

1: Growing Local Missionary Churches

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Why are some churches so effective at reaching people and making disciples, while others remain stagnant year in and year out? The answer to this question is not geographical, denominational, philosophical, or generational. Today in the U. Most are applying one or more of these five proven outreach principles. We would encourage you to do the same! Outreach Principle 1: Outreach is THE Priority Here is one reason why older churches are generally less effective at outreach than newer churches: Over time, churches become increasingly self-centered and self-serving. The result, not surprisingly, is that such churches stop growing. While there are many good things a church can do—and there are some important things a church should do—there is only one essential thing a church must do: Social Networks are the Vehicle There is a 2, year-old insight that any congregation can apply to reach more people. Non-Christians come to Christ and the church primarily through relationships with Christians. Christian friends and relatives bring twice as many new believers into local churches as all the other reasons—combined! To apply this principle, encourage each person in your church to list their unchurched friends and relatives in the community. The average person can list Next, encourage members to pray specifically for these people. Felt Needs are the Connecting Point Most unchurched people are not walking down the streets of your community thinking about the eternal destiny of their soul. But they are thinking about something; usually something of immediate concern or interest: If the Gospel of Christ is really relevant to all aspects of life which, of course, it is , we need to show unreached people how it is relevant to their lives, as well. Research I conducted for the U. Then, in a microcosm of the disciple-making process, he talked about water where she would never thirst again! Some key felt needs of people in your community are disconnection and isolation they are looking for a place to belong and the pressure of a busy and stressful world they are looking for a greater sense of balance and ways to manage priorities. Because now your message is, from their point of view, relevant. What is the primary ingredient that keeps people active in church? The research is conclusive: According to one study, new members who stay beyond their first year make an average of seven new friends in the church—versus two for drop-outs. Friendships develop when people share things in common, such as common age, interests and family status.

2: What is My Role in the Church? Matthew

Hebrews chapter 3 gives us a template on doing a successful home church: For any church to be successful, big or small, in a cathedral or in a home, we have to have a correct vision and alignment, to know why and what we are doing and where we are going.

What Nee lacked in formal training he made up for by voracious reading of as much Christian literature as he could get his hands on, and by hands-on experience in evangelism and church planting. Nee developed a reputation for profound insight into the inner Christian life and the New Testament church life, which he expressed through books and magazines he published after moving to Shanghai in 1920. Lee had been raised as a Southern Baptist¹ and personally accepted Christ as his Savior in 1915. In the following years Nee wrote many books and held regular conferences and trainings for church workers. Nee, Lee, and other workers planted churches up and down China and in Southeast Asia that numbered at least six hundred by the time of the Communist Revolution in 1949. However, Nee considered the divisiveness he observed among the Brethren to be unbiblical, and so, seeking the New Testament ground for the unity of believers, he developed the concept that there should be only one church per city, autonomous from all other local churches, denominations, mission boards, and so forth. Although conceived for the purpose of unity, this has proved to be the most controversial element about the LC, for it is essentially anti-denominational and rejects the legitimacy of any church that meets on any other basis than locality—although the LC embraces all Christians as genuine children of God see part 4. When the Communists came into power, severe persecution was unleashed on the LC and Nee was imprisoned in 1957, where he died twenty years later. All of these were presented as new revelations, not in the sense of a new truth that goes beyond the Bible, but rather in the sense of a biblical truth that had been lost sight of but that the Spirit has uncovered and that the church has recovered. Lee began to teach that in the Book of Acts the church life was spread through migration, and so groups of LC members began moving to different parts of the country and establishing churches there. With the explosion of the Jesus movement in the 1960s many idealistic young people, as well as spiritually hungry older people, were seeking a greater experience of Christ and also of the New Testament church, and so the ranks of the LC swelled and they became a known quantity at least among Christians in many cities across the United States. Churches were also planted in Canada and on every continent. Countercult ministry also came into its own in the 1960s, and, as previously noted, the LC did not escape its notice. Looking back on it as objectively as I can, I would have to say that people on both sides behaved badly. Countercult researchers did not make sufficient effort to understand the LC in their own cultural and theological contexts and so failed to assess properly the wide-ranging differences that would naturally exist between an indigenous Chinese Christian movement even with many youthful American converts and typical American evangelicalism. LC members, for their part, were nothing short of militant in their response to public criticisms. The tactics and rhetoric of their more immature members reinforced the mistaken notion that they were cultic. I also remember how they overwhelmed the phone lines of the Bible Answer Man program, completely disrupting the show, in order to contend aggressively with Martin about their teachings. Lee Meets Martin Things could have turned out very differently. I have in my possession the transcript of a February 21, 1966, meeting between Walter Martin and Witness Lee. Lee had invited Martin to have lunch with him and his wife at their home, and Martin accepted. They had a long and frank discussion in which they got to know one another, discussed their beliefs, recognized each other as brothers in Christ who loved the Lord, and ultimately had very warm Christian fellowship. They concluded that they would follow up with more dialogue about LC teachings. Lee expressed openness to correction and Martin expressed openness to finding there was nothing to correct. They agreed that during this time both sides would cease and desist with the provocative antics. We did not trust Lee and we feared that Martin might be taken in. Having embraced a form of Eastern Orthodoxy and broken ties with SCP, Sparks was coming from a particular perspective and used the ancient creeds as well as the Bible to refute the cults. The book accused the LC of brainwashing and abusing their members. A settlement agreement was reached in that resulted in a retraction being published in eighteen American newspapers. Nelson ceased distribution of the book and unsold copies

