

How Churches Survive Without A Pastor



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DEDICATION

To the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ that are seeking to continue until
His coming.

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PROLOGUE

This booklet is designed and makes references to a specific group of churches known as “Landmark Missionary Baptists.” Many of the referred helps mentioned are working with and through the American Baptist Association (ABA), even though each church is independent.

Most of the Bible references are given in NKJV, although this is not exclusively so. However, if the material within is applicable and helpful to your situation, you are free to make use of it, striving to give God all the glory. It is for this purpose, especially to see the Lord’s Churches grow and be a faithful witness, that this is written.

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THE HARD FACTS

Chapter One

First let's start with the good news, then to the hard facts.

#1. We serve a big GOD! Theology always has a practical aspect. What do you believe about God? What do you believe or know that He is able to do? In your life of faith, how has God proven, possibly repeatedly, what He alone can do? Think of those instances and allow them to 'exercise and grow your faith.' Now is a time to remember there is nothing too hard for the Lord – Genesis 18:14.

#2. Jesus is the Head of the Church! You know that, but what does this mean practically. If He is the head, this is His problem. If you are a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, this isn't just on the few that remain. *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."* Ephesians 5:23, 24.

#3. With Jesus being the head, and He sent the Holy Spirit as Comforter – Helper to His churches, we have divine help. Now, just as the wife submits to her husband, everyone in the Lord's church must submit to Christ.

Problem solved. If every member is submitting and doing all the Word would have us do, this will take care of itself. Submission to Christ and the Word will cause us to come into the right relationship with our Lord and in His church. Submission will cause pastors, deacons, teachers and every member become willing to serve one another rather than trying to be the preeminent member.

#4. The basic problem. You or your church did not place winning souls as the priority the Great Commission gives it (Matt. 28:19,20). Because your church has not won new converts, trained them after baptism (discipleship), your numbers have dwindled to a few.

It is time to go into the hedges and highways looking for people. Your church must be in the 'people' business. This means the 'make up' and look of the congregation may change from what you are used to. Do not look on the outward appearance, skin color, ethnic background, or lifestyle predisposition to decide with whom you will share the gospel. In the 70's, I was a long haired, hippie type, driving a Volkswagen van when I attended my first church service. But they saw past my look and knew my need. Christ changes people from the inside and it works its way out.

Perhaps at some point in the life of your church, there were plenty to fill the pews and all members became satisfied. After church service, it becomes something we look forward to, like talking with our friends or fellow members. We forgot to make visitors feel welcome. Added to that, in this electronic, social media age, it is easy to forget to know our neighbors and fail to see our neighborhood or workplace as our mission field. Consequently, there are few in the church today. Every member must recognize we are all ministers/ missionaries where-ever we go, and it is urgent to go now. Not doing so means a certain death for the church.

How would you react if a medical doctor told you "If you don't do this, and take this medication, you will die."? Do you want to die? So, you change your habits. Perhaps, on the other hand, you may reason, "I am ready to meet the Lord, and I love my spouse, kids and grandkids, and don't want them to be hurt, as I will miss them, but to die isn't all that bad. Most of them know the Lord and I pray as others come of age, they'll accept Christ as Savior. So do I really want to change my habits just to keep going?" That's the question for you and your church to answer. To make these, changes, perhaps life altering, it can be hard. But the Lord's Church is nothing to be messed with! You must continue to serve Him as long as He gives you breath.

If you do not change immediately, you might consider looking hard at the situation, and see if the church has just become a social club with the pretense of carrying the gospel. The church may have plenty of money (this too is a sign of inactivity as you are not spending money on missions and outreach) and you feel satisfied. Jesus wrote a letter to a church like this in Revelation chapter 3, the Church at Laodicea. If this sounds harsh, it is, but you are in a “do or die” situation. You must not wait for a pastor; the Lord’s command is to ‘go’ do not tarry.

Some churches may be dying even while you have a pastor. We have seen where a church will keep a pastor, even though the membership is shrinking, because they reason that no one else is available. The instance I am familiar with, the pastor does as little as possible to keep the position, but fails to study for lessons or messages, and does nothing to help the church grow, even when visitors come. One man recently told me that they all knew that it is just a matter of time until they completely die. SAD.

At this point we must also consider churches that “leach” off other churches in order to grow. This is not actual growth, it is just ‘aquarium keeping’ rather than being fishers of men. But cults see many Christians as their next members, their mission field. If your church depends upon growing by getting members from other like churches, that is not “doing” the Great Commission. Sometimes, especially when a new pastor arrives, this becomes the ‘going church’ and people move their membership there until something better or newer comes along. This is not the type of growth necessary for true lasting growth, although it may feel good at the time.

In our churches we have those holding to ‘new light’ doctrines doing the same ‘leaching’ off true churches. They see Landmark Missionary Baptist Churches as the breeding ground to introduce their “super-saint” and “church salvation” heresies. This has been ravishing our churches, especially in the West, and they normally only linger, never flourishing because of the attitudes which spring from this teaching, and it is a matter of time. After some while, they close, and their pastors or young preachers move on to infect other churches. The theology that saints only exist within a church, and those who are saved but outside of the church, will one day be outside of the kingdom, in ‘outer darkness’ is an absolute church killer. It is not only heresy, which Satan is re-introducing, that many years ago led to what eventually became the Catholic Church. This theology leads to a type of ‘pharisaical lifestyle’ that we somehow are the only ones God accepts. This mindset kills churches.

Nothing will excite and keep a church 'alive' as seeing people accept Christ as Savior and being baptized. This will keep a new pastor busy preaching and teaching the basics to these new converts, and he will be encouraged seeing the Lord change lives. The entire church body will be invigorated. But you don't need a pastor to be obedient to the Lord's call and command. Even without a pastor you must be leading people to Christ.

A church that is leading the lost to Christ, seeing them baptized and then taken through a discipleship program (which we will discuss in a later chapter), will not need the "hype" to have the feeling of being alive.

Unfortunately, too many churches have tried to change the style of their worship service, or change the look of the building, or just the background behind the pulpit to have a look of being 'alive' and 'up to date.' What I am about to write needs a little explanation. I greatly sinned, after walking away from a life of faith, but God graciously disciplined me, when He should have killed me. As result of my sin, I did 18 years in prison. The culture shock I encountered on my release was something. But the greatest shock happened at church. Of course, technology had jumped way ahead, but technology is in prison too. But what our churches were doing, allowing and now promoting, I thought I was in a Pentecostal meeting. If you want to be of the Pentecostal faith, fine, just leave and change your name to fit your practice. But that's not the faith that was handed down from the Apostles and Church fathers. Five years later, it is still shocking.

While in prison, I experienced, with professional, renown musicians and singers, in the 'worship band' what is being done in many churches today. These men could put on a magnificent show, but it was just a show. Everyone went away saying how talented those guys were but had no idea what the message preached was. It looked alive but was really dead. Lives were the same and nothing was happening.

Then I went to a new prison yard, and as God answered several men's prayers, we began to see Him bless His Word. In that year, 200 hardened men came to Christ. We began a discipleship program, with a view of making these men "disciplers". The next year over 500 came to Christ. Talk about being alive, seeing lives radically transformed, wonderfully changed.

