs of the congregation. We need to give them a platform that will empower them to minister unto each other, help each other and support each other and more importantly, empower them to fulfill the great commission. This gives the members of the congregation a ministry. The old system took that away from them. That ministry is called the work of the ministry. The five-fold ministry is to equip the church for the work of the ministry. They need to develop and assist the church so that they can grow spiritually so that they can do the work of the ministry. This is Biblical.

In chapter two we have discussed the Luke 10 method of evangelism. Luke 10 describes the great commission in detail. It is all about finding a man of peace somewhere in a street or park or market place, healing him and delivering him from bondage, preaching the gospel of Christ to him, visiting his family in his house, healing and delivering them, leading them to Christ by baptizing them all in water for the remission of sin, laying hands on them to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, incorporating them in the church, incorporating them in the midweek gatherings, putting them through a great commission preparation course, sending them out with the next outreach, utilizing them as seniors to oversee a team within two or three months and then repeating the whole process all over again.

This is the Biblical method of evangelism. This is the great commission in its purest form.

chapter 3 was a discussion on changes made by prominent denominations in the past. Many people are under the impression that the organized church cannot change. They think that it is even impossible for God to change the church and to develop the church. That is why nobody is willing to promote change or to ask for change. Everybody just accepts the status quo and so everybody is just sitting there and accept their fate. This is not supposed to be like this.

Anything and everything in life can change. Change is always possible. God has been pleading with us to change. He has been for decades. I think God is reaching the point where He will make sure that we are put in positions that will force us to change if we don't do it by ourselves.

We have seen that in the past, whole denominations have made major and significant changes. It can happen again. We have seen one denomination become a Pentecostal church. We have recently seen another denomination accepting people to function in the gifts of the Spirit within their ranks. Something that they did not allow in the past. So yes, change is always possible. People may ask, "Why do we have to change?" We have to change because we

are not in the will of God. We need to change because God is progressively developing his church. He is always the same and always complete and perfect. We are not perfect. We need to work on ourselves and we need to allow God to perfect us and improve us and develop us. That is why we need to change.

When Jesus Christ planted his church, God started the process. That was only the start. Unfortunately, the process almost immediately took a nosedive. Instead of the church going up it went down almost immediately. Through the years the church deteriorated awfully. However, God was never going to give up on us. He was never going to leave us in the bad condition that we have put ourselves. He started the reformation through Martin Luther and He is still not finished with us.

The reality is, the church is still in a very bad condition. We are so far from what God wants us to be. It is unbelievable. How on earth is it possible that after two thousand years, we have progressed so little? It is mind-boggling! We have slipped up big-time through the years and God is not happy with this. He started something early in 2016 that will change all this. Or at least many of us became aware of it because this is when we started noticing that major changes are coming.

God is busy changing a lot of things in the world and He needs our help to do that. We are his ambassadors and we are the instruments of excellence in his hands that He needs to do that.

So it is time that we all rise to the occasion and do what needs to be done. Let us be a light in these dark times. Let us shine the light of Christ and let us be ready to give people to eat the word of God, the bread of life. Let us use this opportunity to change the world. The reality is that COVID-19 is changing the world rapidly every day. We need to help change it for the better. Let us show the world that there is a better way. A divine way of living. We have the opportunity now to make a huge difference in people's lives and to change the direction of the world.

The world has indeed been under the power of satan during the past ten years. Worldwide, things have deteriorated quite a lot

under the reign of corrupt and evil politicians. That is why God had to intervene. He raised men and women from all walks of life and in all spheres of influence to help him with this. God has appointed them and He has put them in positions that made it possible for him to change many bad situations in the world. Donald Trump and thousands of other politicians successfully played their part during the past four years. Apart from politicians, God used his children in many areas and spheres of life to change the world.

As a result of that, a lot of good things were restored. A lot of wonderful things happened during the past four years. The caliphate that ISIS proclaimed in 2014 was defeated after they caused so much harm in the lives of many Christians and many good people and even children. Globalism took a huge knock. Evil political parties and their plans and strategies took a huge knock. Evil people that donate their time and money to support evil and evil strategies and conspiracies and strategies took a huge knock. Evil institutions and organizations and companies like the media giants took a huge knock.

Much evil was exposed in the past four years. The plans and strategies of the enemy were exposed and destroyed. God laughed at them and He brought it all to naught. They had such a wonderful foundation. They were getting ready to take the success that they had over the past ten years to a new level. But then disaster struck. God destroyed all their work and all their plans and they are back to square one.

People saw it all. They see it happening right across the world and they are rejoicing. There has been a lot of improvements but God is not finished yet. He is still doing what needs to be done and He needs us to help him. The enemy and his evil servants are putting up a fierce fight as an attempt to undo what God has been doing. That is why you see America burning right now. That is why you see all sorts of evil situations flaring up all over the world. The enemy is fighting back. Sometimes it feels that the people of this world are losing their minds. It amazes me how evil they are and what they are capable of. It is insane. I would not have believed much of this if you told me it was going to happen.

Why did all the bad things happen in the past decade? Why is it still happening? When the devil controls powerful people and politicians, he can change the world. He uses bad people to cause evil to reign. The only thing that can prevent this, is the church. God uses the church to overcome evil. He uses you and me to overcome evil. He uses the church to change the world.

So what has changed? During the past fifteen years, evil ran wild. Evil gained so much ground and we all observed the consequences thereof. It appeared that evil was going to take this world over completely. That is why God intervened. That is why He has shaken this world to the core. He did it by changing the political landscape through Brexit and Donald Trump and many other people across the world and He did it through the COVID-19 pandemic. I still believe that if God did not allow it to happen, He caused the COVID-19 pandemic. Its purpose was to shake every person right across the world. Its purpose was not only to shake the world, but it was also to shake the church. Everybody needed to wake up.

COVID-19 caused devastation in terms of the loss of human lives. It caused the economic collapse or at least serious economic damages and turmoil. Countries and nations, the economy, businesses and institutions, and virtually everybody suffered losses and are still suffering losses because of it. Many people lost a lot of money. Many people lost their jobs. Many people live in fear because of the uncertainty. God has been testing the faith of his children. God exposed the relevance of the church. Many Christians and church leaders have already died because of COVID-19. This should not have happened. They should have been ready for this pandemic. They should have had the necessary faith to make it through this thing.

He made it as clear as daylight that many Christians and the church itself is spiritually in a poor and unacceptable condition. Many of us are standing with red faces when we think back on how we reacted to all this. The church hasn't got faith. Christians just do not have faith. God exposed that fact. The fear and panic resulted in irrational and wrong decisions being made by people, Christians and church leaders. The church did not know how to

deal with all the issues and challenges. This happened because the church did not grow spiritually during the past decade or two. The church actually deteriorated. This is why all this happened. God exposed us so that we can wake up and see what is going on. We need to know the truth and admit the truth so that we can become willing and able to change.

