

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 34

Changing a Church's Culture Changes Its Future By Curtis House

Why are we gifting you this volume? Because the mission statement of our primary publication—*The Parish Paper: New Ideas for Active Congregations*—is to help the largest possible number of congregations achieve maximum effectiveness in their various ministries. *The Parish Paper* is a monthly newsletter whose subscribers receive copyright permission to distribute to their constituents—more than two million readers in 28 denominations. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com for subscription information.

Purpose of this Volume: Provides readers of *The Parish Paper* with insights and methods for how to change a congregation's culture by adding a leadership development system that (1) unifies parishioners in ways that counteract resistance to change, (2) helps people strengthen their spiritual connection with Jesus Christ, (3) grows worship attendance, (4) increases the number of local and across-the-world ministries, and (5) involves a higher percentage of worshipers in accomplishing the various ministries.

© Copyright 2009 by Curtis House. You have permission to download this volume free at www.TheParishPaper.com and/or to distribute copies to people in your congregation.

Author: Curtis House is pastor of First United Methodist Church, Wolfforth, Texas. During the first five years of his tenure, this eighty-year-old congregation in a small West Texas town doubled in average worship attendance and expanded its ministries by more than 400 hundred percent.

Volume 34 – Contents

- I. Are Ideas More Powerful than Habits? – Page 2
- II. Is Relocation Enough? – Page 3
- III. Does Our Theology Have a Visionary Focus? – Page 7
 - A. What Is Our Mission Action Plan? – Page 8
 - B. What Is Our Vision? – Page 8
 - C. What Is Our Mission? – Page 9
 - D. What Are Our Values? – Page 10
 - E. What Is Our Strategy? – Page 11
- IV. Does Our Leadership Structure Overcome Change-Resistance? – Page 14
- V. Do We Understand How to Lead during Transitions? – Page 17
- VI. Do We Engage a Large Percentage of Attendees in Ministries? – Page 17
- VII. Is Our Pastor Equipped to Serve this Particular Church? – Page 22
- VIII. Ten-Week Visionary Leadership Curriculum – Page 26
- IX. Advanced Training for the Leadership Team – Page 59
- X. Appendix – Page 60

I. Are Ideas More Powerful than Habits?

Every group of people—small or large—that works together to achieve a worthy purpose has experiences early in its life that develop an *inclination* toward thinking, behaving, organizing, and functioning in specific ways. Examples include PTAs, labor unions, corporations, political parties, nations, soccer teams, Lion’s Clubs, and congregations.

Over time, a group’s thinking and behavior *inclinations* harden into *habits*. In each aspect of the group’s life—how its participants think about important issues, how they behave toward their leaders, how they interact with the general public, etc.—those *habits* begin to define the group’s thinking and behavior patterns. Soon, outsiders are able to say with considerable accuracy: “That’s the way they operate.”

Over time, some of the group’s thinking and behavior habits grow into *obsessions*. Thus, if the group’s leaders, newcomers to the group, or long-time members of the group start thinking and behaving in new ways, anxiety increases among the group’s participants. That anxiety soon grows into frustration. Among several participants, frustration becomes anger. These individuals vent their feelings in conversations with other group members and attempt to steer the group’s thinking and behavior back within the boundaries of what the group defines as normal, i.e., “the way we’ve always done things.”

Over time, a congregation’s habits and obsessions become its *culture*. Like every other type of organization, a congregation expresses its *culture* (deeply ingrained thinking and behavior patterns) in ways such as the following:

- Ministries to which most of the members are willing—or unwilling—to give time and energy
- Programs and activities with which most of the members feel comfortable
- Policy-setting and planning decisions that key laypersons vote for—or against
- Clergy and staff member actions that key laypersons affirm—or oppose

As William Faulkner famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” (William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, 1951) Thus, a church’s culture, instead of flexibly navigating toward an unfolding future, can become its coffin—preserving the embalmed thinking, behavior, structures, and procedures from past years.

In other words, a congregation’s context (its geographical setting and the type of people living in the surrounding community) and experiences (challenges faced during its early years and the guidance of its earliest leaders) produce an *inclination* toward certain thinking and behavior habits. Many of those inclinations become *habits*. Over the years, some of those habits harden into *obsessions* regarding “the right way to do things in a church.”

Generations later, the congregation’s unwritten thinking and behavior patterns often block the lay and clergy leaders from recognizing and coping with new challenges. For example, the population of the community within fifteen minutes driving distance of its facilities may change. But the congregation’s culture stays the same, frozen in time.

Fortunately, a group’s culture is not genetic. Unlike the built-in instincts that cause Canadian geese to fly south each fall, people in organizations can decide to fine-tune the thinking and behavior patterns that define its culture. For example, during the last fifty years, Japan and Germany have shifted from highly militarized societies to highly pacifist, staunchly democratic societies. Since its cultural revolution following World War II, China has shifted from what

seemed like ideological madness to a highly pragmatic culture. (Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005], page 328)

Likewise, congregations can change their culture. When that happens, congregations achieve new and often dramatically different results in their ministries. This volume is that type of story: *Changing a Church's Culture Changes Its Future*.

II. Is Relocation Enough?

Five intertwined factors—working together like the strands of a rope—played influential roles in Wolfforth United Methodist Church's vitality surge.

The first—but not the most definitive—of these five factors was relocation. In April 2001 the congregation moved 1.8 miles—from a small, seventy-year-old, parking-starved, land-locked facility on the west end of Wolfforth—to a first-unit building with plenty of parking on the opposite side of town. The new location is ten acres across from an elementary school and one block east of the high school in a popular school district. Within a mile to the north and to the east of the church's new location, the edge of a 200,000 population city (Lubbock, Texas) is growing toward the church's new location.

This courageous congregational decision was accomplished with virtually no loss of participating members. The worship-attendance growth and the expansion of ministries that began three years later could not have happened in the old location. But as is so often true when a congregation moves to a different geographical setting, *the new location was not enough!*

Nation-wide research demonstrates that when congregations expect a new location in an area with increasing population growth to automatically increase their numerical membership, they are often disappointed:

- 35% of *numerically declining* congregations in the United States are located in growing-population areas.
- 24% of *numerically plateaued* congregations in the United States are located in growing-population areas.

“At least a dozen factors fuel the numerical growth of congregations and predict their numerical decline. A few of the numerical growth or decline predictors are community factors *other than* population growth. Many of those numerical growth or decline predictors are dynamics *internal* to the congregation.” (Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008] page 84)

The courageous leaders of Wolfforth United Methodist Church had thought the congregation was 1.8 miles from success. But during its first three years in a new location (2001-2003), the average worship attendance did not change. As with many relocated congregations in the United States, changing the geography without changing the congregation's internal culture did not change its ministry results.

The next three pages frame a snapshot of the congregation and its context (surrounding community) taken during a Futuring Conference shortly after the church relocated in 2001. (Herb Miller, *Futuring Suggestions* February 16-17, 2002, pages 2-4)

**A Picture of First United Methodist Church and the Wolfforth, Texas, Community
February 2002—Prior to Its Congregational Culture Change**

First United Methodist Church was established in 1929.

The Wolfforth, Texas, population of 2,725 in 1980 had dropped to 1,701 by 2000.

The nearby Lubbock, Texas, population was 173,379 in 1980, grew to 186,208 in 1990, and reached 199,564 in 2000.

The Lubbock County population was 211,651 in 1980; 222,636 in 1990, and 242,628 in 2000.

Lubbock County population characteristics at the 2000 U.S. Census:

- 25.7% under age 18 compared with 28.2% in that age group across Texas.
- 11.0% age 65+ compared with 9.9% across Texas.
- 27.5% Hispanic compared with 32.0% across Texas.
- 7.7% African-American compared with 11.5% across Texas.
- \$31,961 median-household income compared with \$34,478 across Texas.
- 19.3% of the population living below the poverty level compared with 16.7% across Texas and 12.4% across the United States [in 2003 the Bureau of Census defined the poverty level as \$18,400.00 annual income for a family of four; \$12,015 for a two-person household; and \$9,393 for one person].

In summary, the Lubbock County population was in many ways similar to Texas as a whole.

The 2001-2002 Wolfforth public school students were 68.3% Anglo, 25.8% Hispanic, 4.8% African-American, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .2% Native American Indian.

Wolfforth United Methodist Church’s members were in many ways similar to people in the surrounding area. The church’s 35% of local members under age 18 compared with Lubbock County’s 25.7% of the population in that age range. The church’s 16% of local members who were age-65-plus compared with the 11% of Lubbock County residents in that age range.

2002 - Predominant Religious Affiliation of Lubbock County Residents

Number of Adherents in County	Denomination
37.2%	Southern Baptist
14.1%	Catholic
12.9%	United Methodist
9.3%	Church of Christ (non-instrumental)
6.1%	Independent Charismatic
4.9%	Black Baptist Estimate
2.7%	Independent Non-Charismatic

The religious-affiliation figures listed above did not restrict First United Methodist Church’s membership-growth ability. Research indicates that, in contrast to 96% fifty years earlier, in 2002 only 39% of new members in American congregations grew up in that denomination.

The majority of today’s adults do not decide to join a congregation because of its denominational affiliation. Rather, they base their decisions primarily on these six factors: (1) The worship hymns’ style and tempo fit their age and spiritual preferences. (2) The preaching inspires them with biblical insights about how to live a meaningful life. (3) The pastors and staff exhibit strong spiritual traits and possess personalities to which they can relate. (4) The excellent children and youth ministries appeal to them. (5) The congregation is friendly and they feel wanted in this church family. (6) The church is a reasonable driving-distance from their residence (fifteen minutes or less for 85 percent of attendees).

During the 2001 calendar year, an average of 52% of worship attendees at Wolfforth United Methodist Church also attended Sunday school. That ratio compared with 47% who also attended Sunday school in all 35,683 United Methodist Churches in the United States and the 61% who also attended Sunday school in all 224 United Methodist Churches in the Northwest Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

During 2001, if we divide the total contributions of \$259,495.46 by Wolfforth United Methodist Church’s average morning-worship attendance of 143, the resulting figure is \$1,814.64. That compared with an average of \$1,296.32 in all 224 congregations in the Northwest Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church that year. (Wolfforth’s average annual giving figure was distorted upward due to the building-fund gifts, as is always the case with congregations that construct new facilities.) Note: the presence or absence of an effective annual stewardship campaign is the primary determinant of a congregation’s giving level—not the average income of the county, the community, or the congregation’s members.

During 2001, Wolfforth United Methodist Church gave 5% of its total contributions to benevolence and missions causes in the community, region, and across the world. That compared to a 16% average in all 350,000 Protestant and Catholic congregations in the United States that year, and a 19% average in all 35,683 United Methodist Churches in the United States.

During 2001, the 40% of Wolfforth United Methodist Church’s annual budget that went for building-debt service is (a) often experienced by congregations during their first years in a new facility and (b) well above the 25% rule-of-thumb level that typically causes budget-balancing stress.

2002 - How Attendees Rated Themselves on Friendliness
(Data from “Personal Opinion Survey for Morning Worship Attendees”)

Behavior Pattern	Number of People Giving Opinion
Very Friendly	64
Friendly	26
Polite But Distant	5
Cool & Unresponsive	0
Cold & Aloof	0
None of the Above	0

2002 - How Attendees Rated Themselves on Willingness to Change and Church Vitality
(Data from “Personal Opinion Survey for Morning Worship Attendees”)

Behavior Pattern	Number of People Giving Opinion
Energetic & Open to New Ideas	46
Flexible But Too Rigid on Some Issues	29
Slow Moving & Resistant to Change	8
Standing Still	1
Losing Ground	0
None of the Above	6

The two surveys above indicate that in 2002 Wolfforth United Methodist Church was (a) similar to most other congregations in friendliness and (b) had about the same high resistance to making changes as the average church.

**2002 - The Congregation's Consensus Regarding Strengths
First United Methodist Church, Wolfforth, Texas**

1. Location in a growing-population community
2. Spirit of warmth and friendliness among members
3. Positive attitudes and atmosphere among members
4. Weekly King's Kids and 4th-5th grade ministries with elementary children
5. High value on children and youth ministries
6. High value on community-service ministries
7. Above-average per-household financial stewardship
8. Dedicated core group of lay leaders
9. Capable youth director
10. Much-appreciated pastor who preaches effective sermons and provides capable leadership

**2002 - The Congregation's Consensus Regarding Goals
First United Methodist Church, Wolfforth, Texas**

1. Increase our worship attendance and membership
2. Improve the overall sense of satisfaction with our worship music
3. Strengthen our reach-out ability with regard to (a) inviting people to visit our worship services and (b) accomplishing friendly follow-up contacts with worship visitors
4. Move as rapidly as possible toward the time when we can complete our landscaping and facility constructions

But, as the *italics* in the chart below indicate, during its three years after relocation (2001-2003), the congregation exhibited little change in ministry results.

Seventeen-Year Statistics Reported by Wolfforth, Texas, First United Methodist Church

Average Worship Attend.	Average Sunday School Attend.	Total New Members	Total Members Removed	Total Members at Year's End	
1992	105	60	23	4	256
1993	119	72	17	5	268
1994	125	82	20	9	279
1995	130	83	17	8	288
1996	140	91	24	11	301
1997	136	90	14	10	305
1998	139	72	45	16	334
1999	138	77	14	7	341
2000	126	69	15	40	318
<i>2001</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>331</i>
<i>2002</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>332</i>
<i>2003</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>352</i>
<i>2004</i>	<i>222</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>360</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>340</i>
<i>2006</i>	<i>258</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>373</i>
<i>2007</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>437</i>
<i>2008</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>460</i>

After a new pastor arrived in 2004 (*bold italics*), the factors outlined on the following pages began generating increased worship attendance and expansion of ministries.

III. Does Our Theology Have a Visionary Focus?

The Wolfforth church's experience during 2004-2008 is consistent with national research from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey regarding growing congregations: On average, conservative Protestant churches draw more people in the age range of 18 to 44 years old than do mainline Protestant congregations. Thus, evangelical theology is one of the keys to developing a growing, sustainable congregation.

In addition to its theological perspective, several other factors also influence a congregation's ability to grow numerically. But congregations with an evangelical theology tend, on average, to draw more people 18 to 44 years of age—many of whom have children and youth in their homes. The presence of this age group in large numbers correlates with increasing worship attendance more definitively than with any other single factor. (Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008] pages 66, 69)

This is not to say that numerical growth never happens in mainline Protestant churches and Catholic parishes. Obviously, it sometimes does. Nor does this mean that every congregation that preaches and teaches an evangelical theology grows numerically. Obviously, some of them *don't* grow. But churches that possess *an evangelical theology with a vision* are more likely to grow.

Why does an evangelical theology attract larger numbers of age-18-44 young adults?

Rick Warren, author of the best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life* and pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forrest, California, (about 22,000 worshipers each weekend), gives four reasons:

“After salvation a fulfilled life is one where four basic needs are met. God has uniquely called the Body of Christ to meet those needs....

“**1. Support:** Everyone wants to know they're not alone. God said in Genesis 2:18 ‘It is not good for man to be alone,’ but there are a lot of factors in today's world that are causing us to be more alone....

“**2. Stability:** People are looking for a strong foundation to build their life on....Every study you read about truth these days says people don't believe in absolutes anymore....But if you have no absolutes in your life, you're asking for anxiety and stress....Deep down, the people in your community know that....

“**3. Self-expression:** God made us all a unique mix of gifts, passions, abilities, personality, and experiences. And he gave us an irrepressible desire to express our uniqueness. When we can't express that uniqueness, it produces frustration, dissatisfaction, and boredom....

“**4. Significance:** We all want to know our life matters. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves....You and I are part of the biggest mission imaginable—sharing the Good News about God's Kingdom. I can't think of any bigger mission to center our lives around. As we help people see their unique part in this mission, we're meeting this huge need in their lives....

“If you're built around the biblical purposes of the church (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism), you're meeting those needs.” (*Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*—pastors.com—Issue #366, 11/26/2008)

What does evangelical theology look like at Wolfforth First United Methodist Church?

The congregation's short answer to that question: “Our goal is to make and mature fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.”

A more detailed answer unfolds in the congregation's Mission Action Plan (developed in 2006, about two years after its worship-attendance growth began). The next several pages contain the congregation's Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Values Statement, and overall Strategy.

What Is Our Mission Action Plan? (MAP)

We are establishing a Mission Action Plan to counter the declining membership within the Christian Church, particularly The United Methodist Church. Although the denomination is growing internationally, The United Methodist Church is declining in the United States at an annual rate of 200,000 per year. The average age of a United Methodist member is 67.5 years. What will that number look like ten years from now? We must seek where God is leading the church and be willing to do what it takes to make disciples. We recognize that this starts with us.

Why Wolfforth United Methodist Church? We are a growing church that is called to make a difference, not just in the community it serves but also in the world it serves. We currently have local missions ranging from healthcare to homecare, food vouchers, prison ministry, nursing homes, grief, and many others. The church has taken three teams to hurricane-Katrina-damaged areas and has participated internationally in the love of Christ. We have a global team that ministers in a Muslim country annually, and currently supports two missionaries in seminary who plan to serve in a Muslim country. God is doing great things through our local church, yet we know He is calling us to move ahead.

What Are the Long-Term Goals? As with any church, we will set the long-term goals according to the success of this MAP. It should change our leadership first, internally. The church has been a political battlefield for too long. Personal agendas, power, and influence have all been a part of what has driven the church. It is time for the church to go back to its roots. Instead of committees, we need teams. Instead of workers and employees, we need ministers. This long-term goal has many doors yet to be opened. All that we do should be bathed in prayer. We start with us, praying over God's will in our personal lives and the life of His Church. We must be prayer-centered, Spirit-driven, and biblically literate in the near future. The Ordinances of God must be employed and used by every believer, and in doing so, the very will of God will manifest His presence here.

What Leadership Model Are We Committed to? Our Mission Action Plan is like a box with four sides, each of which plays an equally important role in carrying forward God's purposes for our congregation.

Vision: Refocus on what the future looks like based on the vision. Renew commitment to the right direction. Revisit our context to see if we are on target.

Mission: Remind people constantly what business we are in. Remember why we are doing what we are doing.

Values: Realign our values constantly. Drift happens. Restate our values often. Reclaim our values through new people. Revive our values through self-examination.

Strategy: Review constantly. Are we doing what it takes to get there? Report on progress toward the vision. Reorganize if necessary to live out the vision.

What Is Our Vision?

Vision is not about reality or what is. Vision is all about our dreams and aspirations or what could be:

We envision becoming a church of small groups where our people model biblical community in a safe place where we accept one another and are accepted, love and are loved, shepherd and are shepherded, encourage and are encouraged, forgive and are forgiven, and serve and are served.

We envision helping all of our people—youth as well as adults—to discover their divine designs so that they are equipped to serve Christ effectively. Our goal is that every member be a minister. Our church will be an equipping center where every Christian can develop to his or her full potential for ministry. This development will come through these means: creative, inspiring worship; teaching that is biblical and relevant to life; vital, supportive fellowship; and opportunities for outreach into the community in service and evangelism.

We envision children waking up parents on Sunday morning excited to go to church. We see lots of smiles, glad to be in a place of belonging, welcomed again by a familiar face. We see the fright of the first time melted away by an extra caring touch and loneliness replaced by laughter. We see motivated volunteers, passionate about being with kids, gifted to teach, shepherd, and serve.

We see physical care, babies being cuddled and crawlers being chased. We sense a foundation being laid where Sunday morning is an experience of God's love for the youngest baby to the oldest child; a time when seeds of faith can be planted and nurtured.

We hear cheers of older kids, and feel fun in the air as hundreds of children celebrate and sing of the goodness of God; we hear the quietness of prayer. We envision the stories of the Bible told in creative ways. We see the look of conviction as the gospel penetrates a child's heart. We see caring adults leading discussions and listening during small group time. We dream of kids carrying Bibles and bringing friends.