The prison staff and guards were overwhelmed at the sight. There were too many for the prison chapel, so we had to meet outside. Imagine, between 500 to 700 men sitting peacefully on a prison yard singing praise and listening to God's Word, in the weather extremes. It is God's will this be your story. He is still saving souls and changing lives!

God would have ‘all men to be saved,’ and all means ‘all.’ If that person has life, it is not too late. If you have a theology that God is going to bring the lost He would have saved to you, better change your theology quickly, because that is just not Biblical. The clear command is to ‘GO.’ The old term ‘frozen chosen’ fits too many churches, in their practice at least, and freezing is another form of a horrible death. I heard one pastor say, *“well if they want to hear the truth, they’ll come, but nobody wants the truth anymore.”* That church has four active members, a painful death in a growing area. Besides that not being Biblical, it goes against Christ’s command. Don’t get sucked into that type of Satanic thinking. As long as the Lord gives you breath, you have the job of spreading the “good news.” As long as you have a mind, you can pray for the lost to be saved. Failure is disobedience, simple as that.

Begin today by prayer. Ask the Lord to bring people across your path that are searching. Pray to be bold and ready to give an answer. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the right words as you witness. God answers these prayers. Now get up and go. Where? Where do you need to go? Look around you, be aware spiritually, where-ever it is you are going. Talk to people, be friendly. I used to hear an old preacher say, *“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”* It is true. Just show the love of Jesus, that He spread in your heart. Have you forgotten what Christ did for you? Maybe you need a little time at an old-time altar, or in your quiet place to reflect. Jesus is still saving souls today!

Being in the people business may seem messy work. What about the lady across the street that recently lost her husband, suddenly. Or what about that homosexual couple up the street that feel the discrimination because of their abhorrent lifestyle, these all need Jesus. It’s messy and troubling when we get in the people business, but keep your eyes on Jesus. He is the answer and the only hope. They need to understand His love, which must come through you. We don’t excuse sin, but who of us is perfect? Only Christ, so we must carry His Truth and Word.

I like to carry church cards or, better, church pens. Everyone can use a pen and they usually won’t toss ‘em. It may be that reminder later, that the Holy Spirit will use. Invite them to church. Maybe you think, “what do we have for them?” “What are they coming for?” “We don’t have the programs....” Is the church still meeting? Is the Word of God being preached? That is what they need. They need caring people to care about them enough to show them that Jesus is The Way. Romans 10 asks, *“How shall they hear without a preacher?”* Today you are that preacher!

Get into the habit of talking to people about Christ. Witnessing is a habit that must flow from your conversation. In another chapter we will learn methods for sharing the Gospel. But you must think about it and look for opportunities to 'talk about spiritual matters,' as many like to put it today.

In the next business meeting, or sooner, look to see if the church is giving to missions. God blesses a church that gives to missions. If the budget is giving about 10% of the church's monthly income, prayerfully consider stepping out in faith and increasing that amount. If the church is below that 10%, increase it to that point. In my experience, a church giving to missions is like the individual giving to the Lord's church. God blesses when we step out in this kind of faith.



THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Chapter Two

Let's ask the difficult questions and you must evaluate the situation carefully and prayerfully.

What is the problem?

"We don't have a pastor to lead our church, can we continue and grow spiritually and numerically?"

Does this Church have a will to go on and to grow?

Does this Church need to continue, or is it time to disband?

Are there sister churches of like faith and practice in the area?

If so, would merger be an option?

What if our membership is aged and are not able to do much?

Have you worked too long to be in a place where you control what the church does, and you don't want to give that position up now?

These issues will all be addressed. With fewer men in the ministry, what

would cause a man to want to pastor this church? With that, of course, we believe in the leadership and work of the Holy Spirit bringing God's man, but what would they see when coming in view of a call as pastor? Is there a heart to grow? Is there a field ready for harvest? Does the membership see spiritual and numerical growth to be the job of the pastor and leave it all to him? No man of God, thinking right, would want to step into a church like that. If that is the prevailing thought, you will be a long time looking.

Find a man that will bring and teach the Word of God. The Word is that life-giving force of God. It is the Word of God that convicts sinners and saints alike. It is the Word of God that is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We don't need stories of all our troubles this week. We don't need to hear about the politics and how we should vote. Our churches don't need cute stories about family and animals. We need the sound gospel, brought forth clearly, powerfully and prayerfully. Unfortunately, our churches are weak because of a lack of prayer, that lack of continuity with our Lord. The man you utilize to help or teach, may not be called to the ministry, but, if he is bringing God's Word to the best of his ability, we trust he soon will feel the weight of responsibility for this great task, and put forth a special effort.

Now, as a member, seek to grow. Long to grow spiritually. You may have said, I don't get anything from these preachers today. So often that is true because of laziness in the pulpit. A good message takes many hours of study and prayer, and it seems to me some are unwilling to put in the necessary time. But this does not let us, individually, off the hook to grow in our walk. You seek to grow; it will cause an excitement within you that will spread within the membership. This, in turn, will cause the one bringing the message, and future pastor, to be excited. It is said that revival begins in the heart of one.

A friendly church will also help it grow. We recently visited a church in Florida that was without a pastor, and were overwhelmed with the friendliness. Everyone spoke to us. We have looked for ways to move to that area and help them, it impacted us so much. A church where no one speaks to visitors will also make an impression. 'Won't go back there again.' Often, visitors are looking for some better relationship than the world offers. What better way to lead people to Christ? Be careful not to just talk to 'your dear friend' when at church. If you are going out to lunch with friends from church, be sure to invite the visitor. Perhaps there's enough to have them share lunch at home?

We were members of one church, and would go out on visitation, knocking on doors. God was blessing and visitors began attending. Members asked us, *“Have you been out visiting again?”* and not meaning that in a good way. The impression was strong, they liked the few they had and weren’t interested in seeing the status quo disrupted. Needless to say, that church is in the last stages of dying.

Next, look at the church facility with the eyes of a visitor – what would attract potential members and pastor, what will distract?

Simple fixes may be to bring someone from the outside and ask what they think, honestly, of the facility. Often bulletin boards have pictures of events well over a year old. That says nothing is going on now. Even if the rest of the building is clean, (and it is surprising how dirty many church buildings are – just look at the baseboards for dust build up), look for signs of age on decorations, or too many decorations. Minimalism looks cleaner. What do visitors see? Check the front doors. What condition are they in? Need upkeep with stain, varnish or paint? Is the entry bright and sparkling? Would better lighting be an easy fix? Are there remnants of “dear old Brother So&So” put that up, and we don’t have the heart to take it down. That tells people you are living in the past.

A critical, unbiased eye is needed. We went into a church building that had paintings some dear brother had painted; they were on every wall. No one had the nerve to tell him they are really bad artwork. All through the service all I could do was look at these painting. They are very distracting. Another building where I was asked to preach has some cheap pine boards in place of baseboards with a good amount of dust accumulated. Having been a painter, all I could see was the need for some paint and a few days labor. So, evaluate the building to see what kind, if any ‘memorials’ have been set up. It is a new day and time to lift up Jesus.

Do pews or chairs need to be cleaned? Are there blankets left all over that mark ‘my pew’ or ‘my seat’ and help someone ‘stay warm.’ Think what that tells a visitor. At least find a cabinet and put the ‘throw’ in a place. Better, take it home with you. Encourage everyone to take their Bible home with them, just as we encourage them to bring their Bible. Don’t leave personal Bibles and books on your ‘designated seat.’

