



# ***Principles of Church Growth***

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## CHAPTER 1

# Numbers Are Important.

I was shocked. I had just asked the Bible institute class which is better, to win one, two, or ten people to Christ. The students were emphatic that one is just as good as ten!

I said, “If you, your wife, your children, your mother, brothers, and sisters were all trapped in a burning building, and a fireman rescued one of your children; are you saying that rescuing only one is just as good as rescuing all of you?!!”

Of course rescuing two is better than rescuing one!

Rescuing ten is **ten times as good** as rescuing one!

Suppose your boat sank many miles from land. You and your friends are all exhausted in the high waves. Finally a rescue party arrives. Would you be happy if they were content to save just one (of the others)?

But the **lake of fire** is infinitely more dreadful than burning to death or drowning! Jesus called it everlasting fire and everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:41,46)!

How wicked to not care if many are saved!

It is crucial that the church understand the importance of numbers!

God speaks often of numbers in the Bible. In fact, the fourth book of the Bible is called *Numbers*! Large sections of Numbers, I Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other Bible books go to great lengths telling *how many* came out of Egypt, *how many* sided with King David, *how many* came back to the Holy Land, and so on. Then when the disciples obeyed Jesus after toiling all night and catching nothing, they caught a multitude, too many to draw in, specifically 153 great fishes.

The Holy Spirit makes a point to tell us that at Pentecost about 3000 were added to the church and that the Lord added to the church daily. Then “**many... believed, and the number of the men was about 5000**” (Acts 4:4). Later, “**believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women**” (Acts 5:14). In Acts 6:7, “**the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**” Also in Acts 9:31 they were multiplied, and then in Acts 11:21 a great number believed. Then, through Barnabas many people were added to the Lord (11:24). The word of God continued to grow and multiply (12:24), and still later they “**increased in number daily**” (16:5).

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So numbers are important. But is it right for us count them? Didn't David bring judgment on Israel when he numbered them? Yes. Seventy thousand men died! Does Scripture give any clue as to why? Yes.

**And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them (Exodus 30:11,12).**

Only the ransomed were to be numbered, so there would be no plague. This warning reminds me that it is not the number on the church roll that is important. It is not the number attending church that is important. It is the number **ransomed** by Christ that is important! The number actually saved is dreadfully important!

They were commanded to number the people, over and over. Every time a number of people is given in the Bible, they were numbered!

How important are numbers? Well, if the number is one, and that one is myself, then one is infinitely important—whether I spend eternity in pleasure and fullness of joy in heaven, or eternity in hell fire. So every one is infinitely important. God commanded, **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** I must want each one to be saved just as I would want to be saved from everlasting fire!

Missionary statesman Robertson McQuilkin said, “Don't talk about *mere* numbers. *No immortal soul is mere!*”

Numbers are important!

An orange tree that bears 300 oranges is 300 times as good as a tree that bears only one! Jesus said, **“Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples” (John 15:8).** So numbers are important to God. Jesus is worthy enough to bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10), **“that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”** (Romans 8:29).

Understanding the importance of numbers, of each immortal soul, will spur the church to obedience and greater growth.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Is winning two to Christ better than winning one?
2. Why?
3. Are you glad *you* are not condemned to the Lake of fire?
4. Are you seeking to love your neighbor *as yourself*?



## CHAPTER 2

### **Recognize That There Is a Great Harvest.**

If we think that only a few *can* be saved, we will not plan for many, we will not pray for many, we will not work for many to be saved. Jesus said, “**According to your faith be it unto you**” (Matthew 9:29). If we know the facts we can have confident faith.

The fact is, there is a great harvest. Jesus said, “**The harvest truly is great**” (Luke 10:2), not scarce, not meager. In Matthew 9:37 He said the harvest is plenteous.

The thought that only a very few *can* be saved is a great hindrance to church growth.

### *Reflect & Apply*

Are there only a few or many who can be saved?

## CHAPTER 3

### **Pray for Laborers.**

If there is such a great harvest, why are there not more coming to Christ?

**The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:37,38).**

The problem is not with the harvest. The harvest is *plenteous*. Many could be saved. The problem is with the laborers! The laborers are few. Not many are really laboring in the harvest! Who is really *working* at making disciples? There are a good many church workers, working on committees, working in offices, working at all manner of ministries. Not many labor at winning the lost, at harvesting!

Many years ago I heard Evangelist John R. Rice preach on this great text. He challenged me to **work** at soul winning. He challenged me to schedule a certain number of hours of personal soul winning each week. My ministry was transformed from occasionally seeing professions of faith, to regularly seeing professions of faith.

Since so few are working in this great harvest, Jesus told us to *pray* that God will send forth laborers into His harvest.

How many more workers would be thrust into the harvest if God's people faithfully prayed for laborers? How many more lost people would be saved into God's kingdom?

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Why are so few being saved?
2. What did Jesus command us to do about it (Matthew 9:38)?
3. Will you set out to regularly pray that God will send out laborers into His harvest?
4. Will you schedule yourself to labor *in harvesting*?
5. Write out your plan to harvest, at least one thing you will do.

## CHAPTER 4

# Obey the Great Commission.

Five times the Lord Jesus gave us the Great Commission. Five times the Holy Spirit recorded the Great Commission for us in the Scriptures.

**Matthew 28:19,20** “Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

**Mark 16:15,16** “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

**Luke 24:47** “...And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

**John 20:21** “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

**Acts 1:8** “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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Who is this command for? Is the Great Commission for us, or was it just for the eleven apostles who heard it? We know it is for us as well, because Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples and to teach *them* to obey *all the commands* Jesus had given the apostles. So each succeeding generation of believers is to be taught to obey all of Christ’s commands including this command to go and make disciples.

In addition, this command and promise are “**to the end of the world,**” not just for the first century apostles. Furthermore, loving our neighbors as ourselves would certainly require our proclaiming the good news of salvation and giving fair warning of hell, “**he that believeth not shall be damned**” (Mark 16:16).

Churches grow when pastors obey the Great Commission and teach their people to obey the Great Commission.

When Christians *obey* the Great Commission there will be a tremendous increase in church growth. It is a matter of *obedience*. Jesus said, “**Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?**” (Luke 6:46). Each Christian must face this crucial question. Am I obedient or disobedient? Am I going? Am I making disciples?

*Reflect & Apply*

1. Is the command to go and make disciples for us, or just for the eleven who heard it?
2. How do you know?
3. Are you obeying this command?
4. Will you set out to obey this command as well as you can?
5. Does your church teach its Christians to go and make disciples?

## CHAPTER 5

# Go in the Power of the Holy Spirit.

There is a huge difference between preaching, and preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit!

After Jesus gave the apostles the Great Commission, He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were “**endued with power from on high**” (Luke 24:49). He said in Acts 1:4 & 8 “**to wait for the promise of the Father**” and “**ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me ....**” We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to effectively obey the Great Commission, to make disciples. The book of Acts records the amazing growth (in spite of huge obstacles) after the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Just a few days before Pentecost, the apostles had been powerless cowards. At the arrest of Jesus “they all forsook Him and fled” (Mark 14:50). About fifty days later they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. What a radical change!