We see whole families growing closer to God and each other through programs to motivate and equip parents. We hear the sounds of fellowship—loving, learning, laughing, and living in harmony together. We envision welcoming numerous members into our body who are excited about Christ, experience healing in their family relationships and marriages, and grow together in love.

We envision developing all our people—new believers as well as established believers—into fully functioning followers of Christ through the people-friendly worship services, Sunday school, special events, and most important, small groups. As a result, the Wolfforth area will be different in ten to fifteen years, with Christian influence being increasingly felt in homes, businesses, education, and politics.

We envision a large facility that will accommodate our growth and will be accessible to all in Wolfforth and the surrounding communities. We see a facility that is “kid focused,” that will facilitate learning and having fun for hundreds of children. We see a clean and attractive environment where excellence and creativity are immediately noticed. We see a facility that will have ample room for worship, Sunday school, small groups, Bible study, prayer, education, and other meetings. Eventually, we envision establishing a weekday, Kindergarten through 5th Grade Elementary School housed in our facilities. While we do not believe that “bigger is better,” numerical growth is a by-product of effective evangelism. Thus we desire to grow as God prospers us and uses us to reach a lost and dying world.

This is our dream—our vision of what could be!

What Is Our Mission?

We haven't been able to consolidate our mission into just one sentence. In our view, each of these thoughts describes our congregation's mission:

- Our mission is to create disciples for this life and eternal life.
- Our mission is to make God smile every day.
- Our mission is to help our community be a vital growing part of the body of Christ.
- Our mission is to lead ordinary people to extraordinary life in Christ.
- Our mission is to lead all people into a life-changing, every-growing relationship with Christ.
- Our mission is to share God's love in such a way that people in our community have every opportunity to become disciples for Jesus Christ.
- Our mission is to be a place where God works in us and through us.
- Our mission is to be a partner in our journey home to God.
- Our mission is to make and mature fully devoted followers of Christ.

What Are Our Values?

These core values of the Wolfforth First United Methodist Church define and drive our ministry in the context of a warm and caring environment.

Christ's Headship: We acknowledge Christ as the Head of our church and submit ourselves and all our activities to His will and good pleasure. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Biblical Teaching: We believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, the authoritative and trustworthy rule of faith and practice of Christians. We strive to teach God's Word with integrity and authority, so that seekers find Christ and believers mature in Him. (2 Timothy 3:16)

Authentic Worship: We believe that God is living and active in this generation and has supreme value and worth in our personal lives and in the worship services of our church. (Romans 12:1-2)

Prayer: We believe that God desires His people to pray and that He hears and answers prayers. We believe that God should be our first source for help, not our last. We rely on private and group prayer in the conceiving, planning, and executing of all this church's ministries and activities. (Matthew 7:7-11)

Sense of Community: We stress healthy relationships among Christians. We ask all of our people to commit to and fully participate in biblically functioning small groups—through which they may reach the lost, exercise their gifts, be shepherded, and thus grow in Christ-likeness. (Acts 2:44-46)

Family: We support the spiritual nurture of the family as one of God's dynamic means to perpetuate the Christian faith. We seek to provide an atmosphere that strengthens marriages and families. We are committed to strong youth and children's programs. (2 Timothy 1:5)

Grace Orientation: We emphasize God's unconditional acceptance and full forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We attempt to motivate people through love and thankfulness rather than by guilt, shame, and duty. (Romans 6:14)

Creativity and Innovation: We constantly evaluate our forms and methods, seeking cultural relevance and maximum ministry effectiveness for Christ. (1 Chronicles 12:32)

Mobilized Congregation: We believe the primary responsibility of our pastor and teachers is to "prepare God's people for works of service." We seek to equip all of our uniquely designed and gifted people to effectively accomplish our various ministries. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Lost People: We know that many who are not yet committed to Christ are attracted to our ministry. Therefore, we desire to create a non-threatening environment in which they are free to explore the Christian faith at their own pace. (Luke 19:10)

Growth Responsive: We appreciate the advantages of a small, intimate congregation, but also feel that we should respond to the numerical growth that often results from reaching out to those who are exploring Christianity. We do not set a particular limit on the size of our congregation. We trust God to show our church leadership what the facilities should look like and how to best utilize them. (Acts 16:5)

Ministry Excellence: We believe that the God of our salvation deserves the best we have to offer. We seek to honor Him by maintaining a high standard in all of our ministries and activities. (Colossians 3:23-24)

The Values paragraphs above are adapted from Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), pages 317-318.

What Is Our Strategy?

We print the Wolfforth Church's operational strategy in four distinct paragraphs. But, in reality, our strategy is more like a four-wheeled vehicle. Each wheel depends on the other three wheels for effectively transporting our vision, our mission, and our values into the life of our people, our church, and our community.

Visionary Preaching: This is the most visible thing the pastor does, and for a visionary pastor, the most important. The pastor should engage the people in a way to minister, intrigue, and encourage both members and non-members. Peter, Paul, Timothy, and most importantly, Jesus, were all visionaries. They were vision casters under the influence of the Holy Spirit. With that vision, they touched people in such a way that they become disciples. Thus, Paul advises church leaders, "Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1 NRSV).

Visionary Leadership Team: This team experiences the teachings of the leadership curriculum and helps shape and communicate the church's vision under the leadership of the pastor. The team members know what is ahead through prayer, study, and the Holy Spirit. They test the teachings and evaluate the church's various ministries. Our goal is that everyone in a church leadership role goes through the leadership courses. This ministry is a vital strand running through the framework of the Body.

Discovery Groups: In the Book of Acts we see the early church meeting in homes. In today's society, one in which we no longer have time to know our neighbors, we feel the need to come back to our roots. The Discovery Groups meet in homes once a month to eat and fellowship together. A short devotional and prayer time follows. Someone from the leadership team is present in each group. At least one home group meets each week, and all worship visitors are invited to attend a Discovery Group that meets during the following week. In addition to an invitational postcard sent to worship visitors, Discovery Group Hosts are responsible for contacting people on the worship visitor list to invite them. The Discovery Group homes are strategically placed throughout the community; thus, able to engage people in their area and invite neighbors to come.

Ministry Cells: These prayer and accountability groups serve two purposes. The cells encourage and equip; plus, the cells are a means of encountering the culture. Ministry cells focus on serving Christ in a variety of ways—locally, nationally, and internationally. Cell ministry members covenant together for a specific ministry purpose. Members of each cell ministry feel that God has called them to put His will above their own. Cells do not divide or split; they reproduce. We are moving toward a time when we no longer have committees, but cellular mitosis—specific ministries that grow and multiply to accomplish God's work in the congregation, in Wolfforth, and across the world!

Our Ministries Cluster Under Four Action Verbs

Engage. Examples include Parent's Day Out, Local Missions, Prayer Groups, Sports Teams, Home Groups, and Serving Ministries.

Receive. Examples include Visitor Coffees, Discovery Groups, Men's Retreats, Women's Retreats, Seminars, Communion, Baptism, and Grief Ministry.

Equip. Examples include Bible Studies, Leadership Teams, Ministry Cells, Nursing Home Care, Prison Ministry, Homeless Ministry, Knitting Club, and Prayer Teams for each ministry action group.

Send. Examples include Backyard Missions (repairing homes for needy people), Missions to Mississippi (hurricane recovery), Missions to North Africa, Emergency Relief Teams, House to House (community census and inviting visits), and Personal Witnessing.

Many of these ministries overlap in ways that, to some extent, resemble a circular pattern. For instance, *Sending* involves *Engaging*.

Prayer Powers Everything

As with our individual lives, we must bathe our church in prayer. Ministries should be started through seeking God and His will for the church. Each ministry needs a prayer support team. We strongly encourage prayer teams to form and pray over each of our church's ministries. A prayer-focused and prayer-centered church will hear from God and allow Him to lead us into His purpose.

We facilitate this through one of our church's most important positions: Prayer Coordinator.

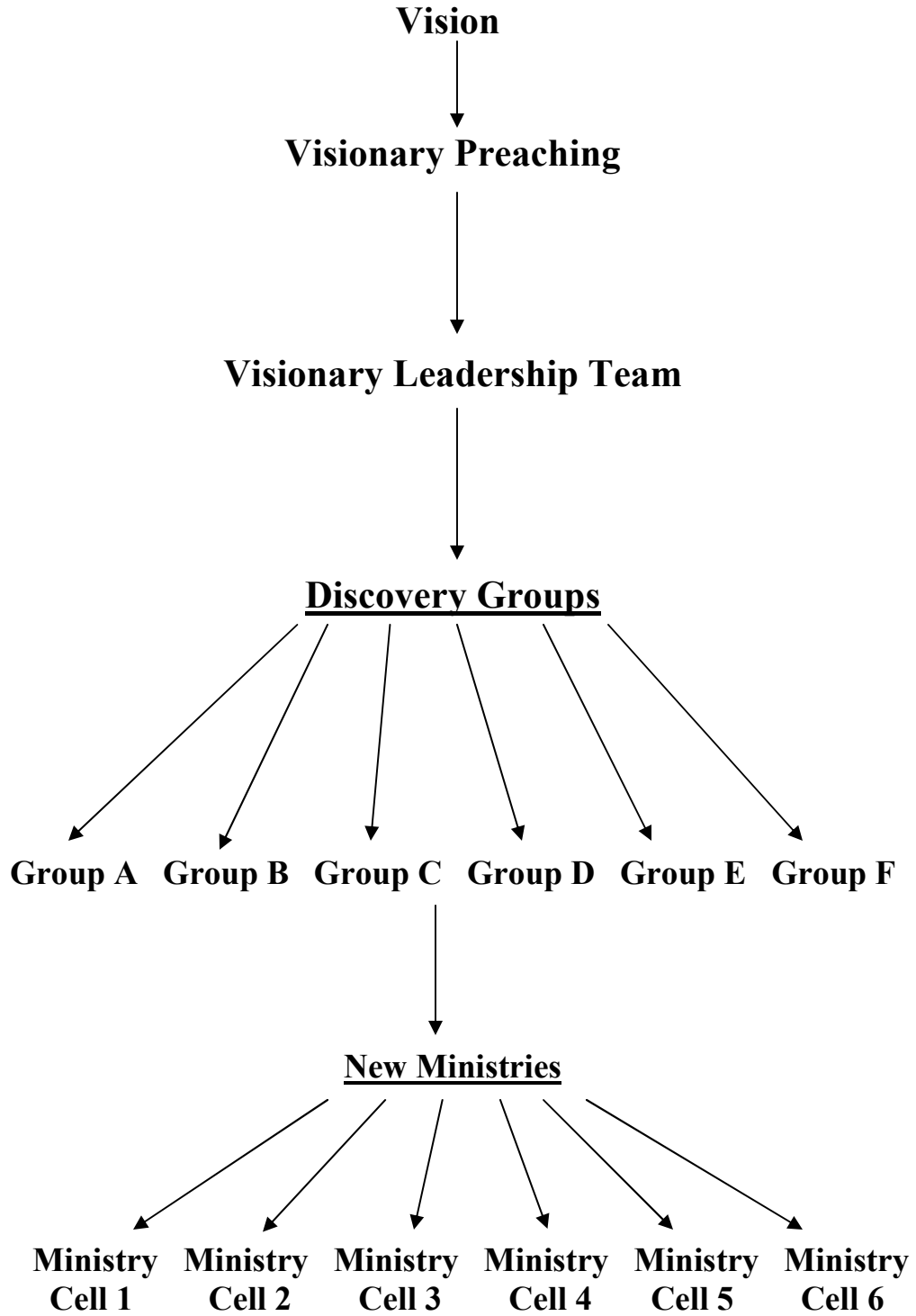
The central force of prayer reaches out to power the five aspects of our church's ministry infrastructure:

1. Vision (Engage)
2. Leadership (Equip)
3. Discovery Groups (Receive)
4. Cell Ministry (Equip and Send)
5. New Ministries (Sending)

In turn, each of those five aspects of our ministry infrastructure feeds into and positively influences the other four.

The following page provides a visual flow chart of the interrelationships among the five aspects of our ministry infrastructure.

Mission Action Plan
Wolfforth First United Methodist Church



IV. Does Our Leadership Structure Overcome Change-Resistance?

Every congregation's culture is strongly inclined to stay the same across several decades and generations of leaders. One of the ways that most congregations resist changing their leadership habits—and thus, their ministry results—is by resisting authority from outside the congregation. That resistance to outside authority includes resisting advice from their denomination, their newest members, and their pastors. Wolfforth United Methodist Church is no exception to that frequently observed phenomenon.

But in this church, establishing and training a Leadership Team has given this group the authority to make changes *from within the congregation*. That transition from an older organizational model—whose habits of thinking and behavior were highly resistant to revision—did not come easily or instantly. But gradually, the transition happened.

As the congregation lived into its Ministry Action Plan during 2006-2008, twelve people graduated from the first ten-week leadership training class. By the end of 2008, the class had graduated a total of thirty-six people. This process gradually created a cohesiveness, unity, and sense of community that overpowered the change-resisting “way we’ve always done things around here.” As metamorphous to new ways of thinking and behaving gradually happened in several dozen individuals, it happened in the church as a whole.

For most human beings, any type of metamorphous happens like this: The individual has a new experience that stimulates admiration mixed with imagination—which produces an emotional feeling about that new experience. From that emotional feeling the will power and motivation forms that creates new actions. Then, as the person takes new actions, he or she uses reason to accomplish them. (Jacques Barzun *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000]) That is how the leadership training and the Leadership Team overcame change-resistance at Wolfforth United Methodist Church.

This is not to say that every long-term member—saturated with the inclinations, habits, and obsessions of years gone by—experienced a metamorphous. For a variety of reasons, approximately 2 percent of members departed the congregation:

- Some of these departing people were uncomfortable with the church's emerging new culture. They experienced feelings of grief and loss. They expressed those feelings by saying, “Our church just isn't the same anymore.”
- Other departing people were socially uncomfortable in a larger congregation. They expressed that discomfort by saying, “There are so many people I don't know.”
- A few of the people who departed would classify in that approximately one person out of twenty in every congregation who—regardless of who the pastor is or how well things are going—is chronically unhappy.
- A tiny number of those departing members were no longer comfortable in the congregation when their power and control over the church's decisions disappeared.

As the new leadership training process evolved, the Wolfforth Church's Nominating Committee added a new criterion. When nominating new officers and governing board members, the committee began to consider for those leadership posts only people who have graduated from the leadership training classes.

As this leadership transition happened, the congregation gradually took on new values, priorities, thought patterns, and behaviors. Thus, its ministry results improved, with a minimum loss of members and overall positive feelings among the 98 percent who chose to stay.

Transition to the New Leadership Structure

The pastor gave primary leadership to this transition, which evolved in several stages—and continues to evolve as the pastor and lay leadership experience it together.

First, after the pastor arrived in 2004, increases in worship attendance began, along with expansion of the congregation's ministries. These positive evidences paved the way for acceptance of new ideas.

Second, almost two years later, the pastor recognized that further increases in ministry effectiveness would be difficult under the congregation's present organizational structure.

Third, the pastor developed the Ministry Action Plan (M.A.P.), a booklet of about a dozen pages. The M.A.P. contained standard planning elements such as Vision, Mission, Values, Strategy—ideas with which some of the lay leadership were familiar from secular business settings. Additionally, the Ministry Action Plan contained organizational-structure concepts such as the Visionary Leadership Team, the Ten-Week Leadership Training Sessions, the Discovery Groups, and the Ministry Action Cells.

Fourth, the pastor distributed a copy of M.A.P. to governing board members for review and study about a month before discussing it as a group. M.A.P. was not introduced as a way to replace the congregation's traditional organizational structure but as a way to compliment it and engender greater involvement of laypersons in the congregation's various ministries.

Fifth, the pastor presented the M.A.P. booklet for discussion at a leadership retreat for the governing board.

Sixth, the governing board officially adopted the Ministry Action Plan.

Seventh, a dozen people experienced the ten-week Leadership Training.

Eighth, after the Leadership Team developed into a functioning group, the governing board asked the Leadership Team to assign one of its members as a voting representative to the governing board. (This matched the governing board's already existing structure of having one voting representative from each committee.)

Ninth, the monthly Discovery Groups came into being, accomplishing discussion, feedback, and communication in ways not possible by the governing board and committee structure.

Tenth, out of discussions in the Discovery Groups, new ministries began evolving in the form of Cell Ministries that spontaneously formed as a result of recognizing important needs. These Cell Ministries involved new people and expanded the number and quality of ministries within the congregation, the local community, the nation, and other nations across the world.

The Leadership Team

In the classic organizational system—used in some form in every mainline denomination—a pastor decides that the congregation should strike out in new directions. Then, he or she tries to persuade a committee and the governing board.

Under the Leadership Team pattern, the pastor and the Team—which meets every other month—make the big decisions *together*, and *only after* communication with and feedback from the six Discovery Groups.

As a final step, the Leadership Team recommends a new ministry or a major change to the governing board.

The Discovery Groups

The six, monthly meeting Discovery Groups—each containing twelve to twenty people—also play an important role in reducing change-resistance, increasing communication, and building cohesiveness across the congregation.

Each Discovery Group sets the evening on which it regularly meets. The groups can meet any evening except Wednesday, which is reserved for other church activities. Sometimes a group that regularly meets on Saturday opts to change its meeting to Thursday night next month—because of a community event, such as a Texas Tech University home football game.

Thus, a total of about seventy people per month gather for fellowship, prayer, building relationships, and communicating. Each of the six Discovery Teams contains one person from the Leadership Team to help facilitate communication regarding what is happening in the church, new ministries planned, and other changes that are coming.

Monthly meeting activities of each Discovery Group:

1. Food and fellowship.
2. Welcome worship visitors. During a week in which two Discovery Groups meet, the group whose meeting is closest to the previous Sunday sends an invitation card to all worship visitors from that Sunday.
3. Prayer. Discovery Groups use a Prayer Guide created for the congregation.
4. Discussion and communication regarding church activities and needs. Some months, the pastor sends three bullet points that all six of the Discovery Groups discuss and report back on to the Leadership Team. Other months, the pastor asks each Discovery Group to surface three bullet points that it feels are important to the congregation's ministries.
5. Communication. Each Discovery Group contains a member of the Leadership Team. This connection provides a comfortable conduit for two-way communication—from attendees to the Leadership Team and vice-versa.
6. Openness to creating new ministry cells that meet specific needs. Out of the six Discovery Groups, several new ministries have formed by spontaneous combustion. Examples: a Grief Ministry Team, a Hospital Visitation Team, and a Homebound Communion Team.

What is the congregation's next new ministry? The pastors and leaders have no clue. But God does. He will plant that idea and sense of call to accomplish it in the hearts and minds of one or more of the congregation's people.

The Ministry Cells

The term *Cell* is a biological metaphor depicting the basic building block of nature: the cell. These Ministry Cells could just as easily been called Life Cells, or Ministry Teams, or Action Teams. Like cells in nature, these ever-expanding cells meet new ministry challenges and opportunities within the congregation. They also help to strengthen the sense of accountability among the congregation's participants.

The Ministry Cells differ greatly from one another in ministry objectives, organizational structure, composition, leadership procedures, training, and duration of service. Some of these cell ministries meet regularly for strategic planning. Other cells hold organizational meetings once a year or occasionally and function in rotation to perform a ministry function. Still other cells consist of people who serve in a particular ministry capacity on a rotating basis throughout the year.

A few of these cell ministries already existed prior to the arrival of a new pastor in 2004 and the congregation's significant culture change that began at that time. Several of the cell ministries began during the first two years of the new pastor's tenure. Many of the cell ministries came into being following establishment of the Mission Action Plan in 2006.