were recalled. But when a heavily revised German-language edition by Neil T. During the nearly five years of pretrial litigation, Duddy left the country and Schwengeler-Verlag never showed up for any of the legal proceedings. On the first day of trial SCP apparently expecting to lose declared bankruptcy based on their inability to pay the anticipated judgment, and so they did not show up at trial either. Although SCP claims that the LC deliberately dragged the trial out so that SCP would be forced into bankruptcy and thus unable to make a defense, the information that came out against SCP in depositions and expert testimony makes it hard to imagine what kind of defense they could have mounted see part 5. After The God-Men trial was over, the conflict between the LC and the countercult community simmered down and remained at a low boil for many years. The movement was rocked in the s by a couple of internal controversies and splits,⁷ but there were enough committed members to weather these storms. A successful work was launched in the former Soviet Union, and the LC established training centers for their young people in approximately ten different countries. In Lee died. Observers in the countercult community wondered if the new generation of leadership would make any modifications or retractions in LC teachings. Simultaneous with the ECNR lawsuit, the LC was clearly making a concerted effort to build relationships with the larger evangelical community. They reached out not only to CRI but also to Fuller Theological Seminary, requesting dialogue and a thorough inquiry into the orthodoxy of their teachings. Fuller agreed to do so, with a favorable outcome for the LC. They developed contacts in the mainstream Christian press, and the coverage they received from those periodicals became more favorable. Wayne House, Gordon R. Lewis, Ron Rhodes, and James R. The mystical leanings in their writings are not traceable to Eastern religions, as has been alleged, but to Western Christian inner life teachers such as Jessie Penn-Lewis, Andrew Murray, and Madame Guyon. Interestingly, his charge was one that we have never heard in America, that Lee was teaching Arianism. He based this on the fact that Lee called the incarnate Christ a creature. Lee did indeed teach that Christ is a creature with respect to His humanity, but he also taught that, with respect to His deity, Christ is the Creator of the Universe. This pattern, in which Lee makes radical statements and balances them elsewhere in his teaching, only to have his critics seize on his radical statements without factoring in the balancing statements, has continued to the present day. In fact, this theme pretty well sums up the balance of this article, insofar as it deals with theology. In other words, the movement has not been immune to the carnal behaviors that have plagued and divided Christian works throughout church history. Living Stream Ministry, Christian Research Institute Our Mission: To provide Christians worldwide with carefully researched information and well-reasoned answers that encourage them in their faith and equip them to intelligently represent it to people influenced by ideas and teachings that assault or undermine orthodox, biblical Christianity. Do you like what you are seeing? Your partnership is essential.

3: Part 1: The Importance of the Local Church | Berean Bible Society

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The Importance of Discipleship and Growth [http: Krejcir](http://Krejcir.com) Growing in Christ is the key to growing a church. This is all about being a good and effective witness of who Christ is and what He has called your church to be and do. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Following up, teaching, and mentoring new as well as seasoned Christians are the keys to spiritual growth and the replication of the witness. When a church forsakes discipleship, its people will not grow and thus will not reach out. Many will give up on Christianity while others become confused, calloused, or complacent. Alternatively, they will be swept away by false doctrines and cults because they do not know the difference. When we forsake discipleship, we end up just living for and unto ourselves. We miss out on opportunities, learning experiences, growth, and will exchange an eternity of rewards for a limited time of fun. This will turn into anger and bitterness later on in our lives. Why should we grow in Christ? Because, He lived and died on our behalf, willingly giving up His life by paying the penalty for our sin. He allows us not only to escape the fires of hell, but also gives us eternal life. Growth will be our response to who Christ is and what He did for us. This is what will either be repulsive or attractive to others as we "fish" for Him. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. It means we are not only willing to trust Him to provide for our salvation, but we trust Him for the future. We are to trust Him even when we do not know, like, or understand when or where He is leading, or when it is unpopular. As we grow in Christ, we have to keep our eyes on Him. In doing so, we will be of better use to Him and become increasingly unsatisfied with anything less than His call and character. God does not ask us to seek converts. He simply asks us to disciple. Discipleship is modeling and teaching Christians the precepts of the Bible, mainly prayer, doctrine, and Christian living, which means having an attitude and heart that worships Christ. Yes, we are still to evangelize, but that is not our main mission and call. When we evangelize, we must realize that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring people into an intimate relationship with God. This is an act of divine intervention and grace. He uses us as the tools, but He is the means. We are the display case of His life and work! We are to care, and share with others His love and character. We are to obey and reach out, but we cannot lead people anywhere. He is the One who leads! Our goal is to worship and model our worship to others-not just our service in the church, but the lifestyle of a heart surrendered and poured out to His. However, with that said, when we are real and authentic in our Christian living, then we are actually doing effective evangelizing and bringing others to Christ even more powerfully and frequently. How does our focus on Him and not evangelism help us be evangelistic? Because, when the focus is on evangelism, it tends to be on gathering numbers for numbers sake, and this mindset is pretentious and ineffective. It will model Christ-like character to the community, encouraging others to surrender themselves to Jesus Christ. However, this is only the beginning. When we are worshipping Christ with our hearts and minds, we are focused on Him and motivated to be His witnesses. How To Grow in Faith Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Second Chronicles tells us, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked waysâ€¦ Do you see the condition? The "if" needs to become a "do;" we are to carry out what He has accepted in us, so the rest of the passage becomes fulfilled in us. To grow means we are to turn from sin, seek Him, be praying, act with humility, seek His righteousness, and practice maturity. We are not to wander from Him or allow our desires to be selfish and sinful. We are to focus on His precepts and allow ourselves to be filled up with Christ. When we call upon our Lord, that call will echo over all those around us. We grow as we look to and trust in Him, and as we pursue our lives in Christ. That means careful pursuit and continual

