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# Reaching People God's Strategy to Keep His People Going and Growing

Ronald Wayne Sorenson

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REACHING PEOPLE  
GOD'S STRATEGY TO KEEP HIS PEOPLE GOING AND GROWING

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A Dissertation Project  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School  
Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Ronald Wayne Sorensen

May 1984

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## INTRODUCTION

### JESUS AND HIS STRATEGY

To those who dare to believe that the impossible is possible --these are the people with unlimited potential that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is using to reach people.<sup>1</sup> Their significance is in their success to reach people. People are reached as God the Father wins people unto Himself through His Son, His Spirit and His people.

### THE PRINCIPLES

#### THE PEOPLE PRINCIPLE

People reach people! Jesus came to this earth and caught the attention of the world by modeling a new brand of love. Jesus was resurrected from death and turned the world upside down as He shared about a new brand of life. Then Jesus ascended to heaven. The stir on earth was equalled in heaven. Excited angels bombarded Jesus with questions.

One angel asked, "Jesus, what plan do you have for continuing the work You began on earth? What plan is there for Your new brand of love and life to be shared?"

Without hesitation Jesus answered, "I left everything in the hands of the apostles."

"What if they fail?" another angel asked.

Again there was no hesitation, "I have no other strategy."<sup>2</sup> God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has no other strategy, but He does have the strategy. People reach people!

It was a small group of eleven men whom Jesus commissioned to carry on his work, and bring the gospel to the whole world.

They were not distinguished; they were not well educated; they had no influential backers. In their own nation they were nobodies and, in any case, their own nation was a mere second-class province on the eastern extremity of the Roman map. If they had stopped to weigh up the probabilities of succeeding in their mission, even granted their conviction that Jesus was alive and that His Spirit went with them to equip them for their task, their hearts must surely have sunk, so heavily were the odds weighted against them. How could they possibly succeed? And yet they did.

Why did these eleven weaklings, who once ran to hide, succeed?<sup>4</sup> How could these nobodies succeed with the impossible and insurmountable obstacles that lay in their path? What did these early Christians have? Not much!<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly the only secret of their explosive and lasting impact was the dynamic change in their own lives:<sup>6</sup>

1. They were new people with an absolutely new quality of life.

2. They were wholly dedicated and willing to obey God whatever the cost.

3. They were enthusiastic and so totally convinced that the meaning of the universe was found in the death, resurrection and Lordship of Jesus Christ that they could not keep quiet about it.

4. They were marked by a transparent love of acceptance, care and oneness that broke down the natural barriers between blacks and whites, between masters and slaves, between rich and poor, between those from Jewish backgrounds and Gentile backgrounds.

5. They were able to endure anxiety, suffering, persecution, prison and death with such joy, peace, prayer and praise that stories of these impossible people spread like wildfire.

6. They were intense in their tremendous concern for the 'lost'--those who had lost their way and were out of touch with the God of the cosmos that these Christians knew in such a personal way.

7. They were people who turned the world upside down by living out their priorities of prayer and the Word.

8. They were saturated with power that was there for all to see--the life-changing, character-transforming, ministry-equipping power of the Holy Spirit.



## THE POWER PRINCIPLE

Why do people bother to reach people?<sup>7</sup> What stimulates people to be about the business of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ until their death? What motivates people to endure the unending task of reaching people?

1. People bother because of God's love.
2. People bother because of Christ's command.
3. People bother because of the Holy Spirit's thrust.
4. People bother because of their responsibility.
5. People bother because of their great privilege.
6. People bother because of other people's need.
7. People bother because it brings joy.

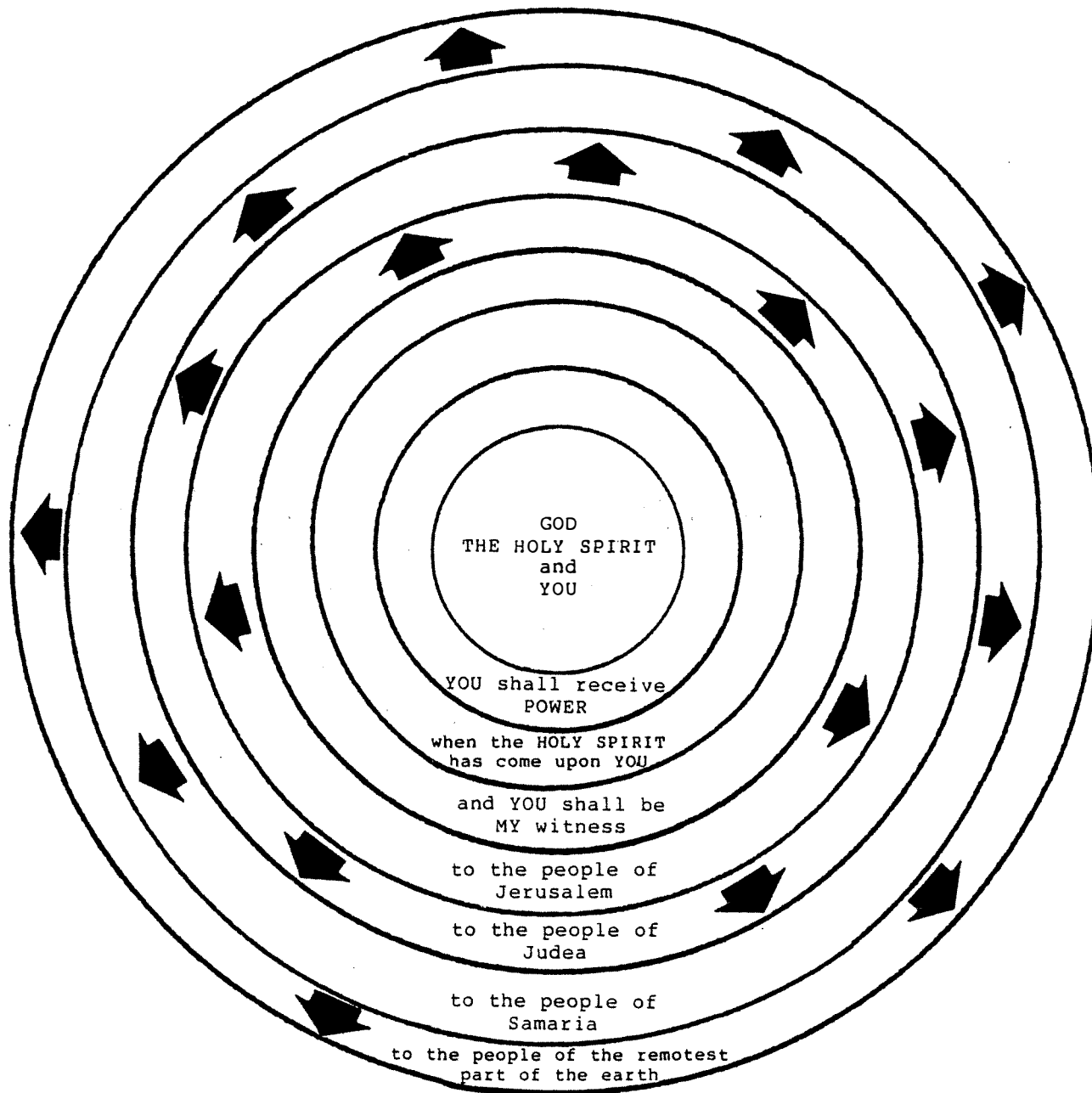
It is impossible to sit still. It is impossible to be quiet. It is as Jesus answered the Pharisees in their criticism of the disciples praising God joyfully, "I tell you, if these become silent, even the stones will cry out!"<sup>8</sup> It is as Peter and John answered the Sanhedrin in their attempt to stop these men from speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."<sup>9</sup> It is as Paul the apostle--who experienced hardships, imprisonments, beatings, lashings, stonings, shipwrecks, hunger, thirst, nakedness, dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from his countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers in the sea, and dangers from false brethren<sup>10</sup>--honestly spoke, "For to me to live is Christ..."<sup>11</sup> It was inconceivable to the early Christians that anyone could receive God's Holy Spirit without being filled with the fire, wind, power, force, energy, explosiveness and every thing necessary to speak for and do the works of Christ whenever opportunity knocked. Had not Jesus promised His followers the Holy Spirit and now the Holy Spirit is available to every person in Christ, every moment, everywhere.<sup>12</sup> (See DIAGRAM 0.1)

Today as in the first century the Holy Spirit continues to be 'poured forth' upon people;<sup>13</sup> these people have no choice but to reach people!<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact, qualified analysts confirm that "for the most part, Christianity is simply growing 'out of control'!"<sup>15</sup> "It may be rather hard to believe, but at the present time ... each day welcomes a net increase of a least seventy-eight thousand Christians on this planet."<sup>16</sup> In Asia and Africa alone approximately one-thousand new churches are established each week!<sup>17</sup> Another qualified source reports that "the most important change in Protestant missionary strategy in the past 10 years has been to identify and seek to contact some 16,000 tribes and social groups around the world that have been beyond the reach of Christianity."<sup>18</sup> Acts 1:8 is being fulfilled as the Holy Spirit comes upon people and thrusts them forward to reach people.