Plagues and pestilences are equalizers. It does not discriminate against anyone. The fact that nobody can provide any protection or any security whatsoever is especially challenging for most people. It reminds them that the support systems of the world are not that reliable at all. When they see or hear how people die around them, how the medical profession struggles to cope with the situation, how the economy and everything that is man-made collapse all around them, they lose their sense of security, especially when stability and security and order rapidly give way to chaos and instability and disorder and confusion. This is when people look for something outside the norm or other than the usual support systems that they can cling onto to sustain and maintain them during this time of turmoil. This is the reason why millions of people have started to follow Jesus Christ in the past few months. This is why many lukewarm Christians have decided to recommit their lives to God.

This is also why the church needs to change. Those churches and denominations that refuse to change might regret it in the months or years to come. The challenges are not going to stop. COVID-19 may blow over but something else may take its place. God is on the move. We will have to change. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. The Holy Spirit empowers us to do the job. If we are involved in things other than the things that Christ instructed us to do, they will not work with us. We need to be obedient. God works with us when we are obedient and when we do what we are supposed to do. This book is to help every church leader to adapt to the new situation and to help them cope and to help them to prevent hardships in the future.

We should all heed to the calling of God. He is mobilizing and activating his church as He wants the church to be mobilized and

activated. We cannot follow our own agendas anymore. We have reached a “live or die” situation in the history of the church. People who do not listen will backslide. Church leaders who do not listen will see their churches closing their doors. This is not a tactic that I am using to scare you. There is nothing in this for me. This is a call for a reality check. It is time that we take stock. It is time that we evaluate what we are doing. It is time for a change.

One of the biggest changes that we can make is to make use of the laborers. As soon as church leaders understand the power and the abilities of well-balanced laborers who are unleashed into this world to do the work of the ministry, they will reap the benefits forever. We have mentioned in chapter 4 that the new converts will turn out to be a tremendous help.

People often wonder how new converts can play such an important part when it comes to evangelism. They just do not understand that new converts are in reality far more valuable than most old Christians in this regard. The reason for this is because most Christians have been failed by the church. We have failed to utilize them according to the instructions that Jesus gave us. We have failed to equip them with the way that we were supposed to. They have never learned how to fulfill the great commission and they were spoiled because of this. Many of them will be willing to accept this new way and new methods that we are going to teach them but many of them have been spoiled beyond repair, and this is a shame.

Many people, including church leaders, just cannot grasp the fact that new converts can be taught to do the work of the ministry within a week or two or in some cases within a few weeks. I know of a person who accepted Jesus Christ on Thursday. On Friday he was baptized. On Saturday he was baptized in the Holy Spirit and a few days after that he already healed a few people, led some of them to Christ, and interpreted tongues. This happened because this person was taught in the way that I am describing in this book.

As I said, your most powerful resource is the new converts, the laborers that we should always pray for. In chapter 2 of this book,

we addressed one of the ways that we should utilize the new converts. New converts are very excited about Christ Jesus and their experience with him. Some have been delivered or healed of disease during the outreach and they are just over the moon with joy. They just love Christ and at this stage, nothing is impossible in their eyes and by the way, nothing is impossible. This wonderful experience happened just a few days ago in their life. So it is important to take them out with you with the next outreach, which should be a day or two after they decided to follow Jesus Christ. This allows them to see and observe the same experience from another perspective. They see what happened to them a few days ago and they learn a lot more. Show the new converts that they can immediately pray for the sick by laying hands on them and they can immediately lead people to Christ. Allow them to do both as soon as possible.

Get as many teams out as possible at different times and different areas in your town or city. There should be different teams going out every day. Very soon you will experience a lot of breakthroughs in this regard. The mature disciples will get better day by day. The new converts will get better day by day. Things will be easier and easier day by day. Before you know it, within a month or two, some of the new converts will be overseeing outreach teams. This is the power of true Biblical discipleship. Your congregation will grow rapidly and new churches will be planted.

The fact that new converts will be able to oversee new teams in such a short period ensures that churches expand fairly quickly.

We also discussed the power of the baptisms. We need to be baptized in water as soon as possible and we need to be baptized in the Spirit as soon as possible. Many people do not know that our souls are not saved or justified by grace or faith only but through works as well. We read that in James 2:24

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Many people do not know of this Scripture in the Bible. It does not contradict Ephesians 2:8-9 which says that we are saved through

grace and not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 refers to our spirit and James 2:24 refers to our soul and body. So if the soul and body are saved by works then it is saved by us. We have to do the job. We do the works. We need to pursue holiness. We need to crucify the flesh. We need to walk by the Spirit. We need to renew our minds. All these things are not so easy to do.

This is why the water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are required. We need God to help us with this and we need the "tools" that He gave us to help us with this. The baptism in the water helps us to get rid of the old man by crucifying him on the cross and by dying with Christ and rising with Christ and by the washing off of our sins. These things happen in the water.

Many people think that we need to be pure and holy and that we need to deserve the Holy Spirit before we can be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The truth is that the exact opposite is true. We need the Holy Spirit to help us and lead us and teach us and remind us what the word of God says and what Jesus said and what the Father said and exhort us and motivate us and comfort us and intercede for us and reveal the truth to us and inspire us and build us up. We need the Holy Spirit in his fullness. When we go out to be obedient to Christ and to fulfill the great commission we need the Holy Spirit to empower us to preach the gospel of Christ and to heal the sick and to cast out demons and to do miracles and to raise the dead. Without the Holy Spirit, the nine gifts of the Spirit cannot function in our lives.

This is the true gospel of Christ and if we follow these three steps we are immediately on a path of success, victory and freedom. This is real freedom. This is divine dominion. We repent, we follow Jesus Christ through the water, we are baptized in the Spirit and the moment all this happens, we are free and ready and able to do what God wants us to do. If any of the three steps are missing we are spiritually not at such a good place in our lives as we should be. We are not completely saved when one or more of these things are missing.

We are completely saved when we are obedient in all three of these steps and if we truly pursue holiness. When we do this, our spirit and our soul and our body have all been set free completely. How do we know if a person has been saved and set free completely? We know this when the soul is like the spirit and when the body is like the spirit. This is when the body is completely healed. No more sicknesses and diseases are evident in such a person's life. We know it when the soul is completely submitted to God and his word and his will. This means that there is no more struggle and wrestling and fighting and bad emotions and bad attitudes. The soul has completely submitted himself to the Holy Spirit and allows the fruit of the Spirit to flow through him continuously.