growth, not a simple look-over, but an in-depth and committed life. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Growing is surrendering our will to His. Surrender is the process through which we grow toward Him and His will, and away from our will. Surrender is making Christ the Lord of all of our lives so that worship, discipleship, and growth can happen. For this to truly happen, we must rid ourselves of false presumptions, perceptions, reckless ideas, faulty thinking, and other such things that are barriers to our growth, so we can make room for Him. Thus, we gain a deeper intimacy with our Lord as our Commander and Friend, as our God and our King, as the provider of Grace, as our Love, and as our reason for being. In His purposes, we find real contentment, joy, and fulfillment. This can be summed up in the adage, "we cannot be doing the work of God unless we are the people of God. I have been in pastoral ministry as a profession since , and was in lay-ministry for several years prior to that. I can tell you absolutely that the one thing that keeps most people from accepting Christ as their Savior and being born again is that they do not want to admit their need; they do not want to be convicted. They do not want to admit that there is something basically wrong with them. They still cling to the idea that there is some good thing about them that God should accept, and if they do more good than bad, He will have to let them into heaven. I do not think anything has been more destructive in the whole realm of theology and what is preached in so many churches than the idea that we are O. No repentance is necessary. Come one, come all! But, the Bible says we cannot come to Him; He comes to us. Christ will save us if only we will acknowledge our need and accept Him as our Lord and Savior; yet, so few will. It is the same with Christians who lack the motivation to witness; they do not want to admit that others have a need. It is not an official Christian policy by any imagination; rather, it is a rationalization we make because of our fears, complacency, or indecision. We are not able to do so. People desperately need a Savior! So, carefully consider any barriers in your thinking that blocks you from this core truth and reality of life: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. What is the barrier that holds you back from giving this proclamation of love to others? We all need to find and remove it. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He calls us to wake up and do something with our faith, not to just sit in a pew and complain, or lay on a couch as life drifts by. A call is pronounced. An action must take place to secure that His precepts will cause an impact. We cannot just hear; we have to obey. Obedience is not in words, but in deeds that demonstrate our words through practice and action. This is not about our salvation; it is about our worth and our impact. Our salvation by faith alone may secure us, but what is the impact if we do nothing with it? Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Life is tough; it is full of setbacks and hurts that seem to cripple us. Did you know all it takes to tie down a horse is a simple leather strap? Did you know a horse could easily break it, like we could break a kite string? A horse does not try to do that because he does not think he is able to do so. You are able to cross any barrier to grow in deeper worship and faith in Christ, because He is there with His healing power. When we ignore Him, we just end up stagnate in life, continuing to hurt. Yes, we will struggle and hurt and we will need times to recover. However, we must make the determination to recover, not to remain disabled, preventing our abiding in Him. Obedience will override our feelings so that we will remain steadfast and secure. We are all called to put our faith into practice. We can now take the relationships, mentoring, and learning, and carry them out in daily life. This is often expressed in service projects and missions, but that is only a small, although necessary aspect of service. Service is how we daily live our lives, modeling His character to those around us. When we are in ministry, we need to realize, it is not what we do, but whom we can equip.

4: The "Local Church" as Movement and Source of Controversy - Christian Research Institute

Church growth today is big business. Many people, from bureaucrats in declining denominations, to sociologists of religion, to earnest young evangelical pastors, would like to know what a growing church is like and how to have one.

What is the Church? The Church is spread across the whole world and made up of every culture and language—all believers alive on planet earth. It is not limited to a building, just as a natural family is not limited to their house. As Christ is the head of this family, all members are considered part of the Body of Christ. It is like having relatives all over the world but living with your immediate family. A local church is a group of believers committed to worshiping Christ, teaching his Word, supporting each other as you follow Jesus together and proclaim the good news to others. Why do you think it would be important for you to spend time with other Christians? Discover the benefits of life in this new community!

1. The local church provides opportunity for us to enjoy this community. You will see that the benefits are mutual. Pastors and teachers help you grow in your Christian life as they feed you the spiritual food of the Bible and help you to know God better. In what areas of life do you feel tossed about by every wind of teaching? Just as a house keeps people protected from harm, a good local church community can keep Christians safe from false teaching. Would you be able to recognize false teaching on your own? Being part of a church family helps you learn how to love others and their differences. As we do so, we model his love to the world. Why do you think Christians loving one another would be such a powerful witness? Read 1 Corinthians God has given you spiritual gifts to benefit your church family. A local church family can help you discover your gift and learn how to use it to strengthen the Body of Christ. Whether God gave you the gift of singing, teaching, or giving, that role is a crucial one for healthy functioning of the Body of Christ. How do you think someone discovers her or his spiritual gift? Finding Community in a Local Church God knows you need the guidance of a pastor, the care of other Christians, and the safety and support of a good church to help you grow as a Christian. What makes a good church? No church is perfect just like no family is perfect. But, as stated on the first page, a healthy church is committed to certain things. Look for a church that

- Worships Christ A healthy church presents Jesus as the Son of God and faith in him alone as the only way to be saved from your sins and have a relationship with God.
- Grows Believers to Follow Jesus Together A healthy church encourages you to personally follow Jesus as his disciple and grow stronger in your faith—what you read in Ephesians 4: Pray and ask God to help you find the local church he wants you to join. He has promised to provide for you, so you can trust him to answer your request. When you find a healthy church that is committed to the four values listed above, thank God! Ask him how you can serve there. The sharing of our lives requires sincere love, kind speech, continuing encouragement, heartfelt forgiveness, and selfless generosity. All these qualities are possible because of the Holy Spirit living inside each member and binding us all together. Relationships among believers should be marked by love for each other, which is the very thing that attracts those who do not have a relationship with Jesus. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another. He knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. Our relationship with him does not prevent us from experiencing misunderstandings or differences of opinion. Sometimes these relational challenges tempt us to harbor grudges against someone with whom we differ or to isolate ourselves from the community. Neither of these is healthy for a believer. Reconcile Relationships Quickly Jesus helped his disciples through their conflicts with one another. By faith in Christ, we are not only commanded to love but are given his love to give to others. How should we respond to a broken relationship with a fellow believer? Stay Connected One of the main reasons some Christians live defeated lives is that they have isolated themselves from other believers. A coal that is separated from the others will soon grow cold. Isolation will lead to stunted spiritual growth and a lack of joy in your life. Why is it important to stay connected to other believers? While you are part of the universal Church, God wants you to be part of a local church family. You may or may not belong to a local church right now, and there is still a bit to learn about it all. But, take a moment now and thank God for adopting you into his family and giving you a new community in which to enjoy your new life. Renewing Your Mind with Truth