Now Peter boldly preached the gospel. Acts 2:37-47 tells the effects. The listeners were pricked in their hearts with conviction. There were not just a few professions of faith! *Three thousand were saved and baptized!* They *continued steadfastly* in the teaching, fellowship, meals together, and prayers! Others took note and feared! Many signs and wonders were done! Believers loved each other enough to share what they had so that no one lacked! They continued in unity, gladness, and praise! What plain evidence that the apostles witnessed with power! These converts were real Christians!

What a contrast to much of what we see today posing as Bible Christianity! We need a fresh infilling with the Holy Spirit!

Certainly all true Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit: “**if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His**” (Romans 8:9). But not all Christians are *filled* with the Holy Spirit. We are commanded, “**Be filled with the Spirit**” (Ephesians 5:18). God would not command us to be filled with the Spirit if we were all always automatically filled with the Spirit anyway.

I remember, as a young man, reading about how great preachers such D. L. Moody and Charles G. Finney and others were definitely filled with the Holy Spirit and how the power of God came on them resulting in the salvation of multitudes. I was hungry for more than what I was seeing!

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One book was especially helpful, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, by James G. Lawson. In it Evangelist D. L. Moody said:

I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York— oh, what a day! — I cannot describe it... I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to hold back His hand.

I went back to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world— it would be like dust in the balance.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus told us how we can receive this blessing:

**If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:13).**

**I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring (Isaiah 44:3).**

After the disciples “**all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication**” suddenly “**they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**” with many remarkable and wonderful evidences following.

Are you satisfied with what you are seeing and experiencing?

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do all Christians have the Holy Spirit?
2. How do you know?
3. Are all Christians *filled* with the Spirit?
4. How do you know?
5. How can you receive the fullness of the Spirit?
6. What are some evidences of being filled with the Spirit?
  - From Acts 1:8
  - From Ephesians 5:18-21
7. Will you trust God continually to fill you with His Spirit?

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<sup>1</sup> James G. Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, 1998, p. 237.



## CHAPTER 6

# Happy Christians Draw Others to Christ.

One evidence of a Spirit-filled Christian is a life of praise and thanks to God:

**...“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God...” (Ephesians 5:18-20).**

When we are cheerful we are much more winsome to the world! **“And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord”** (Psalms 40:3). When we are praising God through all the ups and downs of life, many will notice, take God seriously, and trust Him. Notice again. **“Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”** Happy, praising Christians bring others to faith in Christ.

Years ago a man told me something about my attitude I needed to hear (but did not like.) He was an unbeliever I was trying to win. He said, “You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!”

Sometimes we need to pray, **“Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation... then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinner shall be converted unto Thee”** (Psalms 51:12,13).

After many years of preaching in hundreds of places in various countries I think I can safely say that churches characterized by happy, enthusiastic singing tend to be full, growing churches. Churches where singing is dull are often stagnant in their growth.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do people think you are a happy person?
2. Do others hear you singing and praising God?
3. Do you need to pray, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation”?
4. Will you set out to obey the command, “Rejoice evermore”?

## CHAPTER 7

### **Forsake All, and Follow Jesus.**

Why are some people such effective soul winners? The apostles won many people who stayed true to Jesus through persecution and death. The apostles had fruit that remained (John 15:16). Jesus had said, **“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”** (Matthew 4:19). They forsook all and followed Him. Jesus made them effective fishers of men.

If we would be His disciples, we must do the same. He offers no short cuts. **“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple”** (Luke 14:33). **“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”** (Luke 9:23). Instead of emphasizing educational, social, personality, or technical “requirements” to effective service, we need to return to *the* requirement: complete surrender to Jesus and disciplining ourselves to obey whatever He says. *He* will make us fishers of men if we follow Him.

These apostles certainly did not have the high tech advantages we have. But they were effective! Most of them did not have what some would consider the educational requirements. They had forsaken all to follow Jesus, though. Jesus did what He said He would do. He made them fishers of men! They turned the world upside down!

The real requirement to become a fisher of men is not to make just a little change, but to forsake all and follow Jesus, obeying Him regardless of how we feel or what others think. We will recognize that all that we have is His. We will try to use it all as He wants it used.

We must forsake all to follow Jesus; He will make us effective fishers of men.

If we have forsaken all to follow Jesus, friends and relatives will not keep us from serving Him. *Our entire time is His*. This fact alone will make a huge difference in the number of people saved.

If we have forsaken all to follow Jesus, *all of our belongings are His to use for His kingdom*. Of course, this fact will make a huge difference in the progress of His kingdom!

- Many of the lost will be attracted to Jesus when they see how Christians love each other and give to those in need.
- Many more Christian workers can be sent to effective training institutions.
- Many more missionaries can be supported and sent as laborers into the harvest.
- Many more Bibles, tracts, and other effective literature can be distributed.
- Evangelistic broadcasting, tapes, and videos can be multiplied, especially on needier fields.

*Reflect & Apply*

1. Have you forsaken all to follow Jesus?
2. Do you deny yourself daily to follow Jesus?
3. Does Jesus have some of your time, and the rest is yours?
4. Are you using all of your possessions the way He wants them used (since they all belong to Him)?
5. Do you regularly go over the commands in the New Testament to make sure you are obeying them?

## CHAPTER 8

# Concentrate on the Responsive.

If your goal was to catch as many fish as possible, would you:

1. Fish where you could also work on other jobs?
2. Fish where everyone else was fishing?
3. Fish where nobody else was fishing?
4. Fish where the most fish are?
5. Fish where the fish are biting the best?
6. Fish where there is the best entertainment?
7. Fish where you have the best view?
8. Fish where it is most comfortable?
9. Fish beside your girl friend?

I would go where the fish are biting best, or where I could *catch* the most. Just going to where the most people are does not mean you win the most. Just going where no one else is working does not mean you win the most.

Not all countries or cultures are equally responsive. A country is made up of a variety of groups and subgroups of varying receptivity. Some are more open to the Gospel. Some are more resistant. I try to go where I can bring the most to salvation. I have only a limited time here on earth. Jesus commanded, "Go and make disciples." I want to do the best job I can to obey that command. I want to spend my life in the most profitable way to the Lord in making disciples! I want to spend my time where I can win the most for Jesus!

But does the Bible teach that we should concentrate on the responsive? God certainly loves the whole world, and Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, and Jesus commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature. But God's method seems to be to concentrate on the responsive in order to reach the rest. God called Abraham (who was very responsive) and showed His mercy to him in order to bring salvation to the rest of the world.

**I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:2,3).**

Jesus commanded His apostles to flee to another city if they were persecuted in one city. He said if they don't receive you or hear your words to shake off the dust of your feet against them. There are others who will hear. Leave the resistant; go to the responsive.

It is both logical and Scriptural to concentrate on the responsive.

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But, of course, if God clearly leads you to some who seem unresponsive, you go. He is Lord. Philip was clearly led (by the angel of the Lord) to leave a place of many conversions to preach to one man, the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Only God knows which individuals will reach many others and which groups are about to turn responsive.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do you know which kinds of people are most receptive in your area?
2. Are you willing to disciple people outside of your race or social class?
3. Are you willing to go “where the fish are biting”?
4. Do you tend to support the ministries that are bearing the most fruit?