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DIAGRAM 0.1: GOD AND PEOPLE REACHING PEOPLE (ACTS 1:8)

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## THE PYRAMID PRINCIPLE

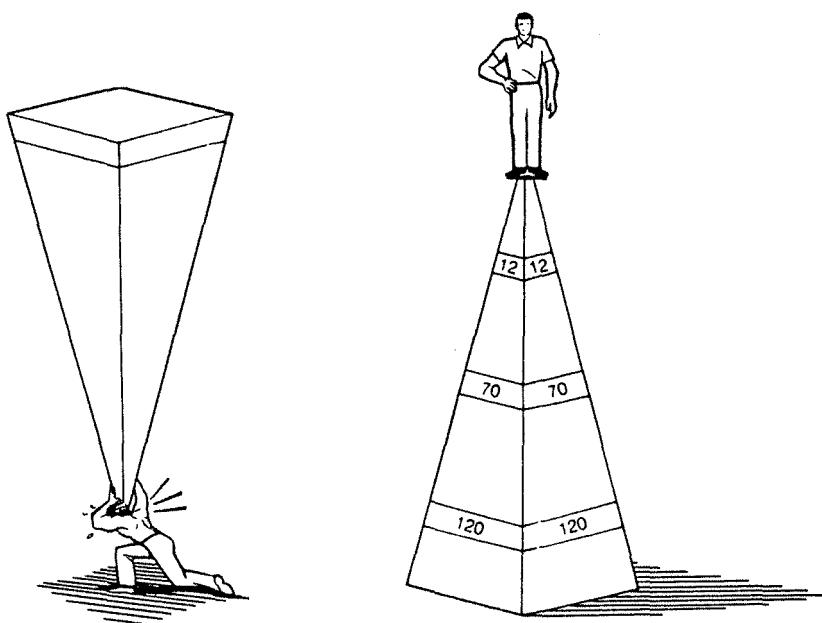
The power of God's Holy Spirit so filled and transformed 'nobodies' and 'weaklings' that they became the leaders of a movement which, when measured by its effects, has become the most potent single force in the life of mankind.<sup>19</sup> A leader is a person with the ability to influence people. Jesus Christ was a leader; the Holy Spirit guided His pyramid building method of leadership.

The diagram on the right shows the way Jesus worked. The leader is at the top of the pyramid, which develops beneath him. Jesus began by associating with a group of men from whom He selected the Twelve. He gave these twelve the responsibility to do the same thing He was doing. As the crowds continued to grow, He selected and trained seventy more. Finally on the day of Pentecost, there were 120. By training others to assist Him, Jesus built the pyramid right side up. All looked to Him as the true leader and the ultimate source of truth, but He did not do all the work. He trained others to become like Him. Thus, Jesus established the biblical method of building the church through the building of disciples. But also important is the fact that Jesus did not build the disciples merely to use them to do His work, but because He cared about them and wanted them to grow to personal fulfillment.<sup>20</sup>

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DIAGRAM 0.2: HOW TO CHANGE THE PYRAMID

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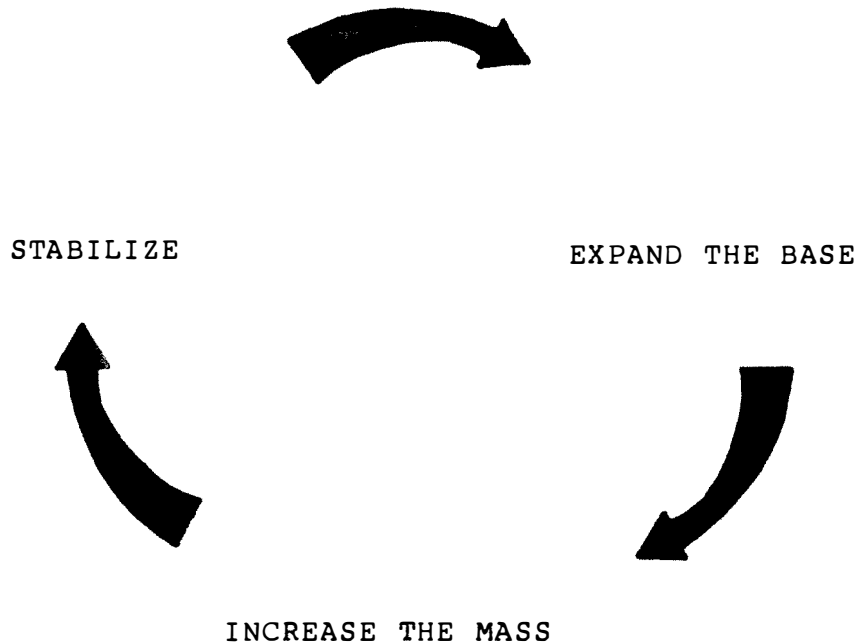


The essence of Jesus' training program was the practice of being with people--just letting His disciples follow Him.<sup>21</sup> Jesus taught His disciples the pyramid principle of growth:<sup>22</sup>

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DIAGRAM 0.3: THE PYRAMID PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH

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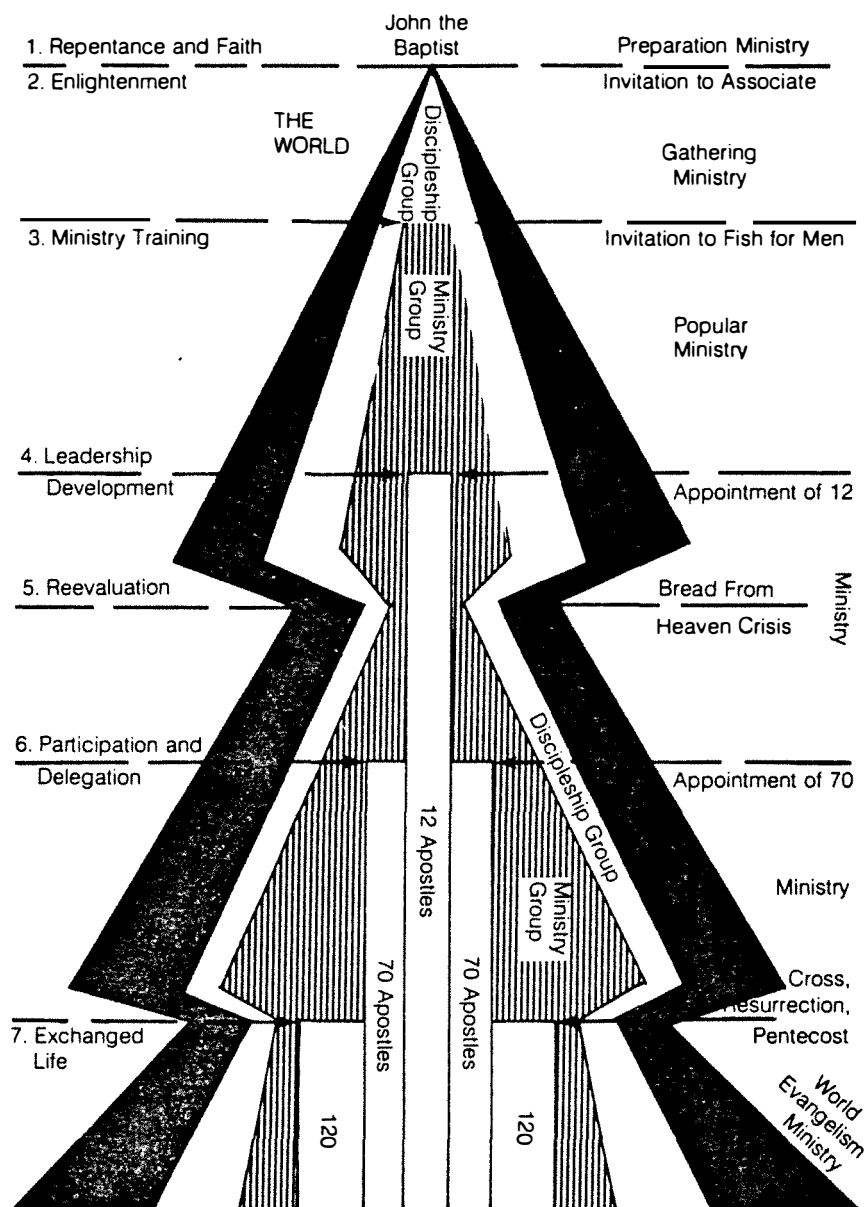
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Jesus expanded His leadership base through eight guiding principles:<sup>23</sup>

1. SELECTION: People were His method.  
He chose twelve of His disciples. Luke 6:13
2. ASSOCIATION: He stayed with them.  
Lo, I am with you always. Matthew 28:20
3. CONSECRATION: He required obedience.  
Take my yoke upon you. Matthew 11:29
4. IMPARTATION: He gave himself away.  
Receive the Holy Spirit. John 20:22
5. DEMONSTRATION: He showed them how to live.  
I gave you an example. John 13:15
6. DELEGATION: He assigned them work.  
I will make you fishers of men. Matthew 4:19
7. SUPERVISION: He kept check on them.  
Do you not yet see or understand? Mark 8:17
8. REPRODUCTION: He expected them to reproduce.  
Go and bear fruit. John 15:16

Jesus' concept of pyramid building included the individual, small groups and crowds. There was "a progressive numerical growth (with two major setbacks) in the size of the interested crowd, the discipleship group and the ministry group."<sup>24</sup>