Continue putting truth in your mind through memorizing Bible verses that are relevant to what you are learning. Review Memory Verse 1 – Ephesians 2: Review Memory Verse 2 – John Review Memory Verse 3 – Galatians 5: Review Memory Verse 4 – Hebrews 4: Find and read the verses listed. Write observations of what you see and how you feel about each benefit. Learn to live your new life in community with other Christ-followers. Your church community can help you to grow strong in your faith and to know God better: Your church community can keep you protected from being swayed by false teaching: Your church community can help you to discover your spiritual gifts and learn how to use them to serve the church family: Your church community can be a source of encouragement to you: Join a small Bible study and prayer group. Use your gifts to reach others for Christ. Look for mature believers who can disciple mentor you as you grow. Ask God for someone you can disciple, sharing with her what you are learning. Getting to Know Christ Continue reading through the gospel of Mark to get to know Jesus better – reflecting on his life, his relationships, and his teaching. Also, begin to pray regularly to your Heavenly Father. Consider praying for specific issues in your life, for friends and family you desire to know Christ, and for your personal spiritual growth. Day 2 Discover Jesus Read: Reflect on what you read – Day 3 Discover Jesus Read: Reflect on what you read – Day 4 Discover Jesus Read: Reflect on what you read – Day 5 Discover Jesus Read: Reflect on what you read – Day 6 Discover Jesus Read: Reflect on what you read – Days 7 Review and Ask Questions Spend time reviewing what you have learned this week about your new life in Christ. What discoveries have you made? What questions do you have? Graceful Beginnings, Lesson 6.

5: The Importance of Discipleship and Growth

However, I believe this style stunts the long-term growth of the local church; having organizations within a church contributes to its growth and development. And people also get confused on the difference between being a youth and being a young adult.

Oliver I grew up in a quiet neighborhood in southern California where the two-parent family was the norm. I could fill an entire article with facts and figures to document the alarming decline and disintegration of the family. In unprecedented numbers our families are changing: If this disintegration was taking place primarily in the homes of unchurched families, it would be tragic enough. The real tragedy, however, is that the divorce rate is as high among evangelical couples as unchurched couples. A casual view of history reveals that as go marriages, so goes the family; as go families, so goes the community; as go communities, so goes the nation; as go nations, so goes civilization. The Bible tells us that in the beginning God created the family. In His infinite wisdom He chose the family to serve as the cradle for personhood. The quality of family life influences every other part of our life. The quality of family life also has a powerful impact on the believability of the gospel message. The two are interdependent. When love is seen the message is heard. Throughout Scripture, God provides instruction related to marriage, the family, and parenting. Relationships are a core part of who God is and who He would have us to become. In Genesis we see God in relationship with himself; God in relationship with man; male and female in relationship with each other in marriage; parents and children in relationship in the family; groups of families that made up the 12 tribes of Israel in relationship with other tribes. In the Old Testament there are numerous insights into the nature and function of the family. The Hebrew family was noted for its unity. This cohesiveness developed quite naturally, as the nature of that society placed children and parents in close contact. The majority of activities centered around the home and often included children, parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Many functions performed by social service agencies or the local church today were performed by the extended family in biblical times. The Hebrew home was the primary educational, recreational, and social center for the children. Religious education was centered in the home. As a result, parents spent time with their children—working, teaching, communicating, and playing. This interaction helped produce a family unity that made it possible to pass on values from parents to children, from generation to generation. Psalm Education takes place in the schools. The majority of social and recreational activities take place outside the home, usually with nonfamily members. Even the bulk of religious education is left to the church. What Is A Family? When most people think of the typical American family, they picture a man and a woman who get married, have children, and live together for a lifetime. This is referred to as the biological or nuclear family. In the past, most families knew their neighbors and lived close to relatives. These relatives made up an extended family and included grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or other adult siblings. The extended family served as supportive roles for the nuclear family. In addition to the traditional two-parent families we have single-parent families, extended families, adopted families, childless families, and reconstituted or blended families. The role of the extended family and the neighborhood community has significantly decreased, if not disappeared. The dual-parent or single-parent family is faced with a much more complex and difficult task. Over the last several decades we have come to an increased awareness of the impact of families on personality development. It would be difficult to overstate the immeasurable influence of early life experiences on the passage of children through adolescence into adulthood. In an unhealthy family, the members are spiritually, emotionally, and relationally undernourished. This malnutrition produces many devastating effects. Children raised in unhealthy families are much more likely to experience difficulty, or an inability to form long-term relationships. They have a hard time trusting and forming strong commitments and are afraid of intimacy. They struggle with emotional stability, communicating clearly, effective conflict resolution, as well as difficulty with believing and trusting God. The home is the window through which children get their first glimpse of God. It is also where they get their first glimpse of who they are and what they are worth. Children discover their value and worth in the mirror of those around them by how much they are looked at, listened to and touched, by what their parents