## CHAPTER 9

# Have Large Families, and Train Them to Serve God.

One of the first commands in the Bible is to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). Nowhere in the Bible has God done away with this commandment. Children are clearly a blessing. **“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward”**. They can be a great asset in the Lord’s battles: **“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.”** Having many children is a *blessing*: **“Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them”** (Psalms 127:3,4,5). **“He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children”** (Ps. 115: 13,14). This blessing is repeated in Psalm 128:1-3:

**Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord... happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine... thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.**

**And God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God... (I Chronicles 25:5,6).**

Notice:

- God gave Heman 14 sons and 3 daughters.
- They all served the Lord.
- They were all under the hand of their father.

Also Obededom had eight sons **“for God blessed him”** (I Chronicles 26:5).

Evidently, it is important to God who begat us and who we beget. God tells us nothing about many people in the Bible except who begat them and who they begat. The Scripture notes that Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters (1 Chronicles 4:27). **“And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons’ sons, an hundred and fifty”** (1 Chronicles 8:40). I certainly hope that all the sons God gives me become mighty men of valour in God’s service!

Psalm 112 tells us how we can have descendants who are mighty upon earth. **“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth”** (verses 1,2).

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Children can be *trained* so that even when they are old, they will not depart from the right way. **“Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”** (Proverbs 22:6). These are words of certainty (verse 21). Of course, there is a vast difference between telling children the right way or teaching good Bible doctrine, and *training* them to consistently obey, thank and praise God, be truthful, work hard, serve God (instead of money), disciple others, and so on!

But it will definitely take much time and effort. **“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”** (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). In order to obey this command we will have to have our children around us as we sit in our houses, walk, lie down, and rise up. If our work takes us away from them or we send them away too much for education or other purposes, then we cannot obey this command.

Furthermore, I must not nullify the training of my children by sending them off for many hours a week to be among worldly peers or let them absorb ungodly TV. **“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’”** (1 Corinthians 15:33). That is one big reason we home school our children.

And God will hold us responsible for how our children turn out. **“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief..** (Hebrews 13:17). Note that God held Eli responsible for the wickedness of his sons (1 Samuel 2:27ff. and 3:13). Of course God held the sons responsible, too.

Being godly parents is not enough. David was a man after God’s own heart, used by God to write Scripture and to win supernatural victories for Israel, but his own sons Absalom and Adonijah wickedly usurped the throne. David failed. Of Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:6 says, “his father had not displeased him at any time....”

My dad was not afraid to displease me! He knew what the Bible says about disciplining children, and he practiced it. (Now I’m thankful!)

**He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him be-times [early] (Proverbs 13:24).**

**Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (Proverbs 23:13,14).**

**Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools (Proverbs 19:29).**

**Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart (Proverbs 20:30).**

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**The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (Proverbs 29:15).**

What do these verses on disciplining children have to do with church growth? *A lot!* Many, many children of effective pastors, evangelists, and missionaries have been lost, who could have been trained to be successful harvesters for God's kingdom. Instead of being lost, they could have won thousands of others themselves!

**Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul (Proverbs 29:17).**

**And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).**

**Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:11).**

My parents' discipline of me has helped me have a happier, more peaceful, and a more fruitful life.

Children of Christians and especially children of pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and other Christian workers ought to be a vast source of laborers in the harvest. It is normal for a son to follow in his father's steps and line of work: Paul said of Timothy, "**...as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel**" (Philippians 2:22).

My dad guided me (in fact, all six of us) into helping in his evangelistic work when we became young adults. His ministry was bringing pictured evangelistic messages into hundreds of public schools. We, his children, had similar gifts and abilities. He had trained us. It was natural that we followed in his steps.

Pastors' sons ought to have great insight and experience through watching and helping their dads, thus preparing them to pastor. The same is true with evangelists and missionaries. Missionaries' kids have a big head start over other missionary candidates in knowing the language, culture, and skills of their work.

Many would object to this concept, saying Christian workers should wait until their children are *called* by God before expecting them or guiding them to spend their lives serving God. But parents *should* train their children to obey— such commands as "preach the Gospel" and "make disciples." The fact is, a "call" is *not* a qualification even to pastor. Check the qualifications of a pastor in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. "**A bishop then must be blameless...**" There is no mention of a "call." So if a man is blameless and meets the qualifications listed he is fit to be a pastor.

Yet many, many children of Christian leaders do not even follow in the faith, let alone spend their lives serving God as their parents did. Yet "**having faithful children**" is a qualification of being a pastor (Titus 1:6). "**For if a man know not how to rule his own house,**

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**how shall he take care of the church of God?”** (I Timothy 3:5). Christian men ought to know how to rule their households and bring them up to serve God.

God commended Abraham, **“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord...”** (Gen. 18:19). Joshua said, **“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”** (Josh. 24:15).

So having many children is a blessing, and they can and should be trained to serve God and make disciples. Sadly, many effective Christian workers do not put priority on training their own children to obey and serve God. They are too busy with “ministry”! Short sighted! Disobedient.

Now let’s consider the effects of following these principals. Let’s use our imagination. Suppose one church of 100 couples averaged **five** children per family and trained them to serve God. In six generations at that rate they would produce about 200,000 Christian workers! One hundred and twenty-two thousand just in the sixth generation! Not to mention all the disciples they would make directly and indirectly all over the world!

But if 100 couples averaged only **two** children per family (slightly higher than the current American average), then after six generations at that average there would still be only 100 couples per generation!

Then imagine the average is **ten**! In those six generations from the year 1800 to 2000 they would produce more than *fifteen million* Christian workers, *just* in the sixth generation!! How many millions and millions of souls and Christian workers would they win from the outside! And consider 15,000,000 committed Christian voters *plus* all the others they would win and influence! And consider the effects on the economy with all those honest, hard working people. Also, I wonder how many hundreds of thousands of square miles of desert God would bless and make fruitful. The Bible makes it clear that He turns fruitful lands into deserts for the wickedness of their inhabitants, and **“He turneth the wilderness into a standing water... which may yield fruits of increase”** when they turn to Him (Psalm 107:35ff.).

I know that not every couple is able to have ten children, but you can see the effects if God’s people were more obedient to His command to be fruitful and multiply.

It is true that the Bible gives some good reasons not to marry and have children, such as times of persecution (Matthew 24:19 and I Corinthians 7:26). And some have not married in order to give themselves more fully to the service of the Lord (Matthew 19:12 and I Corinthians 7:32-35). But it is ironic that in the past two or three generations it has become fashionable in America to limit the number of children to an average of less than two “because we cannot afford more.” It is ironic because Americans have become one of the richest cultures in history, and suddenly we cannot afford to have more children!

Having many children and training them to serve God in His harvest is a *great* means of discipling many for His kingdom.