So most of us are still in the process of saving our souls and our body. Some are very successful with this and others not. Some are more obedient and others not. Just think of a person who repented fifty years ago but who was never baptized for the remission of his sins and who was never baptized in the Holy Spirit. How successfully do you think he is in this area. Did such a person save his soul and his body completely? No, he did not because it is impossible to do these things without the help of God and without making use of the "tools" that He gave us.

Such a person probably experienced quite a lot of turmoil and hardships and problems in his life. Such a person never could reign as a king in the kingdom of God. Such a person experienced quite a mediocre life in Christ. He or she is like the nation of Israel who could only conquer about ten percent of the promised land. Such a person failed to claim his or her inheritance. They are poor in spirit and they lack a lot. They are not spiritually developed like they should have been.

So this chapter concludes the Discipleship program which was aimed at helping church leaders to adapt to changes and to counter bad events and situations like COVID-19 and financial difficulties and other challenges that they might face. By the way, our next book is all about house churches. It will be a very comprehensive book and all aspects of house churches will be discussed.

About the writer

ASR Martins is a Christian author. He wrote several books including **“The Free Authentic Christian Dreams and Visions Symbols Dictionary”**. He interprets Dreams and Visions and he also manages an online **“Dreams and Visions Symbols Interpretation Course”**. He stays with his wife Marinda and their boys, Ewaldt and Rheeder, in Klerksdorp, South Africa. They also have a daughter Alisia. They see themselves as spiritual facilitators by providing support, resources and encouragement to everybody who wants to be pioneers in the hand of God.

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The Authentic Christian Dreams and Visions Symbols Dictionary

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The Truth About Sicknesses and Diseases

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Understanding The Prophetic Times We Live In

New book preview

The Authentic Christian Dreams and Visions Dictionary

Introduction

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

Numbers 12:6

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

The Authentic Christian Dreams and Visions Symbols Dictionary was compiled because of the pure need for an authentic dreams and visions symbols dictionary. The vast majority of dreams dictionaries available today are predominantly false and erroneous. People need to have access to a Bible-based dreams and visions dictionary that is really authentic but unfortunately, most of them cannot find one at all.

Because of pure desperation, Christians make use of all sorts of dreams and visions dictionaries on the Internet. These dictionaries are in fact seriously defiled with numerous false meanings for the different symbols. The way the authors (compilers) of these dictionaries come up with meanings for symbols is not Biblical. It is most often a guessing game for most of them and it is therefore not worth making use of these dictionaries. Most of them are non-Christian dictionaries like Muslim dictionaries or dictionaries of pagan religions. Some of them are psychological based or demonic based dictionaries and just as dangerous to God's people.

Quite a lot of them are rooted in the occult and demon-possessed mediums and fortune-tellers seized the existence of dreams, visions, and the interpretation of dreams and visions to defile this wonderful gift from God. These dictionaries were primarily created to deceive people and are worthless, dangerous, and cannot be utilized at all.

Daniel 1:17

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Psalm 25:14

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

This is why this book was written. God's people need access to an authentic dreams and visions dictionary. To ensure that this book is a useful aid to the reader, I need to discuss the purpose and the fundamentals of dreams and visions. Therefore, in this book, I need to make a few very important statements about dreams and visions.

What is the purpose of dreams and visions?

Dreams and visions are, among other ways of communication, a very important method that God uses to communicate with people.

Job 33:14-20

14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed;

16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,

17 That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.

18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:

20 So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.

He does not only communicate with Christians but also with unbelievers through dreams and visions. Although dreams and

visions differ from each other it is fundamentally the same. The same principles and the same meanings apply to both dreams and visions. The only difference is that with the one the receiver of the message is asleep and with the other he or she is awake.

Very important though, we need to ask God to communicate with us. We need to seek his face for wisdom, knowledge, and truth.

Proverbs 2:3-6

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

God speaks to people through dreams and visions but as you could see in the Scripture above that it takes some effort from our side. We need to seek God for wisdom and knowledge and we need to pay attention to our dreams and visions. Dreams and visions are compared to treasures as it is the word of God. When we humbly submit ourselves to God and his leading, He will speak to us. He is alive and well and He loves to communicate with his children. The Biblical language of symbols is a universal language created by God.

Some dreams are not messages from God but in fact the result of a restoration process that God has built into every human being. God created this mechanism to help people emotionally deal with circumstances and occurrences in their lives. God's aim with these dreams is to restore us emotionally. This process keeps us normal and able to deal with life and its challenges. Such dreams are products from the soul (mind) as affirmed in Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 5:3

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Psychologists like to refer to a term called the "subconscious mind" as if it is just an intellectual system that has certain qualities and which functions in a certain way. To most of them, it is just trillions of cells working together to make up this mystical system which they do not really understand. They are also aware of our conscience which plays an important role in the decisions we make. To most scientists, this is only a natural process that is part of the makeup of every human being.

It is a bit more than that. On the one hand, your conscience, which was formed and influenced through moral education, training, and environmental influences, is making your soul aware of certain areas of concern (identified as being wrong and not acceptable) that need to be dealt with in your life. On the other hand, your spirit, who is always in harmony with the Holy Spirit, makes your soul aware of issues in your life which it has identified to be unacceptable. How does your spirit do that? Your spirit compares the condition of your soul with what it has learned from the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Whatever is in your soul that is not from God your spirit will bring under the attention of your soul. The awareness mechanism functions through dreams. I call these dreams "emotional restoration dreams"

To put it as simple as possible: Your soul struggles with certain problematic issues which it was exposed to. These bad experiences and challenges put a lot of pressure and stress on the soul. We need to deal with these issues. Some of these issues are identified by your conscience and some by our spirits. While you are emotionally struggling with these issues, your spirit, who is always in perfect harmony with God, helps your soul to deal with these issues. It can do this because it knows how to deal with these issues. Your spirit is enlightened because of the continuous and constant fellowship with the Holy Spirit and with God. Remember, the Holy Spirit is in your spirit and not in your soul. Your spirit knows things that your soul is completely unaware of. Your spirit

brings clarity because it has a very powerful God-given ability to assist your soul. We read about that in the Bible:

Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Why is it illuminating all the dark areas and corners of the inner man? Why is it a "lamp" in the innermost areas of the soul? What is it searching for? It looks for areas in our lives that are not in line with God, his word, and his will. It brings these areas of concern under the attention of the soul. It then assists the soul to deal with these issues. It is all about submission and alignment. It brings harmony. The spirit is led by the Holy Spirit in this regard. The spirit also helps and teaches the soul to be led by the Holy Spirit. This process improves our lives. This mechanism is a gift from God. We do not understand this mechanism or this process but we are aware of it through the dreams it produces.