Start now at the parking lot. Do the grounds appear neat? Is there designated parking up front for handicapped AND visitors? Often visitors are not certain of starting times and arrive later than members. Give them the preferred parking and keep the back pews open in case they are a young family. I know how ‘old brother and sister Longtime’ have their seats set.

It is time to shake things up and move! To survive, things must change. Pick up a copy of Thomas Rainer's book, "Autopsy of a Dead Church" for more on this topic.

A few scheduled workdays may be in order to throw out the clutter. Church buildings, like our homes tend to attract clutter. Never let it become, when members think or say, "we bought a new sofa, and figured the church could use our old one." Bring your new one, if the church needs a sofa! Never give God your old stuff.

No matter the time of year, it is spring cleaning time. Paint is a relatively inexpensive means to liven things up. Don't get trendy though or you will be re-painting in another two years. Don't go with this fad of painting the walls behind the pulpit black and putting up neon lights, unless you want to become a night club. That sends a very wrong message to visitors. This carries the idea that we must be entertained rather than coming to hear the Word and to worship God. I fear that years of 'children's church,' meant to keep little ones entertained has spawned generations now expecting to be entertained. One of the marks of a dead church is the replacing of true worship with entertainment. That too makes this death just a matter of time.

I pastored a church that had a seat on the stage for the pastor to sit before the preaching. Next to the chair leg was an M&M on the floor. No telling how long it had been there. I saw this my first week as the new pastor. I determined to see how well the building was being cleaned by the member of the church who was paid each month. That M&M was still there when I left 5 years later. Take a good look all around, you may score a 5-year-old M&M!

What condition is the sanctuary in? Money may be a problem right now, but, while you are not paying a pastor, build up two accounts. One for renovation and upkeep. The other to help move the new pastor. We recently visited a sister church that has the same curtains and valance in front of the baptistry that was there in 1977, when I last preached. Again, it's time for updating. Make sure the membership understands, this is necessary.

Are there cracks in the sanctuary walls? Check around windows and doors, that's where they often start. What shape are the windows and sills in? Need cleaning? Now the seating. Is it time for a good steam cleaning and repairs? You will be surprised how a little matching stain wiped over the existing wood will cause mars and scratches to disappear. Be aware of the odor and time required to dry thoroughly. So, a Saturday workday may

not be the time for this application of stain or varnish.

How about the nursery? Look through all toys, furniture and give everything a good cleaning. Be sure no spiders or spider webs have collected. If a young mother visits with her little one, would she feel comfortable here? Set a very high standard in this area.

If you have a larger church building, with few members and attendees, it may be time to meet in the fellowship hall or even a nice classroom. This brings everyone closer, gets them out of their 'assigned seating' and the singing sounds richer. It's less discouraging when the room feels fuller. A big empty building rings of days gone by, when it was filled. This is just the minor shake up some members need.

If you need the funds, why not rent out the auditorium to another congregation and meet in the fellowship hall or other room? This can be done on a year-by-year basis, with the view that you will grow and need that size building once more. True, this will bring along a set of new difficulties, but the added funds should make up for repairs and upkeep, plus help your 'pastor fund.'

In the immediate, here is what every member needs to do: Keep your eyes on the Lord, not on the man. You may have had pastors in times past that helped you grow and blessed your life, and you want someone to fill those shoes. Understand now that no one will be able to replace that dear man of God. One of the hardest things for a new pastor is to follow a man that died while pastor. Now, even those that disliked the former pastor will idolize him. God has made us all different, differing gifts and talents, so seek God's man, not a replacement.

Pastoral change is not the end of the world. You may hate change, I do. But the role of a pastor may now be different as the congregation changes and has needs perhaps the church has not faced before. You and your church must determine if there is a need to continue. If this is the fact, you will get through this. Follow some practical advice.

Be Faithful – Attend all the services possible. – Often others will become discouraged and much less enthused, that promotes more frequent absences. If there was ever a time your church needed you it is now! Perhaps you have felt there is nothing you can do, but that is not the case. Your being there makes a difference. Remain faithful in uncertain times.

The Covid days brought a great increase in FaceBook and YouTube streamed services. That was seen as a 'stop-gap' solution, but some got out

of the habit of actually attending church. Our shut-ins certainly can be more in touch with socially streamed services, but that is far from what God has called us to do and be. If you are able, go to church. You need the brethren, and they need you. Be faithful!

Be a Prayer Warrior – A Person of Prayer. We are all called to pray, but now is a time to be sincerely devoted to prayer! Be sure Satan will do all he is able to incite mischief, discouragement and conflict. Prayer and spiritual vigilance is an immediate need you should fill.

Continue to Contribute Financially – The bills are still coming in with new expenses on the soon horizon. Often another casualty when a pastor leaves, others think there is less need to support the church. There will be new expenses bringing a new pastor and perhaps family onto the field.

Even if a pastor is expected to work an outside job, the church needs to help get him situated to enable him to do the work. But make it your prayer and aim to help the church support the pastor in a full-time position. This too will help the church grow spiritually and numerically.

Be Extra Patient and Understanding – Many members will be feeling the loss and discouraged. The stress and tensions of missing leadership may promote an atmosphere for misunderstanding. All of sudden things are not running smoothly, and just don't feel right. Now is the time to help others recognize why this is. You set the example of jumping in to make up the shortfalls.

Volunteer – This goes with the last point, perhaps change will be good for the church. However, others may simply leave the church or give up positions of responsibility. Do we need to say, it is a very poor time to leave a church? A time like this makes it a critical time to step up and each member do more. Now is the time to check on one-another. A pastor is a shepherd, and people love and need to be cared for. Now, just a call, visit or text to let others know they are loved and thought of.

Help Keep the Unity – voices of discouragement and discontent may be heard or felt throughout the membership. This is your chance to influence, support the Lord's Work. Your influence and encouragement are so needed to help promote peace and unity among the members. Also, we should always be ready to "talk up" the church among friends and relatives, but now it is especially necessary.

With this, there may be other leaders, such as deacons and preachers who will help bring unity and stability. If these do not have the recognized voice and credibility among the membership, and often visiting preachers do not know the personalities and some 'sensitivities,' they may make

matters harder than should be. We are called in Scripture to be peacemakers, which takes love and tact. Be a part of the solution not the problem, (as they say).

Avoid Church Politics – again hinging on the above. Unfortunately, some see this as a chance to control, influence, struggle for position. Power struggles do happen in the Lord’s churches, though Jesus taught us to be servants. Power struggles have killed churches. So, do not contend with those, support the authority within the church, pray for them. Allow God to work. If this is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, He can and will direct. He has an amazing way of bringing people together through the power of the Word. Our call is to humble ourselves, love the brethren and serve.

We Are Not Promised Tomorrow – don’t wait until a new pastor comes to serve the Lord. In the interim of a pastor’s departing and finding a new pastor (and this has been in several cases lately becoming a matter of years), we need to keep serving the Lord. Don’t let visitation or another vital ministry become stagnant or suspended. If the men meet regularly, keep meeting. You get the idea. Our Lord has a vital purpose for every service and blesses His Word as it is proclaimed. If your church no longer has this purpose, it is time to close the doors to go where the Great Commission can be fulfilled. It is important for the entire congregation to stay faithful and engaged. Help with every guest speaker, or interim pastor, to the best of your ability.