say to them and about them in front of others, and by how much time their parents make for them. Is there a difference between a family in which everyone is a Christian and a Christian family? It takes more than every family member being a born-again Christian to make a Christian family. A Christian family is a family where relationships with each other are patterned after the way God communicates and relates to His children. It is a place where truth is lived out, not merely talked about. It is a family in which biblical truth is both taught and caught. A Unique Opportunity For The Church Given the significance God places on healthy relationships, a logical question is, What is the role of the church in building strong marriages and families? One vital life sign of a healthy church is the health of its marriages and families. The church has been called to be a lighthouse, the source of solutions for what ails a lost and dying society. A strong marriage and family ministry serves as salt and light in a world characterized by confused, disoriented, and disintegrating families. It says that truth works, truth makes a difference. By offering tools, resources, support groups, and programs it also says that we care about our community. People turn to the church during significant life events such as baby dedications, baptisms, marriages, and death. Ministers perform approximately 75 percent of marriages in the U. The most frequently presented problem is marital difficulty. Where Do I Start? Given the fact in eternity past God decided to create us in His own image and designed us to be in relationships; given the importance of the family for personal growth and development; and given the significant opportunity family ministry provides us to communicate help and hope to a hurting world, where can you begin? Here are a few simple steps that will get you going in the right direction. Instead, begin by establishing a prayer team. Ask them to begin to pray, on a daily basis, for what God might want to see take place in your congregation. A Solid Biblical Base Scripture makes a strong case that ministry involves caring for the whole person—the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. To ensure the long-term effectiveness of any family ministry, it must be bathed in prayer; rooted and grounded in Scripture; supported by a solid biblical and theological foundation; and the vision must be clearly articulated, owned, and supported by the staff and congregation. While insights from the social sciences including psychology, sociology, and education can be helpful, it is essential that Christian family ministry be grounded in the clear teaching of Scripture. The resource list at the end of this article contains several books that provide help in this area. Review Existing Resources Since our time and resources are precious, it makes good sense to see what is already being done in this area. What are some existing models of family ministry? What are the questions we need to ask? What has worked well in congregations similar to ours? Conduct a Needs Assessment Develop an adequate understanding of the composition, needs, and interests of the congregation and the community. This includes taking a look at the demographics of the community, the demographics of the church, population growth rates, ethnic composition, age breakdown, average income, and unemployment. Another important question is: Are there any regularly scheduled classes or programs that provide people with biblically based principles on relationships, premarital preparation, parenting, divorce recovery, singles, marriage enrichment, dealing with grief, or addictions? A church can also conduct a need assessment survey of its congregation. Assess Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges Based on the needs assessment, you will have a clear sense of the community God has called you to serve, the composition of your own church, existing resources in your church and community, as well as the perceived needs of the various age levels of your congregation. Make a list of the existing strengths and resources, the opportunities for ministry in your own church and in your community, and some of the challenges you will face in allowing God to work through you to take your family ministry to the next level. Develop a 3-Year Plan This is the most important and, in some ways, the most difficult step. In this step, build on what you are already doing that has been helpful and add to it as you have leadership and resources. Since a meaningful family ministry will eventually include children, youth, single, divorced, widowed, and married adults, you will need to determine one or two target groups; goals for the first year; and additional goals for years 2 and 3. Develop a strong education and enrichment program; teach biblical relationship principles across the life span; provide mandatory premarital preparation including the use of mentor couples, provide post-wedding care, classes for first-time parents, or classes for couples who are becoming empty nesters. Incorporate training in spiritual formation and growth throughout all of these programs. In my ministry of over 30 years, I have yet to see a couple with severe marital problems who have

had a strong, consistent family and couple prayer time and devotional life. Another essential part of a 3-year plan is to cultivate, cultivate, and cultivate leadership. This starts with you. Who you are in your own relationship with Christ is the most important component of family ministry. Helpers of families must first help themselves, then they can model what they teach and explain the difference Jesus Christ can make in a marriage and family. The reality is that healthy leaders, healthy couples, and healthy families attract others that they can help to grow and mentor who in turn will become effective leaders. Take some first steps. Besides, if you believe that power is perfected in weakness 2 Corinthians Conclusion Share this article with others in your congregation. Begin to pray about what God might want to do in your life, your marriage, your family, and then in your congregation. Perhaps you might want to meet with some fellow pastors and see what God might want to do in your community. Then, as God leads, start with the first step. At The Center for Marriage and Family Studies CMFS we work with a handful of churches each year to help them develop a 3-year plan that fits the specific needs of their congregation. Perhaps there are ministries close to you that are equipped to help you in this way.

6: Your New Life in Community | www.enganchecubano.com

Church growth is not about competing with the ministry down the street but more about developing the people God has planted in the local church to be used by God with their unique gifts. I believe people are called to churches for a specific purpose.

Subscribe to the CompellingTruth. How important is spiritual growth in Christian life? Someone who is growing spiritually will become more and more like Christ. The spiritually mature will be able to "distinguish good from evil" Hebrews 5: Spiritual growth is expected of the believer. The author of Hebrews reprimands his readers for "no longer try[ing] to understand" Hebrews 5: The criticism leads to exhortation: Scripture offers valuable insights into how a Christian can grow spiritually. As we rely on His power and follow His teachings, we can develop greater maturity. Peter provides a peek at the process: For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" 2 Peter 1: Involvement in a local church and the exercise of our spiritual gifts are invaluable to the development of maturity Ephesians 4: Rather than be swayed by every errant doctrine that comes along, we can speak "the truth in love," with the result that "we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" Ephesians 4: To evaluate spiritual growth, we can measure our improvement in the "fruit of the Spirit. Are we increasing in love? If so, we are growing spiritually. We should be aware that growth often comes through trials. Just as physical strength is built through exertion and straining against resistance, spiritual strength is developed in the hard times of life. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" James 1: Because growth comes through trials, Scripture also teaches we are not to grow weary in the process. Much spiritual development is the result of persistence. We also have the promise that the Lord Himself will oversee our growth and bring us to maturity. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" 2 Corinthians

7: Developing A Family Ministry For Your Church

Nelson Searcy is the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church in New York City. Started in , this groundbreaking church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently has locations in Manhattan, Queens, San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL.

Relief Local Church U. The Birth of the Church The work of completing the Great Commission is traced to the first gathering of believers and the Call has not changed. Key Ingredients Healthy churches are typically filled with transformed, increasingly mature followers of Christ. This is why assisting believers to go deeper in their faith and equipping them to use their gifts and talents to win others to Him is such a high priority. Following those first models of community, Alliance churches are committed to the growth of those in their care and modeling the nature of Jesus Christ both to the fellowship of believers and the community where they gather. We have found several key ingredients that form an Acts 2 fellowship: Alliance pastors set the stage. Passionate to win the lost for Christ, they guide and counsel their respective flocks to go deeper in their love for Jesus, while training them to also be faithful stewards of the good news. Strengthening believersâ€™ at every age level, and from every walk of lifeâ€™ to know and love Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King and to complete His Great Commission is fundamental to Alliance church ministry. A mature, transformed disciple is passionate to reach the lost with the good news. Alliance fellowships offer community outreach and short-term missions opportunities. A good litmus test for a healthy Body of believers is when they actively sendâ€™ and supportâ€™ career missionaries. A natural outgrowth of a vibrant fellowship is to birth like-minded fellowships. A church body that is inspired, equipped, and resourced to reach the nations is vital to completing The Great Commission. For more information please contact your district missions mobilizer or the Global Link Office. Partnering with the Worker. A church body that is led by a "vision-caster" facilitates strategic relationships between North American Alliance churches and Alliance workers, people or projects overseas. Mixed with a heavy outpouring of the Holy Spirit, these ingredients make for a winning Kingdom recipeâ€™ completion of the Great Commission. Locate a Church Use this tool to locate a church in the U. Enter either the city optional and state, or zip.