It is very important to understand that although one dream is a message from God and the other a natural method to restore our emotional condition, both can and must be interpreted. Interpretation of all dreams and visions will either reveal a message from God or it will tell us with what we are struggling with within our personal lives.

Both interpretations need to be followed up by actions. God does not communicate unimportant information to us and emotional restoration dreams are designed to help us cope with life. It accurately exposes emotional and problematic issues in your life. We do need to act upon these issues and that is why we need to give attention to both types of dreams. Emotional restoration dreams are not just a way of restoring us emotionally but it is also, on purpose, telling us that we need to take action to sort out or to address certain issues in our lives. We need to interpret these types of dreams so that we can identify problem areas in our faith walk with God. After we have identified these problems we need to submit these individual problems to the word of God and to the will of God. We should never ignore any dreams or visions. It is of the

utmost importance that we deal with these messages according to God's word and God's will.

What exactly is the purpose of receiving messages from God? Why does God communicate with us? Dreams and visions are very exciting. It means this glorious wonderful creature called the living God, the ancient of days, the everlasting Father, the creator of heaven and earth and everything that exists, is really directly communicating with us.

Apart from the written word of God, He still does communicate to us directly. The prophet Joel prophesied that in the last days, God will pour out his Spirit on all flesh and that people will dream dreams and see visions. We are living in the last days. The last days started the day the Spirit of the living God was poured out on mankind. The Bible did not say in the early days or in the days of Elijah or in Biblical days. It says in the last days we will receive the Holy Spirit and we will see visions and dream dreams.

If we have the written word of God available to us, why does God still need to communicate with us? Isn't everything already written in the word? Of course, everything is already written in the word of God. But this does not mean that we understand everything correctly. It also does not mean that we apply the word correctly. It does not mean that the five-fold ministry is teaching the word correctly. It does not mean that God does not want to supernaturally reveal that word correctly to us. It does not mean that God does not want a personal love relationship with every believer. It does not mean that God does not want to comfort us when He sees us struggling with life's challenges.

When the five-fold ministry is leading people astray God wants to intervene. He wants to protect his children against false teaching. He wants to improve our lives. He wants to help us grow spiritually. That is when He starts communicating with you, his beloved son, or daughter.

So what exactly does God communicate with us in dreams and visions?

- He sometimes gives us clarity on certain doctrinal issues. He teaches us through dreams and visions.
- He sometimes warns people against other people or specific situations like He did with Joseph against Herod who wanted to kill the baby Jesus.
- He sometimes warns people about certain strategies and tactics that the enemy is orchestrating against them (Protection).
- He sometimes leads us to perform certain tasks or work of the ministry like evangelistic work at specific places.
- He sometimes imparts supernatural abilities to us through a dream or a vision. In the dream or vision, He shows us what He wants us to do and what gifts He gave us. That instant we also receive the anointing to carry out what He empowered us to do.
- He sometimes exhorts us and He comforts us, in a dream or a vision when the going gets tough.
- He sometimes delivers us from bondage in a dream.
- He sometimes gives direction, in a dream or a vision. This usually happens when we pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- He sometimes equips us in terms of knowledge and regarding the ways of God. This helps us to live the way He wants us to live.
- He sometimes shows us that we need to address certain issues in our lives.
- He sometimes convicts us of sin.
- He sometimes shows us how to address these issues.
- He sometimes gives us strategies for success.

We have seen in Job 33:14-18 that God speaks to us in dreams and visions to withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from

man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. The bullet list above ensures that Job 33 is a reality in your life. It helps us live in the fear of the Lord. It helps us live a life that pleases God. It also helps us to be more effective in ministry. It is there for the benefit of the gospel of Jesus Christ and also for the promotion of the kingdom of God.

Some dreams are about knowledge or wisdom or the direct leading of the Holy Spirit. Other dreams are all about insight into the will and the ways of God. Yet other dreams are all about divine "impartation" in our spiritual lives. For these reasons we always need to understand that we cannot be led by dreams but rather by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit often uses dreams and visions to lead us but that is not the only way He leads us. He also leads us through various other ways like the whisper in our spiritual ears, a cellphone message from a friend, a word in Scripture that He emphasizes in our hearts, a telephone call from a stranger or a friend with a word of confirmation, good advice from a respective person in the body of Christ, a piece of literature from a book, a song, supernatural inner peace and assurance, inner experiences when we seek His face in prayer, etc.

I cannot tell you how many of the above examples of dreams and visions I received over the past 35 years. I have written them all down. These books (dreams and visions recording books) that I have written contain all my dreams and visions that I received from God through the years. These dreams and visions are precious gifts from God. When I read through these books today (I often do), I can see the plans, purposes, will, and aspirations God had for me and still has for my life. I can look back and see the warnings that saved me from many dangerous situations and people. I can see where He gave direction. I can see where He corrected the wrong doctrines. I can see where He exhorted me and where He comforted me. I can see how every dream and vision worked together to form me. I can see how it caused me to grow spiritually. I can see how it caused me to mature in Christ.

Some of these dreams and visions were prophetic in nature. God showed me what was to happen in my life and in my personal

ministry. These dreams and visions were and still are precious to me. It prepared me for the work of the ministry. It helped me to stay focused and it helped me to persevere. These dreams and visions all fit together like a puzzle. It completes you in Christ. Not only do dreams and visions bring individual clarity on individual situations or aspects but together it serves to bring clarity on many spiritual aspects as a combined unit. And yes, these dreams and visions all conform to the written word of God one hundred percent. It is always in line with God's word.

The most important advice that I give people about dreams and visions is to write them all down immediately when you wake up or immediately after you received the vision. Some people have a pen and their dreams recording books at their bedsides. The longer you wait to write them down the less you will remember. Your intellect and your soul immediately start breaking down the dream or vision in your mind. That is why you cannot delay writing them down. Every minute counts!

Daniel 7:1

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters.

Habakkuk 2:2

And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

The above-mentioned Scripture about Daniel's dreams and visions shows that he did write down his dreams and visions. He did it so that he can cover all the symbols and bring all the different aspects into consideration during the interpretation of the dreams and visions. Please note that when you record dreams and visions that it is important to write down every symbol in the dream or the vision. The shape of each object, the color of each object, the quantity of the different objects, the direction facing and/or the direction of movement of each object, the words that were spoken, the actions performed, the emotions experienced with each

occurrence in the dream, or vision, the place the dream was physically located, the geographical area, background circumstances, the context of the time, history and certain information that you supernaturally knew in the dream, and vision need to be written down exactly as God gave it to you. The gifts of discernment, knowledge, and wisdom do sometimes manifest in dreams and visions. You need to write information obtained this way down as well. The more accurate you record all this information the more successful you will be with the interpretation of the dream or vision. Remember that each symbol and all detail in the dream, and vision need to be analyzed. We need to do this systematically to bring the total sum of all possible aspects and meanings into the equation. If we do not analyze all symbols and all meanings we might lose vital information and we might end up not interpreting the dream or vision correctly.