V. Do We Understand How to Lead During Transitions?

Edwin H. Friedman's classic advice to leaders is especially applicable to any pastor or layperson aspiring to change a congregation's culture in order to change its future:

1. People want a leader to take them to a new place. When that leader starts acting or thinking differently from the way they have been thinking or acting, that bothers them.
2. At the point in time when the leader begins to be the most successful in leading people to a new place, they try to sabotage his or her leadership.
3. When that sabotage comes, the leader must think and behave in the following ways:
 - Stay in touch with the group, rather than withdrawing.
 - Take non-reactive, clearly conceived and clearly defined positions.
 - Continue to define yourself and your goals without expecting other people to "understand." If they "understood," *they* would be the leaders instead of you.
 - Leaders have the capacity to differentiate themselves from the views of others and see things in new ways.
 - Effective leaders continue to define themselves without trying to force others to change. The more you try to "force" people to change, the more they resist it.
 - Refrain from "diagnosing" the behavior of your group or other people. That is negative behavior for a leader. Taking the behavior of others that seriously also tends to reinforce it rather than reduce it.

(Leadership insights excerpted from Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation* [New York: The Guilford Press, 1985])

In congregations, as in every people group organized to accomplish an important objective, the group's inclinations tend to harden into habits. Those habits often become highly change-resistant obsessions. Helping the group move beyond its leadership thinking and behavior obsessions is not simple, but it is possible

VI. Do We Engage a Large Percentage of Attendees in Ministries?

Research by the Gallup Organization indicates that, when measured by their participation, American church members fit into three categories:

- About 29 percent of church members have a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to their congregation. These members are more likely to invite acquaintances to worship and give time, talent, and money to the congregation's ministries
- By contrast, 54 percent of a typical church's members are *not engaged*. They attend irregularly. Their relationship to the congregation is less spiritual than social. Their membership feels like belonging to a Country Club at which they seldom eat or play golf. They donate money and time in minimal ways.
- At still greater contrast to the 26 percent of members who are *fully engaged*, a third group (17 percent of a typical church's members) is *actively disengaged*. A few people in this 17 percent group attend worship at Christmas or Easter. But they are uncommitted to or negative regarding their church's membership expectations. They are on the membership role, but many of them can't remember the current pastor's name. The few people in this group who regularly attend worship are quite unhappy with their congregation: they randomly scatter that ill will via negative comments to friends and strangers. (Research by The Gallup Organization, reported by Albert L. Winseman in *Growing an Engaged Church* [New York: Gallup Press, 2007], pages 66-71)

The higher the percentage of members and worship attendees in the category of *fully engaged*, the greater the church's *E-factor*. E-factor stands for *enthusiasm*—a shorthand way of referring to that magic feeling you sense in some churches, and notice by its absence in others.

“E-Factor is the cumulative *sum* of the degree of enthusiasm *for* the church *by each individual* in the church. . . . The kinds of enthusiasm. . . that come from deep within the individual: The enthusiasms of *commitment*, of *dedication*, of *involvement*, of *belonging*, of *fulfillment*.” (Robert Leigh, *The Leigh Stewardship Newsletter* April 1985)

Increasing the percentage of *fully engaged* people from 26 percent to 36 percent or 40 percent enormously increases a church's ministry energy. Through its worship services, leadership structure, and various ministries, a major objective of Wolfforth United Methodist Church is to do just that!

The results of that effort (as of January 2009) are described in the next few pages. This list is an expanding force—with new ministries added frequently and present ministries revised.

Listing these ministries under three categories provides a picture of when they developed:

- Ministries that existed prior to the 2004 arrival of a new pastor
- Ministries that started after the 2004 arrival of a new pastor
- Ministries that started after the 2006 development of the Ministry Action Plan, Discovery Groups, and Visionary Leadership Training.

Ministries that Existed Prior to the 2004 Arrival of a New Pastor:

Sunday School - Nursery for younger children; classes for three-year-olds through kindergarten, 1st graders, 2nd and 3rd graders, 4th through 6th graders.

Believers - The format of this adult Sunday school class is Bible study, prayer, devotion, and fellowship. This is a diverse group of adults of all ages, both married and single. Topics vary. Past topics include Rick Warren's course based on his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. The class also meets for fellowship and social events outside of Sunday school.

Seekers - This adult class, focused on Bible study, brings together older couples and singles for a time of warmth, fellowship, and devotion—as well as fellowship and social events outside of Sunday school.

Vacation Bible School - This week of Bible study, activities, games, and music is provided for children three years of age through sixth grade.

Church Camps: These camps for various grade levels are available for children completing the 3rd grade through the 12th grade at Ceta Canyon Camp & Retreat Center.

Men's Ministry - The United Methodist Men is a group of Christian men who meet at 8:00 a.m. the first Saturday of each month for breakfast, fellowship, and devotional study. Their primary fundraising goal is to pay half of the church camp tuition for children of this church who desire to attend a summer church camp.

Adult Choir - Open to all worshippers (no auditions required), provides worship leadership and anthems every Sunday during the 10:30 a.m. service. This choir also performs the Christmas and Easter cantatas.

Special Music - Special presentations throughout the year showcase talented youth and adult members who possess vocal or instrumental talent.

Children's Christmas Program - The annual Children's Christmas Musical Drama offers a variety of speaking and musical parts, celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Backyard Missions - A youth ministry that repairs local homes for people unable to provide the means to keep themselves warm and dry.

Local Missions - These happen daily and include food vouchers, emergency bills paid, houses roofed, windows replaced, etc. (The total annual Missions budget grew from \$2,500 in 2004 to \$25,000 in 2006, and now exceeds \$50,000.)

Ministries that Started After the 2004 Arrival of a New Pastor:

Children's Church during Worship - After the Children's Sermon in worship, children ages three-to-five are dismissed for Children's Church: the program includes fun Bible crafts, movies, and a snack.

Praise Team - This group provides worship leadership through contemporary praise songs and hymns during the 8:30 a.m. blended worship service.

Preschool and Parent's Day Out -Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 am to 2:30 p.m.

Confirmation Classes, March through May - This class presents the Gospel, along with United Methodist beliefs, to prepare young people in the 6th grade for a relationship with Christ, baptism, and full membership in the Body of Christ called Wolfforth United Methodist Church.

Challengers - This group of parents meets to study topics related to parenting and raising children and teenagers in a Christian home. Studies have included Dr. Kevin Leman's "Running the Rapids: Guiding Your Kids through the Turbulent Waters of Adolescence" and "Making Children Mind without Losing Yours."

Homebound Communion - A team delivers communion to people unable to attend worship.

Spiritual Formation - This class is open to adults of all ages.

Sunday Evening Bible Study - Led by the pastor, this group is open to all ages and meets Sundays from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Topics vary. Past topics include The Book of Acts, Paul's letters to the Corinthians, the Book of Revelation, the Book of Job, and Christian Ethics.

The United Methodist Women - This group of Christian women meets at 6:00 p.m. the first Sunday of each month for worship and Bible study and also raises money for missions projects.

Contemporary Worship Service at 8:30 a.m. Sundays - This service—very similar to but less traditional than the 10:30 a.m. service—features a praise time and contemporary music.

Needlework Class - This group, which meets on Mondays at 10:30 a.m., welcomes everyone from beginners to advanced crafters for a time of learning and fellowship.

Visitor Coffee - Every quarter, worship visitors are invited to meet with the pastor. These coffees give people opportunity to ask any questions regarding the church and its ministries.

Prayer Groups - Various groups of people meeting for prayer

Disciple Now - A three-day spiritual revival for youth

Serving Ministries - Meals for the sick, meals for funerals, and other helping ministries such as lawn mowing and house cleaning.

Men's Retreat - A spiritual growth experience conducted in conjunction with another congregation and held at Ceta Canyon Camp & Retreat Center

Women's Retreats - A Beth Moore seminar or spiritual enrichment retreat of some other type

Marriage & Family Retreats - A retreat designed to strengthen marriages.

Seminars - An annual teaching seminar such as the "John Wesley Adventure"

Prison Ministry - The chief deputy sheriff, who is a member of the congregation, calls when he sees a need in the jail.

Homeless Ministry - Once a month the church serves at Fiesta De Mingo, a meal for the homeless offered in downtown Lubbock.

Missions to North Africa - The church currently supports a family in North Africa, is preparing another family for missions in North Africa, and organizes one trip to Africa each year.

House to House Ministry - The church organized seven teams of seven people each, and canvassed the new housing development area near Wolfforth. The teams went door to door, inviting people to attend worship.

Discovery Groups - These study, discussion, feedback, and fellowship groups (total of six groups as of January 2009) meet monthly on any night of their own choosing (except Wednesday, which is reserved for other church functions). For the purpose of increasing effective communication, one member of the Leadership Team is part of each group. Each group consists of twelve to fourteen people, plus invitations to worship visitors from last Sunday.

Ministries that Started After the 2006 Development of the Ministry Action Plan, Discovery Groups, and Visionary Leadership Training:

Children's Choir - Wednesdays 6:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.: Music and movement experiences prepare children to perform in various children's music programs during Worship Services throughout the year, including the Children's Christmas Program.

Music with Marissa - This Children's Choir practices music and movement on Wednesday nights from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Children's Wednesday Night programs follow, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

TeamKid - Wednesdays 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Children 1st grade through 6th grade learn how to courageously do what's right! Check out the program on the www.Lifeway.com Website.

Dinner and a Movie - Wednesdays 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Children Pre-K through Kindergarten have fun with Veggie Tales, Little Heroes, Bible Man, and activities to go along with the story.

Childcare - Childcare is provided for most church activities. Advance reservations by calling the church office are required for events other than services of worship and scheduled meetings.

Full-time Youth Ministry - Examples of what's happening:

- It's time to order your Poinsettias again for Christmas: "In Honor Of" or "In Memory Of." The Youth sell these as a fund raiser for Missions.
- December 28-31: Ski Trip to Ruidoso. Cost for the Ski Trip is \$150 whether you Tube, Ski, Snowboard, or Lounge. This also includes lodging and meals while there.
- Certificate of Appreciation Awarded to the Youth from the South Plains Food Bank for the 700 pounds of food the youth collected to help alleviate hunger across the South Plains. This was raised while on a scavenger hunt during the Disciple-Now spiritual revival.

University/Young Adult Class - This group meets in the Pastor's Office for devotion and fellowship. Both singles and couples are invited to meet with their peers to discuss Christianity in daily life. Topics vary. Past topics include Christian Ethics.

Young Careers Class - This group is currently studying Financial Peace. Adults from ages 24 to 40 join together for fellowship.

Sports Teams - A church softball team competes with teams in other local congregations.

Ladies Bible Study - Mondays 6:30 p.m., Thursdays 1:00 p.m., and Fridays 10:00 a.m. Topics vary, but the group often uses a Beth Moore Bible Study.

Men's Prayer Group - Tuesdays at 6:30 a.m. at Pastor Curtis House's barn.

Angel Food Ministry - A non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to providing grocery relief to communities throughout the United States. Angel Food's groceries are sold in a quantity that can fit into a medium-sized box at \$30 per unit. Each month's menu is different and consists of both fresh and frozen items. Generally, one unit of food assists in feeding a family of four for about one week or a single senior citizen for almost a month. All the items are the same high quality you would purchase at the grocery store. There are also specialty boxes such as steaks, chicken and pork. Angel Food Ministries participates in the U.S. Food Stamp program. For more information, go to the www.angelfoodministries.com Website.

Soldiers Ministry - Reminds soldiers that they are loved and appreciated. The church sends something each month and likes to include a note or cards with each box. The content of each box includes snack items, hand sanitizer, foot powder, foot cream, baby wipes, flavor packets for water, hard candy, and gum.

In Our Prayers - The President and a list of more than two dozen people in our Armed Forces (their names are posted on the church Website).

A list of people who live in retirement homes is posted on the church Website.

To add someone to the Prayer List, people call, FAX, or E-mail the church office.

Grief Ministry - This group meets monthly and is designed to help those who are dealing with grief of any type. Very complimentary to the ministry of pastoral care, this caring, recovering group of people who commit to loving one another is Scripture led, offers hope, and provides listening ears.

Home Bible Study Groups - These meet weekly for Bible study and prayer.

Nursing Home Ministry - Three teams meet monthly with the pastor to pray over the Communion elements and then deliver communion to nursing home residents.

Emergency Relief Teams - Three such teams, involving over sixty people, went to areas hard hit by Hurricane Katrina. The church plans to set money aside for national disasters, in preparation for sending teams into these areas when requested.

Knitting Group - This group meets on Monday morning for any who want to learn to knit or come and share their hobbies.

Prayer Teams - Trying to make Wolfforth United Methodist Church a house of prayer, teams are being formed to pray over every ministry.

VII. Is Our Pastor Equipped to Serve This Particular Church?

In most congregations, resistance to change is much stronger than the fear of ineffectiveness. This is especially true in congregations that say they want to grow. Often, what people in such churches mean is that they want the pastor to grow the church. But they do not want to allow their church to change in ways that make that growth possible.

Thus, pastors who exert the type of leadership that overcomes this normal, powerful, resistance to change must feel a strong sense of spiritual call to ministry with this particular congregation in this community. Such pastors are not just using this church as a stepping-stone to another, larger church that fits their professional career objectives. They do not see their role as a job with a salary but as a spiritual call from God. Otherwise, they lack the endurance to patiently persist through the challenges that inhabit the change-resistant landscapes of churches.

Reuel Howe, a pioneer in helping clergy to develop their skills, published an abbreviated quote from a study done for the Association of Theological Schools. The top ten clusters of qualities were as follows:

1. *Service without regard for acclaim.* Wanted is a person who is able to accept personal limitations and, believing in the Gospel, is able to serve without concern for public recognition.
2. *Personal integrity:* a person who is able to honor commitments by carrying out promises despite all pressures to compromise.
3. *Christian example:* a person whose personal belief in the Gospel manifests itself in generosity, and in general, a Christian example that people in the community can respect.
4. *Responsible functioning:* a person who competently and responsibly completes tasks by being able to handle differences of opinion and who senses the need to grow in pastoral skills.
5. *Leader in community building:* actions that will likely build a strong sense of community within a congregation.
6. *Perceptive counselor:* one who reaches out to persons under stress with perception, sensitivity and warmth that is freeing and supportive.
7. *Theologian and thinker:* a concern to “sharpen an already keen intelligence through continual theological study and careful attention to clarity of thought and expression.”
8. *Positive approach:* one who handles stressful situations by remaining calm under pressure while continuing to affirm people who express differing opinions.
9. *Acknowledges limitations:* one who is able to admit mistakes and recognize the need for continued growth and learning.
10. *Enabling counseling:* using high levels of understanding and skill in helping people to work through serious problems.

(Reuel L. Howe, Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies, *Newsletter*, Spring 1976)

Laypersons usually agree that—with regard to what they hope for in a pastor—little has changed in thirty-three years. Without possessing most of the qualities on that list, few pastors experience personal satisfaction and ministry effectiveness. *But as valid as these ten traits still are, they are not enough to grow a church or expand its ministries!*

Almost two decades later, national research revealed that lay people view three skills as the top essentials for clergy effectiveness: preaching, management/administration, and pastoral care. (Lovett Weems, Jr., Mearle L. Griffith, Judy Copeland Ashcroft, *Pastoral Leadership*, [Dayton, Ohio: Office of Research, General Council on Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1993] page XII)

Yes, lay people in every congregation view these three skills as quite important to clergy effectiveness. *Yet, by themselves, these three skills are not enough to grow a church and expand its ministries!*

What about the pastor's personal spiritual gifts and ministry priorities? Pastors who excel in growing a congregation's worship attendance and ministry vitality often see preaching, teaching, and evangelism as their primary spiritual gifts. *But those three spiritual gifts and ministry priorities, by themselves, are not enough!*

A pastor is more likely to grow a church's worship attendance and expand its ministries when he or she strongly believes in ten action-passions of evangelical theology, outlined below. A pastor's passion for evangelical theology's classic convictions does not guarantee growth in worship attendance and expansion of ministries. But in the present-day spiritual-preference climate, more than 70 percent of the age-18-44 young adults in and around Wolfforth, Texas—if they decide to visit or participate in a Protestant congregation—attend one whose activities are driven by the following ten action-passions of evangelical theology.

1. Christ-Centered: Someone asked a pastor whose worship attendance had grown from 150 to 1,500 for the secret behind that increase. He replied, "Where Jesus is, there will be crowds." That pastor, an extremely humble person, was not inferring that his church presented Christ better than other churches. He expanded on his statement by saying that an essential element in helping people grow spiritually is to concentrate on and authentically present Christ.

When people believe in a living God, they think God is *present* rather than historical. That conviction translates into what theologians call a "high Christology"—God incarnated in present-day culture to transform the quality of individual lives. For people in churches that teach a high Christology, the Bethlehem stable is a continuous event. God is still among us. He still walks the Emmaus road of daily life, communicating with people who are willing to talk with Him. That conviction draws crowds.

Pastors of transformed and transforming congregations provide more than psychological help, more than good ideas, more than emotional experiences, more than a warm social group. These churches encourage people to make a spiritual connection with Christ. They do not confuse the bread of life with the crumbs of religion.

2. Bible-Based: H. Richard Niebuhr gave us an appropriate warning against "Biblicism," reminding us that such an approach makes Scripture the object of its study, instead of God (*Reflections*, Summer-Fall 1995). Transmitting facts is not the primary purpose of Bible study; changing lives is the goal.

Biblical information and rational thinking, when divorced from a spiritual focus, become an invisible form of "salvation by intellectual good works." Christian faith is a gift God gives to people who form and maintain a personal relationship with Him. That is the primary objective of Bible study in transformed and transforming churches.

3. Spiritually Oriented: Herb Miller reports a conversation between Susan and Carl, who had just moved to a new town. They were driving toward the cafeteria after their first visit to a worship service in their denomination's oldest church in the community. Carl asked, "What did you think of the service?"

"I can summarize it in one word," Susan said: "Dead!"

Curious about her uncharacteristically harsh judgment, Carl asked, "What makes you say that? Was it the music? Was it the preaching? What do you think causes the dead feeling?"

"I can summarize it with two words," his wife replied. "Flawed theology!"

"Meaning...?" Carl asked uncomprehendingly.

Susan continued her laconic responses by saying, "That congregation has lost touch with every church's basic reason for being in business."

"Which is...?" Carl said, beginning to feel like a dentist trying to extract a tooth in a dark closet.

"To nurture the spiritual dimension of human personality," Susan replied.

"What do you mean?" Carl said. "Is the church too liberal? Too conservative? Too what?"

“Their problem is deeper than any of those labels,” she exclaimed, warming to the subject. “Most visitors are looking for a spiritual connection with God, not just a social connection with new friends. If newcomers sense the absence of that spiritual dimension, the church feels dead. So most of them visit once or twice, and move on.”

Carl turned into the cafeteria parking lot as Susan added, “Most long-term members are blind to their church’s defect. The few members who complain about it tend to express themselves so vaguely that the leaders can’t hear them. You remember what my sister, Karen, said about their church: ‘I like the denomination. I like the pastor. I like the people. But I’m not being fed.’”

“I get your point,” Carl said as he opened the car door. “Let’s eat.” (Herb Miller, *The Parish Paper*, September 1999, Volume 7, Number 3)

4. Prayer-Powered: Many airlines print the term “Spirits” on a card in the seat-back pockets. The card lists alcoholic drinks served. *Spirits* is an accurate description of alcohol. It gives people a different spirit than they had a few minutes previously.

Everyone has some type of spirit, and that spirit can change with new circumstances. People can have a peaceful spirit, a negative spirit, an angry spirit, a fearful spirit, or some other type of spirit. Effective pastors know that the best way to help people shift to a new spirit is by helping them connect with the Spirit of Christ. Prayer is the primary way that happens, which is why Scripture urges us 103 times to “ask.”