DIAGRAM 0.4: PROGRESSION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

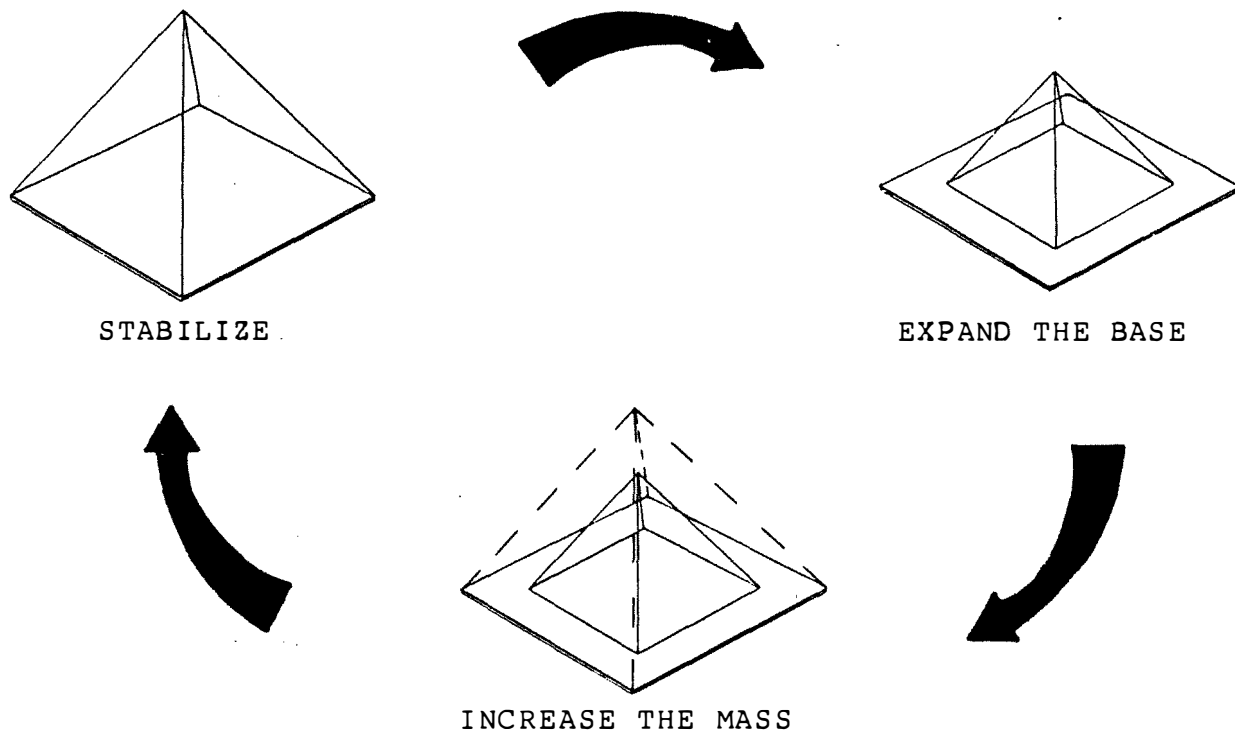


A pyramid is a structure with a square base and four triangular sides meeting at a point. "The Pyramid Principle states that for a church to grow, it must expand its base of organization and ministry before it may add to its mass of followers."<sup>25</sup>

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DIAGRAM 0.5: TRIANGULAR GROWTH ACCORDING TO THE PYRAMID PRINCIPLE

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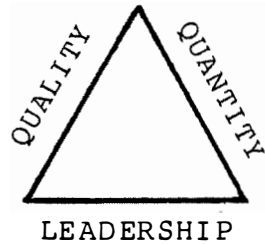
Many churches fail to grow because of the failure to understand and implement this simple principle: organizational expansion always precedes numerical increase. The leadership of an organization will ultimately stifle growth and extinguish life or generate growth and give birth to life.<sup>26</sup> For a church to grow, it must expand its leadership (base of organization and ministry) before it may add to its congregation (members and adherents).

It's like piling sand on a table. You can only pile on so much before the table space runs out. When you are out of table the sand starts flowing onto the floor. If you want and need to hold more sand, you must enlarge the table. That is the point of the pyramid principle. Add to the base and then you can expand the operation. Increase qualified leadership (and organizational structure) and then your church may grow, both qualitatively and quantitatively (add organizational structure).<sup>27</sup>

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DIAGRAM 0.6: THE TABLE CONCEPT OF TRIANGULAR GROWTH

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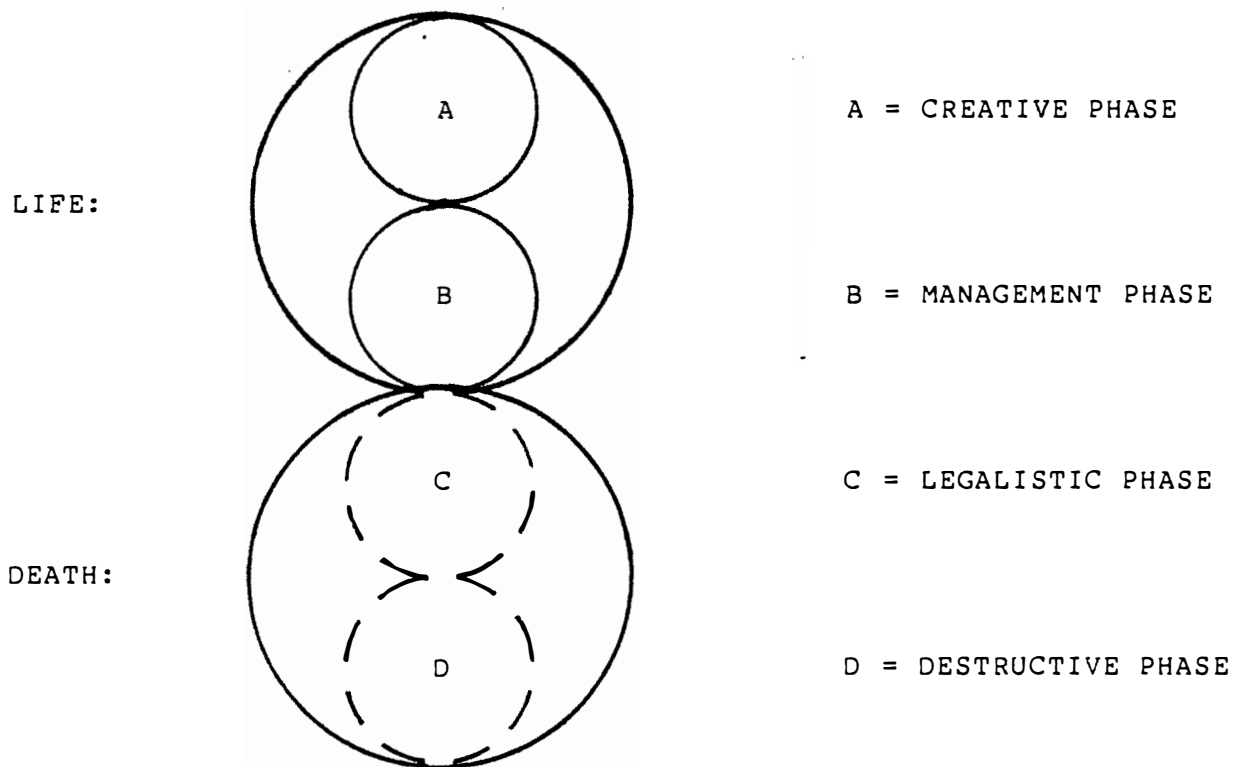
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A church must also seek to maintain a creative focus on new leadership and task development.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the church as an organization opens the door to unlock 'unpredictable creativity.'<sup>29</sup> The organizational process tends to develop along the following lines:

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DIAGRAM 0.7: THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

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Ministry and organization will rise or fall on its leadership. Leadership determines the future of the organization with decisions to live in the circle on the top and grow and prosper or live in the circle on the bottom and maintain, decline, or die.

## THE TARGET

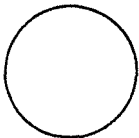
Life has one supreme target. This target is specific and measureable; it's also possible to hit the bull's eye when the human spirit cooperates with the Spirit of God.

## THE ULTIMATE ACT

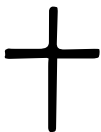
The ultimate act in history is described with these words, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should never perish, but have eternal life."<sup>30</sup>



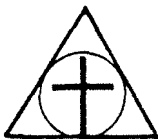
= GOD  
God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...



= SO LOVED THE WORLD  
God so loved the world, all mankind, man and woman, boy and girl, you and me...



= THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON  
God loved so that He gave the Son as His 'gift' by sending Him into the world and He also gave the Son on the cross as 'the' gift to the world...<sup>31</sup>



= THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.  
Each person has the opportunity to believe and have eternal life.



(Perishing is set in stark contrast to life; a person who does not believe would be without Christ.)



The ultimate act, therefore, is God's gift of salvation to the world through Jesus Christ; mankind is God's ultimate love target.