From where do dreams originate from?

Dreams and visions come from God. He is the Dream Giver and that includes both types of dreams. We need to go to God and the Holy Spirit for more clarity on dreams and visions. We need to go to God for the interpretation of specific symbols that we identified in dreams and visions. God created mankind. He created us according to his image. We were born of his Spirit. We are like Him. He knows us inside out.

Now it is very important to understand the following, "Nobody has the right to regard dreams and visions or the interpretation of dreams and visions as something that they mastered or something they own." Not only do dreams and visions come from God but also the meanings of the symbols come from Him. We can even take it further by saying that we cannot really interpret dreams and visions without the help of the Holy Spirit. God needs to help us "find" the meanings of dreams and visions by revealing it to us through prayer and divine revelation. For this reason, a mere dreams and visions dictionary alone will be of little use to us. It will put our attention on some meanings and we might have an indication of what God wants to communicate to us but that's all. The real meaning of the dream or the vision will be lost if we do

not seek God in prayer for the interpretation of the specific dream or vision.

God also provides the meanings of different symbols. Most symbols and the meanings of these symbols are found in Scripture. It is understandable that if dreams and visions come from God, that the meanings of the symbols in these dreams and visions will be found in his word. The language of symbols belongs to God. He created it. Almost all symbols and meanings of these symbols come from the Bible.

Some symbols are modern equivalents of Biblical symbols. For this reason, a “sword” and an “arrow”, which come from the Bible, have the same meaning as a “pistol” or a “rifle” which are modern equivalents of these Biblical symbols. The same with a “horse” and a “motor vehicle.” In some cases, God gave the meanings of the different symbols and in other cases, God used the natural characteristics of the object to be representative in terms of the meaning of the specific object. Some objects may have both a God-given meaning and also a meaning based on the natural characteristics of the specific object. Some symbols cannot be found in the Bible and we need to seek God for the meanings of these symbols. This makes the interpretation of dreams and visions more complex. For this reason, we cannot use a dictionary only but we need to seek God in prayer to determine exactly what God wants to tell us.

The symbols

Because God created everything that exists, everything belongs to Him. The rainbow is his, the sea is his and the lion is his. Anybody may try to defile God's property and he may give other meanings to objects but that changes nothing. Even when the enemy tries to defile God's property by giving demonic meanings to certain objects, that objects and the meanings of these objects still belong to God. It means that God created it and He gave meaning to everything first. It means that the meanings that God gave certain objects in dreams and visions are the true meanings and all other meanings are false. This is exactly why dreams and visions

dictionaries created by pagan religionists or even psychologists are so full of errors and false meanings. Not only people but also the enemy started to give different meanings to objects. It is important to understand that we need to ignore these meanings.

Pagan religions like Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, satanists, and people like fortune-tellers, psychics, and even psychologists all have no business with dreams, visions, or the interpretation thereof. This has nothing to do with them! It has everything to do with God, the Church, and you, the individual.

We should not be scared of demonic types of symbols and demonic meanings. It is actually false meanings and these meanings are not legitimate. For example, God gave a certain meaning to the symbol of a rainbow. Satan also started to use the rainbow as a symbol and he gave this symbol another meaning. We should ignore this and embrace God's symbols and the meanings God gave to these symbols. A rainbow is pure and beautiful and it belongs to God.

How common are dreams and visions?

God spoke to many people in the Bible through dreams and visions. People like Abraham, Jacob, Pharaoh, Moses, Gideon, Nathan, Eli, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joseph, Amos, Zechariah, The wise men who came to witness Jesus' birth, Joseph and Maria, Pilate's wife, Paul, Ananias, Cornelius, Peter, John and many more.

In these dreams and visions, God used symbols and certain meanings of these symbols to communicate with these people. The angels often asked those people the following words: "What do you see?" When these people identified these symbols the angels often gave them the specific meanings of these symbols. Please look at the following Old-Testament and New-Testament verses for more insight in the way God communicates with us:

Genesis 15:1

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great"

Job 4:13-16

*"Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falls on men,*

Genesis 46:2

*God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob"
And he said, "Here I am"*

Genesis 41:1-7

*Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a
dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.*

Exodus 3:2-3

*The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the
midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning
with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.*

Numbers 12:6

*"If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known
to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream."*

Acts 7:30-32

*"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the
wilderness of mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.*

Judges 7:13-15

*When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his
friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread
was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and
struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent
lay flat"*

2 Samuel 7:4

*But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan,
saying,*

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple.

Ezekiel 1:4-14

As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.

Ezekiel 8:2

Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from his loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from his loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal.

Ezekiel 11:24-25

And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea so the vision that I had seen left me.

Ezekiel 37:1-10

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

Daniel 2:28

"However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

Daniel 4:5

I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Daniel 2:19

Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

Amos 7:1-9

Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king's mowing.

Amos 8:1-6

Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit.

Amos 9:1

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, "Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, And break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; They will not have a fugitive who will flee, Or a refugee who will escape.

Zechariah 1:8

I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him.

Zechariah 3:1

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Zechariah 4:2

He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lamp-stand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;

Zechariah 5:2

And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits"

Zechariah 6:1

Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains.

Matthew 2:12

And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Matthew 2:13

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him"

Matthew 27:19

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him"

Acts 9:3

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

Acts 16:9

A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us"

Acts 18:9

And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

Acts 22:18

And I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'

Acts 27:23

"For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Acts 9:10-11

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias" And he said, "Here I am, Lord"

Acts 10:3

About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

Acts 10:9-17

On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

Revelation 1:12

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands;

God does speak through symbols to people. Human beings were created with all the abilities and all the tools that they need to understand dreams and visions. created that way. We do not grasp the abstract so well. We want to see pictures. That is the reason why Jesus spoke and taught through parables. Have you ever heard someone asking, "Don't you understand? Must I draw you a picture?" God will never stop speaking to us this way. At least not until "when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

A very important Scripture to confirm that God speaks to us through dreams and visions is Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:14-18.

Joel 2:28-29

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Acts 2:14-18

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

We are living in the last days. That is why we dream and that is why we see visions.