8: How important is spiritual growth in Christian life?

The Five Most Important Church Growth Principles everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life relatives bring twice as many new believers into local churches as all the.

Carter John Carter is committed to helping people reach their potential in life through spiritual transformation. Known for his engaging and practical teaching style, he is the senior pastor of Abundant Life Christian Center, a culturally diverse church located in Syracuse, NY. He is the founder and president of Mercy Works, a charitable organization that creatively meets the practical needs in distressed urban communities. John and his wife, Lisa have three sons – Jordan, Joshua and Caleb. The Transformed Life is powerful discipleship tool that is designed to help believers experience personal transformation through a dynamic relationship with Jesus and the local church. A purpose is a reason for being. Everything God does has a purpose. Everything God has made has a reason for existing. There are specific purposes Jesus intended for His church to accomplish. Knowing those purposes is important for every believer. The law of purpose states that unless you know the purpose of a thing, you will be likely to either neglect, misuse, or abuse it. There are many people today who have received God as their Father, love Jesus, and mistakenly think that they can grow spiritually without having to make any formal connection with the local church. Because of technology, it is possible to watch church meetings online, listen to great teaching through electronic means, and interact with others on the internet. In the United States today a new phenomenon is occurring. Believers are forsaking the organized local church in favor of alternative systems of private worship that consider themselves a truer expression of the biblical church. However, upon close examination, these meetings lack some of the key elements that constitute a biblical expression of the local church. While it is certainly true that every believer is a king and priest unto God 1 Peter 2: In fact Jesus spent 3 and a half years training ministers for His Church, and Paul clearly understood that a biblical church required human leadership by specially called and gifted ministers Eph. After all, biblical leadership is servanthood Matt. The Lord designed the church as a distribution system. There are many things that Jesus distributes to His people exclusively through the local church. The Lord intended for us to live the transformed life in community together. Knowing the purposes God intends for us in the local church enables us to receive them. This is known as the corporate presence of God. While the Lord is present inside of each of His children, when we come together to worship as the church, He is present in an even greater way. When you come to church, expect the Lord to manifest His presence. Know that regardless of what you may feel emotionally or physically, Jesus is there in a special way. Often it is your presence in church and participation in worship by faith that sets the environment for the Holy Spirit to move in the service. He is present to minister to the needs of His family, so attending worship services is a selfless way in which your presence helps to create the environment God uses to move in the lives of others. Anointed preaching in the local church is the cornerstone of this transformation. When the Lord Jesus left the earth, He appointed ministers to lead His church. They are referred to as the ministry gifts because Jesus personally chose, called, equipped, and sent them as gifts to minister to the local church. The primary way these ministers lead the church is through anointed preaching and teaching. No matter how long one has been a Christian, we never outgrow our need to be fed by our spiritual shepherds by the living Word of God. Because most believers did not have personal copies of the available Scriptures, church meetings involved lots of Bible reading and teaching. One of the first Christian historians who lived less than one hundred years after the resurrection of Christ was Justin Martyr AD He wrote about the practices of the first believers: Then, when the reader has ceased, the president [pastor] verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. When we gather to hear a sermon each week, the Holy Spirit works through the gifts in the pastor to inspire our faith. Strong faith is essential to pleasing God Hebrews Renews Our Minds Anointed teaching and preaching can often help us to change our thinking and renew our minds faster than private Bible study alone. The more we hear the preaching of the Word, the more our minds are strengthened in new and better patterns of thinking. This process is critical to our growth. Corrects and Protects Us Timothy was a young pastor of the enormous local church in Ephesus. Paul wrote Timothy two letters instructing him how to lead the church

effectively. Much of what Paul told Timothy had to do with His teaching and preaching ministry. Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable. The pastor needs to do more than encourage us. When God speaks correction through the pastor, He is actually protecting us from error and deception Ephesians 4: Sometimes the pastor will find himself saying something he did not plan to say. Often the pastor will not know why he is being directed to say things in his message. This is a sign that God loves His people enough to speak personally to a room full of different people at the same time! As a pastor, I have had several very unusual experiences along these lines. During the worship service, I had a vision in my spirit. When the senior pastor, Dr. Bernard sensed the Holy Spirit was speaking to me, he asked me to share what I was seeing in my heart with the congregation. Some of it I shared publicly, and the rest I shared privately after the service with Dr. It feels like a disaster of some sort. Bernard and the congregation to be a light and help to the city when this event occurred. Naturally, I felt somewhat strange afterwards because I had no idea what I had seen or whether I was accurate or appropriate in sharing it. The pastor was very gracious and assured me that he had sensed they were preparing for something important as a churchâ€”to be a great witness to the city. Bernard was asked by the churches of New York to coordinate a massive relief and recovery planâ€”helping thousands of New Yorkers rebuild their lives. Not every pastor is used in the same way. By faithfully attending church and listening carefully to the messages that are preached, you will often discover that God is speaking into your life and preparing you for the challenges that lie just ahead. Many times we leave church thinking the message was probably for someone else, only to discover later that week that God was speaking directly to us!

United Worship A powerful celebration takes place when believers gather and begin to worship and praise God together. United worship has a transforming effect on those who experience it. Throughout Scripture, we are told to praise and worship God together in His assembly. There is nothing quite like the experience of openly participating in united worship in the local church. He often speaks to our hearts and reminds us of His love through His presence. Healing, deliverance, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit may begin to operate in the church as the Lord responds to His people in worship. United worship is the part of the local church experience that is completely selfless. In true worship, we focus on Christ and His work, giving unrestrained thanks to God. The less we focus on those around us and the more intent we are on fully expressing our hearts to God, the greater our worship experience will be. While any believer may offer praise to God privately, there is something altogether different that happens in us when we openly worship God together in the local church.