#### THE ULTIMATE COMMAND

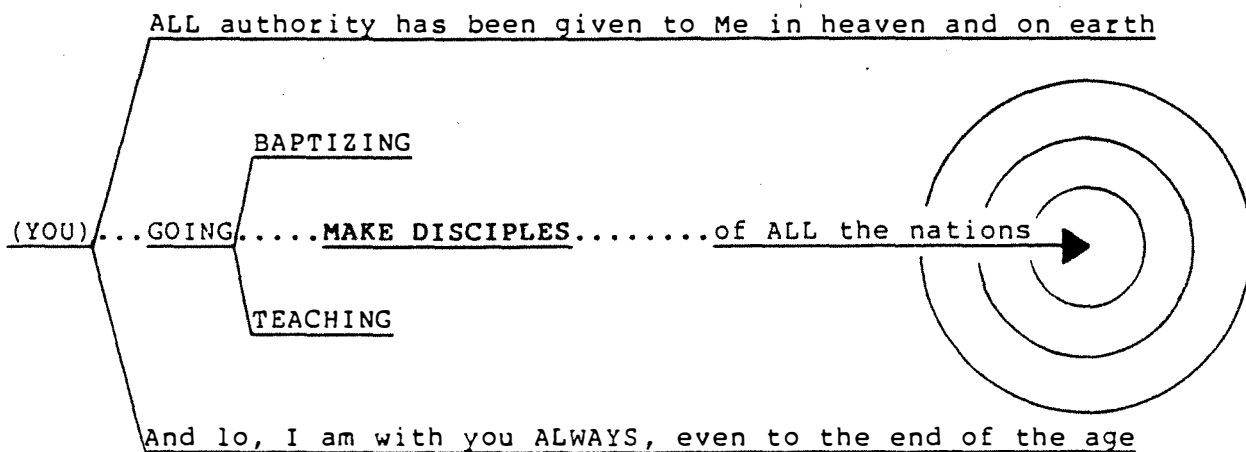
The proof that God was able to perform His promise of salvation to mankind was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death. The risen Lord<sup>32</sup> Jesus Christ then gave the ultimate command to His disciples:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

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DIAGRAM 0.8: MAKING DISCIPLES (MATTHEW 28:18-20)

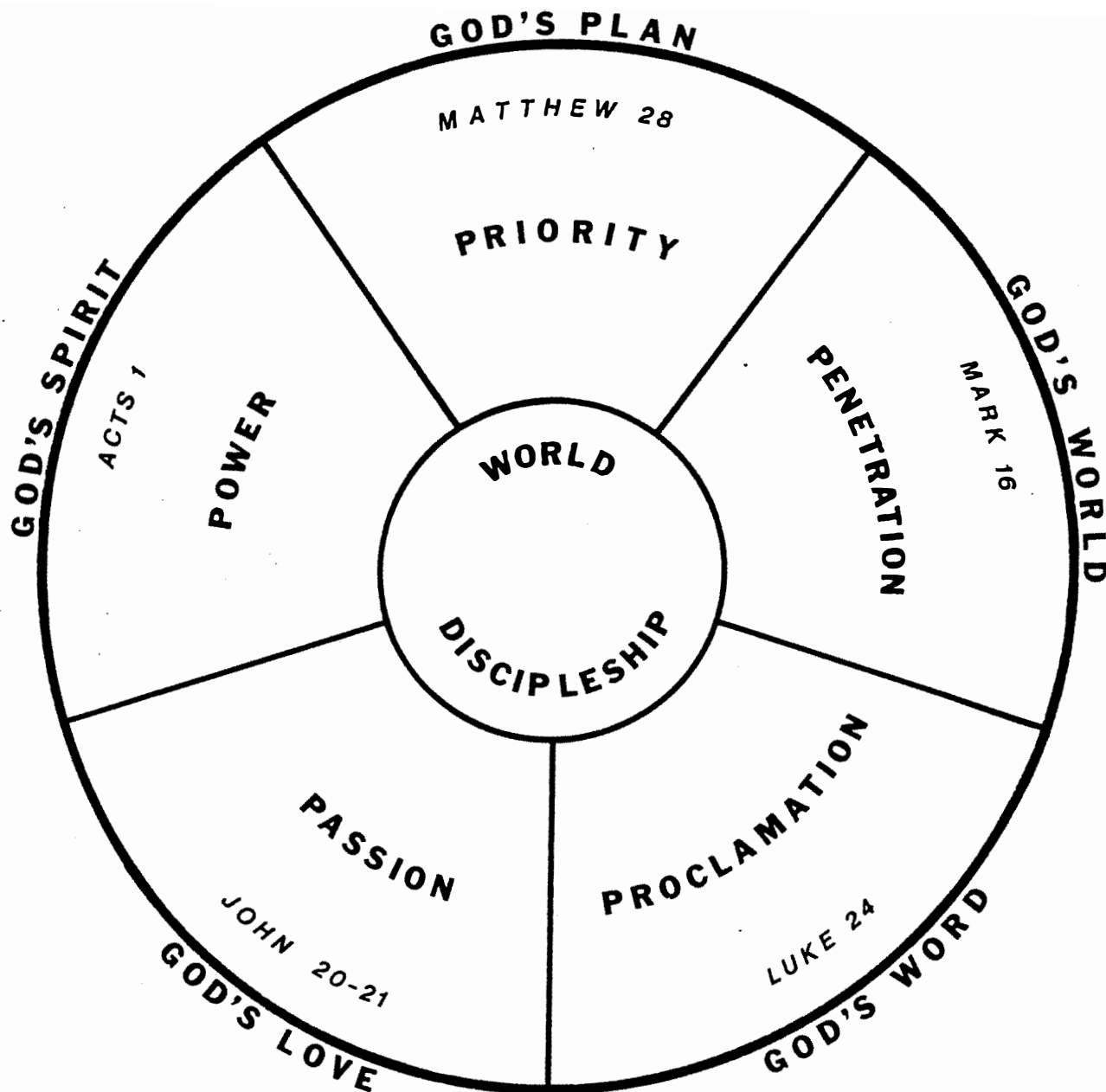
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To avoid the great commission becoming the great omission, Jesus guaranteed that His last words would never become His lost words by sharing the ultimate command in several instances with a variety of descriptions:<sup>33</sup>

DIAGRAM 0.9: JESUS' GREAT COMMISSION MOSAIC



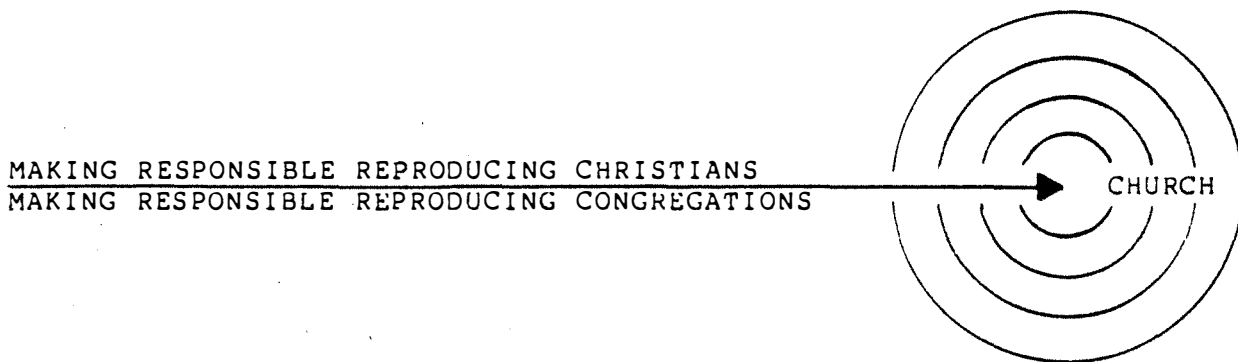
## THE ULTIMATE GOAL

God's salvation through Jesus Christ is to be shared through a group of people that believe. These believers so relate themselves together that their impact is in their effect to make disciples who also go, baptize and teach. The ultimate goal happens as these believers so relate themselves together and do the acts of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. The goal is continuous as these believers together become disciples by:<sup>34</sup>

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### DIAGRAM 0.11: THE GOAL

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The effect fulfills the promise of Jesus as disciples and churches multiply.<sup>35</sup> "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."<sup>36</sup>

## THE STRATEGY

### QUALIFYING THE STRATEGY

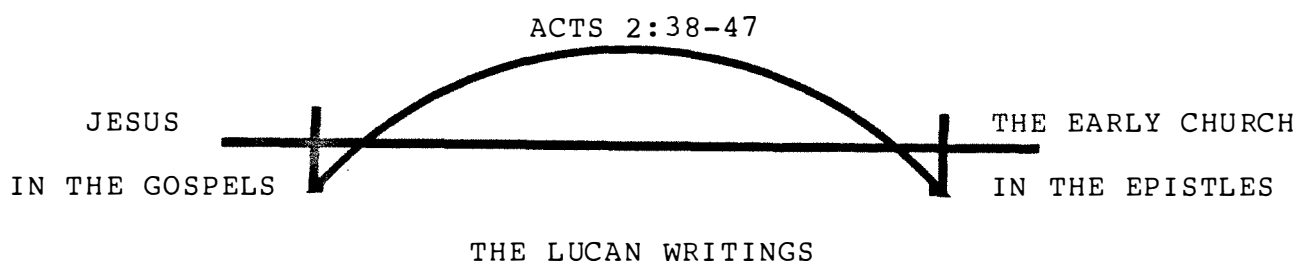
Only one Textbook reveals the successful pattern of people reaching people--the Bible. The Bible's central message is the story of salvation. The work of Luke is recognized as the center of the New Testament, spanning the Gospels and the Epistles and joining them together in one whole.<sup>37</sup> What is significant is Luke's combination of the story of Jesus and the story of the early church in one account.<sup>38</sup> Luke was able to see that the first generation of the church formed a continuation of the era of

salvation which had begun with Jesus and that the era was still continuing until the expected return of the Lord; for Luke the two stories are really one.<sup>39</sup> Acts is the record of the progress of the Word of God which brings salvation.<sup>40</sup> The spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth marks the culmination of what Jesus began to do and teach.<sup>41</sup> The pattern of the beginning is definitive for the church in Luke's day and ours;<sup>42</sup> that pattern becomes Jesus' MASTER STRATEGY OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP. Luke shares the strategy as the model and the power of the Holy Spirit is transferred from Jesus to those first century believers, the church.