Pagan dreams and visions dictionaries

When a non-Christian dream he or she is receiving a message from God just like a Christian. Just like us, they also have "emotional restoration dreams" But, they need the Holy Spirit and the word (Bible) of the living God to assist them to interpret the dream or vision. The problem is that they do not have the Holy Spirit. It is quite difficult for an unbeliever to find the meaning or the interpretation of a dream or a vision. It is thus impossible for them to interpret dreams and visions correctly. A Biblical example of such a person was Nebuchadnezzar. He searched for a person who could assist him in interpreting the dream that he had. His own pagan interpreters could not interpret the dream for him. Fortunately for him, he did find a man of God. He found Daniel and

he succeeded in finding the true meaning of his dream. Apart from Nebuchadnezzar, other Biblical heathens like King Abimelech (Gen 20), The Midian Army (Judges 7:13-14), Pharaoh's butler and baker (Gen.40:5), Pharaoh (Gen 41:1,5), Pilot's Wife (Matthew 27:19), and the Wise Men who visited the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:12) all had divine dreams which needed interpretation.

When a person ponders on certain issues God will reveal these issues to them irrespective if such a person is a Christian or not. That is what happened to Nebuchadnezzar and it also happened to Pharaoh. It is still happening today. That is why we must always take note of what we were pondering on the day before the dream or the vision. It is also important to remember what our needs were just before the dream. Sometimes we ponder on a certain need or a certain person or even a certain situation. God reveals many aspects of these things to us. Also, remember the people you had contact with just before the dream or the vision. Sometimes the dream is not about you but about another person that crossed your path. Sometimes God wants you to minister unto such a person (Message or word from God for such a person).

Many times this assisted me a lot to correctly interpret the dream or vision that I received from God. Sometimes people speak to God about a certain problem or a certain situation. They forget about this and when God answers them they are confused, just because they forgot praying about or pondering on the problem or situation before the dream or the vision.

Why does God reveal certain things to unbelievers? I do not know. What I do know is that nobody will have any excuse one day when it comes to spiritual things. As nature reveals to us that there is a God for us to search for this God, so even dreams and visions reveal to us that there is a God. Even if non-believers pursue the meanings of dreams and visions they will find it, just as Christians do. Our God is a God of grace and mercy. He answers to nobody and He does what He wants. We cannot question Him!

The greatest danger for an unbeliever and a Christian for that matter is to consult a pagan dictionary. Would you go to a fortune

teller or a soothsayer to interpret the dreams that God gave you? Nebuchadnezzar attempted to do that without any success:

Daniel 2:2

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

Whatever you read in a pagan dictionary will not be anything other than lies. Consulting these dictionaries will lead to deceit.

Occupied minds

Sometimes people are dreaming about things purely because their minds are excessively occupied by those things. This is an unhealthy or undesirable situation that causes emotional restoration dreams. People are very emotional when they are obsessive.

For instance, when a person is constantly frightened or scared of something he may dream about exactly what scares him. Some people are so preoccupied with their careers and ambitions resulting in them dreaming about those things. Some people can be so jealous of other people and some can be so suspicious about things resulting in them dreaming exactly what they are jealous of or suspicious about. This can be a bit confusing when interpreting a dream. These are classified as carnal dreams. With the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, these types of dreams can be identified and dealt with. Preoccupied people and people displaying an unhealthy obsession with certain things and certain people should be counseled in this regard. Recurring dreams of this nature should be identified and dealt with.

This is what John E. Thomas has to say about this kind of fleshly dreams:

A young lady once told me a dream in which her boyfriend proposed to her. I asked her if they had been together for a while and if she thought it was past time for them to be engaged. She confirmed both of these things were true. The source of the dream

became apparent to me, and I gently told her she wanted to be married so much that she had caused herself to dream about it.

The most common soul dreams involve a coming marriage, promotion, ministry, or season of popularity. When we interpret dreams at film and music festivals, it is amazing how many musicians tell us dreams in which they are finally discovered!

The prophet Jeremiah warned about dreamers who dreamed dreams they caused themselves to dream (Jer. 29:8-9). Not all soul dreams come because someone is a false prophet, like the people Jeremiah was condemning, sometimes we just desire something so strongly that we dream about it.

- John E. Thomas

Please take note that when we interpret dreams and visions incorrectly we will have the same or similar dreams over and over again until we interpret them correctly.

Can satan give us dreams and visions?

Dreams and visions and the interpretation of dreams and visions belong to God. No, the devil and his demons cannot give us dreams or visions.

People who teach that satan can mislead us through dreams and visions often misunderstand the following Scripture:

2 Corinthians 11:14

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

People who believe that satan can give us dreams and visions do not know how to explain certain strange “phenomena” that they observe about this subject. This inability causes them to believe that dreams and visions can be created by evil forces. They also do not know how to deal with reports from people who claim that they had experienced dreams or visions from satan. When these people give details of the dreams or the visions they had, it indeed appears that it did indeed originate from satan or demons.

The truth is that satan cannot give us dreams directly. He hasn't got that power or ability. He can cause us to dream which is a natural result of fear and guilt that he causes in our lives.

People who live in faith, righteousness, and obedience never experience dreams that were indirectly caused by evil forces. Because they do not fear anything they never have nightmares or negative dreams caused by emotional imbalances in their souls.

Some people are tempted into sin, disobedience, and doubt in the love, the favor, and the word of God. People who doubt in God's word and his love often live in fear. The more fear and the more sin in our lives, which causes feelings of guilt, regret, and condemnation, the higher are the possibility that we will experience emotional turmoil in our lives. The more oppressed we are by satan, the more feelings of fear, guilt, and condemnation will build up in our souls.

This will be dealt with by the natural emotional restoration process that God gave us which is called "emotional restoration dreams." We need this kind of dream for our emotional condition to be normalized or to be reset. This is the natural and automatic God-given mechanism that we all have to assist us in coping with the emotional stress that we are almost daily exposed to.

It is this mechanism that sometimes causes nightmares. We will experience nightmares and we will experience fear in these dreams. Even when we wake up after such a dream we will still experience fear. Some people think that such dreams come from satan. This is not true. These types of dreams originated in our souls because of fear, guilt, and condemnation.

After a robbery incident a person I know frequently had dreams of robbers breaking into his house. He frequently had dreams of criminals attacking and hurting him. It was only after he learned to trust and rest in God's love and in His ability and His will to protect him, that this person managed to get rid of fear and also the nightmares.

This is why some people, after watching a movie about the abduction of children will have nightmares that night of their children being abducted or harmed similarly. It was not a dream from satan. It was a dream caused by fear. People who trust in the unfailing love and protection of God watch the same movie without getting nightmares.

Now it is a well-known fact that people who get involved in the occult and satanism do experience things that normal people (Christians and even normal unsaved people) do not experience. These people have opened a lot of doors to the devil and demonic activities in their lives. They are seriously exposed to things that we as Christians and even normal unsaved people are not exposed to.