United Prayer There is something powerful that occurs when believers gather to pray. Each of us needs prayer. It is our living source of communication with our Father. The Bible teaches that we should pray both privately and with others. When the church prays together, there is a multiplication of our power in prayer. The Scriptures teach this principle in the Old Testament Ecclesiastes 4: When the church gathers to pray, Jesus Himself is present and the Father has promised to do whatever is asked of Him. This is an astounding promise for the local church. In the book of Acts, we see that the Holy Spirit was poured out as the church gathered on Sunday to pray in one accord Acts 2: Then after the church leaders had been threatened, the church gathered to pray, and something supernatural occurred: In the New Testament, we see that some of the most powerful miracles occurred when the church gathered to pray about the needs of the moment. It is the faith we offer in prayer that moves the heart of God to work on our behalf Hebrews

In the verses above, we see that they did not just attend services to hear teaching. They opened their homes, shared their possessions, and ate together with great joy. Nearly every change that occurs in our lives for the better or worse comes by way of relationships. That means that they have a certain spiritual, emotional, and natural force of influence. Whether we intend it or not, the people we habitually associate with have gravitational influence on our feelings, thinking, and behavior. The people we associate with will either pull us upwards towards positive transformation or pull us downwards towards negative or distracting patterns of thinking and behaving. If we are going to transform our lives, we need to discover people who are going in the direction of change we want to establish in our own lives. When a person becomes a believer in Jesus, they need to build genuine relationships with others who love Jesus and are hungry for personal transformation. While we may have many relationships with non-Christians who can help and advise us in natural things, our deepest intimacy needs to be forged with other believers in the local

church who are seeking to follow Jesus. Choosing friends and building fellowship in the church is a choice that you must make. Because the church is made up of people from all walks of life, it is important to build quality relationships with different people and open your heart to the diversity of age, race, gender, and social status that make up the body of Christ, the members of the church. Sacred Unions and Passings Marriage and Funeral The local church is the place where believers enter into the sacred covenant of marriage.

9: 5 Barriers to Church Growth

As with a growing organism, the local church has those who plant the seed (evangelists), those who water the seed (pastor/teachers), and others who use their spiritual gifts for the growth of those in the local church.

Coaching situations are characterized by a person or group who: These are broad characterizations, so you can imagine that coaching has a wide application in the church. Let me mention a few applications where coaching can make a significant impact. Pastoral Care For most congregations, pastoral care focuses primarily on supporting people who are in pain, suffering through crisis, or experiencing severe change. Such care is important and often takes on a counseling or therapeutic nature. When ministry leaders are capable coaches, they expand their pastoral care ministry to help their flock deal with positive change, create new awareness, and take action. Cindy is an associate pastor in the Midwest who was getting burned out providing pastoral care amidst issues that almost always had a negative flavor. Unless a church member is sick, lost a loved one, or is struggling with their marriage, they do not need me. Not only is the work sucking the life out of me, but I provide very little value to most of our church members. Cindy summed it up well: It allows me to care for people who are not in crisis and who, by moving forward, are much more likely to avoid crisis. Of course we should. But people do not do or believe what we tell them to do or believe. Our neighbors have become less and less responsive to our appeals, our delivery of the gospel, our tracts, our postcards, and other forms of telling. Telling does work some of the time and is appropriate. However, our evangelistic efforts can also be upgraded when we add a coach approach to sharing the good news. In our book, Faith Coaching: Our coworkers, neighbors, family members, and the people we happen to meet most likely shut down when we start telling them about Jesus. But almost anyone is willing to engage in a conversation that consists primarily of questions that helps them take forward steps. When we stop selling Jesus and start engaging in honest conversation, those around us will move forward in life, and Jesus is always forward. Discipleship Just as coaching can help non-Christians discover where they are in life, move forward, and discern their need for Christ, we can also coach fellow Christians to a deeper walk with the Lord and toward more meaningful ministry and mission. Too much of our discipleship efforts rely on studies and lectures that do a good job of informing but not always a good job of forming. This is because formation is personal. When we coach for spiritual formation, we start with where the disciple is in his or her walk, explore what is next, and what actions are required. When we coach for discipleship, we explore: Are they new to faith, mature, or somewhere between? On the express train? Are they facing an ethical decision at work? Is God calling them to shift their parenting style? Teams and Committees When I stumbled upon coaching as a church planter, the first place I took a coach approach was in my work with teams. One team I coached was our hospitality team. They were responsible for greeting guests, helping them feel welcome, and connecting with them. I asked them how well, on a scale of 1 to 10, they thought they were doing. Tossing out ideas before settling on three key actions that fit our church, they said: Coaching teams involved major and oftentimes awkward shifts for me. As the lead pastor of an infant church, I was used to being the answer man: As I experimented with coaching teams, I realized how important it is that I trust the team members and believe they have valuable and workable ideas. It takes time to figure out a truth: If team members are not capable of being coached, then I have the wrong people on the team. Another shift involved my willingness to allow others to have good ideas. I sometimes hear pastors and leaders say that delegation means you have to be willing to live with solutions that are not as good as what you would have offered. But to coach our teams, I had to believe that differing ideas are seldom about better or worse. For most issues, there are many good options and solutions that are equally valuable. Coaching works because it brings out the ideas from the people who are willing to carry out the ideas, so there is ownership, which promotes an okay idea to a great idea. When coaching teams, remember: A group is not the same as a team. Teams function as a unit or a whole, whereas a group is a collection of persons with similar interests or responsibilities. Teams create awareness and own actions at the team level, and each action needs a name assigned to it to ensure follow-through. Groups such as committees or councils usually create awareness at the group level and commit to actions at the personal level. Also, many