*Reflect & Apply*

1. What are the reasons usually given for birth control?
2. What are the reasons God gives for not having children?
3. Are children a blessing?
4. Are you willing to have a large family?
5. How can you have descendants who are “mighty upon earth”?
6. Can children be trained so that they will turn out right?
7. How can you know with certainty?
8. Did God hold Eli partly responsible for the wickedness of his sons?
9. Does being a godly parent ensure having godly children?
10. How do you know?
11. Does God’s Word so live in you that your children hear you speak of it when you sit down, walk around, lie down, and get up?
12. Are you teaching God’s Word to your children *diligently*?
13. If I don’t use the rod I \_\_\_\_\_ my son.
14. A spanking that really hurts reaches the \_\_\_\_\_.
15. What must parents do so the children will bring them delight and rest?
16. Is it normal for a son to follow in the vocation of his father?
17. Is a man qualified to pastor if his children are ungodly?
18. Is a “call” a qualification listed in the Bible for a pastor (a bishop or an elder)?
19. Should a man *rule* his home?
20. Should we wait for our children to have a special call before we train them to preach and make disciples?
21. Why?
22. What do evil companionships do?
23. Are you training your children to love and serve God in His harvest?
24. If Christians multiplied so that there were many more millions of godly people, is there any reason to believe God would make more of the earth’s land fruitful?

## CHAPTER 10

# Miracles, Especially Healings, Promote Growth.

Imagine! Everyone in two towns turns to the Lord! What could trigger such an amazing wonder? A healing. When Peter healed Aeneas who had been bedridden for eight years **“all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord”** (Acts 9:35).

When he raised Dorcas from the dead, **“it was known throughout all Joppa... and many believed in the Lord”** (Acts 9:42).

The same was true in the ministry of Jesus. After the resurrection of Lazarus many of the Jews, when they **“had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him”** (John 11:45). **“And many other signs truly did Jesus... but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name”** (John 20:30,31).

But it was not just Christ and His apostles who did mighty works, helping many others believe. **“Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people”** (Acts 6:8). Also when Philip preached Christ **“the people gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing, and seeing the miracles which he did”** (Acts 8:6).

In fact, Jesus said that the wicked cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented if they had seen miracles like the ones Jesus did in Chorazin and Bethsaida. But it is also true that miracles do not always bring people to faith. Chorazin and Bethsaida did not repent.

**Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matthew 11:21).**

We are repeatedly commanded to **“seek the Lord and His strength”** (1 Chronicles 16:11 also Psalm 105:4). Jesus did not do many mighty works in His own country because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:58).

I do not want to be the hindrance to God’s miraculous working because my unbelief! **“He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief”** (Mark 6:5,6).

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Revival suddenly came to the island of Timor in Indonesia in September, 1965, when there was repentance, confession, renunciation of occult practices, and humility. Many miraculous events occurred along with extensive evangelism done by numerous teams. “Thousands of Muslims were converted, the biggest impact on Islam in history”,<sup>2</sup> until then.

The Reformed Church Presbytery on Timor recorded 80,000 conversions in the first year of the revival there, half of those being former communists. They noted that some 15,000 people had been permanently healed that year. After three years the number of converts had grown to 200,000.<sup>3</sup>

Many, many examples could be given from many denominations, both Pentecostal and nonpentecostal, of God’s healing and other miraculous works.

That is not to say that every Christian should expect the gift of healing or of working miracles. **“For the body is not one member, but many.... But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.... Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing?”** (I Corinthians 12:14,18,29,30).

Nor should we think that every *real* man of God would certainly work miracles. John the Baptist was greater than Moses, Elijah, or Elisha who all worked many miracles. In fact John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived until the time of Christ (Matthew 11:11), and he turned many to the Lord, but he had a reputation of not working miracles (John 10:41).

But we should not shut our hearts and minds to God’s mighty working in our day. **“...I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you”** (Acts 13:41).

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Can you list some miracles in the Bible that resulted in people believing on Jesus?
2. Do miracles always bring people to faith?
3. What limited the power of Jesus to work miracles?
4. Does the Bible teach that all Christians have or should have the gift of healing (1 Corinthians 12:30)?
5. If a person is a really great Christian, does it follow that he will be able to work miracles?
6. Is it possible that God could be working a great work in our day and that we would not believe, even if we heard about it?

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<sup>2</sup> Geoff Waugh, *Flashpoints of Revival*, 1998, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Waugh, 1998, p. 67.

## CHAPTER 11

# Distinguish Between Real Growth and False Growth.

When we speak of church growth, the important thing is not an increase in church attendance, or a large number on the church roll, or merely outward professions of faith, but *bringing them into God's Kingdom!*

Some churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, may have huge numbers of followers with almost no knowledge of salvation by grace. Other churches may be free of heresies but still be filled with worldly people never born again. And many have been led to a profession of faith without any repentance. They think they are saved, but there is no change in their lives.

How can people *know* that they really know the Lord?

**And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (I John 2:3,4).**

**We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14).**

The message of the Great Commission is repentance. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). So on the day of Pentecost when Peter was asked, "What shall we do?" Peter answered, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...**" (Acts 2:37,38). Paul summarized his message by saying "**...They should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance**" (Acts 26:20).

Churches around the world are flooded with people claiming to be Christians but with little or no change in the way they live from day to day. What does the Bible say about those who continue to live a wicked life?

**For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5)**

**Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,**

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**nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed... (1 Corinthians 6:9-11a).**

Jesus said, **“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 7:21). So we need to strive to bring people to genuine faith and the resulting obedience. And we need to help people see if they are truly saved. **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the the faith”** (2 Corinthians 13:5). **“He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him”** (Hebrews 5:9).

Real growth is more people actually born again, genuine disciples. False growth is merely more church members, or more baptisms, or more attending church, or more mistakenly thinking they are saved.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Is it possible that churches have great growth with no one added to God’s kingdom?
2. Do some people make a profession of faith who do not get born again?
3. How can you tell if you really know the Lord?
4. Is repentance in the message of the Great Commission?
5. Do you emphasize repentance in your witness?
6. Will people who call Jesus “Lord” but who continue on as fornicators, homosexuals, thieves, and idolaters inherit God’s kingdom?
7. How do you know?

## CHAPTER 12

# Distinguish Between Short Term Growth and Long Term Growth.

The goal of this study is to promote the most people genuinely saved possible in the long run. Winning many today is very good, but also discipling them in such a way that they and their spiritual descendants will be continuing to disciple many others for generations to come is much better!

A church or an individual may be winning many now but may have weaknesses or unscriptural practices that will later come to fruition and hinder people from coming to Christ in the future. Secret sins may show up in results only years later.

There is a long list of names and numbers in both Ezra and Nehemiah that has a challenging question. The list tells how many came back to Jerusalem from each family after seventy or more years of captivity in Babylon. The group with the smallest number was “**the men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two**” (Nehemiah 7:28). The most was “**the children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty**” (Nehemiah 7:38).

As I read these two almost identical lists (Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7) it makes me question how many of my spiritual children will still be following Jesus 70 years later. Or how many total spiritual descendants will I have after 70 years. How genuine are my converts? How well disciplined are they so that they will bear much fruit?

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do you want those you have led to Christ to be healthy and leading others to Christ?
2. How can you help them?

## CHAPTER 13

# Obey the Great Commission Fully.

In order to make the most disciples in the long run, it is important to fully obey the Great Commission. Instead of merely leading people to saving faith in Christ, the command is to (1) go, (2) make disciples of all nations, (3) baptize them, and (4) teach them to obey all that Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:19,20).