5. Worship-Rooted: A primary task of any congregation is to apprehend, address, and celebrate the mystery of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit that is within us, among us, and beyond us. In koine Greek, the words *leiturgia* and *diakonia* both have to do with service: *diakonia* is the “private” service of waiting tables; *leiturgia* is “public” service, taken on for the sake of the whole society. The early Church used this word to mean the Church’s living out of its pastoral vocation to worship and prayer. (Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church*; [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989] page 94) Pastors who fail to see *leiturgia* as an important pastoral role seldom excel in growing churches and expanding their ministries.

6. Children-and-Youth Prioritized: Research conducted in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey indicates that one of the strongest qualities found in American congregations that are growing numerically is “Caring for Children and Youth.” (Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008] page 81)

Common sense tells us why this is true. When a church connects with large numbers of age-18-44 young adults, it also connects with many parents who have children and youth in their homes. If that congregation has strong ministries for children and youth, the parents make sure those programs stay strong. If those children and youth programs diminish to ineffectiveness, many of those parents switch to another congregation. As they exit, the parents often say, “We have no choice. We have to think of our kids.”

Likewise, young-adult families that visit worship quickly discover any deficiencies in quality of the elementary Sunday school and youth groups. The result: they visit once or twice and don’t return. One such couple said to friends, “We like the pastor. We like the church. But the youth program is between weak and non-existent. We have to think of our kids. So we’re shopping elsewhere.”

7. Evangelism-Focused: The Apostle Paul reminds the church at Corinth that God gives the growth, not people (1 Corinthians 3:6). But Paul didn’t leave all the responsibility for growth on God’s broad shoulders. He gave the Corinthian leaders “what for” about the poor environment they were giving God to work in.

The pastor cannot guarantee a congregation’s success in evangelism, but he or she can definitely block it. Without the pastor’s enthusiastic commitment, lay efforts prove futile. A bumper sticker read, “Warning: This car under the influence of driver.” Like an automobile, churches are a complex organization of interrelated parts. If one of more than a dozen crucial working parts in a church goes awry, the whole system slows down or stops. But the driver plays an incredibly significant role in maintaining an evangelism-effective Body of Christ.

8. Care-and-Compassion Saturated: After listing several types of needy people, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40 NRSV). That includes people inside and outside the congregation, people we know intimately and people we’ve never met, people in the Wolfforth community and people on the other side of the world.

In one of the Bible’s most familiar chapters, the Apostle Paul reminds us, “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV). Another way to say it: many of the people we seek to connect spiritually with Christ do not care how much we know about Christ until they know how much we care about them.

9. Ministries-Involvement Driven: Bishop Gerald Kennedy of The United Methodist Church’s Los Angeles area described three types of clergy person. One type of minister arrives at a church and says, in effect, “Here I am. Serve me.” And the church does. A second type of minister arrives at a church and says, “Here I am. Let me serve you.” And the church does. A third type of minister arrives at a church and says, “Here I am. Let us serve Christ together.” And the church does. (Gerald Kennedy, *Seven Worlds of the Ministry* [New York: Harper & Row, 1968])

That third type of pastor is far more likely to serve a growing-membership, expanding-ministries congregation. God wants leaders of His Church to be passionate—not just about getting God’s work done—but about helping people grow spiritually as they use the gifts God gave each of them to do God’s work.

10. World-Mission Involved: At the bottom of the front cover—underneath the picture of a great city at sunset—on the Wolfforth Church’s *Mission Action Plan* booklet is one of John Wesley’s most famous sayings, “The World Is Our Parish.”

Underneath that Wesley quote is this Bible verse, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

Those two phrases summarize the action plan of any growing-membership, expanding-ministries congregation!

What if a congregation’s spiritual values and culture do not match the preferences of the young adults most likely to attend a congregation in the Wolfforth area? In this community context, without those ten action-passions of evangelical theology, a pastor’s gifts of preaching, teaching, and evangelism are scattered on fallow ground that grows sparse crops of worship attendance and expansion of ministries.

And without those ten action-passions of evangelical theology, a pastor’s gifts of preaching, teaching, and evangelism are like a powerful gun pointed in the wrong direction, hitting a target that accomplishes nothing.

Without those ten action-passions of evangelical theology, the pastor does not muster the persistence to lead a change-resistant congregational culture toward worship-attendance growth and expansion of its ministries.

Is history repeating itself? In so many ways, what happened at Wolfforth United Methodist Church repeats the past. Exhaustive research by historians and sociologists tells us that the theology and results of mainline and evangelical churches from 1776 to 1850 correlates with the theology and results of mainline and evangelical churches from 1965 to 2005. (“The Upstart Sects Win America, 1776-1850,” pages 55-116 and 235-283 in Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005* [New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005])

VIII. Ten-Week Visionary Leadership Curriculum

A congregation's transformation usually begins with change in a handful of leaders. As one pastor put it, "Most churches don't change until some of the people change. Usually, that begins with the pastor and some governing board members."

The Wolfforth congregation is part of The United Methodist Church, so these Visionary Leadership Lessons fit our denomination's history and theology. This curriculum depicts how we accomplish these ten sessions. That is not to say (a) that mimicking our model will produce identical results for your church or (b) that this is the only way to develop a team of visionary leaders. This is the way we do it. You may want to do it differently. Two examples:

- Other United Methodist congregations may prefer to use this ten-session framework and develop their Visionary Leadership Training in a slightly different way.
- Congregations of other denominations and movements will want to fit their own faith traditions, histories, and theological convictions into this ten-session framework.

But these methods and materials worked well for us; they helped us to accomplish these results: a leadership development system that (1) unifies parishioners in ways that counteract resistance to change, (2) helps people strengthen their spiritual connection with Jesus Christ, (3) grows worship attendance, (4) increases the number of local and across-the-world ministries, and (5) involves a higher percentage of worshipers in accomplishing the various ministries.

Each pastor who uses these ten Visionary Leadership Training sessions should view them as a "model," not as a catechism to blindly promote as the ONLY way. Each pastor should (a) add his or her own biblical knowledge and interpretations to the various Bible texts studied and (b) use ideas and theological concepts pertinent to the congregations in his or her own denomination. *Therefore, each lesson provides ample space between paragraphs so that the teacher can add personalized notes and illustrations.*

Instead of purchasing a Bible study curriculum, we developed our own. The best teachers are those who research, develop, and plan their own courses. As the old adage says, "Those who teach learn more than those who are taught." We often know best what we have worked hard to understand ourselves.

The pastor begins each Lesson by distributing to each participant the one-page Student Outline for that lesson (except for Lessons 8 & 9—a two-page Student Outline—and Lesson 10, a three-page Student Outline). These Student Outlines are in the Appendix.

We begin each of the ten sessions with a Bible study designed to fit that particular lesson. Thus, participants know that effective leadership isn't just the pastor's idea; leadership is God's idea. We schedule prayer *after* the Bible study rather than at the start of the session. This sequence (a) places emphasis on the Word of God and (b) sets a precedent for how the leaders we train will conduct the meetings they lead. One of our goals is to see the teaching model we use in these ten sessions begin to flow through the leaders into their own teaching methods.

The Bottom Line: Our objective in these Visionary Leadership Training sessions is to develop leaders who, working from this model, (a) help our people read their Bibles, (b) pray, (c) listen to what God wants for our congregation, and (d) move in unity to accomplish the mission of making disciples.

Visionary Leadership Lesson 1

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The Book of Acts church points to a bigger picture, moved by the Holy Spirit.
2. Church leaders should know Church history.
3. Goals are no good without strategy.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Acts 1 & 2

What happened?

What were the people doing?

Where did the church move to?

What did it revolve around?

We often hear today’s Christians say, “I don’t need church to get to heaven.” A rancher once told me, “I feel closer to God at the third fence post on my place than I ever have in church.”

What are these kinds of statements *really* saying? Translated into the genuine, underlying desires of people who express them, such statements say, “I want the highest possible value for the least amount of effort.”

Church leaders benefit from a more careful study of Church history, which begins with these words of Jesus: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven....” (Matthew 16:18-19 NIV). This Scripture strengthens our ability to communicate the importance of Church with a capital C. This organization wasn’t man’s idea—it was God’s idea. An accurate interpretation of Jesus’ words emphasizes Peter, the Rock, along with the cluster of rocks: that’s you and me!

Paul’s Letter to the Church at Ephesus reminds us that Jesus is the head and we are the body. Leaders who take this Scripture seriously emerge from their study to move the Church forward. By contrast, people who choose not to be connected with the Church miss a chance to be nurtured, and most importantly, miss the opportunity to nurture others on a much bigger scale.

One man said that his church is a group of men who meet at the local supermarket’s buffet/coffee shop for lunch three times a week. They have Bible study and take turns leading the study. He feels that “the Church” is Apostate (has abandoned true religious faith) and is far more an institution than part of the actual Church.

We hear such comments more and more often. This is flawed theology. Groups of this type tend to focus on *themselves* and feel good about their fellowship. They nurture and comfort one another, but the end result becomes selfish. Unlike a genuine church, such groups do not have a vision for the world. Christians do far more good by being a part of a church that has missions around the world—a church that is feeding the hungry both locally and globally. A genuine Church of Jesus Christ is connected to but reaches far beyond a little group of people who meet three times a week for their own consolation.

During Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter arises as a leader and preaches his first sermon. Acts 2:42 (NIV) begins with these words: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...” *Church leaders need to understand that God appoints them to bring clarity to His people.* This is a calling more than a profession.

The Mother Church, or the Church of Jerusalem, quickly becomes very vision-oriented (Acts 6:1-4). The Apostles lead, teach the Church people to take care of one another, and most importantly, begin to appoint and send out (*Apostolic* means “to send forth”).

The Holy Spirit identifies leaders and caretakers, and gives them gifts to move the Church forward. How many of our church leaders know the basic history of the Church of Jesus Christ? If we were interviewing for a job, we would research it and know its history. (We will look at a thorough history in Leadership Lesson 3.)

Saul is called to be a part of the Church in Jerusalem, and the Church develops strategies to take the Gospel into the world, i.e., Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13). Note: Saul is also called Paul (Acts 13:9), a Greek form of his name that strengthened his ability to be all things to all people, i.e., minister more effectively in the Greek-speaking part of his world.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer: During the Prayer Time in each of the ten Lessons, the pastor prays first. (Usually, only a couple of the participants pray aloud during the first three or four Lessons; by Lesson Ten, most of the participants participate vocally.) Then, the group sits in silence for a time. To close, the pastor leads the group in the Lord’s Prayer.

We emphasize praying by the people, not praying for the people. We don’t take prayer requests, because prayer requests in these settings waste precious time. Instead of conversations with God, prayer requests in these leadership training sessions almost always turn into conversations with one another. So, we explain, “If you have a request, give it to God during our prayer time and we will agree with you in prayer.” It is okay to discuss a prayer request, but we can do that after the meeting. We schedule a prayer time to do just that: pray!

7:30 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells. (Draw this chart on the board at every meeting.) This helps the class members to begin seeing the purpose behind this organizational structure.

The Visionary Leadership Team:

- What is it?
- Who should come?
- What is expected of all who attend?
- What will be the outcome? – Goals and Vision

What Is It? The Visionary Leadership Team is for anyone and everyone who wants to use their gifts for the sake of God, the church, and life in general. This is a way to apply God’s plan and purpose for our lives in order to grow and prosper His Kingdom.

The Goal of Leadership Training: This strategy is a clear, concise process to move people from disciples to leaders. By this process, we pick up our cross in this life and help bear the crosses of others. By this process we are “discipled” (move to a closer walk with Christ), and in turn, go and disciple others.

High Expectations: We expect people who choose to attend these ten leadership training sessions to commit themselves to one another by faithful attendance. *To successfully graduate from this course, you must attend all of the meetings.* We allow only one excused absence during these ten sessions. If you miss more than one session, you must begin again the next time we offer the Leadership Training sessions.

The Process Creates Unity: Becoming a member of this leadership group helps our congregation come into unity as the Body of Christ. This process develops ministries, goals, and ultimately effective ministry, both locally and in the world. Through prayer, Bible study, and vision, this process moves us from being just another business to becoming spiritually focused, Christ-centered, purpose-driven, and ministry-accomplished.

7:45 p.m.—Distribute the Confirmation Tests. (See Appendix for this four-page document.)

7:50 p.m.—Explanation of Confirmation Tests: Like many churches, we have a confirmation class for children and youth each year. This six-week program ends the first week in May with a campout. But, unlike most churches, our kids must take and pass the confirmation exam in order to graduate.

This is not easy. The exam covers Church history, Scripture memory, and basic Bible knowledge. The kids get a study guide one week prior to the test. We stress to the parents the importance of studying and making this a priority for the kids’ lives. We encourage our children to learn mathematics, physics, English, and other disciplines. But we often rank our Christianity as a third or fourth study priority. Why do we see secular education disciplines as more important than eternal disciplines?

7:55 p.m.—The Visionary Leadership Team Takes the Confirmation Test. The amazing result: few of them pass! This experience is a vivid demonstration of the leaders’ need to learn and leads them to the following questions.

8:15 p.m.—Pair up and share your answers to these questions

- When did you become a Christian?
- When did you become His disciple?
 - We should not only know these answers; they should be written down.
 - We need to learn how to tell the story.

Congregations rejoice at professions of faith by new Christians. But we often leave people there, at the starting line. Does not this teach—by the absence of teaching—that this new beginning as a Christian is as far as people need to go?

But a Disciple of Jesus Christ is someone who moves far beyond just being a Christian: being a Disciple is living as a transformed agent in order to be a transforming agent.

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignments

Next week:

- Write your testimony. Writing out our testimony gives us clarity. It is hard to be an effective witness for Christ if we are not clear.
- Distribute a copy of this first book to each participant, free of charge: *Leadership and Self Deception*, The Arbinger Institute, Inc. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2002). Read at your own pace but please complete this first book during the first three weeks.
- Read Matthew 24 and Acts 1 & 2. These are good examples of what the congregation should look like.

Coming weeks: Please obtain and begin reading the second book as soon as possible; we will begin discussing it week after next, in our third session: *The Bait of Satan*, by John Bevere (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2004)

By the end of the ten-week sessions: Please obtain and read these four other books.

- *An Unstoppable Force*, Irwin Raphael McManus (Orange, California: Yates & Yates, 2001), available at www.grouppublishing.com
- *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002)
- *Unveiled At Last*, Bob Sjogren (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1992)
- *Power Surge*, Michael W. Foss (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2000)

Two options for purchasing the books:

- Participants can purchase all of these books, new or used, by going to the amazon.com Website.
- The pastor can notify a local bookstore in advance of each new Visionary Leadership Class—so that the bookstore will have in stock the five books listed above for purchase by each individual.

Emphasize the commitments of leadership, and the group members will commit participants almost to the level of covenant. Tell participants that purchasing these four books is an investment in their spiritual growth. They always respond positively. The monetary involvement also helps to strengthen their personal commitment.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 2

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The fullness of God
2. The necessity of unity in the Body
3. The basic calling of the Church (Matthew 25 & 28)

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

Ephesians 4:11-13 - Who are the some? Who are they in this church?
John 17 - “I pray... that all of them may be one....” (John 17:20-21 NIV)

The Apostle Paul urges us to seek the fullness of God in our personal lives and in our congregation. In that search for God’s ultimate purpose, we experience God and His plan working in our lives and in this particular Body of Christ.

Paul’s prayer for the Church at Ephesus asks that the fullness of God come into that Body. (Ephesians 5:14-21) Paul says that God’s power is present within the Church’s leaders of each succeeding generation. His power enables us to do things beyond ourselves. His power pulls us together, helps us to love beyond knowledge, and strengthens our ministry.

Hopefully, you are almost finished reading *Leadership and Self Deception* and are ready to begin reading *The Bait of Satan*. That second book asserts that Satan’s greatest bait is disunity among members of the body. Have you noticed that problem among Christians? We can’t seem to get along. A local church not far from us experienced great growth a couple of years ago. I wanted to know what they were doing right. So I asked their pastor. I learned that it wasn’t what their church was doing right; it was what another church was doing wrong. Several members of a nearby congregation had become angry when a new pastor fired an associate. Their church hired the associate, and much of the congregation followed him.

Our churches are filled with nasty rumors and people who like to fuel them. Clicks are formed, and sometimes these clicks develop into the HID virus (Highly Infective Destroyer). Most of the people who carry the HID virus habitually criticize their church’s leadership. They are more likely to enjoy roles of authority than roles of selfless service. Such a virus eventually destroys any vision that does not allow its carriers to run things.

That is the most dangerous ailment in the Body. In most congregations, pastors tend to (a) leave these HID carriers alone, or (b) allow them to run the church so as to keep the peace. When a church has low spiritual energy and motivation—which produces congregational slow death—this HID syndrome is often the cause. Such churches usually want the pastor to be their employee but not their leader. Soon, the pastor’s spiritual energy and motivation also drains away.

God wants unity. Churches find it impossible to move forward without it. There are ways by which you can allow God to fight for you, so you don’t have to work alone against impossible odds. Teach a leadership class! Begin casting a new vision. Yes, some people will accuse you of having “an agenda” and try to lead a team in opposition. Stay the course. Eventually, the revitalization tide becomes larger as your Leadership Team begins to understand what God has intended for every church. A few people leave when they lose their control roles. But you will be amazed at what stays: a Gideon-type army ready to move your church forward to God’s work with fresh tools.

In John 17:11, Jesus prays for his disciples, asking God to make them one, just as He and God are one. Jesus doesn't just pray this prayer once. Three times in this chapter, Jesus prays that prayer.

In our own Body of The United Methodist Church, I agree with most beliefs and practices. But I hang up on a few. For instance, although The United Methodist Church teaches that baptism is valid in three ways—sprinkling, pouring, and immersion—I almost always try to immerse the people we baptize. I feel that immersion (a) is more biblical and (b) people getting entirely wet at baptism make a much stronger witness to the Body and its members!

For example, kids ask far more questions about what is going on when they see an adult fully immersed at baptism—as opposed to seeing a little water dabbed on their head. The word *baptism* actually means “to marinate in.” To me, that means we should use all available energy to teach, preach, and fully develop the life of a believer! Marinate them in the life of Christ. So, if a Baptist tells me that his or her church believes in baptism by immersion—hey, I do too!

But my primary objective is NOT to argue theology or biblical interpretation with other clergy or congregations. My objective is to keep to the biblical essentials: Jesus is Lord. The Bible is God's Word, and so on.

We as the Body should be concerned about our overall witness to the world. So once you get the kinks out of the Body you are in, strive for unity across denominational lines. God is love. When we receive Him in His fullness, we come into unity—both inside the congregation and with other denominations.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Review important points of last week's lesson.

7:40 p.m.—Why are the terms Calvinism and Armenianism important? Why would we look at these historic theological arguments after teaching the importance of unity? Because each one of us has a slightly different background; each of us carries certain mental assumptions regarding what is the right theological belief and biblical interpretation. In other words, we all bring a preconceived thought or belief about God to the discussion table. Many of our differences stem from one of these positions: Calvinism or Armenianism.

Many people believe that everything is predetermined (Calvinism), and many people believe life is about free will (Armenianism). There is scriptural evidence for both viewpoints, and all of us probably believe to some extent in both Calvinism and Armenianism.

For instance, I believe God chooses us (Calvinism)! But now watch—*all of us!* God so loved the world that He gave his life *for all of us*. But each of us has the power to say yes or no (Armenianism).

God chooses the gifts He gives to each of us (Calvinism). And, oftentimes, we get to choose the talents we develop (Armenianism).

The bottom line: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight” (1 Corinthians 3:19 NIV).

8:00 p.m.—Review important ideas in the book, *Leadership and Self-Deception*

Example: In the Box

8:10 p.m.—From the Mission Action Plan on the Board, Review the Role of Vision-casting through Visionary Preaching. Draw four vertical columns on the board. At the top of the four columns, write four words:

- Engage
- Receive
- Equip
- Send

The four words that top these columns are excellent categories to describe the basic principles of Christ’s Church: feed, drink, stranger, clothe, visit sick/prison, make disciples, baptism, Apostle’s teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer.