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#### DIAGRAM 0.11: THE BRIDGE

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#### SIMPLIFYING THE STRATEGY

"What shall we do?"<sup>43</sup> This corporate expression of individual conviction prompted the Christlike answer, "Repent!"<sup>44</sup> The results of God's messenger, Peter, proclaiming the message of God demonstrating His love through Jesus, whom He made both Lord and Christ, are apparent:

LISTEN: These persons heard preaching of the Word.

CONVICTION: These same persons accepted (belief) or rejected (disbelief) the Word.

CONVERSION: These believing persons stood in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through repentance and faith.

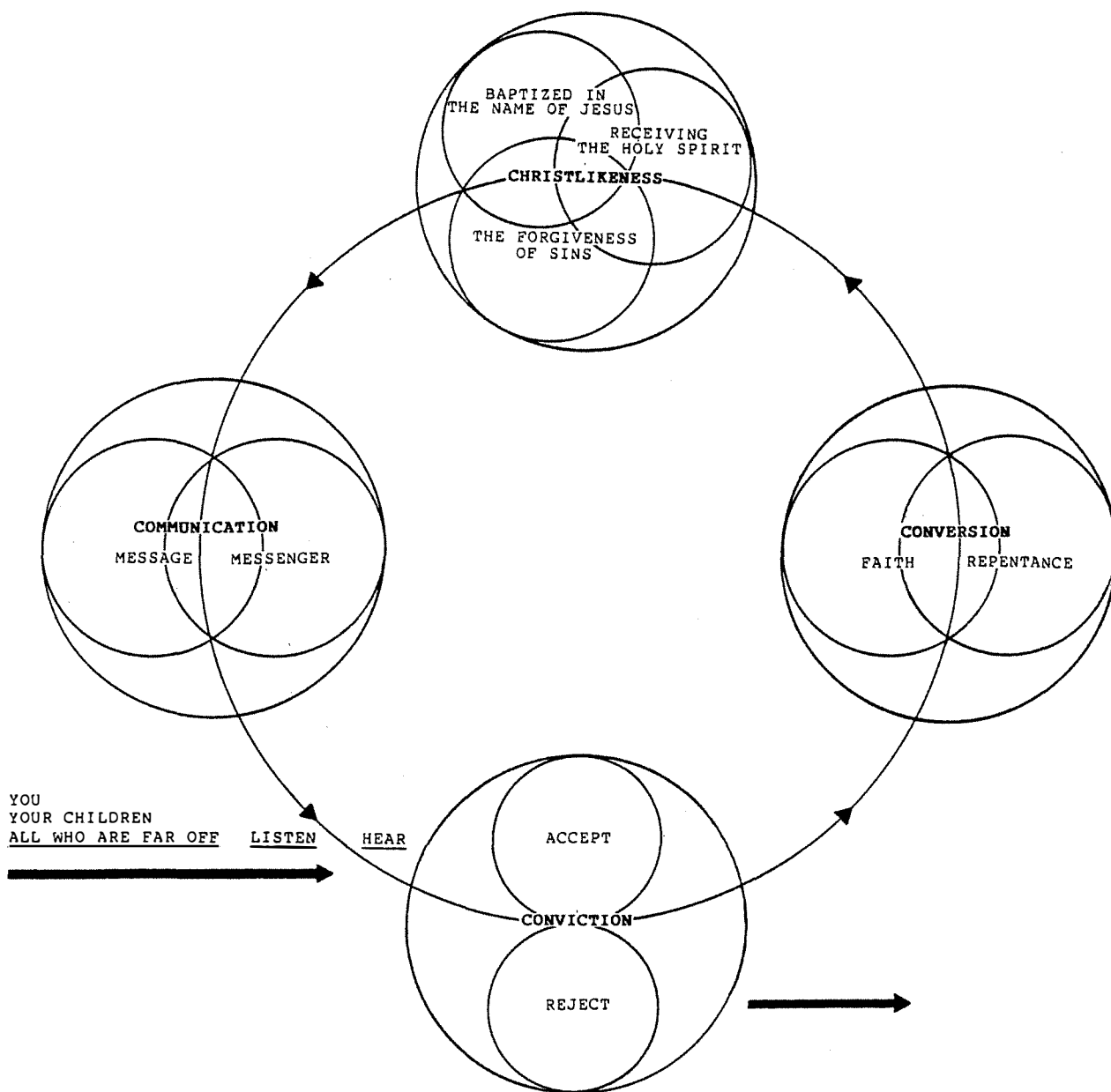
CHRISTLIKENESS: These believing persons changed inwardly.

COMMUNICATION: These believing persons were transformed outwardly.

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DIAGRAM O.12: YOU, YOUR CHILDREN AND ALL (ACTS 2:37-40)

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Peter also exhorted the crowd toward a decision with other words, "Be saved..."<sup>44</sup> The strategy of Jesus through the early church in Acts 2:38-40 is simple; apart from hearing the word combined with conviction, conversion, Christlikeness and communication, there can be no salvation..."from this perverse generation."<sup>45</sup>

## AMPLIFYING THE STRATEGY

The seed for the strategy had been planted; now that seed explodes into a powerful model for the church then and now.<sup>46</sup>

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;

45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

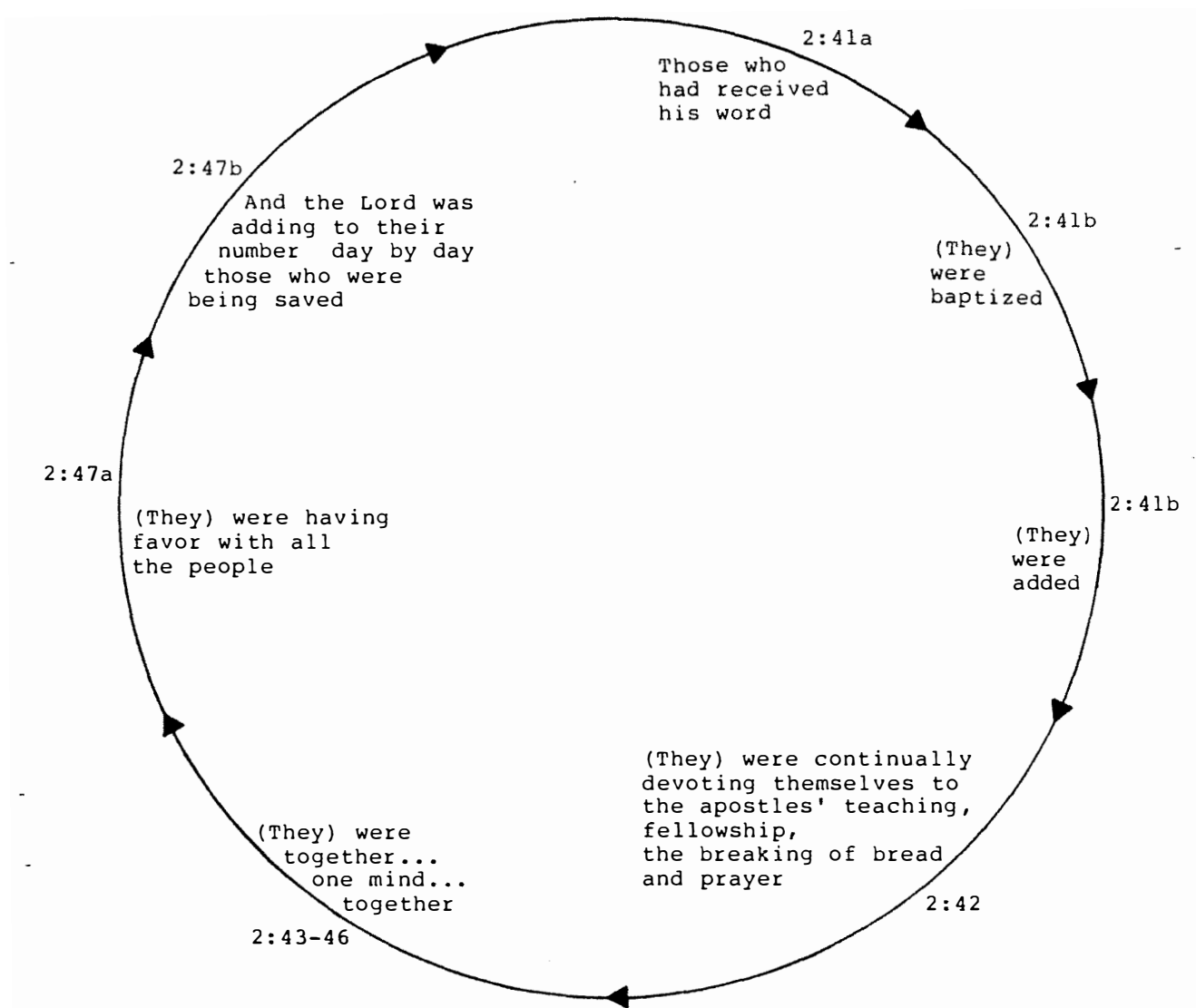
Acts 2:41-47 reveals the spiritual growth model for individuals and churches. "It was a continuous process ('being saved') in which the church became both the goal and the agent of dynamic evangelism."<sup>47</sup> (See DIAGRAM Ø.13.)

The following chapters outline and expand this model which becomes a strategy for individual Christian growth and corporate church growth, THE MASTER STRATEGY OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP.