God is more interested in church growth than we are! Certainly God has demonstrated that He loves the world and desires that all be saved.

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).**

**Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).**

It follows that the best way to win the most people in the long run is to carefully obey all that God commands. Surely He knows the best way better than we do!

**This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8).**

We need all of the Bible. Our converts need all of the Bible. **“All Scripture... is profitable... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Timothy 3:16,17). **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”** (Luke 4:4). Do not think you must choose between “soul winning” and “deeper life.” You need it all! Many soul winners have ruined their lives and ministries because they did not learn the Bible teaching on victory over sin.

By obeying all that He has commanded, we will continue to be spiritually strong and healthy and avoid pitfalls that would destroy us and our ministries. By teaching others to obey all His commands we can extend successful ministries to many others for a long time! **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”** (Luke 4:4).

The New Testament pattern for teaching, fellowship, and growth is in a *healthy* local church: **“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”** (Hebrews 10: 25). But if the church is filled with divisions, **“ye come together not for the better, but for the worse”** (1 Corinthians 11:17). **“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark**

**them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).**

A lukewarm or sick church may do more harm than good to the new believer. Jesus said to the church at Laodicea, **“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew [vomit] thee out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:16).**

So Jesus commanded us to (1) go and (2) make disciples, (3) baptizing them, (4) teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. Of course, this last part of the command includes training the converts to go and make disciples. We must train others.

**And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).**

Then an important part of fulfilling the Great Commission is to *send others*.

**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

**How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?**

**And how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Romans 10:13-15).**

The Apostle Paul expected those whom he had helped spiritually to help him financially to go on to the next place so he could preach and win more. They would send him. (See Romans 15:24 and Acts 15:3).

We have a huge responsibility to give to effective disciplers who are going out as missionaries. As God has blessed us, we can bless them, so they can carry the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

**God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.  
God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him (Psalms 67:1, 2, 7).**

*Reflect & Apply*

1. What are the four parts of the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28:19,20?
2. Which parts do you need to obey better?
3. Which parts of the Bible do you need?
4. Do you have a plan to get to know *all* parts of the Bible? Write down your plan.
5. Would your teaching be summarized as teaching your students to obey God's commands, or teaching them a defense of a system or a tradition, such as covenant theology or dispensational theology or Pentecostalism or fundamentalism?
6. According to 2 Timothy 2:2 what kind of men should we invest our training in?
7. Are you training others to go and make disciples?
8. What is one reason God blesses us (according to Psalm 67)?

## CHAPTER 14

# Ask God for Great Blessing.

## For Yourself

God commands us to not only pray for blessing, but to pray for great blessing. **“Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it”** (Psalms 81:10). So if we ask for only a little blessing we are sinfully disobedient. **“Ye have not, because ye ask not”** (James 4:2). God gives good things to those who *ask* Him (Matthew 7:11). God’s Word encourages boldness in prayer. **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace...”** (Hebrews 4:16). **“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”** (Romans 8:32).

William Carey, known as the father of modern missions, said, “Expect great things [from God]; attempt great things [for God].”<sup>4</sup>

We should believe Jesus for greater works. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father”** (John 14:12).

God was pleased to grant Elisha’s request of a *double portion* of the spirit of Elijah! Elijah worked many miracles to help turn people to God. Elisha *doubled* Elijah’s supernatural works. And God was pleased to record these facts in Scripture for our encouragement. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4).

Prayer is not asking God for what He is going to do anyway: **“Ye have not because ye ask not”** (James 4:2). **“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”** (Matthew 7:11).

God was pleased to record the prayer of Jabez for our benefit. **“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.... And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, ‘Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!’ And God granted him that which he requested”** (I Chronicles 4:9,10). So God not only gave him his request, but God said Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. Asking for great blessing is honorable.

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1. Patrick Johnstone, *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think*, 1998, p. 30.

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So let's ask God to enlarge the borders of our ministries and that His hand will be with us! It would bring Him glory if we brought forth *much* fruit. **“Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples”** (John 15:8).

We ask God to bless us *so* that we can be a blessing to others, all over the world.

**God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations (Psalms 67:1,2)**

So I ask God to be merciful to me and bless me, *so* many will be saved among the nations. God's blessing on *me* affects *their salvation!* That fact urges me to ask for myself great mercy and blessing! There is a lake of fire! Opening my mouth wide in asking blessing for myself is not selfish, it is enabling me to rescue many more from hell!

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Did God merely say, “Open your mouth, and I will fill it”?
2. Do you ask God to bless you *greatly*?
3. Why do we not have, according to James 4:2?
4. Is prayer an exercise in asking for what God will do anyway?
5. How do you know?
6. Was God pleased to give Elisha a double portion of the spirit of Elijah when he asked?
7. Was God pleased to bless Jabez and enlarge his coast as he asked?
8. Was he more honorable or less honorable than his brothers?
9. Would it glorify God if *you* bore much fruit?
10. According to Psalm 67, what is the purpose of our asking God to bless us?

## Pray for Others.

The things I want God to do for me, I should pray for others as well. The mercy and great blessings I ask for myself, I should ask for others. **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”** (Galatians 5:14).

If I am really concerned with advancing God’s kingdom, not just my kingdom, I’ll be happy to ask for *great* blessing on the ministry of *others*. If I am really concerned with souls being saved from everlasting fire, I’ll be happy if they are saved through someone else’s ministry. I’ll pray for that ministry, too.

Selfishness is such a serious sin that God killed Onan because he would not build up his brother’s household (Genesis 38:10). Some Christian leaders seem uninterested in building up their brothers’ work.

Sometimes Christian workers are discouraged because they are in an obscure place. But God does not exalt everyone to leadership and prominence. Everyone can pray, though. Anyone can come to God in Jesus’ name and receive great and mighty things. Maybe no one else will know (in this life) that it was your prayer that brought the blessing. **“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation”** (Luke 17:20).

I wonder how many, whom we have never heard of, will be some of the first in God’s kingdom. They quietly prayed and brought *great* blessing on D. L. Moody, or Charles G. Finney, or other great men of God. Jesus said, **“Many that are first shall be last; and the last first”** (Mark 10:31).

We are commanded to pray **“always... for all saints”** (Ephesians 6:18). The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to exhort us that **“prayers... be made for all men...”** (1 Timothy 2:1). So it is a sin when we do not pray for others. Samuel said, **“God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you”** (1 Samuel 12:23).

**And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).**

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. What rule summarizes why and how we pray for others?
2. Regardless of where we are, how can we have an impact on the Communist world, the Muslim world, the ministry of a great man of God, or a struggling Christian?
3. When did God especially bless Job?

## Pray Against the Enemy.

**No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house (Mark 3:27).**

Our goal is to enter into Satan's house, his domain, and take his subjects away from him, so that they will love and serve a new master, Jesus! But Satan and his demons will not sit idly by! He can be bound, though. We *can* take his subjects.

I have learned through 37 years of evangelistic preaching that praying against the enemy is a helpful, practical thing! It is not a useless exercise.

There are numerous prayers in the Bible against the enemies of God. Moses said, **"Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee"** (Numbers 10:35). The Apostle Paul said, **"So fight I, not as one that beateth the air"** (I Corinthians 9:26). He knew how to make his warfare count! He said, **"Fight the good fight..."** (1 Timothy 6:12).