groups function to make decisions, not take actions. Board Meetings Coaching can have a positive impact on board meetings. Some might refer to these as elder meetings, council meetings, or something similar. Whatever the name, the function is to provide high-level oversight and direction for the church. This might cause one to think there is very little room for coaching. When a church takes a coach approach to board meetings, the quality of listening increases among the board members and therefore the quality of discussion improves, resulting in better decisions. I have seen coaching make a difference in board meetings that have to do with distinguishing interests from solutions. Coaches are savvy at knowing the difference and at helping clients distinguish interests what the client wants from solutions how the client might go about getting his interest met. Too often board meetings are a battle of proposed solutions when the underlying interests are not clear. I facilitated a church board meeting where the discussion shall we say argument? One camp wanted to stay with the traditional hymns while another wanted to go contemporary “not an uncommon discussion among churches in the past decade. I posed questions aimed at exploring why each camp wanted what it wanted. One side was most interested in honoring the longtime worship pastor a classically trained and very gifted conductor who was nearing retirement , while the other was interested in attracting young people to the church. I have also coached boards that, when they revealed their true interests, cared less about Christ and the gospel and more about their petty preferences and grievances. Yet, the coach approach to these meetings is what finally allowed these board members to express and deal with their deep and unsavory interests. Leading Coaching is not synonymous with leading, yet neither are the two incompatible. Leading is about influencing others toward a better future. Leaders who want to extend influence and have followers are wise to employ a coaching mindset and skills. Nowhere in the church is coaching more important for leaders than when it comes to vision. Too many leaders isolate themselves from the congregation to become inspired with a vision they will then share. Such vision casting can even fall into a dictatorial style when pastors declare their vision is directly from God and that any opposition or question is an affront to God. The second problem is that inspired visions often fall on deaf ears and reluctant hearts so the leader must invest much energy getting buy-in. Coaching can help avoid both of these problems. Leaders who adopt a coaching approach are constantly accessing the wisdom of their followers through the use of coaching questions and active listening. I call this skimming the vision. This method discerns vision by inquiring the followers and assuming that many of the followers carry some portion of the larger vision for the church. This is not vision by committee. Rather, it is vision by community where a gifted and called leader listens discerningly and assimilates prayerfully the vision in a clear and compelling way. When shared, a skimmed vision sounds familiar to followers because it is already familiar “after all, it comes from them. The vision is inspiring because the coaching leader extends beyond his wisdom and preferences by tapping into the wisdom of others who are also listening to God. The vision is also inspiring because it has faint rings of familiarity, having come from the members of the church body. Just as leaders must avoid taking a dictatorial approach to visioning, they must also be cautious not to fall into a laissez-faire or hands-off approach. While there is much wisdom in members, they need a catalyst to ask, listen, provide feedback, and challenge them. Leaders need to be engaged in helping members explore options and motivations, challenge their current thinking, and help them get clear on goals and actions. Managing Staff and Volunteers Church leaders who manage others can also benefit from coaching. As with leading, coaching does not replace managing, but it does upgrade our approach. Managing involves sound utilization of resources time, energy, equipment, money, etc. When we manage staff and volunteers in the church, we can fall into the trap of believing people are simply resources like money or equipment. Of course this is not true. Individuals we manage have their own abilities, motivations, expectations, and history. A wise manager takes a coach approach by getting to know what is unique about each person and then partnering with that person to decide how best she can accomplish the end. A manager is a keen observer of the resources strengths, skills, habits, personality, knowledge, preferences, etc. A pastor manager who coaches does not pull out from the staff or volunteer what she should accomplish since outcomes are typically set , but he does pull out from the person how to accomplish the outcome. When I managed a student minister, I often took a coach approach. I set the outcomes involve kids and parents in programs aimed at their spiritual formation , but how the student minister went about her role was up for

discussion. Rather than encourage her to fill the role like someone else would, I helped her discover how God had wired her for fulfilling the role. She enjoyed and was successful spending time with the parents and adult volunteers more than with the students. This allowed her to concentrate her efforts into helping the adults be involved with the kids and do most of the ministry with the students while she equipped and encouraged them. She also took a coach approach to working with her volunteers, helping each find where they fit best in the program from behind-the-scenes volunteers who planned activities or ran the technology for student worship, to the out-front parents who had time and ability to eat lunch with kids at school. A manager pastor who employs coaching is able to live out what Marcus Buckingham implores of managers in *First, Break All the Rules*:

The Manchester School Perils and promises of a new South city : Knoxville in the modern age. Mystery of the secret code Expert guide to visual basic 6 Books in Print 2007-2008 (Books in Print) The Suicide of Reason Architecture versus erudition: the Perrault-Blondel debate revisited Menus and music for Christmas The most dangerous guitar lesson : jamming with David Reinhardt. Select catalogue of sheet music Real and ideal in literature. Pioneer life at Rocky Mount Exported to bigger size Reagans rebellion 3. Embracing the arts and crafts movement These are my brothers Show-n-tell grab bag American Book Collectors and Bibliographers The 2007-2012 Outlook for Non-Electric Gas Forced Warm Air Furnaces and Humidifiers with over 400,000 BTU Financial markets and the economy by jay kaplan Hail to mail (Passports) Eric foner give me liberty an american history Prepositional phrase list a-z Antigone Sophocles. v. [3]. Reader Aid. Journet to Universe City Black Hole Drive and Other Stories Natural recycling vs human generated waste Determinants of life expectancy On Two Types of Wackernagel Cliticization in Secret book of Artesius Longaevus II. What Nerds Dont Want You to Know Almost single A Gaia Busy Persons Guide to Crystals The Essential Ti-108 Activity Book (Basic Calculator; Texas Instrument Ti-108) Kreg jig workbench plans V. 1]. Module 1. Energy flow and the cycling of matter 1 booklet 1 DVD-ROM Golden Retrievers and Other Sporting Dogs (World Books Animals of the World) Workers compensation in Canada Using cooperative learning and classroom research with culturally diverse students Susan Obler . [et al.] Encyclopedia of municipal bonds