Do Your Part – Don’t Panic and Be at Peace. If you do your part, we know our Great Shepherd is doing His. Help others remain calm and steadfast in the faith. Help watch for those who once attended and may be dropping off. Perhaps you can be used to encourage them to keep their eyes on Jesus.



WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?

Chapter 3

Remember what the Lord said to Moses when He was sending him to Pharaoh? What is in your hand? Now, look around to see what resources are available to the church right now. Remember what Jesus did with the loaves and fish? He is the same Lord today, though He isn't working such miracles today, He is still working, and His power makes insignificant items useful and powerful. He took twelve ordinary men and changed the world. He is still changing lives and hearts.

Who is in the membership that can teach well? Will they stimulate spiritual growth and encourage the membership? This may be a time someone is willing to learn and apply themselves to become a better teacher of God's Word. Those entrusted to this position must understand the tremendous blessing and responsibilities this carries and not take it lightly.

Does the church have faithful men or a deacon that can provide leadership and know what to watch for? Here's what Mike Raines writes

in his book “Why Baptist Churches Die,” p.12

“How do we recognize those who have yielded to the Holy Spirit? I have boiled the characteristics down to just a few. I’m sure there are more that I have missed. Here they are:

1. They love to pray.
2. They rarely miss church services.
3. They make the hard decisions concerning family and friends.
4. They try to win the lost.
5. They are not given to gossip.
6. They are tender-hearted.
7. They give without reservation.
8. They pour over their Bible and are pre-disposed to obey what Christ commands.
9. They are slow to offend, but quick to defend.
10. They get the Big Picture.”

Brother Raines hits it directly. Looking to these characteristics will help promote growth. He goes on later in this chapter to say: “If we reject the man God sent to lead us, then we are forced to face the consequences of such a decision. Let’s face it, our churches have wrestled with pastoral leadership. We have perverted the doctrine of church authority to mean what the Bible does not teach. Since the carnal is naturally suspicious, he will scrutinize every man who stands in the pulpit. Then he feels somehow qualified to offer his criticism freely. Diotrephes was such a man. He was defined by his ambition. He desired to have the preeminence among the brethren. He wanted control and to be in full control. I have found at least one Diotrephes in every church I have ever pastored.”((p14)).

Let’s now consider some *harmful habits* we easily fall into from George Barna’s book “The Habits of Highly Effective Churches”:

1. Printing the Bible verses used in the sermon, in the service bulletin or projecting them on a large screen.
This has encouraged many people to stop carrying their Bible to church and ultimately from using them through the week.
2. Conducting an annual Easter and/or Christmas event.
These events begin with great intentions but fizzle after a few years. These activities attract few of the outsiders they were originally intended to attract.

3. Maintaining a rigid order of service in the weekend event.
There is value to stability and consistency, but the predictability of the service has created disenchantment among many, especially Baby Busters, both because it is too routine and because the message communicated is one of resistance to change in a world defined by change.
4. Expecting the pastor's (wife) to be the catchall.
Thousands of churches continue to pay one (below average) salary, ostensibly for the pastor, but expect output from two full-time employees (the pastor and his wife). This not only creates emotional and financial stress for the pastor's family but facilitates unrealistic productivity expectations by the congregation.
5. Requiring the pastor to be the chief fund-raiser for the church.
This undermines the trust people have in their pastor. The congregation never knows why the pastor is saying or doing something: Is it because it needs to be said or because it will facilitate generous giving?
6. Developing an information-laden website.
Currently more than 98 percent of the church websites we have examined are designed to provide a static information to people. The individuals most likely to use a church site and to find it useful, however, are those under 30, and they are looking for interactive possibilities, not information.
7. Assuming that community is fostered in a handshake.
Setting aside a minute in the weekend service to allow people to shake the hands of those seated nearby is not by itself a bad thing. It is when the church's leaders assume, however, that the exercise has anything to do with building community, establishing interpersonal intimacy or creating a friendly atmosphere that the practice becomes an unhealthy habit.
8. Maintaining church classes or programs because of internal politics or history.
Often congregation do not have sufficient interest in a class or program to support its retention or perhaps there is not sufficient expertise available to conduct the activity with excellence. In response to various types of pressure, though, most churches have one or more programs that continue in spite of ample evidence that the program is innocuous at best and harmful at worst.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Many of our churches now use social media for teaching and preaching. The cost is minimal to bring this into your church in order to supplement teaching or even preaching. Instead of not meeting today because we don't have a preacher, still meet, pray, sing. Then tune into one of our sister churches preaching. It's not the best, but it will keep the church going.

My hope is to provide, with this book, free Bible study lessons on video/social media, you can utilize however you need. These lessons can be downloaded to your computer and shared in a classroom or sanctuary. There are so many of our brethren making this sort of material available today, you have a wide selection. Let me suggest that you check and are sure of the soundness of the material and preacher first.

Here's a resource available at no cost to you and your church: You have permission granted here to use these sermons and lessons. A new website has many of these resources in one place. It is 'Pastorlesschurches.org'. Also, go to "Schoolofministry.xyz". You will find videos on YouTube of various studies and recorded sermons. You will find audio recordings on 'Schoolofministryresources.org' a Bible podcast. We try to add more videos each week. It may not be the option you would prefer, but it will help keep the doors open and the church meeting.

We must always be like those in Berea, they studied the Scriptures to be sure the things taught are in line with the Word of God. It is unfortunate that many young preachers are being thrust upon churches without the necessary background and training, thus I hear a lot of 'untruths' being proclaimed. More and more I am convinced that it's not that they are heretical, just unlearned, preaching their own ideas rather than Scripture truth. It is my personal goal to examine the Word and the context and preach that only. Our own ideas or theories must be well labeled just that, hopefully causing others to grow and study. This is also the reason you want a pastor that will devote himself to the study of The Word and prayer.



PREPARE TO GROW

Chapter 4

Start now with training material, plan to grow. Two ways your church can prepare are:

1 – Get into the habit of witnessing. Witnessing is a habit, and we need to be reminded, or we will slip into daily routine and forget to speak to people about spiritual things.

2 – Begin to train disciplers’ now. Settle on a curriculum for discipleship and learn how to use it. Have men (or a man) and women (or a woman) prepared to disciple a new convert. The Bogard press has several reliable discipleship books available. Also contact the *Macedonian Mission Service* in Kentucky. They sent us hundreds of booklets we used for discipleship in the prison. I always liked Bro. Ray Brooks book on “*Baptist Doctrine*,” it is a workbook with fill in answers. These are available through the Bogard press.

Ask pastors in your area what they recommend. I also have a book that is designed to be used in home Bible study of four basic lessons, which concludes with salvation. The makeup is to lead those interested to a saving

knowledge of Jesus Christ through four home Bible studies. You can download this and customize it as you please, then print it off (Find it at: 'Pastorlesschurches.com'- First Steps booklet). Otherwise, we make this available for free, just remember that I print and mail at my expense, so any love offering helps. But I will customize the back with your church name and address, photo if appropriate, and any contact information you like. Our brethren have written and produced several excellent books I hope you will prayerfully consider those for use as well.

Get into the habit of witnessing. How many ways have we already said it – “It is a habit.” It is easy to allow the day-by-day routine to take over and lose the thought of telling others about Jesus. Often, young converts, with their zeal and newfound relationship with Christ, they can't help but share it. Were you that way too? We could examine why we lose this zeal, but there are multiple reasons. So today, determine to talk to someone about Christ. Look for opportunities.