The Holy Spirit often inspired David in the Psalms to pray against his enemies:

**Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. ...Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt (Psalm 35:1, 4).**

Our struggle is not primarily against people, but against the unseen powers of darkness:

**"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).**

The place of prayer in driving back the enemy is pictured in Exodus 17 when Israel was fighting Amalek. As long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed. When he let his hands down, Amalek prevailed. **"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands..."** (1 Timothy 2:8). When we pray that God will drive back the enemy, we will have victory. When we fail to pray, we are defeated.

Jesus even taught us to pray, **"Avenge me of mine adversary"** (Luke 18:3). **"And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily"** (Luke 18:7,8).

In about 1983 Open Doors (a mission to closed countries) declared a seven year prayer campaign against Communism. In 1990 the Iron Curtain fell.

Besides the personal battles we all face, there are false religions that are blocking *hundreds of millions* from the good news of salvation. I often pray against Islam, Hinduism, Bud-

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dhism, Communism, animism, secular humanism and others. I also pray against groups that pervert the Gospel such as Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, and the Jehovah's Witness Watchtower Society. Some other destructive influences that the enemy uses are the alcohol, drug, tobacco, and pornography industries. Some of the dangerous movements within true Christianity that we need to oppose and pray against are pharisaism, lukewarmness, materialism, and the teaching that repentance is not necessary for salvation.

When God's people were rebuilding Jerusalem, they had to hold a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other (Nehemiah 4:17). So as we labor with Christ we are both building and battling. We can and must drive back the enemy.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do you use the Psalms to pray against the unseen enemies you struggle against?
2. What are some of the major religions that have opposed Bible Christianity?
3. What are some destructive movements within Christianity?
4. In your struggle against the powers of darkness, do you merely beat the air?

## Pray for Revival.

Some of the greatest times of growth of God's kingdom come in seasons of revival. The Revival of 1858 seems to have been at least partly the result of a prayer meeting at the Fulton Street Church in New York City. A layman organized a prayer meeting for businessmen. The beginning was dismal. No one arrived on time. Finally, six arrived. They prayed. As the weeks passed, others came. They filled the church. Then the theatre. Within a few months 6,000 were reported attending daily noon prayer meetings in New York and another 6,000 in Pittsburgh. The prayer meetings spread to other cities. By May 1859, 50,000 people were reported won to Christ through the prayer revival.

Newspapers reported that in many towns in New England there were no unconverted adults left. According to church growth historian, Elmer Towns, besides an unknown number of church members who were converted, more than a million of the unchurched were saved and joined churches as a result of that revival.<sup>5</sup>

Psalms 126 describes revival, culminating in reaping with rejoicing:

1. **When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.**
2. **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.**
3. **The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.**
4. **Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.**
5. **They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.**
6. **He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.**

When the Lord turns again our captivity, He sets us free from the things that hinder His blessing. **"We were like them that dream."** It will seem too good to be true. It will be like when Peter was set free from prison by the angel: he thought he was seeing a vision (Acts 12). It seemed too good to be true. God wants to bless us above all we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

**"Then was our mouth filled with laughter."** That would be an unexpected blessing! **"...And our tongue with singing"** is another evidence of revival, God's turning our captivity. A further evidence of real revival is that the heathen, the unchurched, will notice the mighty things God is doing and *will admit that God is doing it!* **"Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."**

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<sup>5</sup> Elmer Towns, *The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever*, 2000, p. 123.

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Psalm 126:4 tells how to get these wonderful blessings: *pray!* Verse 4 is a prayer, **“Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.”** The south is a desert area in southern Israel. On rare occasions a sudden, overwhelming storm drenches the desert till there are “streams in the south.” The desert is transformed into a place of life and growth and beauty!

So even if we are working in a spiritual desert, we should pray that God will turn our captivity as the streams of the south, with a sudden, overwhelming shower of revival blessing, setting us free to enjoy God’s blessing, seeming too good to be true, our mouths filled with laughter and our tongues with singing, even the heathen admitting that this is from God!

The last two verses of Psalm 126 show that it will be a time of reaping. **“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”**

It is often true that more people are saved in a few months of real revival than in many years of ordinary labor. *Let’s pray for God to do it again!!*

A. T. Pierson went so far as to say, “There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin with united prayer.”<sup>6</sup>

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. How would you like your mouth filled with laughter, your tongue with singing, so much blessings that it would seem be a dream, seeming too good to be true, so that even the outsiders would admit that this is a great work of God?!
2. Will you pray for that?
3. Will you pray for that for your church? For churches elsewhere?

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<sup>6</sup> Towns, p. 117.

## CHAPTER 15

### Serve God with Diligence.

This important principle *multiplies* the other principles. How many more laborers will be thrust out into the harvest if we pray regularly with diligence! How many more souls will we win if we go and make disciples wholeheartedly and consistently! How much more supernatural blessing will we get from Heaven if we continually open our mouths wide in asking God for great blessing! How much purer and healthier the church will be if we diligently teach them to obey all of Christ's commands!

**“Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).**

**“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).**

This principle is true of soul winning, giving, praying, training, and so forth.

**“He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster [destroyer]” (Proverbs 18:9).**

I do not want to be brother to the destroyer of God's work, but I am if I am lazy in my work for the Lord. The Lord calls the slothful servant “wicked” in Matthew 25:26.

**“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame” (Proverbs 10:5).**

We can learn a big lesson from the little ant. She *works without being told*.

**“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” (Proverbs 6:6-9).**

We will be wise when we preach from our own sense of duty, with no one to oversee us. When we witness without being told. When we pray without being told. When we do God's work without being told. If I don't do the work that needs to be done, on my own, I'm dumber than an ant!

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The Apostle Paul said, **“For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day... we preached unto you the gospel of God”** (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

There are not many who really *labor* in the harvest. **“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few”** (Matthew 9:37).

Almost every day I ask God to help me to use my time well, so I don't waste time. Here is a good prayer: **“send me good speed this day”** (Genesis 24:12). We are commanded to redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16 and again in Colossians 4:5). Here is another good prayer to pray: **“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”** (Psalm 90:12).

We should try to serve Jesus better than anyone else has! We should try to *win*, as in a race. **“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”** We must control ourselves and make ourselves work for Him *diligently*. **“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate [self controlled] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly... But I...bring... [my body] into subjection** (I Corinthians 9:24-27).

Serving Christ with diligence will bring many more into His Kingdom.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Do you pray *with diligence*?
2. Are you making disciples *with diligence*?
3. How do we sometimes side with the destroyers of God's work?
4. Do you pray or disciple others only when you are accountable to someone?
5. Why is the ant so wise?
6. Are you really trying to *win*, trying to serve Jesus better than anyone else ever has?
7. If you were, what would you do differently?
8. Do you rule your body, or does your body rule you?

## CHAPTER 16

# Take Advantage of People Movements.

Often church growth runs along family lines, or people tend to respond within a distinct class or social group. This type of growth is seen the Bible. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, *and all his house* believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). The Philippian jailor and all his household believed on the Lord (Acts 16:34). “**A great company of priests were obedient to the faith**” (Acts 6:7).