The bottom line is, nowhere in the Bible does it say that satan can give people dreams and visions. Nowhere in the Bible do we see even one reference or one incident of a person who experienced a dream or a vision given by satan.

When we read 2 Corinthians 11:14 carefully we see that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. What it means is that he can make himself appear like an angel of light. He might even be able to appear like Jesus Christ. This verse has nothing to do with dreams and nothing to do with visions.

I am convinced that satan can appear to people pretending to be an angel of light to deceive them. He can also appear to people as the devil himself to scare them. Can he appear to a Spirit-filled Christian? He did in the life of Smith Wigglesworth. Smith and his wife were disturbed in their sleep one night when the devil suddenly stood at the foot end of their bed. Smith looked at him once and simply said the following words: "Oh! It's only you", and went back to sleep immediately.

There is a possibility that he did not appear to Smith Wigglesworth and his wife that night. It could have been God who exposed the presence of the devil in the room to Smith for some reason, even if it was only to test or to build his faith.

Through the years God has opened the spiritual eyes of many ministers by exposing the works of the devil to them. A person I know of once ministered unto a lady who was extremely depressed. When prayer and counseling did not help this sister, this person's eyes were opened and he saw a goat standing a few feet away. The moment he saw the goat, who was actually a demon, the demon realized that he was exposed and he fled the room immediately when this person took control of the situation. This sister was immediately delivered from the spirit of depression.

If you experience fear, in a dream, can it be from God? I once heard the testimony of a lady who was trapped in bad and evil activities. She once had a dream of a very ugly and devilish monster lurking and hiding in the dark in her garden. In the dream, she was terrified. At one stage she was peeping through her bedroom window when she saw this huge evil creature chewing a screaming woman in its huge mouth. She could hear the woman's bones crack while being chewed to death. She heard the last faint little scream from this woman just before this creature finally swallowed her. At exactly this point she knew that she was, in fact, that woman. She was terrified during and after the dream.

Now many people would say that this dream came from satan. It turned out that this dream was from God. It was his final warning to this woman that if she did not repent immediately from the evil and devilish activities she was involved in, the demon in the dream, was going to cause her to be lost and condemned forever. It was His last warning and fortunately, this woman did repent soon after this dream.

Now Spirit-filled people of God who saw satan appear to them might have seen satan being exposed to them by God. I do admit that satan and demons can appear to Christians. I will not deny that.

Does satan appear to unbelievers? I do not think so. Usually, he does not want unbelievers to know that he exists but I assume that it is possible. Does he appear to satanists and people who are busy with all sorts of witchcraft and occultism? Yes, I do think so. As I

said, people in this category are exposed to a lot of things because of the sin and the devilish activities that they embarked upon.

The mere fact that satan can appear to people does not mean that he can give people dreams and visions. Dreams and visions are a divine ability. Only God can “manufacture” a dream or a vision in such a way that our physical brain and our physical senses can observe or experience it. The following quotations will give us a little more insight into what goes on in our brains when we dream:

The limbic system

The limbic system is a relatively primitive part of the brain where memories and emotions are processed. It is made up of the amygdala, hippocampus, and cingulate gyrus:

The amygdala - acts as a link between a stimulus and

how you react to that stimulus. It takes information from your senses and reacts in the appropriate way, i.e. if something smells bad, we feel disgust.

The hippocampus - the memory teacher. The hippocampus is responsible for memory consolidation. For example, the first time we touch something hot, it learns the experience and replays it repeatedly to another part of the brain called the cerebral cortex. This creates a long-term memory.

The cingulate gyrus - this structure is partly responsible for your physical reactions to situations. It controls skeletal muscle movement and also recognizing which part of the body has been stimulated through touch.

During REM sleep, this part of the brain is highly active. When we see what this part of the brain does, it is easy to relate it to dream production...

Active brain

So, while you may think your brain ‘switches off’ when you go asleep, it is actually highly active for part of the night. It is almost as active during REM sleep as when you are awake! During this

time, it is thought that your brain also works hard to clean itself up...

<http://www.dreams.co.uk/sleep-matters-club/what-happens-in-your-brain-while-you-dream/>

Scientists have identified a specific pattern of activity at the back of the brain which could then predict whether a person was having a dream. Their findings confirm that dreaming can occur both during rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep and non-REM (NREM) sleep.

Researchers have traditionally associated dreaming with the high-frequency brain activity they observed during REM sleep, and which appeared similar to the kind of brain activity seen when people were awake. In contrast, low-frequency brain activity during NREM sleep was interpreted as an absence of dreams.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/what-happens-our-brain-when-we-dream-1616364>

Only God can manipulate the very complex processes in our brains to give us dreams. In plain terms, God bypasses the normal processes deep inside our brains. He interferes with those processes by divinely inserting a God created "video" into our brains and then He hits the "play" button. At that moment we "see" and "hear" a message from heaven. The same with a vision.

It is very important to understand that satan cannot do this. He always had only one weapon and only one power and that is his mouth. He uses that mouth to do two things; to lie and to tempt. He sits on people's shoulders and he makes deceiving suggestions. He tries you to believe his lies and he tries to get you to do bad things. That is all he can do. He has no other power, authority, or ability. He uses the only ability he has to cause you to sin, to doubt, to feel condemned, and to fear. This may lead to nightmares and bad dreams but it does not come from him. He only indirectly causes these dreams because you allowed him to instill fear and condemnation in your life.

On the other hand, it is quite easy for satan to appear to a person. He merely has to walk over from the spiritual realm into the natural realm. Although I said that it is quite easy I do need to mention that satan is tremendously restricted in what he can do when it comes to the natural realm. God has spiritual laws in place which govern both realms and evil forces cannot bypass those laws. They always need legal grounds to do so. For this reason, it is not just a matter of randomly appearing to a person. The bottom line is however that satan can appear to people. When he does appear to people he does the two things that he is very good at; he lies and he tempts. Inserting a dream into a human brain or creating a vision is something else. That requires divine abilities. Only God is the Dream-giver and the Vision-giver. Remember that satan could do a lot of things in the Old Testament that he just could not do anymore after Jesus Christ defeated him on the cross of Cavalry. He was stripped of all his power and authority and he was nullified.

Through the years people noticed “astonishing” things and acts performed by evil spirits when in fact those acts are quite commonplace. What is so profound or so amazing when magicians cause people or objects floating in the air when in fact demons are holding up those people or objects in the air? What is so profound or so amazing when magicians achieve this through soul power? There is nothing miraculous about these things! What is so profound or so amazing to see that demons can “read” minds when in fact everything we think in the natural realm is audibly heard by all spiritual creatures in the spiritual realm? They do not read our minds! They hear us think! In the spiritual realm, this is natural. There is nothing miraculous about that! It is commonplace and simple!