Ask the class to list “current ministries in our congregation that fit under those four words.”

Illustrate how visionary preaching can motivate people to start Ministry Cells that fit into those four categories.

Let’s review and discuss the two questions we used in Lesson 1:

- When did you become a Christian?
- When did you become His disciple?

After thinking about those questions for awhile, is there anything you would add to how you answered them two weeks ago?

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV) advises, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Summaries of testimonies in Matthew 25; Acts 1 & 2

How do our ministries reflect Matthew 25 and Acts 2?

Ask participants to list some points that stood out to them in their homework reading.

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignment: Continue to read *Leadership and Self-Deception*; begin reading *The Bait of Satan*.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 3

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The New Self
2. Overview of Church History (from the Apostolic Age to the present)
3. Setting the bar high – John Wesley

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Ephesians 4:23-24 and Romans 12:1-2

1. Does our church’s righteousness witness to people both inside and outside the congregation? We saw all kinds of unexpected happenings within our congregation: Sunday school parties that served alcohol; tailgate parties that caused marital friction due to an “altered” state; and arguments involving which walls “belonged” to a weekday preschool class and which walls belonged to a preschool Sunday school class. What kind of witness is that?

The congregation—not just the *individuals* within the congregation—needs to put on the “new self.” I love to hear people say, “The church here is full of loving people and we want to be a part.” A couple of months ago, a young family asked, “Would you take us?” Wow! She was saying that it would be an honor to be a part of the family here at Wolfforth. That is big evidence that the congregation is putting on the “new self.” It’s different!

The world is tough, beating people up all of the time. A church doesn’t need to look like, act like, or think like the rest of the world. People are looking for a refuge, and we have the opportunity to offer it.

2. How do we renew our minds? From what we have learned in the past couple of classes, hopefully, we are coming into the New Self. What does that mean? Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV) tells us, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul follows up that passage with, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with all malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 3:1-32 NIV).

Our minds are great tools, but they can be dangerous—if they think things that are not true. Our minds can cause us to be counter-punchers instead of punchers—reactionists instead of activists. The “new self” means capturing our thoughts, renewing our minds, and testing the very will of God (Romans 12:2).

I am nearing middle age. In some countries, I passed it years ago. I have often wondered if I missed it. You know—life! I loved athletics growing up: playing football, basketball, and running track. I was very competitive in the Army, competing for Soldier of the Month, Quarter, and Year. I majored in Biology in college and thought I would be a career Physical Therapist. Now look at me. My body couldn’t run across a football field. The Army wouldn’t take me because I am too old. And all of the treatment protocols have changed in Physical Therapy. My kids are young—six, four, and two. I have a large home mortgage, and I hope to live long enough to see it paid! If I had stayed with the Army, I could retire in three years. If I had stayed with Physical Therapy, I would be making a lot of money. All of the what-ifs in life are starting to come at me.

Here I am a pastor, and often I feel not a very good one. I can't seem to get everyone seen, prayed for, and encouraged before I need to be working on the next Bible study and sermon. I, too, must remember to renew my mind.

I have found one key that always works without fail. When I need to be lifted up, I read God's Word. When my mind wonders, I read Psalm 119:9 (NIV): "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." Reading 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds me that all of God's word is inspired. I like the way the New American Standard Version translates this; instead of "God breathed," it translates the words "inspired by God."

Yet, this takes discipline. I am amazed at how we pastors know this and so seldom practice it. In 1 Tim 4:7-8, Paul tells us to discipline ourselves for the purpose of Godliness. Every effective leader I ever knew had discipline. As Tom Landry said, "I make men do what they don't want to do so they can become the men they want to be." (Quoted by Myles Sweeney, March 2008, Light the Fire Conference, Ceta Canyon Retreat Center) Reading the Word of God inspires us; it changes us; it leads us into the heart of God.

3. New Testament Grace and Old Testament Law. We also need to understand that when we feel that we don't measure up, we never will. Only in the Grace of Jesus Christ can those Judgment scales tip. But we must not to take the Grace of God lightly. Jesus came, not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. As with everything, we must find a balance.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Review important points of last week's lesson.

7:40 p.m.—Church History: Draw a timeline and/or use a chart to show the high points of Church history.

To understand where the Church is now, we should know some of what has happened prior to our time. The breakdown looks like this:

- The Early church (70 to 700AD)
- The Middle Ages (700 to 1500 AD)
- The Reformation (1600 to 1750 AD)
- The Church in the West (1750 AD to the present)

Review the key historic figures such as Constantine, Muhammad, St. Francis, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Thomas Coke, The Enlightenment, and the Church in America. Don't spend a lot of time on The United Methodist Church (or on your denomination or movement). That comes in a later lesson.

In our era of Church history, why do we see so many congregations full of ill-equipped disciples? We pay the pastors to do it all. In one of the most effective churches I have seen, the senior pastor went into renal failure and had a kidney transplant! He had great leadership skills, a spectacular relational style, and tremendous vision. While Dr. Richard Bales, now retired, was in

the hospital and the church leaders realized that they must carry out the vision. They did, and the church grew dynamically during that period when he was absent.

In United Methodist Churches, as in many congregations in other mainline denominations, the lay people seem to believe that the pastor is not necessarily “called” by God but by the District Superintendent, the Cabinet, or the Bishop. This misperception has become a white elephant that eats most of the spiritual energy in many congregations, and I choose to expose this myth. The laity is ill-equipped and often run the church with an inward focus rather than with Jesus’ “go and make disciples” focus (Matthew 28:19 NIV).

I don’t feel that this is completely the laity’s fault. When a pastor comes and goes every two or three years, the laity is never led. This system makes pastors into non-leaders; they are simply employees. Don’t give me that bull about this system being “servant leadership.” It isn’t! It’s a system that promotes a slow death in congregations. It is visionless!

Yet, it isn’t just the Cabinet (the District Superintendents working as a group to appoint pastors to congregations) that causes laity malaise. Some pastors feel more comfortable with the congregation’s ministries solely under their authority. They want full control. Other pastors simply are waiting to move up the ladder to a larger church. Pastors often hear this advice: “If you want a bigger church, get more education, and the Cabinet will move you to one.” Why do pastors almost never hear the following advice: “If you want a bigger church, why not grow it where you are?”

The only way to change a community is to be a part of it—live in it, love it, be willing to live or die for it. When God called me to leave Sierra Vista, Arizona, I cried and was very angry at God. I loved the people and the community. While at Canyon, Texas, I bought a house and never intended to leave, let alone go to a Happy, Texas, where they were going to close the church if I didn’t take it. Then, I never intended to leave. God had to move me to Wolfforth, Texas.

But during my first three years at Wolfforth, I never wanted to stay! For the first time I hit a crisis in ministry. Although the church saw consistent growth, I never wanted to be here. I didn’t care if it grew. And I was frustrated with what I was seeing: a church in a small town near a growing city, with no sense of community except the public school (which has several locations and 7,500 students)! My feelings didn’t level out about being here until the fourth year. Now I am learning to love the people and the community, and I’m getting a clear picture of where our congregation can be in coming years.

When arriving at a new congregation, I have always felt that “we can only go up from here.” along with that assessment, I have felt that “God will lead me, to lead the people, to carry out His mission.” The bottom line: we must not look for our security in rational thinking and planning but “in one hope of our calling” (Ephesians 4:4 NASV).

To go up, means setting the bar high. If we only listen to how the people feel, we are doomed. When I considered taking the Happy, Texas, United Methodist Church, two men from the community told me, “The church has no hope. It has a large debt for its size, and not one pastor in the District will take it. The church is planning to shut its doors. You would be well advised to stay where you are.” I couldn’t. God had called! During my last year at Happy, over two hundred people attended the Easter service (in a community with four hundred in population). I don’t say this to brag; I say it to remind us that God calls us to set the bar high. Pastors must be prophetic leaders! If we don’t see ourselves as a visionary pastor, perhaps we don’t belong in the role of pastor.

Oftentimes a church's people have lost vision. Small churches are especially inclined toward the mindset that the pastor is their employee. Let them think it. I mowed the grass for the church. I mowed it for the elderly. I welded the handrails on the steps that lead up into the church. I often cleaned and vacuumed the church. That's okay. But the people also knew that I had non-negotiable convictions and high expectations for each one of them. Keep the bar raised high.

I never join anyone to church membership without meeting with them first. I ask, "Will you support this church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness?" That's huge. If they say they will, I expect them to deliver on that promise.

8:10 p.m.—John Wesley: setting the bar high

Perfection: is it possible?

Genesis 17:1 (NASV): "Walk before me and be blameless."

Matthew 5:48 (NIV): "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV): "Aim for perfection."

By contrast, in our era of Christian history, we have tended toward creating churches full of ill-equipped disciples. We pay the pastor to do it, not to lead the people in doing God's ministries. We lower our standards, oftentimes condoning sin in exchange for increasing the membership. We do this in the name of Grace. Pastor Irwin McManus tells this story:

I was sitting on the hearth of the fireplace with an individual who was considering becoming a part of Mosaic. He turned to me and asked me if Mosaic was a law church or a grace church. It was pretty obvious to me that he was setting a trap, so I thought I would go ahead and jump in. I said, "Well, of course we're a grace church." "I thought so," he replied. "I was concerned that you were one of those law churches that told people they had to tithe."

"Oh, no," I said. "We're a grace church. The law says, 'do not murder.' Grace says you don't even have to have hatred in your heart; you can love your enemy. The law says, 'do not commit adultery,' but grace says you don't even have to have lust in your heart for another woman. The law says, 'Give 10 percent,' but grace always takes us beyond the law. You can give 20, 30, or 40 percent. We would never stop you from living by grace." He looked at me and said, "Oh"—a profoundly theological response. (Irwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force* [Orange, California: Yates & Yates, 2001], pages 204-205)

Grace always supersedes the Law. Both are important. Remember, Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not abolish it. "Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24 NASV). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NASV).

Notice that both are important. The Law is a tutor, and Grace is anything, including Jesus, that God offers to us, or by which God invites us to Himself. Yet, each of us controls the ability to receive that Grace: we do this through faith! John Wesley said, "If you do not have the fruits, effects, or inseparable properties of faith, you do not have faith." (*The John Wesley Reader*, compiled by Al Bryant (Dallas: Word books, 1983)

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 4

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Staying on the move
2. Apostolic—sending forth
3. Organism versus Organization—one is God-made; the other is man-made.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

1. Joshua 10 - To obtain victory over the Amorites, Joshua must keep marching. He returns to Gilgal (Joshua 10:15). But he does not stay there. He continues through the Promised Land (Joshua 10:29-42).
2. Acts 2 - The Church at Jerusalem was a sending unit (Apostolic).

1. To conquer any type of Promised Land we must stay on the move. If God has truly chosen us to be leaders in a church located in Wolfforth, Texas, shouldn't we desire to conquer the territory to which He has called us? Shouldn't we occupy it and move on to enlarge the ministry of His vision for our congregation?

Joshua 10 is not a chapter from which we commonly hear preaching or teaching. Yet, if we believe the Bible is the Word of God, we need to see what beneficial insights we can glean from this text. Taking up the torch of leadership from Moses, Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. The problem: it is already occupied! Israel on the move cost many of them their lives. But this enslaved people has cried out to God for four hundred years and traveled in the wilderness for another forty years. Now, Israel is moving into what God is giving them.

The people of Gibeon had made a treaty with Israel. Five neighboring kings became worried about the Israelites moving in so close to them. So they decide to wage war on Gibeon—a great city in the territory. The Gibeonites send word to Joshua, asking for his help against the five Amorite kings. Joshua checks in with God, and God says, “Go get 'em” (Joshua 10:8 NCHV—New Curtis House Version).

2. Israel stays on the move and God fights for them. God causes the enemy to become confused. He throws hailstones on the enemy, which kills far more of them than the soldiers of Joshua would kill. God causes the sun to sit still to give the Israelites time to pursue their enemy.

When we seek God's guidance and stay on the move for God, He fights for us—even when our territory is occupied by the formidable enemy of Satan himself! This picture looks different in the New Testament. Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Joshua prays for his enemies and God delivers them into Joshua's hand. Post Jesus, I believe God wants to deliver *our enemies* into our hands as well. The result: They, too, come to know Jesus as Lord and their sins are forgiven. Accomplishing this objective takes prayer and staying on the move.

I understand most of the “enemies” outside of the church. They have no background in Christianity and don't understand it. Many of them feel it is simply a crutch to get through life. But it is harder to understand Christians who become the enemy from *inside* the church. Control, pride, and an artificial relationship with Christ is their steering wheel. As Peter Lord said, “There is nothing meaner than a carnal Christian” (December 8, 2008, Lecture at City View Church, Lubbock, Texas).

God tells Joshua to pursue his enemies and kill them. Purity is important to God. Israel's faith has had a long, repetitive history of influence from pagan religions—worshipping their gods, sacrificing to idols, etc. Israel needs to be the influencers, not the influenced! So, God wants the numbers on His side. It's cruel, but it's true.

The same is true today. God wants those of us who are on the inside of Christian congregations to be unified. Any enemies of God's work should be prayed for, pursued in love, and invited to choose a better way (Matthew 18:15). If we can't get the inside of the church right, how can we ever conquer the outside?

3. Joshua shows great leadership when he opens the cave and subdues the five kings. This is why: Joshua tells the army commanders to each put a foot on the necks of the five kings. Joshua is teaching his leaders that God will reward their willingness to conquer what God puts before them. It's not enough for Joshua to know and experience this truth about leadership. Everyone needs to experience it. That story may seem cruel, and if you are under someone's heel, it is.

But, remember, all people will experience God in some way—either by faith or by rejection. “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11 NIV). Notice that believers and non-believers alike will bow. Our Christian enemy is not the people who have not bowed to God; rather, our Christian enemy is the spirit within them, by which they lead eternally lost lives.

Paul reminded us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV). The five Amorite kings in the Book of Joshua represent the rulers, authorities, and darkness of this world. A thorough study of Paul's letters can be summed up as “good pushing back evil.” It's that simple. We should always be on the move to conquer our Promised Land and bring others to it—to pursue our enemies through prayer, strategic emphasis, and hearing from God.

4. The word *Apostolic* means “send out” or “sending forth.” God sent Joshua out. In turn, Joshua sent his captains out, and they sent the armies out. The Church in Acts 2, we have learned, was a sending church. Paul's eyes were always fixed on Rome.

The Church of Paul's day flourished during the *Pax Romana*, or peace of Rome. During that period, the Roman Empire built excellent road systems all over the known world—across Europe and even into Great Britain. Christianity found its way down those roads, as the Jerusalem Church focused on equipping and sending forth.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Review important points of last week's lesson.

Vision Teaching:

The Church is an *Organism* rather than an *Institution*.

Definition of Organism: A living being that is capable of reproduction.

Not everyone likes the book by Irwin McManus. Perhaps I like it because I majored in biology. However you view the book, its lesson is powerful.

The one thing we don't talk about in our mainline churches (and it is definitely the white elephant that eats all the spiritual energy and motivation in the room) is the slow death our denomination is experiencing. In many other parts of the world, The United Methodist Church's membership is growing. But in the United States, our denomination is losing 200,000 more people per year (due to death, moving out of town, and transfers to other denominations) than it is adding by baptisms and transfers into United Methodist congregations.

The average age of a United Methodist parishioner is sixty-seven years. What will this denomination look like in ten years? Do we expect to conquer our Promised Land? Or, are we expecting to just marry and bury a gradually declining faith family?

What should a church look like—an organism and not an institution? Institutions tend to be primarily concerned about only one thing—themselves. And institutions almost always have heyday years and then demise years. How many large churches do you know that set almost empty on Sunday mornings? We can learn a lot from the biological metaphor of what God has made so evident.

Five Basic Characteristics of a Species that Survives:**1. A Balanced Ecosystem**

- A. Science tells us that a butterfly fluttering its wings could be responsible for an avalanche in Antarctica.
- B. The Bible states that when one man sinned, all of creation groaned.
- C. The pulling of one piece of fruit from the tree of knowledge was the primary influence that set into motion famines in deserts, tsunamis, earthquakes, and the unpredictable forces and violence of nature.
- D. When relationships become stagnant and the community of Christ closes itself to the outside world, the result is an institution rather than a movement.

2. Environmental Adaptation

- A. Species that thrive are species that adapt—improvement of a species within its own kind.
- B. Lung fish example; athletes become bigger, better, stronger, faster.
- C. Faced with a decision to either adapt or die, effective church leaders don't change what they believe or their non-negotiable convictions: they minister in the midst of their culture.
- D. People in our culture were raised on watching and multi-tasking.

3. Spontaneous Reproduction

- A. Non-reproducing species live only one generation.
- B. Species that reproduce live as long as time exists.

4. The Nurturing Instinct

- A. Caring for the young and sensitive is necessary for their spiritual survival.
- B. This is similar to the bands and societies set up by John Wesley in the mid-1700s.

5. Life Cycle Harmony

- A. This means the embracing of one's own birth, life, and death.
- B. Each generation is connected to the one that precedes it and the one that follows.
- C. In the end, effective living is not so much about prolonging or perpetuating our own life as about giving life to others.
- D. Nature's example: Salmon working their way upstream for the sole purpose of spawning a new generation.
(Five points from Irwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force* (Orange, California: Yates & Yates, 2001), pages 14-20.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 5

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Several places to go—only one place to turn
2. The importance of knowing and using spiritual gifts
3. Working “in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4 NASV)

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: 1 Samuel 30:1-6 (NASV) “A Bad Day”

- Key theme—David turns to the Lord.
- David is a young leader, leading his troops in battle.
- David is a novice; God continues to pour His favor on him.
- The enemy arrives and destroys the campsite while David and the army are gone.
- David faces a leadership crisis.
- David’s soldiers are hungry, tired, and ready to stone him.

Allison and I often tell our oldest son, “You make a decision every morning whether it is going to be a good day or bad one.” Making a positive decision doesn’t mean that bad things won’t happen that day; it simply means that our attitude is most of the battle.

People grumble at pastors. People grumbled at Joseph, grumbled at Moses, grumbled at David, grumbled at Jesus, and grumbled at Paul. You get the picture. As leaders, we need to know our limitations, our gifts, our strengths. But we also need to know how to lead ourselves, how to find overcoming strength during unexpected stress. Sometimes the rain falls, even when the sun shines.

In David, we see an example of a great leader who didn’t get caught up in all of the grumbling (1 Samuel 30:1-8). David and his soldiers returned from battle to Ziklag. They were tired, worn out, and hopefully, going to get a decent meal. But that didn’t happen. Instead, they came home to painful disappointment. The Amalekites had taken their wives, daughters, and sons. They had burned the village.

David was a young warrior. His men trusted that God was with David. And he had just been spared a great war with Saul’s army. Yet, the Amalekites take both of David’s wives. How can God allow such a thing to happen? The Scripture says, “Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep” (1 Samuel 30:4 NASV). The people were not the only ones to weep; David wept.

When they can no longer weep anymore, they want to stone their leader. David is greatly distressed. He is at a critical juncture. He can focus the blame on the soldiers, the officers, or the faction of rebels. He can leave it all, run away, and blame God for his failure and for allowing such a thing to happen.

He doesn’t do any of this. Instead, “David strengthened himself in the Lord” (1 Samuel 30:6 NASV). Even though David is sad, nervous, and maybe in a little doubt, he knows what to do. David knows that he must lead himself before he can lead anyone else. He goes and strengthens himself in the Lord. Rather than blaming God, he kneels before God and asks, “What now?” Once again, God tells David to pursue. As a result, God restores everything and everyone.

Leaders usually have several places to go, several hats to wear, several people to see, all in one day. Jesus was this way. Yet, throughout Scripture we see Jesus withdrawing from the crowds to go apart and pray. He knew he had to lead himself before he could lead anyone else.

Where do we direct our leadership energies? Do we focus on the opportunities to place blame, which are always around us? Or, do we focus on strengthening ourselves in the Lord?