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DIAGRAM 0.13: THE GROWTH MODEL (ACTS 2:41-47)

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END NOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20.
2. Eims, Art, 38 and Aldrich, Life-Style, 15-16.
3. Green, Church, 13.
4. Mead, Eleven, 31.
5. Green, Then, 14.
6. Green, Then, 21-31.
7. Green, Then, 109-116.
8. Luke 19:40.
9. Acts 4:19-20.
10. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.
11. Philipians 1:21.
12. Acts 1:8.
13. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2.
14. Mead, Eleven, 31: "By the beginning of the fourth century a writer tells us, 'There is not a single race of human beings, barbarians, Greeks or whatever name you please to call them, nomads or vagrants or herdsmen living in tents, where prayers in the name of Jesus the Crucified are not offered up.'"
15. Wagner, C. Peter. On The Crest Of A Wave. Ventura, California: Regal, 1983, as quoted (Winter, Frontiers, 24).
16. Wagner, C. Peter. On The Crest Of A Wave. Ventura, California: Regal, 1983, as quoted (Winter, Frontiers, 24).
17. Wagner, C. Peter. On The Crest Of A Wave. Ventura, California: Regal, 1983, as quoted (Winter, Frontiers, 24).
18. Time, Christmas 1982 Cover Story, as quoted (Winter, Frontiers, 24).
19. Latourette, Christianity, xiii.
20. Wilson, School, 67.
21. Coleman, Plan, 38.
22. Womack, Pyramid, 79.
23. Coleman, Plan, 38.
24. Wilson, School, 175-176.
25. Womack, Pyramid, 139.
26. Womack, Pyramid, 22.
27. Jenson and Stevens, VineLife, 27.
28. Chaney and Lewis, Design, 62-63.
29. Womack, Pyramid, 22.
30. John 3:16.
31. Morris, John, 229.
32. Matthew 28:18-20.
33. Devine, Disciple, 3-3; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:27; John 20:21; Acts 1:8.
34. Gerber, Manual, 18.
35. Gerber, Manual, 16-17.
36. Matthew 16:18.
37. Marshall, Luke, 222.



38. Marshall, Luke, 221.

39. Marshall, Luke, 221.

40. Marshall, Luke, 222.

41. Marshall, Luke, 222.

42. Marshall, Luke, 222.

43. Acts 2:37.

44. Acts 2:28.

45. Acts 2:40 and Brown, Dictionary, 3/ 213: "In Acts, statements about salvation focus on the immediate present. The offer of salvation is linked with the demand, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation' (Acts 2:40). A mention of future salvation is found in Acts 2:20, alluding to Joel 2:32: 'And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' The Joel prophecy refers to the end-time, and its use implies that the end time has now dawned. It should be noted that 'the name' for Joel was that of Yahweh, whereas in Acts it is applied to Jesus. In him God is personally present in a saving way."

46. Acts 2:40.

47. Acts 2:41-47.

48. Acts and Gerber, Manual, 15.

## CHAPTER ONE

### COMMITTED

God's passion to find people is phenomenal. With awesome depth and urgency, God reaches out through His Holy Spirit, His Word and His people to find people. God's objective is certain and clear: a dynamic eternal relationship with people. God verify's His passion with:

a theology of labor and harvest;<sup>1</sup>  
a theology of searching and finding;<sup>2</sup>  
a theology of seeking and saving;<sup>3</sup>  
a theology of persuading and winning;<sup>4</sup> and  
a theology of fishing and catching.

God's passion penetrated a small group of people. Although this small group experienced a person-to-Person relationship with Jesus Christ, they still fell short. The lives of the disciples exhibited:<sup>6</sup>

1. Selfish egoism--They quarreled over first places. "...whoever wishes to be first among you shall...." (Matthew 20:20-28)

2. Self-righteousness--"Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." (Matthew 26:33)

3. Resentments--"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54)

4. Spiritual impotence--"Why could we not cast it out?" (Matthew 17:19)

5. Criticism--"Why this waste?" (Matthew 26:8)

6. Group bigotry--"...we tried to hinder him because he did not follow along with us." (Luke 9:49)

7. Race-prejudice--"Send her (a Syro-Phonician) away, for she is shouting out after us." (Matthew 15:23)

8. Selfish acquisitiveness--"...we have left everything and followed You: what then will there be for us?" (Matthew 19:27)

9. A dislike of self-sacrifice--"God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." (Matthew 16:22)

10. Fear--"...the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear..." (John 20:19)

Then Jesus Christ was miraculously raised from the dead.<sup>7</sup> For more than forty days He met with these same disciples and then after He promised His continued presence through the Holy Spirit, Jesus ascended to heaven.<sup>8</sup> Unlike their past relationship and Jesus merely being 'with' them, in the near future the Holy Spirit of Jesus would be 'within' them.<sup>9</sup> The Holy Spirit came.<sup>10</sup> The disciples were transformed:<sup>11</sup>

1. Instead of selfish egoism there was self-surrender;
2. Self-righteousness was replaced by a deep humility based on grace;
3. Resentments were dissolved by love;
4. Spiritual impotence was turned into spiritual adequacy;
5. Criticism gave way to appreciation;
6. Group bigotry became group co-operation;
7. Race prejudice was changed into human brotherhood;
8. Selfish acquisitiveness was transmuted into the most amazing burst of charity the world has ever seen;
9. A dislike of self-sacrifice became self-sacrifice that has never been matched;
10. Fear turned into a courage that laughed its way through persecution and death.

"All this was done effortlessly, for the disciples weren't doing it--they were allowing the Holy Spirit within them to do it."<sup>12</sup> Surprised by the resurrection and transformed by the Holy Spirit, this small group of people gave birth to the beginning of the greatest continuous people movement the world has ever known.<sup>13</sup> These disciples, full of resurrection faith and the Holy Spirit, instantly proclaimed Christ to the Jerusalem public. The listening public from a roll-call of nations responded to Peter's call to repentance, they received his word.<sup>14</sup>

THOSE WHO HAD RECEIVED HIS WORD (ACTS 2:41A)

The Word of God is not thrown into history without effect. Through the word-event recorded in Acts 2, God was having a real encounter with people. It was not a matter of majestic monologue from God but within this event the mightiness of God encounters the madness of man. Jesus had previously constructed the encounter:<sup>15</sup>

THE MESSAGE .....Luke 24:44-47

"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said unto them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name..."

THE MANDATE.....Luke 24:47

"...to all the nations--beginning from Jerusalem."

THE METHOD.....Luke 24:48

"You are witnesses of these things."

THE MEANS.....Luke 24:49

"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

THE MOVEMENT<sup>16</sup> .....Acts

The church first began in an upper room in Jerusalem with a small band of 120 disciples (1:15).

On the day of Pentecost 3,000 new believers were baptized and added to the Jerusalem church (2:41).

Many more believed and now the number of men in the Jerusalem church stands at 5,000 (4:4).

Multitudes of men and women were constantly added to the numbers of believers in the Lord in the Jerusalem church (5:11-14).

TO THIS POINT INDIVIDUALS AND MULTITUDES WERE ADDED TO THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM; FROM THIS POINT DISCIPLES AND CHURCHES WERE MULTIPLIED. WITHIN FOUR DECADES NEW CHURCHES (CONGREGATIONS) WERE PLANTED IN EVERY POPULATION CENTER OF THE THEN-KNOWN WORLD.

The number of disciples multiply (6:1-7).

The number of churches multiply in the collective sense of geographical multiplication of believers throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria. It is no longer only the first church in Jerusalem but now other congregations emerge and also continue to increase in the number of believers (9:31).

The number of churches multiply. No longer does Luke refer to 'the whole church' (5:11), 'the church in Jerusalem' (8:1), or the regional church of Judea, Galilee and Samaria (9:31), but to churches (15:41). Churches were planted and the churches increased in number daily (16:5).

How many myriads? The exact number of Jewish converts to Christ was unknown but was spoken of in tens of thousands (21:20).

In "The Acts Of The Apostles" the Word of God is the Word about Jesus.<sup>17</sup> On the day of Pentecost Peter spoke this Word and his word was received. The message of the saving-event in Jesus Christ proved to be powerful.<sup>18</sup>

A basic pattern was revealed in the Word which the early Christians announced:<sup>19</sup>

First, THEY PREACHED A PERSON.

Their message was frankly Christocentric. Indeed, often enough the gospel is referred to simply as Jesus or Christ: "He preached Jesus to him."<sup>20</sup> To the Jews Jesus was the fulfillment of God's work in history:<sup>21</sup> to the Gentiles Jesus marked the end of God's apparent disinterest.<sup>22</sup> Jesus the man, Jesus crucified, Jesus risen, Jesus exalted to the place of power in the universe from which He would return in judgment at the end of the age, Jesus who meantime was present among His people in the Spirit, and demonstrated this through signs and wonders as well as through the meteoric rise of the Church.

Second, THEY PROCLAIMED A GIFT.

The gift of forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit, the gift of adoption, of reconciliation. The gift that made "no people" part of the "people of God", the gift that brought those who were far off near.<sup>23</sup> The Jews had done nothing to merit it,<sup>24</sup> any more than the Gentiles had: it proceeded entirely from the grace of God. The gospel is "the word of His grace"; it is only through the grace of the Lord Jesus" that men can be saved, or find life, or be justified.<sup>25</sup> But the author of this salvation is none other than God himself, the offer is directed to all men without distinction--except the distinction of being themselves unacceptable.

Third, THEY LOOKED FOR A RESPONSE.<sup>26</sup>

The apostles were not shy about asking men to decide for or against the God who had decided for them. They expected results.<sup>27</sup> They challenged men to do something about the message they had heard. "What shall we do?" was the response of the crowd on the day of Pentecost. The answer is clear enough on the pages of the New Testament.