Causing a person to dream or creating a vision is quite a different story. Only God can do that. People who claim that they experienced a vision from Jesus Christ or a vision of an angel appearing to them when details in that vision contradict Scripture have been misled. It was not a vision and it was not Jesus Christ or angels. It was satan appearing to them as an angel.

It is common knowledge that Jesus Christ and his angels have appeared to people many times through the ages. They still do appear to people even today. Ask Muslims. They can tell you a lot about Christ or angels appearing to them. This happens a lot more lately than in the past. Christ and his angels will probably appear to people until the end of the age. The devil and his demons can do the same but as I said, this has nothing to do with dreams and visions.

We never have to fear that we might be misled by satan, in a dream or a vision, pretending that the dream or the vision is from God. This will never happen. But he can deceive us when he appears to us. The Bible says that he “is transformed into an angel of light.” He can appear to people without them knowing that he is not Jesus Christ or an angel of light. Without them knowing that this person in front of them is the devil himself! There is no atmosphere of evil. No bells of warnings going off. Absolutely nothing to warn you except one thing only: Lies and deceit!

What we do need to do is the following: Whenever Jesus Christ or an angel appears to you, always check if what they tell you conforms with the Scripture, always ask them to give you a Scripture reference to confirm that the statements they make are true and legitimate. If we follow this rule we cannot be deceived. Jesus Christ appeared to Kenneth Hagin nine times in his life and each time Kenneth did exactly this. Every time this happened, without any exception, Jesus did give Kenneth the Scripture references that he required.

We never have to fear that we will be deceived when we have dreams or visions or when angels appear to us as long as we check all information with the Scripture.

This brings me to a Scripture that some people sometimes use to support their belief that the devil can cause us to dream:

Job 4:12-16

12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,

14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:

16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying...

I agree with Roger Barrier's explanation of this Scripture. According to him Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, experienced a situation where he was awakening from deep sleep into a full-blown satanic attack. I also had similar experiences in my life. I can remember on one occasion I woke up from a nightmare and then experienced an evil presence in the room. On another occasion, I woke up from a deep dreamless sleep and then experienced the presence of an evil spirit next to my bed. I was woken up from my sleep by this spirit. On both occasions, I was caught off guard and for a few seconds terrified, confused, and paralyzed. I could not act for a few seconds. I could not call on the Name of Jesus and I could not rebuke the evil spirits in my room. At least not until I recovered. Why and how does this happen?

Consciousness occurs when we are awake; we are in a sub-conscious state when we are asleep. When we go to sleep our conscious mind makes a "hand-off" to our sub-conscious. When we sleep our brains also produce chemicals to paralyze our bodies. Otherwise, we would act out our dreams. Sleepwalkers have a deficiency of these chemicals, some more than others.

In the situations that I mentioned above I was in a "paralyzed" state and thus couldn't move or speak until the transition of control was returned to my conscious mind. I was hindered from calling out the Name of Jesus until the transition was complete and then I was back in control of my voice and able to call out for Jesus.

Eliphaz's experience with the evil spirit occurred in that transition moment from "paralyzed" subconscious sleep to wakeful consciousness. It might have been preceded by a nightmare or a dream that made him restless but his experience was an outright demonic attack.

There is no doubt that Eliphaz awakened terrified and afraid amid a full-blown satanic attack. I do not believe that satan can enter, influence, or control our subconscious minds. His attacks are limited to the times when we are fully awake and can defend ourselves.

Satan can grab a "foothold" in our lives. Paul tells us that this may occur if we continue to sin again and again in the same area. Control of that particular area is up for grabs and if satan gains control we must repent of our sin and take authority of our lives again. When the sin is forgiven satan no longer has a foothold (James 4:7).

Sometimes satan uses these footholds to get to us. As I mentioned already, it is these footholds (sin, doubt, guilt, condemnation) that cause nightmares. He indirectly causes us to dream and he is sometimes ready to follow such a dream up with a full-blown demonic attack just when we are at our weakest, those few seconds whilst we are waking up. He does this to create fear in our lives and to influence us when God instills faith in our lives.

It was during these few seconds that Eliphaz was influenced by the evil spirit that passed before his eyes. He could see this evil spirit and he could hear this spirit. I did not mention how the evil spirit in my room woke me up that night that I mentioned above. Although it was quiet in my room, in the spirit world this demon was screaming at me at the top of his voice whilst stamping his feet quite hard on the floor to attract my attention. My wife who was sleeping next to me was unaware of this. She did not hear a sound. I did.

Eliphaz was experiencing a demonic attack just like I did. This was not a dream or a vision that he experienced but a visitation from an evil spirit.

There is another aspect about dreams and visions that I mentioned in the post, "Former Satanists Cause Vulnerabilities In Church". In this post, I mentioned that there are people in the church who outright lie about many things in their lives. They do it on purpose to hurt the body of Christ. They tell lies about dreams and visions, doctrines, and all sorts of spiritual experiences in their lives. Some people are being deceived and they deceive other people without even knowing it. This is not what I am talking about here. I am talking about people who purposely infiltrate the church to teach erroneous doctrines of devils. We read about them in the Bible:

Zechariah 10:2

For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...

Unfortunately, this warning is still applicable. Many people deceive many people in the church and elsewhere daily, and it will never stop.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Mathew 24:4

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

The unfortunate reality:

- People do interpret their dreams, visions, and experiences incorrectly.
- People just lie outright about their experiences. Some never saw a vision in their lives yet they zealously testify of what God showed them in a particular vision.
- People add to and subtract details about their visions or the dreams they had.
- People have false experiences, especially satanists because of living in a world filled with all sorts of evil deceptions.

Some people think satan or demons are infiltrating their minds during nightmares, but there is no passage in the Bible to substantiate this. There are no biblical incidents of demonic forces communicating with people during dreams or nightmares. Nightmares are nothing more than the brain's way of contending with our fears and concerns as it continues to function during sleep cycles.

If a Christian experiences continual, frequent nightmares that are interrupting sleep and causing an emotional disturbance regularly they need to deal with their fears. They need to allow God to build up their faith so that they can rest in his love. Prayer is our most potent weapon against any kind of emotional or spiritual distress. Praying for fifteen or twenty minutes before sleep is the most effective way to calm the mind and heart and prepare for restful sleep. God grants wisdom to those who seek it from Him (James 1:5), and He has also promised His peace to all who seek it. "Do

not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This was a short excerpt from ASR Martins’ “The Authentic Christian Dreams and Visions Symbols Dictionary”

This book also includes more than 800 pages of symbols and its meanings...