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—To shift mental gears, ask questions such as the following:

- Does anyone have any observations to add to the Bible study?
- Has something in one of the books we are reading jumped out and grabbed your attention?

Typically, comments from participants reveal that God is working in the lives of individual leaders; they are each getting a vision. After a brief discussion, move forward into today's lesson.

7:50 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Vision Teaching: Basic leadership of the church is founded in Christ.

- Recap last week's "Organism versus Institution."
- We must be transformed agents, to transform agents.

Last week we talked about an Organism versus an Organization. We are learning that in order to be transforming agents for Jesus Christ we must be transformed agents.

Daniel Goleman wrote, "Exceptional leaders know their strengths, their limits, and their weaknesses." (Daniel Goleman *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: A Bantam Book, 1995) As spiritual leaders, we should know our spiritual gifts, especially with regard to congregational ministries in which we work most of the time. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 12 for a brief introduction to the spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives each of us these gifts for the purpose of ministries in and by the Church of Jesus Christ. In my case, those gifts are (a) preaching, (b) teaching, and (c) evangelism.

Looking at the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, let's go around the room and ask every person to share with the group what they think their gifts are. If you don't know what your gifts are, I'll ask people in the group to help name them for you. (It's amazing how many times other people can see gifts that we can't see ourselves. Then, too, when other people identify our gifts we feel more certain that we possess those gifts.)

Our homework for next week: Go to the www.buildingchurch.net Website, take the gifted2serve test, and be ready to report back as to whether the results match what the class thinks are your gifts.

The big question: If the Holy Spirit has given each of us specific spiritual gifts, are we using these gifts in ministry? I base my ministry on two primary scriptures:

- Paul says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1 NASV).
- “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13 NASV).

Each one of us is called. If we are believers in Christ, we have been called according to His purpose:

- Is your calling sure? If not, go and strengthen yourself in the Lord.
- Is your vision clear? If not, go and strengthen yourself in the Lord.
- We must go and strengthen ourselves in the Lord, so as leaders we know His Vision for us as individuals and His Vision for the congregation.

Do you have comments or questions regarding the spiritual gifts?

As the group nears this mid-point of the course, questions and comments begin to take on depth and discussions move to higher levels of insight. Across the years, laypersons accumulate an overload of information. Sitting in the pews they have bushels and bushels of sermon knowledge poured on them. The problem: pastors cannot *disciple* parishioners from the pulpit. Pastors can see the forest on Sunday, but they can see and spiritually nourish the individual trees on Monday, especially in Leadership Classes.

Related questions naturally jump into our minds:

- What is our congregation’s calling in this community?
- Has God given our congregation spiritual gifts with which to accomplish that calling?
- Has God given our congregation spiritual gifts that it is not using to accomplish that calling?
- In what ways can a Vision Statement, a Mission Statement, a Values Statement, and a Mission Action Plan (Strategy) help our congregation to accomplish that calling?

We will have opportunities to consider these congregational questions in later Leadership Lessons.

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignment:

We should be starting to read our third book in five weeks—*Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002).

Go to the www.buildingchurch.net Website, take the gifted2serve test, and be ready to report as to whether the results match what the class thinks are your gifts.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 6

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The importance of God’s time
2. Where we are on the calendar
3. Bringing others into God’s time—Reaching Upward, Inward, and Outward

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Esther

- King Ahasuerus throws a party for officials of all 127 provinces to show his wealth.
- The King commands that Queen Vashti come to display her beauty, but she refuses.
- The King organizes a search for Queen Vashti’s replacement.
- Mordecai’s cousin, Esther, enters the King’s harem and is selected Queen.
- The Persians rule during this period, and the Jews are not favored.
- Mordecai hears of a plot to kill the King.
- The King promotes Haman to high office, but Mordecai refuses to bow down to him.
- In retaliation, Haman influences the King to condemn all Jews to death.
- Esther tells the King that she is a Jew and his decree will kill all of her people.
- Mordecai tells Esther that she has come to her royal position for such a time as this.

In order to be good leaders, we must be good stewards of a precious gift called time. We often hear people say, “There is not enough time in the day.” But *time* is not usually the *real* problem, is it? The core problem is our priorities: we find time to give time to our genuine priorities.

In a world said to be millions of years old, why were you and I created at this very time? If we figured out how many humans have been here throughout the ages, generation after generation, the statistics would be staggering. What are the odds that you and I would be here right now?

James 4:14 (NASV) states, “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” Leaders prioritize their time because they feel the urgency of the “vapor.” Life and time in some ways are synonymous. We don’t have one without the other. So, how do we make the most of these twin gifts?

First, we need to understand the two types of time:

- Chronos time is the chronological time on our watches and calendars.
- Kairos time is God’s time.

The book of Esther helps us distinguish between those two types of time.

King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) throws a party for the officials of all 127 provinces that are a part of his kingdom. He asks his Queen, Vashti, to come and show off her beauty. She refuses to come, and the King is furious. As a result, Vashti loses her role as Queen. The King issues a decree that Vashti be replaced. Mordecai, a Jew, is the cousin of a beautiful girl named Esther, who is brought into the King’s Harem. There, she wins the King’s heart in a beauty contest whose winner replaces Queen Vashti. The king chooses Esther as his new Queen.

The Jews are in exile at this time—under Persian rule—and Mordecai tells Esther not to reveal to the King that she is a Jew. While Mordecai is sitting by the King’s gate one day, he overhears a plot to assassinate the King. Mordecai tells Esther about the plot. Esther tells the King, and he is very pleased with her.

During this period, a man named Haman is rising to power in the King's court. The King appoints Haman over all the other nobles. Everyone pays homage to Haman by kneeling before him, except for Mordecai, who only bows instead of kneeling. In retaliation Haman plots for a year to have Mordecai killed. After learning that Mordecai is a Jew, Haman asks the King to decree death for all the Jews—and sweetens his sales pitch with a bribe: ten thousand talents of silver. The King acquiesces and gives Haman his signet ring, with which to seal the decree.

Esther must make a decision. If she doesn't speak to the King, all of her people will die. Yet, if she tells the King she is a Jew, she may die along with the rest of her people. Mordecai reminds her of the importance of her position and asks her, "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13 NASV)

Notice how Esther strengthens herself in the Lord. In Esther 4:15-16 (NASV) we read, "Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'"

The King becomes angry when he learns that Haman tricked him. So he hangs Haman and decrees that the Jews are allowed to defend themselves against all enemies.

Esther's courage in protecting her people is celebrated today in Jewish tradition as the Feast of Purim (Esther 9:25 NASV). Purim's root meaning derives from the word *pur*, as in "to cast the *pur*" (that is, cast the lot).

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Reflection:

We are an Organism, not an Organization. Organisms reproduce.
We must be transformed agents, to transform agents.
The best way to predict the future is to create it.

Daniel Goleman writes, "Exceptional leaders know their strengths, their limits, and their weaknesses." (Daniel Goleman *Emotional Intelligence* [New York: A Bantam Book, 1995])

As leaders in the church, we should know our spiritual gifts:

- What are your spiritual gifts?
- After thinking about your spiritual gifts since last week's discussion, what comments would you add?
- If you took the gifted2serve test on the www.buildingchurch.net Website, did your results match what the class thinks your gifts are?

7:50 p.m.—Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Do you feel that Mordecai, Esther, and Xerxes were “called” to a role in the Jewish liberation? Do you feel that Esther and the Jews were on God’s time? What about all of the Jews who Esther asked to fast for three days? Did it make a difference?

God is concerned with His people. He places leaders strategically at the gate, in the Kings court, and disperses them in the multitude. Why? Is it not so that they fulfill His purposes?

How many of us feel that we have been called “for such a time as this” at Wolfforth United Methodist Church? Does God call us onto this field to be coaches (leaders), or do we prefer to passively watch from the stands? Does God call us to lead others to save a world? Does God call us to disciple, nurture, and work in the one hope of our calling?

I sincerely believe that there are many unhappy people in Wolfforth for this reason: they are not on Kairos time, they are on Chronos. They are just putting in their time, waiting for the fourth-quarter bell to sound at their life’s end. They are not working in the one hope of their calling. Isn’t it up to us to show them some of the freedom and meaning Christ gives each of us when we understand the importance of prioritizing our time to hear from Him? Isn’t it up to us to point people toward living lives according to His purpose?

The greatest lives ever lived are people who were willing to die for what they believe. Sold out! Not budging, not quaking, not moving, but completely understanding that they are here for “such a time as this.”

This is God’s time, right now, right here, in Wolfforth. I used to say, “I should have been born 120 years ago.” I like horses and cattle. I love the wide open spaces. I would have fit perfectly in that frontier era of the 1880s. But the truth is this: God knew when He could best use me to achieve His purposes. I believe that this is God’s Kairos time working through His servant. I was conceived, born, and live in this era because this is what God chose for me. What a shame it would be if I didn’t use this time for His purposes!

How many feel that you have been called to be a part of this vision team? How many of you feel that you were called for such a time as this?

Chronos versus Kairos: As stated before, Chronos is chronological time. This is where we get the word chronology. This is drudgery time. Example: a prison inmate marking off the calendar dates.

What are some other examples?

- Watching the time as your preacher preaches?
- Watching the clock at work?
- School?

Kairos time also deals with attitude. No matter what your job, you can be on Kairos time. You can be a witness to God’s Grace wherever you are. We can live a life of destiny, not a life of default. We can know that every minute is a gift from God, to use for His purposes.

Kairos time is God’s time! Kairos time is experiencing God in everyday life. Sometimes we have Kairos moments that leave us feeling in awe. James W. Moore writes that those rich moments which break into the humdrum and change your life; they are powerful, dramatic moments!

Moore lists these examples:

- The Kairos moment of new insight—Lucy and Charlie Brown
- The Kairos moment of penitence—Nathan confronting David after Bathsheeba
- The Kairos moment of tender love
- The Kairos moment of inspiration—you feel that you can't sit still; you must respond; you must act.

Are we a Chronos church or a Kairos church?

What kind of time does your life represent?

Are we ready for such a time as this?

8:25 p.m.—Overachiever homework: James W. Moore, *Seizing the Moments* (Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 2001)

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 7

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Understanding Grace
2. The need for Grace
3. Three types of Grace identified by John Wesley

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

1. Genesis 3 – “Adamic Sin” – The fall of mankind
2. Ephesians 2:8-9 – God’s gift to us
3. Romans 5:20-6:2 – Grace empowers leaders

Genesis 3 – All of us have heard this story several times. God creates and calls it good. He makes mankind in His image. He offers the man a mate who will love him, honor him, respect him, cook for him, clean for him, hunt for him, fish for him... God tells Adam this will cost him an arm and a leg. Adam asks, “How much can I get for a rib?”

The two of them take a bite of the forbidden fruit. Sin enters the world at this time, but so does Grace. Both Adam and Eve shun responsibility, which is still a huge sin among people today. It’s always someone else’s fault: The teacher is too hard on my kid, so she misbehaves. The coach can’t motivate. There is not enough “Power” in the “PowerAid” drink!

We try to set ourselves up, so that if we fail, we have someone to blame. “See, I was right, it was their fault.” I know this act well, after all, I’m a pastor, and if my church doesn’t succeed, it’s the people’s fault! We pastors excel at the blame game.

Adam and Eve had it good. Then, the unexpected happens—which would be somewhat similar to you and your wife going to the Bass Pro Shop after hours and running around naked. Then you sin and the lights come on. Quick, we must find a place to hide and something to cover ourselves with! Suddenly, there are people with shopping carts and you two are the checkout staff!

Let’s look at Genesis 3:8-9 (NASV): “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves....Then the Lord called to the man and said, ‘Where are you?’” Sin is dark and dirty, the equivalent of death. Yet, Grace is far stronger than the stench of sin. Who went looking for whom that day? Adam and Eve are hiding, but God goes looking. I believe that God knew what they had done, yet he wanted to offer them Grace. Sure, he kicked them out of the garden. But he spared their lives and gave them another chance in a different setting.

Romans 5:20-6:2 – Probably all of us have gone down the Roman road of Scripture. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24 NASV).

Are we a people who rely totally on God’s Grace? Yes. We must have it. But we should never take it for granted. “And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be” (Romans 5:20-6:1 NASV)!

Grace is God's gift to us through Jesus. Even though we sin, we should never try to condone it or live in it. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13 NASV).

Ephesians 2:8-9 – Grace is an important lesson for leaders. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (NASV). If we miss this insight, we usually become conceited and judgmental.

Some churches like to brag that they are a Grace church. But if their people don't understand why they need Grace, their church as a body won't find itself needing the altar. Churches that understand their need for Grace remain humble, seeking God's direction for their ministry.

Likewise, when leaders understand their need for Grace, they remain humble. By Grace, the largest sinners sometimes become the greatest givers. Effective leaders remember that their only hope to a righteous life is through the Grace by which Jesus makes them a new people.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Ask Someone to Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

To shift mental gears, ask questions such as the following:

- Does anyone have observations to add to the Bible study?
- Did something in one of the books we are reading grab your attention?

7:55—Visionary Teaching: John Wesley's view on Grace is brilliant. All of us can find ourselves in one of these three types of graces.

Prevenient Grace: This is the Grace that goes before us—the Grace that draws us into a relationship with Jesus Christ. I like calf roping. I'm not very good, but when I can spare the time, I load my horse in the trailer and off we go. When the quarter horse is in the box and the calf is in the chute, tensions are high. Some calves shoot out fast and run hard down the arena. Some calves break right and some break left. Then there are those calves that have no idea where to go, so they mope down the arena.

Regardless of what the calf does, the horse's job remains the same—to pursue the calf. Whether the calf runs hard, breaks right, breaks left, or just mopes, the horse pursues. And when the horse places the rider in the best position, he throws the rope. The horse stops, the calf flips over, stands up, and is now facing the horse.

In prevenient Grace, the horse is like God—who pursues us from the day we are born. Some of us run hard, break right, left, or mope, but that doesn't change what God does. The Holy Spirit is like the rope. It convicts us, reveals the need, and brings us to a place of stopping, kneeling, or turning around and facing God. Prevenient Grace is God's pursuit of a relationship with us.

Justifying Grace: This is the moment where Grace catches up to us—when we confess that Jesus is Lord, believe God raised Him from the dead, repent of our sins, ask for forgiveness, and promise to live a Christian life (Romans 6:23; 10:9-10,13).

Too often, churches leave people parked at that starting line. An old joke says Baptists preach till they can't preach anymore, scare the hell out of people, beat them with the Bible, and lead them in prayer for salvation. After that, they leave them cold, hungry, thirsty and naked. By contrast, the joke says Methodists give people a place to stay warm, feed them, give them all they can drink, and put clothes on their back—but never tell them why they are doing these compassionate deeds!

Grace doesn't end the day we believe that Jesus is Lord; it begins. Christ directs us to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). This is a process. Yes, people can be justified by faith, but that is the starting line. There is more to life with Christ than justification. John Wesley placed new converts in bands (small groups), and then charged the church's leaders with the responsibility for their souls. Ouch! That's a tough role for leaders, but it gets the point across: Members of the body of Christ are responsible for one another. Justifying Grace is a beginning, not the end. Where should leaders lead people? Into a deeper fellowship with Christ, His Word, and answering God's call in their lives. This leads them on to sanctification.

Sanctifying Grace: Sanctification sounds like a mission impossible. People who criticize this type of Grace say that only Jesus was and still is the only perfect human. It's true. He is. Yet, Jesus calls us to a higher way of living. If we are His followers, we strengthen ourselves in Him.

Christ set the bar high. To be a Christian is to be a little Christ. In Matthew 5:48 (NASV) Jesus says, “You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” No, that verse is NOT taken out of context! Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is a challenge to all of us to live different and holy lives. This is living out our sanctification. This is living “in one hope of our calling” (Ephesians 4:4 NASV). Jesus' sermon sets the bar high. He tells us that the Law states we are not to commit adultery. But Jesus says we are not even to look at a woman lustfully. Jesus tells us that the Law warns us not to murder. But Jesus says we are not to harbor hatred toward anyone.

How do we live our lives in the sanctification arena? A good way to start is by loving and reading His Word. Scripture is inspired by God and changes us from the inside out. Prayer is another sanctification discipline, along with fasting and journaling and being part of a church that lives out the Great Commission. We move in the direction of sanctification by communicating with God, and most importantly, by hearing God communicate with us.

8:25 p.m.—Homework: Write your testimony, or evaluate your testimony, using these three types of graces.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Visionary Leadership Lesson 8 & Lesson 9

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. What is an Apostolic Church?
2. What is a Church of Apostasy?
3. What are we?

Divide this Lesson into two parts of one and one-half hours each—Lesson 8 for the eighth week and Lesson 9 for the ninth week.

Allow plenty of time for discussion on these complex issues. End Lesson 8 at the point where it makes sense, according to the group’s progress in discussing these issues.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: All of these scriptures deal with the Holy Spirit and baptism. The work of the Holy Spirit always brings praise to Jesus and always sends people forth.

Matthew 3:11-17

John 20:21-22

Acts 1:8

Acts 2:1

Acts 2:42

Acts 8:16-17

Acts 19:1-7

7:20 p.m.—Ask Someone to Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Tonight we will talk about an *Apostolic Church* versus a *Church of Apostasy*.

Apostolic: From the earlier lessons, we already understand the meaning of the word *Apostolic*—“sending forth” or “to send forth.” Congregations that measure up to that definition are “sending forth” churches—they send ministers and ministries into the world.

First, let’s look at the source of the power behind that “sending forth.” Our Bible study begins with John the Baptist baptizing people in the Jordan River. John the Baptist says, “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt 3:11 NIV). Then in Matthew 3:17 (NIV) we find these words: “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

Baptism is a sacrament: our response and His equipping. How do we know this? John reminds us that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit—which exerts many kinds of power: it comforts, it heals, it reveals, and it teaches. An action the Bible most often reports of the Holy Spirit is “to send forth.” Notice John 20:21-22 (NIV): “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

When the Holy Spirit is present, sending happens. In Acts 1:8 (NIV) Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Once again, the Holy Spirit sends.

Let’s read the rest of the scriptures on this list: (Acts 2:1; 2:42; 8:16-17; and Acts 19:1-7). Each of these scriptures deals with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. When we are immersed in the Spirit, we become less self-focused; other people become very important to us. We get a passion for people who do not know Christ. We get the urge to go and serve. We want to hear God, know Him more, and do His will.

The influence of the Holy Spirit always brings honor and glory to Jesus and sends us forth in His name. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed (marinated) into God’s calling for our lives. God gives each of us spiritual gifts to empower the Body of Christ in its ministry actions:

- Wisdom, knowledge, healing, discernment, tongues, interpretation—all are given to strengthen the body and its witness to the world.
- The spiritual gifts send us forth in the power of the resurrection to bring others into the life of Christ and the one hope of their calling.

An Apostolic congregation brings Jesus glory and honor and is on the move *outward*—sending forth ministers and ministries.

Apostasy: a total desertion or departure from one’s religion, principles, party, cause, etc. During the early days of the Protestant Reformation (the early 1500s and throughout that century), the various Protestant denominations (such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, and the Church of England) accused the Holy Roman Catholic Church of Apostasy on numerous counts, especially with regard to the immoral and greedy behaviors of its leaders and priests. Sometimes the Catholic leaders retaliated by killing those Protestant accusers. As the centuries marched forward beyond that initial Protestant Reformation century, some of those hard feelings between the Catholics and Protestants have remained.

However, many parts of the Universal Church today—which includes many United Methodist congregations—appear to operate on the fringes of Apostasy. (If your congregation is of another denomination and you think this label applies to some of its churches, substitute your denomination’s name in the previous sentence.)

Study the comparative lists on the second page of your handout for this Lesson, titled “Apostolic Versus Church of Apostasy.”

Moving down that list, one item at a time, ask the group for examples that seem to fit how these qualities play out in today’s “Apostolic Churches” and “Churches of Apostasy.”