For the early Christian, the leap of faith--the committing of oneself 'onto Christ'--is inevitably prior to the life of faith--remaining and living 'in Christ'. There was no shortage of emphasis on this act of conversion for the early Christian. "Conversion<sup>28</sup> is nothing other than turning to Christ in repentance and faith."

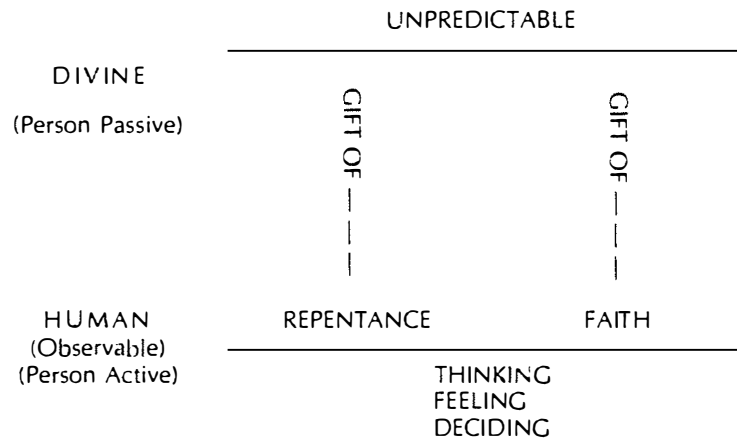
Now both repentance and faith are described in Acts in terms of 'turning'. Repentance is a turning<sup>29</sup> from wickedness, whereas faith is a turning 'to God'<sup>30</sup> or 'to the Lord'.<sup>31</sup> This, then, is the meaning of conversion.<sup>32</sup> 'To turn', intransitive<sup>33</sup> is to turn from the vanity of idols to the living God,<sup>34</sup> from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God',<sup>35</sup> or from sin and self to Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup>

From the multi-lingual audience in the roll-call of nations hearing the Word proclaimed came conviction, conversion, Christlikeness and communication. They heard in their own language, responded and eventually carried the Word with them back to their native soil.

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## DIAGRAM 1.1: CONVERSION

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How did these people receive the Word?<sup>37</sup> The Word and the Spirit liberated them and gave them the freedom of decision. Their decision was more than a mere reception; the Word was embraced joyfully and welcomed heartily.<sup>38</sup>

### JESUS-CENTERED LIFE

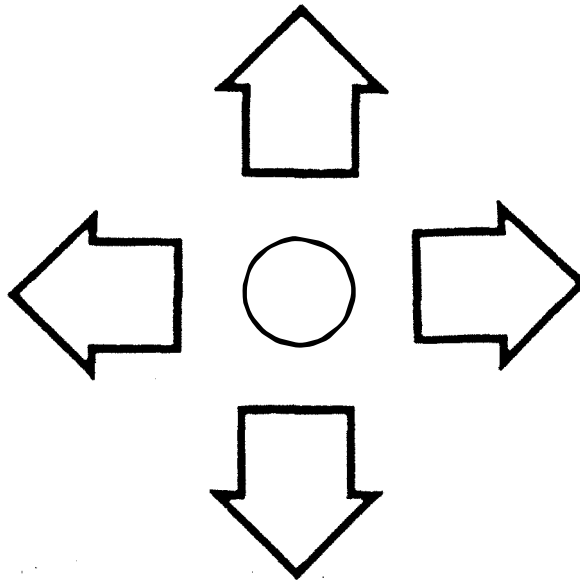
Jesus Christ perfectly modeled a Christian lifestyle. Picture Jesus Christ on the cross before His death and resurrection. Two beams made up the cross and these two beams pinpoint the two directions of His life. The one reaches up to His Father; the other reaches out to people. His power was vertical; His ministry was horizontal. His feet were nailed to the vertical beam; His hands were nailed to the horizontal beam. His vertical relationship was with God the Father--with His head and heart and soul Jesus reached up to the presence of God and with His feet and soul Jesus reached down to saturate Himself with the Scriptures and His innermost Person. His horizontal relationship was with people--with the one hand Jesus reached in by discipling individuals and groups following His model of His Father's unconditional love and with the other hand reached out in unconditional love to the lonely and hungry of soul and body.

Like Jesus Christ a Christian prioritizes his or her life to reach:

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DIAGRAM 1.2: REACHING

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The early Christians lived their priorities. Their conversion to Jesus as Christ and Lord in their faith-encounter and in their filling with the Holy Spirit produced priorities<sup>39</sup>. Luke gives tremendous insight into their Jesus-centered lives:

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.

33 And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of lands or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,

35 and lay them at the apostle's feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.

The Jesus-centered lives of Acts 4:31-35 appear to duplicate the Jesus-centered lives of Acts 2:41-47 which concludes the narrative on the day of Pentecost. God always duplicates this individual lifestyle in a Spirit-filled community.



#### PRAYING: REACHING UP

The early Christians prayed together to the God Who gives repentance and faith through Jesus Christ and Who heals and performs signs and wonders through Jesus Christ.



#### THE WORD: REACHING DOWN

The early Christians spoke the Word with boldness and confidence.



#### ASSEMBLING: REACHING IN

The early Christians gathered together in one place, were of one heart and soul, and held all things in common to meet all needs and wants among them.



#### WITNESSING: REACHING OUT

The early Christians with great power gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and abundant grace was upon them all.

### PRAYING

Without doubt the practice of the early Christians was praying the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ had taught His disciples. This "Disciples Prayer" practiced in their lives brought the Lordship of Christ over their lives: <sup>40</sup>

"Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name."

STEP ONE: I OVERCOME MY INFERIORITY. I discover God as Father.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

STEP TWO: I OVERCOME MY DISCOURAGEMENT. I believe God is building a society of redeemed, redeeming persons and He needs me.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

STEP THREE: I AM ASSURED OF SUCCESS. God will inspire me with self-affirming ideas that can lead me to fulfill His will.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

STEP FOUR: I AM ESTABLISHED IN A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, and my fellow human brothers and sisters. Forgiveness and faith are mine.

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

STEP FIVE: I AM CONFRONTED WITH THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. The price of success; the pains and perils of achievement now come to mind.



As the early Christians practiced the prayer for every disciple of Jesus Christ, their lives and self-worth were transformed to a level of lifestyle that was liberated to love as Jesus had loved. For them Jesus was the Lord of all.

## THE WORD

Wherever the early Christians went, it was the Word they carried.<sup>41</sup> For eighteen months and more at Corinth it was the Word which gripped Paul.<sup>42</sup> It was the same at Ephesus during the two years of his mission: 'All the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord'.<sup>43</sup> When Luke wants to indicate the success of the mission, he says that the Word of the Lord grew and prevailed.<sup>44</sup> The Word makes its own impact on Theophilus,<sup>45</sup> the centurion Cornelius,<sup>46</sup> the proconsul of Cyprus,<sup>47</sup> the citizens of Antioch.<sup>48</sup> No wonder the twelve made it their priority.<sup>49</sup> No wonder they committed their converts to it.<sup>50</sup> No wonder the nameless amateur missionaries of (Acts) 8:4 took it as their great weapon. Does a man believe? Then it is because the Word brings faith.<sup>51</sup> Does a man receive the Spirit? It comes from hearing the Word.<sup>52</sup> Does a man become a Christian? It is due to God's illuminating the heart of the hearers of the apostolic message. Is a man a counterfeit Christian? Then it is because he has no part<sup>53</sup> in the Word.<sup>54</sup>

The Word of God, the Word of the Lord, the Word of salvation, the Word of the gospel or simply the word provides the answers, breaks down the barriers and gives freedom for decision.

## ASSEMBLING

The early Christians believed in togetherness; separateness and total individualism were unknown. The distinguishing mark<sup>55</sup> of the early Christians was a genuine love for one another. They fulfilled the words of Jesus:

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. Your shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come', now I say to you also. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.<sup>56</sup>

Jesus had specifically prayed for their oneness--that the same kind of genuine oneness that existed between the Father, Himself and the Holy Spirit would exist in His new community of believers;

this is our 'Lord's Prayer'!<sup>57</sup> Jesus prayed for this oneness five times:<sup>58</sup>

1. "that they may be ONE, as we are" (verse 11);
2. "that they ALL may be ONE" (verse 21);
3. "that they also may be ONE IN US" (verse 21);
4. "the GLORY...I have given them; ...that they may be ONE" (verse 22); and
5. "that they may be made PERFECT IN ONE" (verse 23).

Five times we find it answered:<sup>59</sup>

1. in the congregational prayer meeting (Acts 1:14);
2. on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1);
3. in the ongoing life of the assembly (Acts 2:46);
4. again in a tremendous prayer meeting (Acts 4:24); and
5. after a judgment miracle of church discipline (Acts 5:12).

The early Christians experienced 'assembly oneness'.<sup>60</sup>

#### WITNESSING

The early Christians witnessed with great power and effect. Jesus Christ was their model witness. Those early Christians reviewed the acts of Jesus Christ. One of His witnessing experiences with the man Nicodemus became a prime model of active conversational witnessing:<sup>61</sup>

1. THE ATTITUDE.....verses 1-2  
Jesus is approached with a searching attitude.<sup>62</sup>
2. THE ATTENTION.....verse 3  
Jesus gets the attention of the listener.
3. THE ACCEPTANCE.....verse 5  
Jesus points toward the acceptance of God.
4. THE ARRANGEMENT.....verse 6  
Jesus describes the arrangement of creation.
5. THE ARGUMENT.....verse 7  
Jesus discusses the argument for faith.
6. THE ACT.....verse 8  
Jesus briefly emphasizes the act of conversion.
7. THE ACCUSATION.....verses 10-12  
Jesus straightforwardly gives an accusation of inaccuracy.
8. THE ABSOLUTENESS.....verses 13-15  
Jesus clearly shares the absoluteness of salvation.
9. THE ALTERNATIVE.....verses 16-18  
Jesus critiques the alternative for lifestyles.
10. THE ACCELERATION.....verses 19-21  
Jesus moves with acceleration toward decision.