Now consider possible deterrents to witnessing. They might include fear; shyness; perhaps past rejection or even perceived rejection. It may be our inability to explain or articulate our own personal testimony. Sometimes a lack of knowing what Scriptures to use or fear of humiliation. It boils down to failing to trust in the Lord, but we must learn to be bold as Ephesians 6:19 teaches. Our goal: *“Let your light so shine before men”* (Matt. 5:16)

Begin the habit of witnessing a step at a time. Here are a few basics to help sharpen skills to overcome those fears. It has been my experience that the most effective witnessing efforts come when there has been a relationship and some level of trust built. This way you personally tailor your approach and can understand what may be keeping that person from accepting Christ. However, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus and the Woman at the well so effectively and without any prior relationship. Of course, He is God in the flesh, but He did leave these as an example for us to study and follow.

Often people do not come to Christ because they just don't think of God; some may have a hatred of God, blaming any bad thing of life on Him; or they may be afraid of Him. A short conversation may bring this out. In a short time, we'll be addressing these.

How to Share the Gospel:

There have been many methods used to lead someone to Christ. Here we share two examples, but there are others. Find and USE that means for sharing the Word that is comfortable to you. USE is the keyword. Remember, it is the Word that has power for new life, not our imagination or wisdom. You won't argue or talk someone into spiritual re-birth. It takes the Holy Spirit to give life. Therefore, use the Word, although you don't have to give the address, you will need to memorize a few Scriptures.

PREPARE YOUR TESTIMONY:

Begin today – Write a one-page testimony with this outline:

Who I Was. This should be a short paragraph or so that deals with the time before you were saved. You were a sinner, and we don't want to appear to glorify our sin, or make it sound as if we miss that life.

What Christ Did. Tell how you came to Christ. What were the circumstances and especially if you remember any of The Word spoken or preached that impacted you. This should be the largest portion of your testimony.

Who I Am Today. Explain how new life in Christ has wonderfully changed you and what has occurred in becoming a 'new creation' in Christ. Conclude with the offer that Jesus gives, is still available to everyone.

With this, memorize a few key verses that will relate the gospel and fit your testimony. Below are several you may consider. It cannot be over-emphasized: study the Word, seek to live the Christian life, and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in and through you, then look for opportunities to share your testimony and the gospel.

Methods of Evangelism:

Evangelism Explosion by Dr. James Kennedy

This is the method I was taught in seminary, and it is very effective. The book is still available and is a great resource, if only for answering objections to the gospel. This brief outline of the presentation of the gospel is from pages 16, 17 of "Evangelism Explosion."

Begin with talking about their secular life. What they enjoy, where they work, etc.

Ask about their church background. Do they have a church background and learn their basic belief system.

Next, talk about your church.

Now, **two diagnostic questions** –

Question #1 – Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?

Question #2 – Suppose that you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say?

(From their answers you can understand what their basic beliefs are and how you can go forward. Most times when I have used this, it leads right into my personal testimony, that I thought it was my good works that would get me into heaven. From here you may want to say something like:

“Well, that’s interesting. Those things are very commendable. When you answered the first question, I thought I had some really good news for you. After hearing your answer to the second question, I know that I do. In fact, I would go so far as to say that in the next sixty seconds you are going to hear the greatest good news that you have ever heard in your whole life! That’s quite a statement, isn’t it?). Now go into the Gospel...

A. Grace

1. **Heaven is a free gift** - Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. **It is not earned or deserved** –

B. Man

1. **Is a sinner** – (None of us are good enough, Jesus says we would have to be perfect) Matthew 5:48

“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Romans 3:23 – *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*

2. **Cannot save himself** – Ephesians 2:8,9

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

C. God

1. **Is merciful** – therefore does not want to punish us.

2. **Is just** – therefore must punish sin. – Exodus 34:7b

God will – *“...by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children...”*

D. Jesus Christ

1. **Who He is** – the infinite God-man – John 1:1, 14
“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”
2. **What He did** – paid for our sins and purchased heaven for us, which He offers as a free gift.
 Use Scriptures like: Isaiah 53:6 – *“All we like sheep have gone astray;
 We have turned, every one, to his own way;
 And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*
 And: Isaiah 53:4,5a – *“Surely He has borne our griefs, And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.
 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
 He was bruised for our iniquities;”*
 Also: Isaiah 53:10a – *“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;
 He has put Him to grief.
 When You make His soul an offering for sin,”*
 One more: Romans 6:23b – *“the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

E. Faith

1. **What it is not** – mere intellectual assent – Ephesians 2:8
“For by grace you have been saved through faith” (nor is it temporal faith).
2. **What it is** – trusting Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Commitment:

The qualifying question: “Does that make sense to you?”

The commitment question: “Do you want to receive this gift of eternal life that Christ left heaven and died on a cross to give you?”

Then I lead in prayer, I pray first and “introduce the person to the Lord,” (as such), then ask them to pray aloud, to be sure they understand. You can assure them there is no formula to pray, simply ask the Lord for His free gift of salvation: Romans 10:9,10 –

“...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is

made unto salvation.”

I have often used what is commonly called “The Roman Road.” The important thing to remember is that it is the Word of God that has power, it is not in our words, or wisdom to lead men to Christ. Therefore, you must use the Word!

The Roman Road – Bible verses from the Book of Romans. This was used when I went to the altar at an invitation, which led me to Christ. It has been used countless times very successfully. It is easy to mark in your Bible, then just remembering where to begin, write the ‘chain’ or ‘link’ of passages in the margin, directing you where to read next.

Begin with:

Romans 3:23 (Our Need) *“For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”*

Romans 6:23 (Sin’s Penalty) *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

(I like to add here – Ephesians 2:8,9, although this is not in Romans), (Not of Works) *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

Romans 5:8 (God’s Provision) *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Romans 10: 9 (Your Response) *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

Adapt this so it is easy for you to follow. Mark your Bible so you can easily flow from one Scripture to the next. Then practice and be familiar with these so your sharing comes naturally.



Chapter 5
**YOU ARE IN THE PEOPLE
BUSINESS!**

Christ came to save sinners – regular people just like us. He came for the rich and poor and everyone in between. He is the Savior of ALL men. We must settle upon this truth, there is salvation in no other. There are not two ways, four or ten ways of salvation. It is in Jesus Christ alone. We believe that, therefore need to practice it. I recently heard one of our pastors say: “If Governor (name) came in here, I’d tell him to leave!” How sad to say it, and sadder yet to think it, for that man needs Jesus just as everyone else. Don’t let looks, political preferences, or status come into play when telling people about Jesus.

In our evangelism class at CMBI, required reading was a book on Communism. Before you stop reading, I believe you will see the purpose. The book was written by the head of the Communist party in England (many

years ago) and contained the story of a man. The description still resonates in my mind; - The bureau head was speaking at a rally on Marxism, and said, *“If any man, woman or child will come and dedicate himself to our cause, I will make them a leader of men.”* After the rally, only one man came. He had a twisted spine, causing him to hunch and lurch as he walked. One eye was cast awkwardly, and his face was contorted due to some illness of long ago. He was hard to look at. He said, with stuttering voice, *“I I I w-w-want t-to b-be a ah lea-lead-leader of m-m-men.”* The offer had been given, but how could this man ever become a leader of men? The speaker explained that the man must dedicate himself to learning every principle of Marxism, work a job and donate 80% of his earnings back to the Communist Party. Then you must dedicate all your free time to training and working for the Party. Thinking there was no way this wretch of a man would accept such, but Monday morning there he was at the office.