Can you think of other comparative descriptions that we could add to this list?

When a congregation’s leaders attempt to change the Word of God and make excuses for why they cannot follow God’s instructions, they become a god themselves; and thus, break the First Commandment. False teaching soon follows, and each false teaching usually finds a large group of followers. High standards for biblical life and Kingdom living begin to disappear.

The role of church leaders is to conform to God's will—NOT ask God to conform to their will and preferences.

Church leaders who focus their attention on people who have not yet found Christ and on the missions Christ sets before them inevitably lead a church that is *on the move*. When church leaders fight battles that (a) lead them into self-gratification and (b) focus inward with their energies, those leaders become the white elephant that eats all the spiritual energy and motivation out of the room.

On this issue, numerous pertinent scriptures are available. Discuss them if you wish and have sufficient time available:

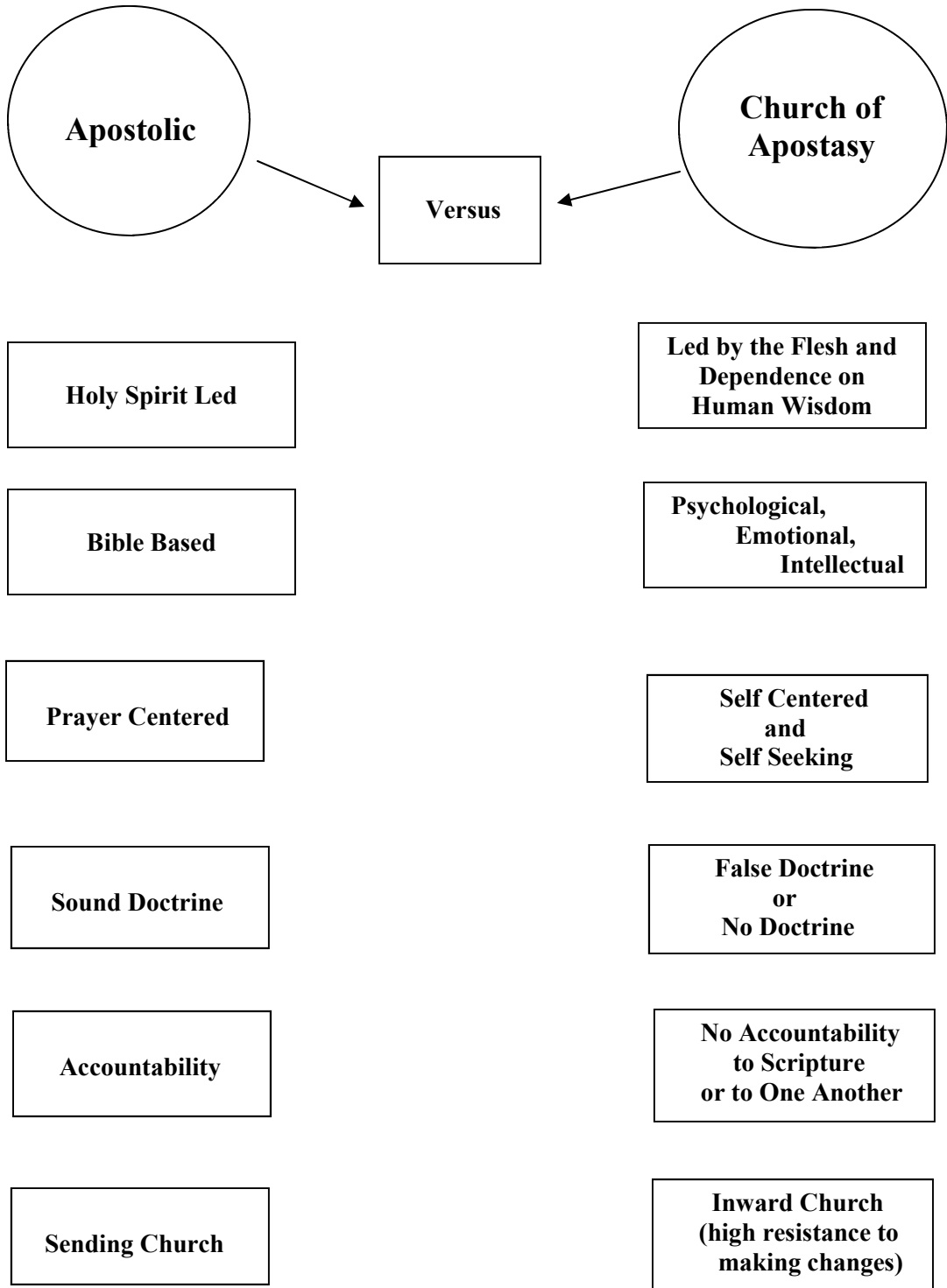
Mathew 24:4-6, 24
Matthew 25:31-46
1 Timothy 1:3-11
1 Timothy 3:1-13
1 Timothy 4:1-4
2 Timothy 3:2-5
Titus 2:1
1 Peter 2:8-11
1 Peter 4:3-6
2 Peter 2:1-3:1-7
1 John 4:1-3
3 John 1:11
Jude 1:3-4

In Lesson 9, provide plenty of time for continued questions and discussions on issues for which ample time was not available during Lesson 8—issues from the Scripture readings, the assigned books, and the group's discussions.

If this discussion finishes early, go into reflections on and discussion of one or more of the books the class has been reading.

8:25 p.m.—Prayer and Reflection

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer



Visionary Leadership Lesson 10

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Our problem is not time management; it is priority management.
2. Priority management starts with us.
3. Go and become disciples; make disciples.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Jude 1:20-21

1. *Build yourself up.* Spiritual disciplines, meeting with one another, encouraging one another in the faith. See 1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASV). Discipline is necessary for growth in Christ: Bible study, prayer, meditation, fasting, and journaling.
2. *Pray in the Holy Spirit.* Growing and building ourselves up in Christ is not a matter of having time to do it; this is a matter of setting life priorities. See Romans 8:26-27 (NIV). Studying the Scripture and being led by the Holy Spirit in our prayers is a necessity.
3. *Keep yourself in God’s love—show mercy.* See 1 John 4:7-12 (NIV). God is love. To know God is to love—sharing His love in our community and the world.
4. *Wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.* See Matthew 25:1-13 (NIV). We should wait with anticipation, keeping our lamp stands full of oil.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Ask Someone to Draw the Mission Action Plan on the Board—showing the flow and interrelationships of Visionary Preaching, Visionary Leadership Team, Discovery Groups, and Ministry Cells.

Discuss observations and questions on issues for which ample time was not available during Lesson 8.

Discuss observations and questions from any of Lessons 1 through 9.

Discuss observations and questions from books the group has been reading.

7:50 p.m.—Time management and priority management: Either (a) ask participants to read silently or (b) ask group members to follow along as you read aloud the following five principles from *Church Effectiveness Nuggets, Volume 10 and Volume 22* (download free from the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site).

Ask group members to place check marks by sections that they feel are especially important to their lives and leadership roles.

1. Strive to live a balanced life. Feeling called to your ministry is enormously different from feeling driven by your ministry. Using time-management methods for the sole purpose of adding hours to your workweek misdirects your energies and skills. Filling every day of every week with work gradually eliminates the possibility of a normal lifestyle. A good resource to combat the driven-ness syndrome: Richard A. Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998).

2. God's work is accomplished in places other than your work, even if professional church work is your vocation. You also do God's work when you relate to your family. That fits into the category of something "you and you alone can do." However, that does not mean your primary focus should be leisure. The critical need is balance.

3. Time management is rarely the major challenge. Priority management is the real issue! Every church leadership role is multifaceted, even the highly specialized staff positions such as counseling and music. Accomplishing a ministry role is not like inserting a bolt into a widget on a factory assembly line. A ministry leadership role is like running a hospital in which patient health is the central goal, but the employees must accomplish dozens of tasks to achieve that primary objective.

4. What is your priority hierarchy? One pastor said, "God put me on earth to accomplish several things. Right now, I'm so far behind, I'll live forever." Like most other people, clergy and staff must choose, not between good and bad but between good and good. If two wrongs don't make a right, what do two rights make? For most people, choosing two or more right ways to spend their time creates constant feelings of chaos and stress.

Steven Covey tells a now-famous story about the instructor who was lecturing on time management. He set a wide-mouth jar on the table next to a platter with some fist-size rocks on it. "How many of these rocks do you think we can get in the jar?" he asked.

After the class members offered several guesses, the instructor put a rock in the jar. Then he asked, "Is the jar full?"

Everyone agreed. The jar was full. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of gravel, and started dumping the gravel in the jar. It filled the spaces around the big rocks. The instructor grinned and asked, "Is the jar full?"

"Probably not," the class said. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of sand, and started dumping the sand into the jar. It filled the little spaces left by the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked, "Is the jar full?"

"No" the class roared. With this he started pouring a pitcher of water into the jar. He got something like a quart of water into that jar. When he asked the class for the point of his picture parable, someone replied, "If we work hard at filling the gaps in our lives, we accomplish more."

"No," the instructor said. "Here is the point: Put the big rocks in first. Otherwise, you'll never get them in." (Steven Covey, *First Things First* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996])

5. Refuse violent behavior. Thomas Merton wrote, "There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence which is activism and over-work. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism . . . destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes work fruitful." (Thomas Merton, *The Violence of Over-Involvement*)

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35 NIV). Is that true? It depends on the causes to which you give yourself. You can give yourself to causes that do not bless you. Giving your life indiscriminately to too many of those things can do violence to your soul.

Ask group members who feel comfortable doing so to share their insights regarding what, to them, seems like their most important checkmark among the five principles listed above.

Allow time for group discussion.

In each of these ten lessons we find basic principles and scriptures to live by and move us forward. Applying those principles and scriptures is a very personal matter for each of us. So, let’s take time to consider personal, practical applications.

As an example of how to accomplish this process, here are my answers to the four questions.

1. What are my lifetime career goals?

- A. To function in the one hope of my calling (Ephesians 4)
- B. To make disciples, not just members
- C. To set back sufficient financial resources for our kids and for ministry

2. What are my lifetime family goals?

- A. To raise a family that loves God and loves neighbor
- B. To use daily Bible study and worship to accomplish family and ministry goals
- C. To be a blessing to my family through priority management, encouragement, and involvement

3. What are my lifetime spiritual goals?

- A. To pursue Jesus through a life of piety, holiness, and Godly wisdom
- B. To help raise up a generation of doers, not merely hearers
- C. To make God a priority in everything I do, i.e., cattle, horses, revivals, eating, playing, etc.

4. What would I like my obituary to say?

“He loved the Lord and he loved the people. He raised a godly family and a godly church that impacted not only the community but the world. His children remember him as a blessing, remember him as loving them, and most importantly, remember him teaching them to love God. His wife, Allison, remembers him as a Godly husband and remembers him as someone who loved her as Christ loved the Church” (I still have a lot of room for growth here).

May God’s abundant love grow in each one of us every day!

8:10 p.m.—Ask each member of the group to draft his or her personal goals and preferred obituary.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

IX. Advanced Training for the Leadership Team

We occasionally provide additional training for people who complete the basic ten-week Visionary Leadership Training Course. The Wesleyan Theology course outlined below is an example.

Wesleyan Theology

This is a general overview of Wesley Theology. The pastor is assisted by two members of the Leadership Team. The pastor's prayer: as we look at the life of John Wesley, it will draw us nearer to Christ and his word. The syllabus is derived from material in a class Dr. Edgardo Colon-Emeric teaches at Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina.

January

11th - Introduction to Wesleyan Theology: Brief history, overall explanation of, and summary of the course. Advance Reading: John Wesley's sermons, "Spiritual Worship" and "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, V."

18th - The Nature of Christ: Spiritual Worship. This session looks unto the Christology of John Wesley, with overtones of his brother, Charles Wesley. Advance Reading: John Wesley's sermons, "The Lord Our Righteousness" and "The End of Christ's Coming."

25th - The Life of Christ: Reflection on salvation through Christ alone. Advance Reading: John Wesley's Sermons, "The Witness of the Spirit, I" and "The Witness of the Spirit, II."

February

1st - The Holy Spirit: This helps us to see the witness of the Holy Spirit and His direction through Grace for each of us. Advance Reading: John Wesley's Sermons, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, IV," "The New Creation," and "The Great Assize."

8th - The Church: Eschatology, the importance of the Church, and its role with the "end times." This topic stimulates much discussion, as we look at Wesley's definition from his sermons. Advance Reading: "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" and "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

15th - The Way of Salvation: Grace and Repentance. Advance Reading: John Wesley's sermons, "Justification by Faith" and "The Great Privilege of Those Who Are Born of God."

22nd - The Way of Salvation: Justification and Sanctification. This looks at what it takes to be justified in the eyes of the Lord and move on to perfection through sanctification. Advance Reading: John Wesley's sermons, "The New Birth" and "The Means of Grace."

March

1st - The Means of Salvation: Baptism. After looking at the Nature of Christ, the Life of Christ, and the Way of Salvation, we focus on the Means of Salvation, primarily with the Ordinances of God. Advanced Reading: John Wesley's sermon, "The Law Established Through Faith I & II."

8th - The Means of Salvation: Scripture and Tradition. Wesley often said that Scripture was "*solo scriptura*" for salvific purposes. What does this mean? Advance Reading: John Wesley's sermons, "Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VII" and "The Duty of Constant Communion."

15th - The Means of Salvation: Prayer, Fasting, Eucharistic, and Service. Wesley believed that adhering to the Ordinances of God gives assurance of salvation. This gives us time to reflect on our own lives and our pursuit of holiness and perfection.

Additional readings for overachievers: *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Kenneth J. Collins (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998); and *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, Outler and Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

Advanced Leadership Course

Members of the Visionary Leadership Team hold most leadership positions, and the church's Nominating Committee considers them first for the church's leadership positions.

Thus, the advanced leadership courses have a two-fold purpose:

1. Members of the Visionary Leadership Team read an assigned book each quarter throughout the year and meet regularly for discussion once each quarter.
2. Members of the Visionary Leadership Team are dispersed through the Discovery Groups (which meet monthly) to help facilitate communication and discussion.

Recommended Readings:

Rediscovering Church, Bill & Lynne Hybels (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995)

Staying Power, Bob Whitesel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003)

Simple Church, Tom S. Rainer & Eric Geiger (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006)

Good to Great, Jim Collins (New York: HarperCollins, 2001)

Lead Like Jesus, Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003)

Training for Reigning, Rick Godwin (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1998)

The Blessed Life, Robert Morris (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002)

From time to time, we add new books to this list and remove books that most of the leaders have read.

X. Appendix

The tools in the following pages include (a) the four-page Confirmation Test for use in Lesson 1 of the Visionary Leadership Training and (b) ten Student Outlines that are distributed to participants in each session of the ten-week course.

Confirmation Test

Fill in the blank with the correct word to complete the Scripture.*

1. John 14:6 – Jesus states, “I am the way, the truth, and the _____; no one comes to the Father, but through me.”
2. Romans 10:9 – “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be _____.”
3. Romans 3:23-24 – “for all have _____ and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”
4. Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is _____, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
5. Matthew 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the _____ and the _____ and the _____, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
6. Matthew 26:26-28 – “And while they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is *my* _____.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them saying, ‘*drink* from it all of you; for this is My _____ of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.’”
7. Romans 6:3 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was _____ from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
8. Acts 2:38 – “And Peter *said* to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of _____ for the forgiveness for your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
9. Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by _____ you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”
10. Philippians 1:6 – “*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will _____ it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
11. James 5:13-15 – “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him _____. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven.”

12. John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever _____ in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”
13. John 4:24 – “God is _____, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Match the correct letter to the questions below.

A. Anti-Nicene Christianity (2nd Period)	B. Crusades
C. 70 AD	D. Apostolic Christianity (1st period)
E. Taking back the holy places which some had dedicated to Mohammed	
F. Usually in homes	G. Those at synagogues and proconsuls
H. The Church was heavily persecuted, yet spread rapidly; people often met in catacombs and homes to avoid persecution; Catholic theology was established	
I. Church in Union with the Roman Empire (3rd period)	
J. Christianity became the accepted religion of the state: Constantine and Gregory the Great	

1. King Solomon’s Temple was destroyed in what year? _____
2. Where did the new church meet at the beginning? _____
3. Paul usually addressed what people first? _____
4. What was the church known as during the period 1-100 AD? _____
5. What was the church known as during the period 100-325 AD?

6. _____ during the Anti-Nicene Christianity (2nd Period)?

7. What was the period of the church from 311-590 AD? _____
8. What was significant during the time period when the church was known as the Church in Union with the Roman Empire (3rd Period)? _____
9. From the 11th-16th centuries, what was taking place? _____
10. What was the church supposedly doing during the Crusades? _____

Match the correct letter to the questions below.

A. Preacher for the Church of England

B. The Reformation

C. Charles; he loved to write hymns

D. Samuel and Suzanna Wesley

E. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Anabaptist; they stood against heresy in the church

F. King who wanted a divorce and the Catholic Church would not allow it; he formed his own church—the Church of England

G. The Holy Club and later: called Methodists because of their disciplined methods

H. Yes and no: the Methodist church was not formed out of the Lutheran Reformation; it was formed out of the Church of England

I. They had stones and rotten fruit thrown at them; they had to preach on their parent's grave

J. Persecution for John and Charles

1. What happened in the 16th and 17th centuries? _____
2. Who were the key players during the Reformation and what did they stand for?

3. Was the Methodist Church part of the Reformation? _____
4. Who was King Henry VIII? _____
5. Who were John Wesley's parents? _____
6. What did Samuel do? _____
7. John had a brother. What was his name and what did he love to do?

8. John and Charles Wesley formed a group at Oxford College which met twice a day. What was this group called? _____
9. John was not happy with the Church of England and wanted it to come back to the Scripture. What did this cause? _____
10. Name some of the persecutions John and Charles Wesley endured.

Match the correct letter to the questions below.

A. Apostles Creed	B. Bible	C. Cross and flame
D. Baptism and Communion	E. Connectional	
F. Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience		G. George Whitfield
H. Accept Jesus as Lord and be baptized in His name		
I. United Brethren		

1. John Wesley was invited by a friend to preach to the miners and the lower class. Who was this friend? _____
2. What is the Wesley Quadrilateral? _____
3. John Wesley said he was a man of one book. What is that book?

4. The church later made it to the U.S., and this made us what kind of church?

5. What creed is recognized by the United Methodist Church? _____
6. What church did we unite with in 1968? _____
7. What is our symbol? _____
8. What should we do as a sign of our love to God and to join the church?

9. What are the sacraments of the United Methodist Church? _____

What is unique about our church?

We learned many other things in confirmation. What was your favorite?

God bless and know Jesus loves you!

*Scripture quotes are from the *New American Standard Bible* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 1

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The Book of Acts church points to a bigger picture, moved by the Holy Spirit.
2. Church leaders should know Church history.
3. Goals are no good without strategy.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Acts 1 & 2

- What happened?
- What were the people doing?
- Where did the church move to?
- What did it revolve around?

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—The Visionary Leadership Team:

- What is it?
- Who should come?
- What is expected of all who attend?
- What will be the outcome? – Goals and Vision

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignments

Next week:

- Write your testimony. Writing out our testimony gives us clarity. It is hard to be an effective witness for Christ if we are not clear.
- Distribute a copy of this first book to each participant, free of charge: *Leadership and Self Deception*, The Arbinger Institute, Inc. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2002). Read at your own pace but please complete this first book during the first three weeks.
- Read Matthew 24 and Acts 1 & 2. These are good examples of what the congregation should look like.

Coming weeks: Please obtain and begin reading the second book as soon as possible; we will begin discussing it week after next, in our third session: *The Bait of Satan*, by John Bevere (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2004)

By the end of the ten-week sessions: Please obtain and read these four other books.