Church growth experts say that most people who have come to the Lord were brought by their family members or close friends. Churches are wise to encourage new believers to bring their family members and friends to Jesus, especially in the first few months after conversion while the ties with their unsaved acquaintances are still strong.

Donald McGavaran<sup>7</sup> and others have done valuable studies on this important principle that we can use to great advantage for God’s Kingdom.

### *Reflect & Apply*

Can you think of ways to help new believers reach out to their friends and relatives (especially in a setting in which they are comfortable)?

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<sup>7</sup> See especially *Understanding Church Growth*, Donald McGavaran.

## CHAPTER 17

### **Speak So They Will Believe.**

When Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium they “**so spake, that a great multitude both of Jews and also of the Greeks believed**” (Acts 14:1). I’ll just mention this principle for now, but it is worthy of lifelong study and prayer that God would give us wisdom to *so speak* that a great multitude will believe!

#### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Did the way Paul and Barnabas spoke affect whether others believed?
2. Have you noticed what (in presenting the Gospel) helps people believe, and what is not so effective, or what hinders?
  - In personal witnessing?
  - In preaching?
  - In giving an invitation?

## CHAPTER 18

### **Avoid Hindrances.**

There are many hindrances to church growth; let me just point out a few.

#### **A. Complaining**

A favorite tool of Satan is complaining. It can transform happy, loving, victorious Christians into miserable, selfish, defeated people. When God's people are winning the lost, Satan wants to ruin it. **“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring...”** (Acts 6:1). Complaining came when they were multiplying. But the apostles dealt with the problem.

In the book of Numbers the glaring sin of God's people was murmuring. Complaining is such a damaging thing, God dealt with it very severely! When they were dissatisfied with the manna, God punished them with a fire and later with fiery snakes. The earth cracked open and swallowed those who complained about Moses' leadership. Two hundred and fifty others were burned alive, and 14,700 died of a plague for the same sin. In the book dealing with numbers the most emphasized problem is complaining.

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. What is complaining?
2. Check your definition with the dictionary.
3. What things are *you* most likely to complain about?
4. Do you teach and warn others about this sin?

**B. The tradition that certain educational levels are requirements for pastors and leaders is a hindrance to church growth.**

Some groups think a certain level of education is a requirement to be a pastor or a leader. These are not Scriptural requirements. See the qualifications of pastors in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. There are no educational requirements. **“Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”** (Proverbs 30:6). These unscriptural requirements choke and restrict proper church growth. Church growth studies show that denominations that require college degrees and especially seminary degrees do not have nearly so many converts as denominations with no such requirements.

Jesus and the apostles certainly knew the Scriptures and the power of God, but they made no such requirements. I am not going into the pros and cons of formal education or self education; I am pointing out that formal education is not a *requirement*.

I have known people who continue to postpone harvesting, spend large amounts of money (sometimes begging others for it), as they work for degree after degree, with little fruitfulness to show for it! All the while multitudes are going to hell.

*Reflect & Apply*

1. What is the basic requirement of bishops or elders (pastors)? See 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 & 7.
2. Is formal education listed as a requirement?
3. Can a pastor know God’s Word and power without formal education?
4. Does a degree in seminary insure that a man knows God’s Word and God’s power?
5. Do you have the self control to study the Bible and other helpful resources on your own? Remember “Wise men lay up knowledge” (Proverbs 10:14).

### C. Pharisaism hinders church growth.

Jesus said Pharisees shut people out of heaven. *That's exactly what we must avoid!*

**But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13).**

There is a big emphasis in the Gospels on the Pharisees, their opposition to Jesus, and His warnings. Here are some of their traits we must avoid:

1. Being strict on others, not ourselves (Matthew 23:3,4)
2. Being concerned with the outward, not the inward (Matthew 23:5)
3. Emphasizing the minor, not the major (Matthew 23:23)
4. Emphasizing our rules, not God's (Mark 7:7-13.)
5. Looking for faults in others (Luke 6:7 & 11:53,54)
6. Persecuting God's servants (Matthew 23:34,35)
7. Using all of the above to cover a wicked life (Luke 11:39, 44).

### *Reflect & Apply*

Which of these traits have you found in yourself?

## CHAPTER 19

# Don't Get Off Balance!

### In your schedule

If Satan cannot get us to be lazy, he may push us to the other extreme. If we work ourselves actually to death, we won't work at all, obviously. Then we cannot preach the gospel. We cannot disciple anyone. We cannot pray for laborers. We cannot pray for revival. We cannot give any wise counsel. We cannot teach. We cannot love and encourage anyone on earth.

Some Christian workers overwork themselves. They are tired, joyless, and irritable. Not very winsome! And they think they are doing right. **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”** (Proverbs 16:25).

They make others think that following Jesus will be burdensome and dreary. But Jesus says if you're having a hard time and are burdened down, **“Come unto Me... and I will give you rest... My yoke is easy and My burden is light”** (Matthew 11:28).

They have to get up early and stay up late... they think. But God says, **“It is vain [useless] for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep”** because **“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it”** (Psalm 127:2 & 1).

In the Ten Commandments God said:

**Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work... (Exodus 20:9,10).**

- Work six days
- Get all your work done in six days
- Take one day of rest

I do not take this command as a legalistic burden. It is a wonderful, invigorating gift! I try to work hard for six days. Then I take a day off to relax, without feeling guilty! Jesus said, **“The sabbath was made for man”** (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is a gift to man (not just for Jews). I take Saturdays off. Sundays I'm busy preaching.

The law of Moses also gave God's people other breaks, feasts, when they were to do no work. So we know that it is not displeasing to God for us to take times off. Jesus said to His disciples, **“Come ye yourselves apart... and rest a while”** (Mark 6:31).

## PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GROWTH

My dad used to say, “It’s not so much what you do for God, as what you trust Him to do through you.”

**“In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).**

**“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29).**

**“He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).**

**“He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father” (John 14:12).**

I have known times of struggling hard in God’s work and having little or nothing to show for it. I have also known times when I was more relaxed and was surprised to see much fruit!

Sometimes we have made heroes of Christians who have burned themselves out. They overworked, overstudied, overfasted, always pushed, and failed to get proper rest. God’s Word says, **“Be not righteous overmuch: neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?”** (Ecclesiastes 7:16). The Christian “hero” who drove himself to an early grave might have had 10, 20, 30, or more years of fruitful service.

As a young man I thought the ideal way to serve Jesus was to burn the candle at both ends. As a result I was sick much more at 23 than I am now at 56. In learning to follow Jesus His way, I have found serving Him getting easier and easier. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I have also found His service more and more enjoyable. **“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”** (Proverbs 4:18).

I’m bearing a lot more fruit, too, than when I was a young man. Bearing fruit comes from abiding in the vine. A branch abiding in the vine pictures rest rather than a struggle.

**I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing (John 15:5).**

To keep a proper balance, I must daily seek wisdom from God. **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”** (James 1:5). I continually need wisdom on how much time I should spend with my wife, children, Bible reading, prayer, other reading, writing, rest, exercise, email, visiting, errands, odd jobs, church services, and so on. (In our home we’ve eliminated radio and TV.)