The days and weeks went by and daily this man kept up. The Party leader found him to be able to handle small jobs with determination and vigor. Eventually he would get the job done. He gave his time and money like no other. Small jobs grew into bigger. His walk seemed to change, becoming more sure footed. His speech improved, though he still had a speech impediment. He could readily explain and argue the virtues of Marxism. He rose through the ranks. Eventually becoming the head of propaganda for Communism in England and Europe. He had become a leader of men. The promise was fulfilled.

How much more then should we do for Christ, Who has given us eternal life, not just a political motive for the world, but a new citizenship! Our eyesight is too small, too narrow. Jesus took ordinary men and women, and they changed the world. If Communism can promise to make people leaders of men, how much greater can Christ, Who makes us a new creation do if we but dedicate ourselves and walk by faith? How big is your God?

Theology is always practical. What you truly believe about God will exhibit itself in your life. Some of us are ‘practical Calvinist’s’, though we would never admit to believing this form of predestination. But on the practical side, we wait for God to bring people to church. We don’t witness to others unless put into a position where confronted. Then walk away, so proud of what ‘we did’ never considering how the Holy Spirit may be working.

If we don’t really believe in a place called ‘hell’ or that there’s only one way to heaven, why bother someone else? Theology, what you believe, always has its life application.

Perhaps we don't witness because our life is just like everyone else'. There is nothing different about us, and we surely don't want to stand out, let alone talk to someone about Christ. Maybe we don't swear or cheat like others, or don't hit the bars with them after work, but we still tell the same jokes, and laugh along, watch the same shows or movies. After all, who wants to be 'that' different? They might think you are a "Jesus freak" or something.

But our Lord is calling us to a greater, higher standard. It's not ok just to be some better than the world. The world is not our standard, Jesus is. Plus, this world is sinking, always getting worse. If our standard is just to be better than the world, and it's sinking, where are we? We are called to the standard of the "elect." The New Testament talks about our election in Christ and that deals with our lifestyle. You were not chosen before this world to become a Christian, but chosen to live for Christ, unlike this world. Can you dedicate yourself, even to the point this man in the story did for Communism? For we have so much greater reasons.

Being in the People Business:

I am convinced that people are looking today, as much as ever for concrete answers in life. With a wavering society and this sense of what is right – if it's right for you alone – and nothing is truly wrong, but it may be wrong for me. That's garbage and our youth are being sold this as truth. That's why they are longing for something more substantial and lasting. We have that truth, Jesus Is The Truth, The Way, and The Life.

Today we must show that living for Christ is far superior. This world wants to see truth. They want to see something different, not the watered-down Christianity that compromises with the world. Today you must live differently, and talk differently than the world, let them know where your hope lies. The world wants to see something that only God can do. But our Lord wants to exhibit that in you! Are you willing? Are you ready?

You must settle two questions. First, 'Do you believe that people are dying and going to a devil's hell if they do not accept Jesus Christ as Savior?' Second, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' How you answer these will show everything. If we believe the lost truly go to hell without Christ, and that nothing is impossible for God, the result: Our motivation to go and empowerment as we go.

Our old Baptist Forefather – Tertullian asked the question to those Christian artisans of his day, "Must you live?" Their livelihood came by making idols and various idol paraphernalia, and argued that, after all, they

had to make a living. They were quick to point out that they did not believe in these items and did not worship them. And, also, someone else will make them even if we don't. To which Tertullian pointedly asked, "*Must you live?*" You have only to be faithful!

A new heresy cropping its ugly head within our churches, really isn't new. We briefly touched on this earlier. It's often referred to as "new lightism," but now is morphing into other forms. Some men that hold to this new style "new lightism" will proudly tell you they are not 'New Lighters.' When they say this, they are referring to the fact they don't hold that a saved child of God must be baptized before he or she receives the Holy Spirit. But now, the new form teaches, these saved people are immediately in sin until they submit to scriptural baptism. If they never receive scriptural baptism, and some often add, they must continue and be faithful in a New Testament church, without this, they will be outside the New Jerusalem, outside of the Kingdom of God, in 'outer darkness.'

What is true and we should all hold to, is being scripturally baptized after salvation, and uniting and serving through one of the Lord's true churches, this is important, but this outer darkness is added. This new theology kills churches because it allows a new type of 'pharisee-ism' to grow. This theology aligns itself with an inner belief that we are better than other Christians, superior in our truth and 'higher knowledge.' Many that hold this teaching will also say that saints are only found within a true New Testament Church. Watch out when you hear this. Know and be assured that once a person accepts Christ, they are 'set aside' or have now become a 'saint.' Jesus explained in the parable of the wheat and tares that we are either a 'Hious' son of the kingdom, or a 'Hious' son of the wicked one. This is the same old lie Satan used years ago which caused the Catholic Church to be spawned. So beware, and do not be afraid to ask questions of any man coming in view as pastor. Don't just take someone because there seems to be no one else available.

The bottom line to helping a small church without a pastor is you! Revival does not come from a pastor. It does not come with a program. It will not come from this or any other book. True revival comes when we have dedicated ourselves (no matter if anyone else does) to carry out the Great Commission.

Be in the people business. Then they won't be such pests and a bother, they become a ministry. If you are a member of one of the Lord's true New

Testament Churches, you are a minister. It does not matter how old or young you are. Christ is today calling you to His work, His purpose, and eternal purpose. Wouldn't it be wonderful to enter His Kingdom and hear "well done my good and faithful servant."? Wouldn't it be wonderful to see others in heaven that you had a small part in leading to Christ? You may plant the seed, another may water, and God gives the increase! When it's all done, we will all say, "To God be the Glory!"



Chapter Six
**FIGHT THE
DISCOURAGEMENT**

Discouragement will or perhaps has come. Your situation may differ from others of my experience, but all that I have dealt with must face true discouraging circumstances. A young preacher told me the other day that he receives calls from churches asking him to come and pastor. The problem, they have never met one another. Why does this happen? Discouragement! You can get preachers to fill in but they don't want to pastor. Perhaps you think, "how long can we go on like this?" You are certainly not alone. In this day, churches may go years without finding a suitable pastor. For this reason, many churches put up with sub-par preaching and lazy pastors. Some churches are returning to the old practice of 'circuit riding preachers.' They set certain preachers to come every other week, or at the first Sunday, something along those lines. That could be a 'stop-gap' solution for the

short term. Admittedly, this truly is a depressing time. So how do we fight getting so depressed?

The best way to fight discouragement and depression is to keep your eyes on Jesus. But how do we do that when we are in the middle of all the problems? Understand that discouragement is one of Satan's most effective weapons against the Child of God.

What is 'discouragement'? It may be defined: "To deprive of confidence, hope, or spirit; dishearten; daunt." At the base of every form of discouragement is a lie from Satan (ultimately – though not always realized). Fear, unbelief, bitterness, self-pity, or condemnation are all based on Satan's lies. Now is the time for the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16). When we lose sight of God's ways or our resources in Christ, we remove the spiritual protection which Christ provided for us in the armor of God.