- *An Unstoppable Force*, Irwin Raphael McManus (Orange, California: Yates & Yates, 2001), available at www.grouppublishing.com
- *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002)
- *Unveiled At Last*, Bob Sjogren (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1992)
- *Power Surge*, Michael W. Foss (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2000)

Two options for purchasing the books:

- Participants can purchase all of these books, new or used, by going to the amazon.com Website.
- Purchase them at a local bookstore.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 2

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The fullness of God
2. The necessity of unity in the Body
3. The basic calling of the Church (Matthew 25 & 28)

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

Ephesians 4:11-13 - Who are the some? Who are they in this church?
John 17 - “I pray... that all of them may be one...” (John 17:20-21 NIV)

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:40 p.m.—Why are the terms Calvinism and Armenianism important? Why would we look at these historic theological arguments after teaching the importance of unity? Because each one of us has a slightly different background; each of us carries certain mental assumptions regarding what is the right theological belief and biblical interpretation. In other words, we all bring a preconceived thought or belief about God to the discussion table. Many of our differences stem from one of these positions: Calvinism or Armenianism.

8:00 p.m.—Review important ideas in the book, *Leadership and Self-Deception*

Example: In the Box

8:10 p.m.—Review the Role of Vision-casting through Visionary Preaching. Draw four vertical columns on the board. At the top of the four columns, write four words:

- Engage
- Receive
- Equip
- Send

The four words that top these columns are excellent categories to describe the basic principles of Christ’s Church: feed, drink, stranger, clothe, visit sick/prison, make disciples, baptism, Apostle’s teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) advises, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignment: Continue to read *Leadership and Self-Deception*; begin reading *The Bait of Satan*.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 3

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The New Self
2. Overview of Church History (from the Apostolic Age to the present)
3. Setting the bar high – John Wesley

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Ephesians 4:23-24 and Romans 12:1-2

1. Does our church’s righteousness witness to people both inside and outside the congregation?
2. How do we renew our minds?
3. New Testament Grace and Old Testament Law.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Review important points of last week’s lesson.

7:40 p.m.—Church History: To understand where the Church is now, we should know some of what has happened prior to our time. The breakdown looks like this:

The Early church (70 to 700AD)

The Middle Ages (700 to 1500 AD)

The Reformation (1600 to 1750 AD)

The Church in the West (1750 AD to the present)

8:10 p.m.—John Wesley: setting the bar high

Perfection: is it possible?

Genesis 17:1 (NASV): “Walk before me and be blameless.”

Matthew 5:48 (NIV): “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV): “Aim for perfection.”

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 4

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Staying on the move
2. Apostolic—sending forth
3. Organism versus Organization—one is God-made; the other is man-made.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

1. Joshua 10 - To obtain victory over the Amorites, Joshua must keep marching. He returns to Gilgal (Joshua 10:15). But he does not stay there. He continues through the Promised Land (Joshua 10:29-42).
 2. Acts 2 - The Church at Jerusalem was a sending unit (Apostolic).
-
1. To conquer any type of Promised Land we must stay on the move.
 2. Israel stays on the move and God fights for them.
 3. Joshua shows great leadership when he opens the cave and subdues the five kings.
 4. The word *Apostolic* means “send out” or “sending forth.”

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Review important points of last week’s lesson.

7:45 p.m.—Vision Teaching:

The Church is an *Organism* rather than an *Institution*.

Definition of Organism: A living being that is capable of reproduction.

8:00 p.m.—Five Basic Characteristics of a Species that Survives:

1. A Balanced Ecosystem
2. Environmental Adaptation
3. Spontaneous Reproduction
4. The Nurturing Instinct
5. Life Cycle Harmony

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 5

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Several places to go—only one place to turn
2. The importance of knowing and using spiritual gifts
3. Working “in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4 NASV)

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: 1 Samuel 30:1-6 (NASV) “A Bad Day”

- Key theme—David turns to the Lord.
- David is a young leader, leading his troops in battle.
- David is a novice; God continues to pour His favor on him.
- The enemy arrives and destroys the campsite while David and the army are gone.
- David faces a leadership crisis.
- David’s soldiers are hungry, tired, and ready to stone him.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Discussion:

- Does anyone have observations to add to the Bible study?
- Has something in one of the books we are reading jumped out and grabbed your attention?

7:50 p.m.—Vision Teaching: Basic leadership of the church is founded in Christ.

- Recap last week’s “Organism versus Institution.”
- We must be transformed agents, to transform agents.

Daniel Goleman wrote, “Exceptional leaders know their strengths, their limits, and their weaknesses.” (Daniel Goleman *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: A Bantam Book, 1995) As spiritual leaders, we should know our spiritual gifts, especially with regard to congregational ministries in which we work most of the time.

The big question: If the Holy Spirit has given each of us specific spiritual gifts, are we using these gifts in ministry?

Each one of us is called. If we are believers in Christ, we have been called according to His purpose.

Related questions: What is our congregation’s calling in this community?

- Has God given our congregation spiritual gifts with which to accomplish that calling?
- Has God given our congregation spiritual gifts that it is not using to accomplish that calling?
- In what ways can a Vision Statement, a Mission Statement, a Values Statement, and a Mission Action Plan (Strategy) help our congregation to accomplish that calling?

8:25 p.m.—Homework Assignment: Start reading the third book—*Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002).

Go to the www.buildingchurch.net Website; take the gifted2serve test; and be ready to report as to whether the results match what the class thinks are your gifts.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 6

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. The importance of God’s time
2. Where we are on the calendar
3. Bringing others into God’s time—Reaching Upward, Inward, and Outward

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Esther

- King Ahasuerus throws a party for officials of all 127 provinces to show his wealth.
- The King commands that Queen Vashti come to display her beauty, but she refuses.
- The King organizes a search for Queen Vashti’s replacement.
- Mordecai’s cousin, Esther, enters the King’s harem and is selected Queen.
- The Persians rule during this period, and the Jews are not favored.
- Mordecai hears of a plot to kill the King.
- The King promotes Haman to high office, but Mordecai refuses to bow down to him.
- In retaliation, Haman influences the King to condemn all Jews to death.
- Esther tells the King that she is a Jew and his decree will kill all of her people.
- Mordecai tells Esther that she has come to her royal position for such a time as this.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Reflection:

- We are an Organism, not an Organization. Organisms reproduce.
- We must be transformed agents, to transform agents.
- The best way to predict the future is to create it.

7:40 p.m.—Leaders should know their spiritual gifts.

7:50 p.m.—Chronos versus Kairos:

Chronos is chronological time. This is where we get the word chronology. This is drudgery time. Example: a prison inmate marking off the calendar dates. What are some other examples? Watching the time as your preacher preaches? Watching the clock at work? School?

Kairos time is God’s time! Kairos time is experiencing God in everyday life. Sometimes we have Kairos moments that leave us feeling in awe. Those rich moments break into the humdrum and change your life; they are powerful, dramatic moments! Examples:

- The Kairos moment of new insight—Lucy and Charlie Brown
- The Kairos moment of penitence—Nathan confronting David after Bathsheeba
- The Kairos moment of tender love
- The Kairos moment of inspiration—you feel that you can’t sit still; you must respond; you must act.

Are we a Chronos church or a Kairos church? What kind of time does your life represent?
Are we ready for such a time as this?

8:25 p.m.—Overachiever homework: James W. Moore, *Seizing the Moments* (Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 2001)

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 7

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Understanding Grace
2. The need for Grace
3. Three types of Grace identified by John Wesley

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study:

1. Genesis 3 – “Adamic Sin” – The fall of mankind
2. Ephesians 2:8-9 – God’s gift to us
3. Romans 5:20-6:2 – Grace empowers leaders

Genesis 3 – All of us have heard this story several times. God creates and calls it good. He makes mankind in His image.

Romans 5:20-6:2 – Probably all of us have gone down the Roman road of Scripture. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24 NASV).

Ephesians 2:8-9 – Grace is an important lesson for leaders. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (NASV). If we miss this insight, we usually become conceited and judgmental.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Discussion Questions

- Does anyone have observations to add to the Bible study?
- Did something in one of the books we are reading grab your attention?

7: 55—Visionary Teaching: John Wesley’s view on Grace is brilliant. All of us can find ourselves in one of these three types of graces.

Prevenient Grace: This is the Grace that goes before us—the Grace that draws us into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Justifying Grace: This is the moment where Grace catches up to us—when we confess that Jesus is Lord, believe God raised Him from the dead, repent of our sins, ask for forgiveness, and promise to live a Christian life (Romans 6:23; 10:9-10,13).

Sanctifying Grace: Sanctification sounds like a mission impossible. People who criticize this type of Grace claim that only Jesus was and still is the only perfect human. It’s true. He is. Yet, Jesus calls us to a higher way of living. If we are His followers, we strengthen ourselves in Him.

8:25 p.m.—Homework: Write your testimony, or evaluate your testimony, using these three types of graces.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer

Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 8 & Lesson 9

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. What is an Apostolic Church?
2. What is a Church of Apostasy?
3. What are we?

Divide this Lesson into two parts of one and one-half hours each—Lesson 8 for the eighth week and Lesson 9 for the ninth week.

Allow plenty of time for discussion on these complex issues. End Lesson 8 at the point where it makes sense, according to the group’s progress in discussing these issues.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: All of these scriptures deal with the Holy Spirit and baptism. The work of the Holy Spirit always brings praise to Jesus and always sends people forth.

Matthew 3:11-17

John 20:21-22

Acts 1:8

Acts 2:1

Acts 2:42

Acts 8:16-17

Acts 19:1-7

7:20 p.m.—*An Apostolic Church versus a Church of Apostasy.*

Apostolic: From the earlier lessons, we already understand the meaning of the word *Apostolic*—“sending forth” or “to send forth.” Congregations that measure up to that definition are “sending forth” churches—they send ministers and ministries into the world.

Apostasy: a total desertion or departure from one’s religion, principles, party, cause, etc. Study the comparative lists on the second page of your handout for this Lesson, titled “Apostolic Versus Church of Apostasy.” Moving down that list, one item at a time, can you think of other examples that seem to fit how these qualities play out in today’s churches.

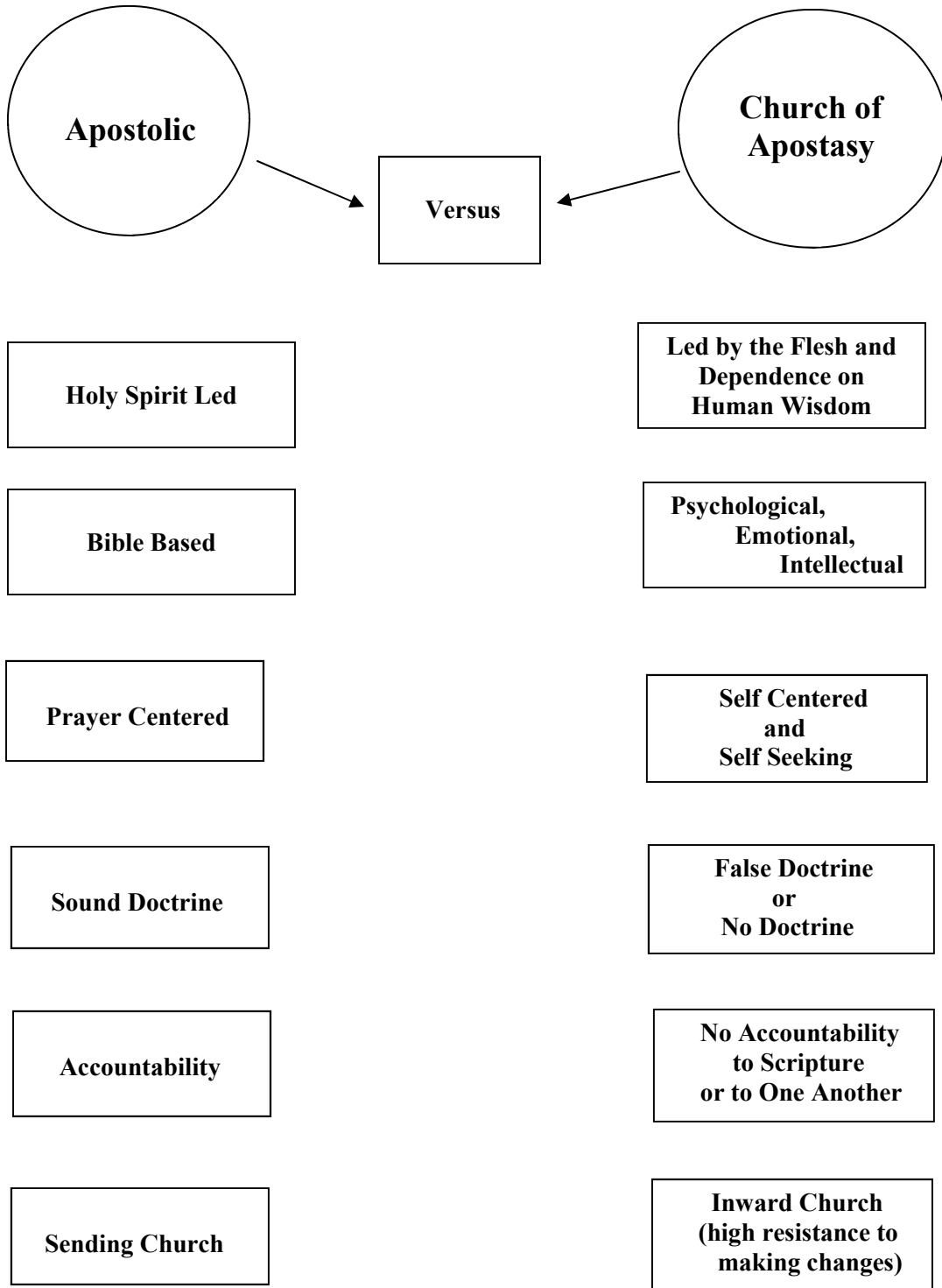
Church leaders who focus their attention on people who have not yet found Christ and on the missions Christ sets before them inevitably lead a church that is *on the move*.

Numerous pertinent scriptures are available. Discuss them if you wish and have sufficient time available: Mathew 24:4-6, 24 - Matthew 25:31-46 - 1 Timothy 1:3-11 - 1 Timothy 3:1-13 - 1 Timothy 4:1-4 - 2 Timothy 3:2-5 - Titus 2:1 - 1 Peter 2:8-11 - 1 Peter 4:3-6 - 2 Peter 2:1-3:1-7 - 1 John 4:1-3 - 3 John 1:11 - Jude 1:3-4

Next week, in Lesson 9, we provide plenty of time for continued questions and discussions on issues for which ample time was not available during Lesson 8—issues from (a) the Scripture readings, (b) the assigned books, and (c) the group’s discussions.

8:20 p.m.—Prayer and Reflection

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer



Student Outline - Visionary Leadership Lesson 10

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).”

Three Major Points:

1. Our problem is not time management; it is priority management.
2. Priority management starts with us.
3. Go and become disciples; make disciples.

7:00 p.m.—Bible Study: Jude 1:20-21

1. *Build yourself up.* Spiritual disciplines, meeting with one another, encouraging one another in the faith. See 1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASV). Discipline is necessary for growth in Christ: Bible study, prayer, meditation, fasting, and journaling.
2. *Pray in the Holy Spirit.* Growing and building ourselves up in Christ is not a matter of having time to do it; this is a matter of setting life priorities. See Romans 8:26-27 (NIV). Studying the Scripture and being led by the Holy Spirit in our prayers is a necessity.
3. *Keep yourself in God’s love—show mercy.* See 1 John 4:7-12 (NIV). God is love. To know God is to love—sharing His love in our community and the world.
4. *Wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.* See Matthew 25:1-13 (NIV). We should wait with anticipation, keeping our lamp stands full of oil.

7:20 p.m.—Prayer

7:30 p.m.—Discuss observations and questions on issues for which ample time was not available during last week’s Lesson.

7:50 p.m.—Time management and priority management: Place check marks by sections that you feel are especially important in your life and leadership role.

1. Strive to live a balanced life. Feeling called to your ministry is enormously different from feeling driven by your ministry. Using time-management methods for the sole purpose of adding hours to your workweek misdirects your energies and skills. Filling every day of every week with work gradually eliminates the possibility of a normal lifestyle. A good resource to combat the driven-ness syndrome: Richard A. Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998).

2. God’s work is accomplished in places other than your work, even if professional church work is your vocation. You also do God’s work when you relate to your family. That fits into the category of something “you and you alone can do.” However, that does not mean your primary focus should be leisure. The critical need is balance.

3. Time management is rarely the major challenge. Priority management is the real issue! Every church leadership role is multifaceted, even the highly specialized staff positions such as counseling and music. Accomplishing a ministry role is not like inserting a bolt into a widget on a factory assembly line. A ministry leadership role is like running a hospital in which patient health is the central goal, but the employees must accomplish dozens of tasks to achieve that primary objective.

4. What is your priority hierarchy? One pastor said, “God put me on earth to accomplish several things. Right now, I’m so far behind, I’ll live forever.” Like most other people, clergy and staff must choose, not between good and bad but between good and good. If two wrongs don’t make a right, what do two rights make? For most people, choosing two or more right ways to spend their time creates constant feelings of chaos and stress.

Steven Covey tells a now-famous story about the instructor who was lecturing on time management. He set a wide-mouth jar on the table next to a platter with some fist-size rocks on it. “How many of these rocks do you think we can get in the jar?” he asked.

After the class members offered several guesses, the instructor put a rock in the jar. Then he asked, “Is the jar full?”

Everyone agreed. The jar was full. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of gravel, and started dumping the gravel in the jar. It filled the spaces around the big rocks. The instructor grinned and asked, “Is the jar full?”

“Probably not,” the class said. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of sand, and started dumping the sand into the jar. It filled the little spaces left by the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked, “Is the jar full?”

“No” the class roared. With this he started pouring a pitcher of water into the jar. He got something like a quart of water into that jar. When he asked the class for the point of his picture parable, someone replied, “If we work hard at filling the gaps in our lives, we accomplish more.”

“No,” the instructor said. “Here is the point: Put the big rocks in first. Otherwise, you’ll never get them in.” (Steven Covey, *First Things First* [New York: Simon & Schuster])

5. Refuse violent behavior. Thomas Merton wrote, “There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence which is activism and over-work. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism . . . destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes work fruitful.” (Thomas Merton, *The Violence of Over-Involvement*)

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35 NIV). Is that true? It depends on the causes to which you give yourself. You can give yourself to causes that do not bless you. Giving your life indiscriminately to too many of those things can do violence to your soul.

In each of these ten lessons we find basic principles and scriptures to live by and move us forward. Applying those principles and scriptures is a very personal matter for each of us. So, let's take time to consider personal, practical applications. As an example of how to accomplish this process, here are my answers to the four questions.

1. What are my lifetime career goals?

- A. To function in the one hope of my calling (Ephesians 4)
- B. To make disciples, not just members
- C. To set back sufficient financial resources for our kids and for ministry

2. What are my lifetime family goals?

- A. To raise a family that loves God and loves neighbor
- B. To use daily Bible study and worship to accomplish family and ministry goals
- C. To be a blessing to my family through priority management, encouragement, and involvement

3. What are my lifetime spiritual goals?

- D. To pursue Jesus through a life of piety, holiness, and Godly wisdom
- E. To help raise up a generation of doers, not merely hearers
- F. To make God a priority in everything I do, i.e., cattle, horses, revivals, eating, playing, etc.

4. What would I like my obituary to say?

“He loved the Lord and he loved the people. He raised a godly family and a godly church that impacted not only the community but the world. His children remember him as a blessing, remember him as loving them, and most importantly, remember him teaching them to love God. His wife, Allison, remembers him as a Godly husband and remembers him as someone who loved her as Christ loved the Church” (I still have a lot of room for growth here).

May God's abundant love grow in each one of us every day!

8:10 p.m.—Ask each member of the group to draft his or her personal goals and preferred obituary.

8:30 p.m.—Closing Prayer