While the Bible speaks rather often of fasting, it took me years to learn that normally God intends for us to enjoy good things.

**There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God (Ecclesiastes 2:24).**

**...Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God (Ecclesiastes 3:13).**

**...God... giveth us richly all things to enjoy... (1 Timothy 6:17)**

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Are you usually tired?
2. Do you take a day off each week?
3. Do you get all your work done in six days?
4. Do you feel guilty unless you rise very early, stay up late, and go around tired?
5. What are the three parts of the fourth commandment in the Ten Commandments?
6. Are you doing too much at a time on this book? That is, are you neglecting other duties in order to finish this book?
7. Would it be better to do a smaller section at a time and meditate on it more?
8. How can you get the wisdom to know how much time to give your wife, children, study, prayer, teaching, etc.?
9. Are you enjoying the good things God has given you?

- **Don't get off balance in your emphasis.**

How do you keep a proper balance in your teaching? I try to emphasize what the Bible emphasizes. I try to go light on what the Bible goes light on. Paul exhorted young Timothy, **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”** (2 Timothy 1:13).

There are several levels of emphasis in the Bible:

1. **THE FUNDAMENTALS**, the essentials If you are wrong on an essential, you are not a real Christian. For example, Jesus said, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). So the deity of Christ is a fundamental.

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2. Other **MAJOR** doctrines These doctrines are emphasized, but it is not essential to know them to be saved. The fact that Jesus will return is taught in many books of the Bible, but knowing it is not required for salvation.
3. **MINOR** doctrines "...If a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him" is clear enough, but is not emphasized. So I do not mention it often.
4. Things that are **NOT CLEAR OR NOT EVEN MENTIONED** The Bible nowhere teaches that men should dress up in suits to go to church, so I don't teach that either.

Someone reproved me for emphasizing the lordship of Jesus. I figure if the Word of God calls Jesus "Lord" 700 times, then I should emphasize that Jesus is Lord! The same man also questioned my speaking about fearing God. But the Bible mentions the fear of God hundreds of times!

We don't keep balanced by copying the emphasis of our peers or by following our denominational traditions. **"...They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise"** (2 Corinthians 10:12). We must measure ourselves by the Word of God.

Let's not major on some hobby horse or chase some rabbit trails. The great reason Jesus came to earth was to save sinners. Let's emphasize what He emphasizes!

**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16,17).**

## *Reflect & Apply*

1. How many doctrines can you name that are fundamental, that is, if someone is wrong on this doctrine, he is not a real Christian?
2. Can you prove from Scripture that each is a fundamental?
3. See the booklet, *Who Are the Real Christians? (The Essentials of Christianity)*, by Paul Young, for further study on this basic topic.
4. How would you class each of the following doctrines (1 **Fundamental**, 2 **Emphasized** but not fundamental, 3 **Not Emphasized**, but clear, or 4 **Not Clear**):

**Bible teaching that relates to:** contemporary Christian music, polygamy, women pastors, capital punishment, salvation by faith, the resurrection of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the timing of Christ's Return (before or after the tribulation), baptism, form of church government, worship style, repentance for salvation, eternal security, speaking in tongues, smoking cigarettes, getting drunk, committing adultery, divorce, musical instruments in church, use of statues in church, praying to statues, women wearing head coverings at church, eternal punishment in hell, KJV only, faith healing, praising the Lord, loving God, loving your neighbor

The purpose of this exercise is not to promote more divisions but practice measuring our teaching and emphases by the Bible's.

<b>Fundamental</b>						
<b>Emphasized</b> (but not fundamental)						
<b>Not Emphasized</b> (but clear)						
<b>Not Clear</b>						

## CHAPTER 20

### Face the Fact of Hell

Yesterday, as I was preaching at a college on what Jesus said about hell, a young man got up and walked out. I suppose I have gotten more opposition from my preaching on hell than on any other subject. Satan hates the doctrine of retribution. One of his favorite lies is that you can sin and get away with it. Back in the beginning he told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). The false cults tend to tone down or outright deny the Bible doctrine of hell.

Jesus said that whoever is ashamed of Him and of His words, He will be ashamed when He comes in glory (Mark 8:38).

Jesus often warned about hell. He said it would be better to pluck out your eye or cut off your hand or foot and throw them away and still enter into life than to keep them and be cast **“into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched... where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”** (Mark 9:43, 48).

**The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41,42).**

**Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment... (Matthew 25:41,46).**

**...The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:22-26).**

**...And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Revelation 14:10,11).**

**And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).**

**But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).**

Jesus said that the way to life is narrow, and only a few find it. He said the way to destruction is wide, and many are on it (Matthew 7:13,14). Jesus said He is the *only* way to the Father. **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me (John 14:6).**

**He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).**

**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).**

**Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).**

**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:13,14).**

### *Reflect & Apply*

1. Is there a hell?                      How do you know?
2. Does it have fire?                      How do you know?
3. Is the fire eternal?                      How do you know?
4. Is the punishment eternal?                      How do you know?
5. Is faith in Jesus the only way to salvation?                      How do you know?
6. Is each soul important?
7. Are you ashamed of Christ's teaching on hell?
8. With these facts in mind, will you earnestly pray that God will send laborers into His harvest?

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9. With these facts in mind, will you earnestly proclaim the gospel and make disciples?
  10. With these facts in mind, will you continually seek the power of God's Spirit?
  11. Since hell is real, will you continually go through the day happily praising God for salvation (knowing that "many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" [Psalm 40:3])?
  12. Do you daily deny yourself and follow Jesus, so He will make you an effective fisher of men (saving them from a lake of fire)?
  13. Will you train all of your family to seek first God's kingdom?
  14. Since there is a lake of fire, will you continually pray that God will show His miraculous power, to help many more believe?
  15. Since there is an eternal hell, will you continually exhort professing Christians to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5)?
  16. Since there is an eternal hell, and since God knows the way to make the most effective fishers of men, will you seek to diligently teach Christians to obey **all** of Christ's commands?
  17. Since you know the facts of hell, will you continually ask God for **GREAT** blessing on your life and ministry, so you will rescue **MANY**?
- Will you pray for great blessing for others?
- Will you pray for revival in the church?
18. Will you continually pray that the enemy of our souls will be driven back and put to shame?
  19. Does the doctrine of hell teach you the urgency of speaking so that many will believe?
  20. Do you see the horror of hindering people from coming to Christ?
  21. Do you see the extreme value of maintaining a Biblical balance in your life and schedule, so you may have a long and fruitful ministry?
  22. Do you see the need to keep a balance in your teaching emphasis so that you are not distracted from the main issues?
  23. Why did God send Jesus, anyway? (John 3:16,17)
  24. Why has Jesus sent us? (John 20:21)



## Other Publications of Paul Young

Booklets:

*Saving Faith* Does it involve a change of behavior?

*Women Serving Jesus*

DVDs of “Small Paul” Young’s chalk talks:

*The Promised Land* You can have joy, peace, and victory!

*The Brazen Serpent* Evangelistic

*The Gift of God* Evangelistic

*Cain and Abel* Evangelistic

*Two Ways* Evangelistic

*John the Baptist* Repentance

*Butterflies* Christian transformations

*What Happens at Salvation* Encouragement

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