There are levels of discouragement that lead to depression.

1. Mild – Problems are perceived as minor or the pressures that affect our emotions.
2. Strong – Major problems and pressures that affect our spirit, to the point that others notice. Proverbs has much to say about a broken spirit. It is only the Lord that can restore us.
3. Disabling (depression) – When problems and pressures overwhelm us and drain us of spiritual, mental, emotional and even physical strength. This feels like your heart melts within you, you have no desire, no energy, and no ability to go on.

There are benefits of discouragement!

1. It should drive us closer to the Lord God. It reminds us of our need for God.
 - A. He might be working to destroy our delight in temporal, empty things. Philippians 3:7-11
 - B. He may be destroying our confidence in our or others human efforts. Romans 7:22-24
 - C. He helps us see it is through our weakness that His strength is brought forward and recognized by others. 2 Cor. 12:9-10

Now Is The Time – take steps to conquer discouragement. How is this done?

Satan will seek to condemn and destroy you and your walk of faith. When we fail, or sin, there is forgiveness with the Lord when we repent and confess our sin. 1 John 1:8-9. The Lord forgives and forgets, as we might say. Condemnation is from Satan's emissaries, that will keep bringing it up in order to hinder us.

Put on the Whole Armor of God. Now is a good time to do a study on the armor of God. Pick up the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the evil one. It helps me to quote God's Word, which is The Truth, to overcome Satanic lies.

David often became discouraged. He learned to encourage his own heart in the Lord. Before that, Johnathan helped encourage David in the Lord (1 Samuel 23). Perhaps you have a precious saint friend that will also help encourage you through God's Word until you can do so on your own. Our Lord warns us not to give up in Galatians 6:9, "*...we shall reap, if we faint not.*" Meditate on God's Word each night when you go to bed. Take control of your thoughts, bring every thought into captivity Scripture says, "*to the obedience of Christ Jesus.*" In other words, don't let your mind wonder onto things which discourage, for these things discourage the spirit. Don't allow your mind to tell you what is true and right, allow God's Word to form your mind and give you a "Biblical mindset," Romans 12:1,2.

This also will help. Establish a place to be alone with the Lord. We need to free ourselves of the pressures of the world. Your smartphone is designed to grab your attention with beeps, buzzing and vibrations, periodically throughout the day. Social media may become addictive. In our day, we need more than ever to put everything away and open the Bible, in book form. I have loads of Bibles on my phone and iPad, along with assorted helps, they are good. But I find the other phone apps distract my attention. So, pick up 'The Book' not in electronic form. You may need an old-time altar, like 'Bethel' of Genesis.

Next, begin to focus on God and His reputation. If our reputation suffers, it means that our concerns are for our program or that somehow, we are in charge. If we are assured that what we are doing is God's direct will, then it is His reputation on the line. He is ALWAYS faithful to His direction and will. We can be confident and expect Him to show Himself strong on our behalf. Therefore, this becomes a good time to evaluate if we are doing God's work in God's way.

Now, focus who you are in Christ. When we understand our position in Christ, we are moved out of the realm of who we are and what we can do and begin to see what Christ has done and will do. There are so many

names within the New Testament of who you are in Christ, there is not room to name all them here, but they are easily found. Begin to quote those Scriptures and meditate – think of these things. Start by recognizing your new citizenship. One that I love to meditate upon is written by inspiration at Paul’s hand, *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,”* Philippians 3:10.

Overcome the pride of thinking you have it all handled, or at least want to make others think you do. Pride leads us to a fall, always. You can be open about your discouragement, disappointments and so on, and others can join you in prayer.

There may be another problem facing the church. It’s all about who is in charge. We all think we have the right answers and things should be done this way or that way. But what does Scripture say? If you are in a position where you have ‘the say-so,’ are you willing to give that up? That may be one major hurdle the church has to overcome, and again, pride is at the root. Keep in mind, this is The Lord’s Church. He is the Head. We are only humble servants. Jesus gave us the example, while in His flesh, submitted saying, *“not my will, but Thy will be done.”* It is time to get self out of the way. Perhaps this has been your family church, now others, outside the family,’ begin to go in a new direction. If this direction is in accord with Scripture, is that wrong? But if we feel we are losing control, or this isn’t the way Grandma did it, we must consider our motives. Never allow “manipulation” or manipulative actions to enter the Lord’s church, although I have too often seen just that. This is the Lord’s church, not ours.

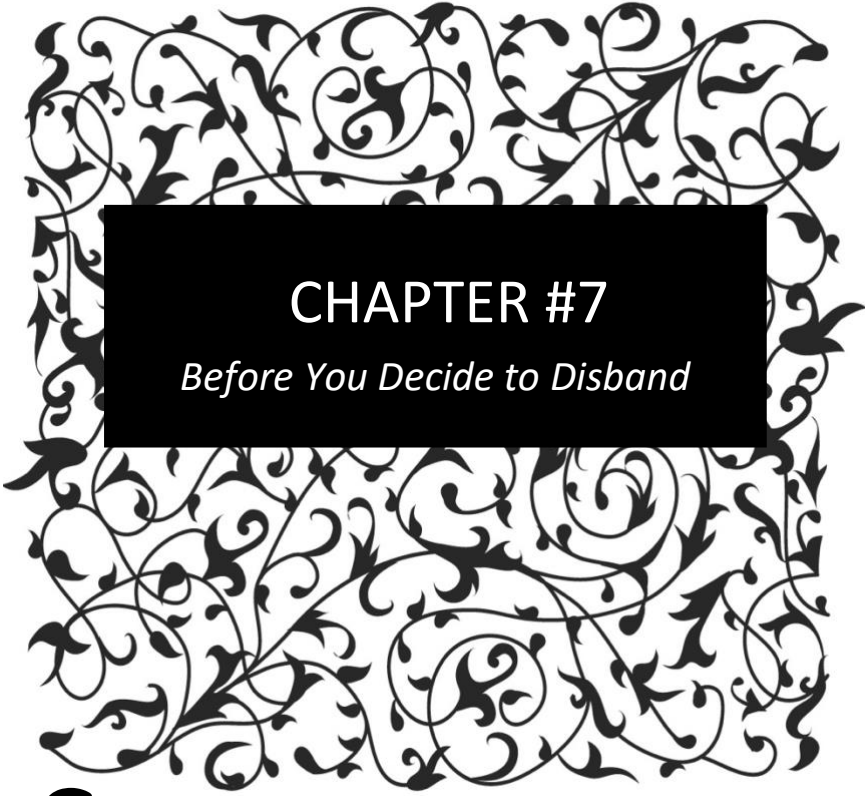
Now, begin to recall God’s blessing and thank Him for all He has done. The old song, “Count Your Blessings” is just one that reminds us of the Biblical truth of 1 Thessalonians 5:18. *“Speaking to yourself in songs, hymns and spiritual songs.”* When we audibly praise (lift up Jesus) it encourages our spirits and we find help to overcome Satan’s devices.

Remember finally, that God can, and often does use our problems, pressures, discouragements for His good. Romans 8:28-29 is another good verse to memorize and quote to yourself. The book of James helps us understand that God uses these to mold us into more mature Christians. Often He allows problems, various situations, and trials to build us up, preparing us for eternity.

Remember, the original Church in Jerusalem, established by Jesus Himself is no longer in existence. All the churches of the New Testament have gone out of existence. There are various reasons, such as;

persecution, heresy, becoming lukewarm and cold spiritually being among them. However, Christ promised in His Word that His true church would never go out of existence and the gates of hell will not prevail. But do not let this be an excuse for not giving our all to not allow this to take place.

In all this, consider that God is grooming us for a home He has prepared. This world is temporary, and all these troubles will one day, (soon) be forgotten and come to nothing. We ought to be heavenly minded because we are just pilgrims on our way to a better land!



CHAPTER #7

Before You Decide to Disband

Still see no way out but to disband the church? Try these things first:

- #1.** Call the nearest seminary in our work. Beg for a student to come and assist. They may also know of faculty, or preachers not pastoring that can come and help for a short term. Some of our schools give the students credit for the experience toward their degree goal by doing so.
- #2.** Go to your local and state association meetings and stress the dire need, ask for help. Let the brethren know the church is near disbanding and needs help. This is an area that sometimes we neglect, thinking we don't need our associated work, but we do. Perhaps God is working on some church or individual's heart to come to your aid.
- #3.** Call faithful men that you or your church have confidence in, in your area for advice and guidance.
- #4.** Is there a church of like faith and practice close and a merger could be possible? We mentioned this earlier and will give more practical advice on

ways to accomplish this later in this chapter.

#5. Before the church votes to disband, read your by-laws. When the church organized, this was probably considered. If the church owns property, building(s) any other real property, it must be disposed of according to the by-laws. My experience has shown this too often does not take place, which leaves the remaining individuals liable to lawsuits and possible court action. Do everything above board, without suspicion, and that no individual profits from that which is the Lord's. Hopefully everyone left has enough fear of God and knows we do not take what is His.

It has been said, in this situation, "Well I supported the church so long, it's time I get paid back." Once we give it, it belongs to the Lord and we no longer have any right to that. Settle that question now. No member or individual should profit from the sale of the Lord's property.

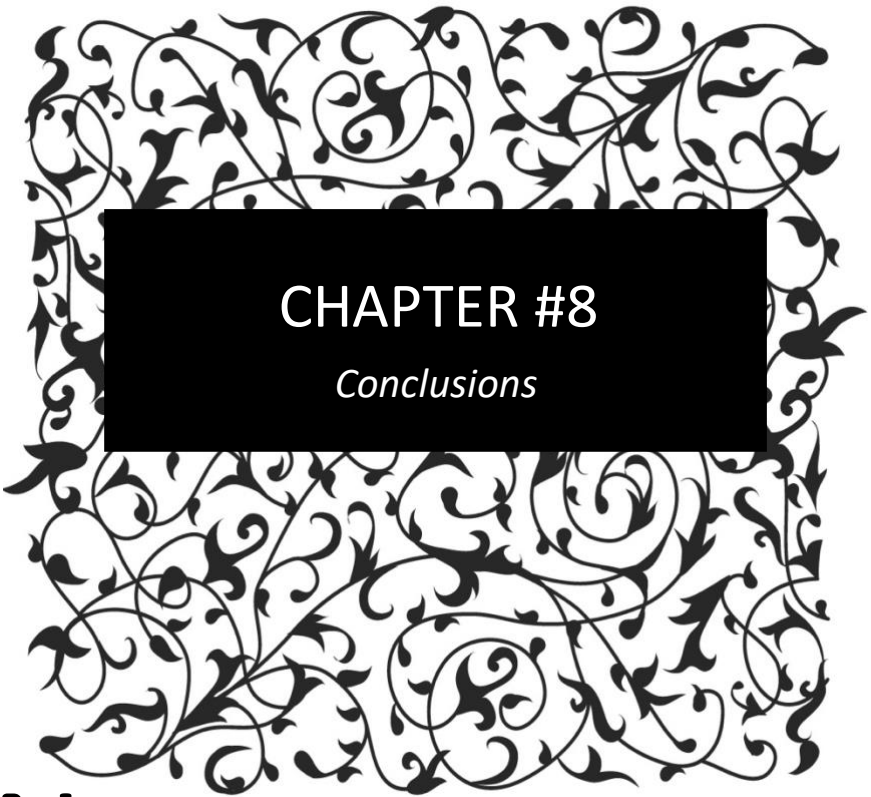
What if the by-laws state the money should be given to an institution that no longer exists?

One example I recently became familiar with, where this California Church's by-laws stated, if the church disbands, the money should go to the California Missionary Baptist Institute & Seminary -CMBI. CMBI had closed prior to the church disbanding. The remaining members voted to change the by-laws to give any money from the sale of the church building to the California Mission Development – at the time of this writing, sponsored by the Church in Visalia.

Because they made known the dire situation, two sister churches came alongside this church to assist, in first trying to rebuild the church or if that was not viable, to close the church as the by-laws stated.

Another church which closed not long ago, returned money they received from CMD (California Mission Development) as well as to sister churches that had sent support for their pastor, who was suffering a disease leading to his death. All property and money were disposed according to the by-laws and without anything that could be questionable. It was a final tribute of their faith and good reputation.

Church Merger Information: Perhaps it could work for two (or more) churches to merge. I found much practical advice online regarding legal necessities that must be considered. Also, think about selling or renting out both buildings, and buying or renting a new one. This will give a whole new "feel" and bring excitement. Also, this avoids a feeling of "well, you all have just joined our church, and that's not how we did things..." so you can imagine. Two churches merging becomes a "new body" and can bring truly invigorating efforts within that body.



CHAPTER #8

Conclusions

Now what the church, as a whole, decides is critical. Perhaps you have looked at, what I call “church killers.” When a church allows one man, or a family to make all the decisions, that’s a mark of slow death. If church business is conducted around someone’s dinner table, that’s a bad sign; watch out. The Lord’s churches have not operated in that manner. This is a Biblical matter of ‘church polity.’ If you see nothing else, learn this, it takes everyone to go forward. One man or one family cannot ‘push’ a church into decisions or actions. If this is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is working in ways beyond our comprehension.

Pastor Mike Raines concludes his book so well that I believe it needs repeating: “SELFLESSNESS BRINGS US TO THE SPIRITUAL

GROWTH OF OUR BRETHREN IN THE CHURCH. Let's not give up hope. Churches that seem destined to die can surely determine to live. Paul's personal resolve in 1 Corinthians 8:13 brings light to the possibilities and potential in the church. Paul says he will give up his rights as long as needed ("while the world standeth") if it means the spiritual growth and benefit of any of his brethren. He wanted to create an atmosphere in his own life wherein his brethren might grow to Christ their lives.

The practice of selfless love is the key in the life and growth of the New Testament church. Jesus made a powerful observation in John 13:35: *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

Note the success of this witness – all men will know of our identity with Christ. Witnessing, which is lethargic at best in a selfish church, will be obvious in a selfless church. There will be no doubt to whom we belong, and the world will know. Note the source of this witness – we will sacrifice to express love for one another in the church. Selflessness will always be building the church upward, inward and ultimately outward.

The heartbeat of a New Testament church is God's sacrificial love running through its body. When the heart of the church body beats with the selfless love of Christ then that Baptist church will not die. It will live and thrive until Jesus comes."

Decide to live. Decide to trust Jesus beyond what you consider your own limits. Decide to witness and obey the Lord's commands. Watch and pray. See if our Lord won't do something that only He is able to do.

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