Another of His encounters was certainly a superb model of passive conversational witnessing--at a well with a woman of Samaria:<sup>63</sup>

1. CONTACT OTHERS SOCIALLY.....verses 1-7  
See and know non-Christians personally.
2. ESTABLISH A COMMON INTEREST.....verses 7-8  
Establish a mutual interest in conversation.
3. AROUSE INTEREST.....verses 9-15  
Arouse a person's interest by life and word.
4. DON'T GO TOO FAR.....verses 13-19  
Gear explanations to his receptiveness and readiness for more.
5. DON'T CONDEMN.  
Accept and even compliment rather than condemn.
6. STICK WITH THE MAIN ISSUE.....verses 20-26  
Stay on the track.
7. CONFRONT HIM DIRECTLY.  
Persevere to the destination.

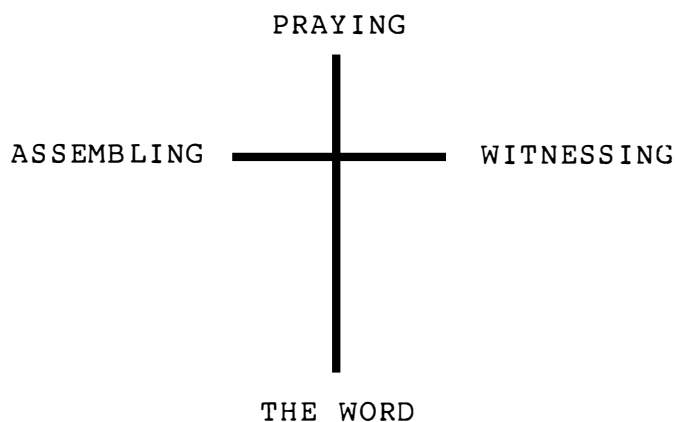
Those early Christians turned their world upside down with the power and effect of their witness; they preached a person, proclaimed a gift and looked for a response.<sup>64</sup> The early Christian was Jesus Christ in the world.

Just as a Jesus-centered life is inseparable from Christian community, so praying, the Word, assembling and witnessing are inseparable in the life of the Spirit-filled believer.

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DIAGRAM 1.3: A JESUS-CENTERED LIFE

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The amazing fact is that whenever and wherever and whatever believers live their message in the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaim that message with the love of Jesus, people in the world are shaken as on the day of Pentecost, "What shall we do?"<sup>65</sup>

END NOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1. McGavran, Understanding, 40-41.
2. McGavran, Understanding, 41-43.
3. McGavran, Understanding, 43-44.
4. McGavran, Understanding, 44-46.
5. Matthew 4:19.
6. Jones, Conversion, 231-232.
7. Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21; Acts 1:1-11;  
1 Corinthians 15:3-8.
8. Acts 1:1-11.
9. Acts 2.
10. Acts 2:1-4.
11. Jones, Conversion, 232-233.
12. Jones, Conversion, 233.
13. Barrett, World.
14. Acts 2:5-41.
15. Gerber, Manual, 19.
16. Gerber, Manual, 16-17.
17. Brown, Dictionary, 3/ 1114 and Kittel, Dictionary, 4/116.
18. Acts 2:41.
19. Green, Church, 150-151.
20. Acts 8:35; 5:42; 28:31.
21. Acts 2:22f; 3:13f; 7:1f.
22. Acts 14:16; 17:30.
23. Acts 2:38; Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 5:19f.
24. Acts 13:39.
25. Acts 14:3; 15:11; 13:46f; 4:12; 13:39.
26. Acts 5:31; 11:18; 18:27.
27. Acts 2:41; 4:4.
28. Green, Church, 152.
29. Acts 3:36.
30. Acts 15:19; 26:20.
31. Acts 9:35; 11:21.
32. Acts 15:3.
33. Acts 3:19 (AV 'be converted').
34. Acts 14:15.
35. Acts 26:18.
36. Stott, J. R. W., "The Meaning Of Evangelism", as quoted  
(Green, Church, 152) and Johnson and Malony, Conversion, 171.
37. Kittel, Dictionary, 2/ 54-55. Apodechomai in the New  
Testament occurs only in the Lucan writings.
38. Luke 18:17.
39. Acts 4:31-35.
40. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 108-109.
41. Acts 8:4.
42. Acts 8:15.

43. Acts 19:10.
44. Thus it was in Judea (Acts 6:7), Samaria (Acts 8:4-7, 14), on the First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:49) and in Asia (Acts 19:20).
45. Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1.
46. Acts 10:44.
47. Acts 13:7.
48. Acts 13:44.
49. Acts 6:4.
50. Acts 20:28.
51. Acts 4:4.
52. Acts 10:44.
53. Acts 8:21.
54. Green, Church, 149-150.
55. Schaeffer, Mark.
56. John 13:33-35.
57. John 17.
58. Gesswein, One, 31.
59. Gesswein, One, 32.
60. Gesswein, One, 31.
61. John 3:1-21.
62. Note the comments and questions by Nicodemus throughout his encounter with Jesus.
63. Little, Give, 23-45.
64. Green, Church, 150-151.
65. Acts 2.

## CHAPTER TWO

### UNITED

"Tremendous growth is going on in the church today."<sup>1</sup> The potential of church growth is unlimited. Beyond God's method of people reaching people through the Word and the Holy Spirit, the reason behind the tremendous growth and unlimited potential is that the Biblical, New Testament, Acts 2:41-47 model of harvesting is being followed. The question is not "What's gone wrong with the harvest?",<sup>2</sup> but 'What is going right with the harvest!' Those harvested in the Lord are instantly united with the harvesters of the Lord. Their hearts are warmed; their lives are changed; and they gladly and immediately join those who like Christ are transforming their world through genuine faith, hope and love. They become world-changers; their commitment to Christ means a commitment to the community of Christ. It is as it was for the early Christian. Solitary Christianity is an unknown; solidarity in Christ is the norm.

To the world two thousand years ago it was unimaginable to even consider the image of the church community as a stumbling block. In those early days the church was a powerhouse<sup>3</sup>--enormous in love, unbelievable in actions, spectacular in unity<sup>4</sup>. Through the Holy Spirit the church experienced capacity power<sup>4</sup>--God through His unique and miraculous Holy Spirit filled the church with corporate power for the congregation as a whole and individual power for every member. In the early church corporate power was the basis for individual power and individual power was the basis for corporate power; without the genuine life of both the corporate and the individual, there was no power. In those days the impact of the church was every bit as impressive and attractive as that of the individual.<sup>5</sup> Today the church is being launched<sup>6</sup> into a rebirth of the Christocentric mission of the first century:

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DIAGRAM 2.1: THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

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The Apostolic Age	The Church Age	The Great Schism & Dark Ages	The Reactionary Age	The Age of Mission
Christ's death to 100 A.D.	101 A.D. to 999 A.D.	1000 A.D. to 1516 A.D.	1517 A.D. to 1999 A.D.	2000 A.D. to the present day

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The early church of that first century launched a radical alternative of life, priorities and attitudes.<sup>7</sup> The local churches were God's counter-culture, salt in the midst of a disintegrating society.<sup>8</sup> And they succeeded! One impressive church with a remarkable success story was in Antioch:<sup>9</sup>

1. Here was a church devoted to every member ministry.
2. Here was a church which cared...about new believers, about the hungry and poor, about those who have never heard the gospel.
3. Here was a church where fellowship was real.
4. Here was a church where leadership was shared.
5. Here was a church where worship was dynamic...unity and variety, fasting and prayer, order, spontaniety and silence, obedience.
6. Here was a church which looked beyond itself.
7. Here was a church where thoughtful teaching was prominent.
8. Here was a church with one overmastering passion...only Jesus!

It is the church which seeks first the kingdom of God that will experience this constant, fresh effusion of the Spirit's power. It will also be the church that is free: free to serve God and the people of God, free to serve the world in terms that are relevant for each generation, free to move at the leading of the Spirit, free to explore fresh presentations of the unchanging message of the gospel, free to overcome the ravages of sin, suffering and death through the cross and resurrection of Christ, free to live and to love, knowing that God's kingdom will come and that nothing can stop it.<sup>10</sup>

The Church began in power, moved in power and moved just as long as she had power. When she no longer had power she dug in for safety and sought to conserve her gains. But her blessings were like the manna: when they tried to keep it overnight it bred worms and stank.... In Church History every

return to New Testament power has marked a new advance somewhere, a fresh proclamation of the gospel, an upsurge of missionary zeal; and every diminution of power has seen the rise of some new mechanism for conservation and defense.<sup>11</sup>

The early church moved in power because of intense and dynamic unity with Jesus and with each other.

Perhaps because of their very simplicity, perhaps because of their readiness to believe, to obey, to give, to suffer, and if need be to die, the Spirit of God found what he must always be seeking--a fellowship of men and women so united in love and faith that he can work in<sup>12</sup> them and through them with the minimum of let or hindrance.

It is the church that is willing to die to worldly standards that will know the power of Christ's resurrection. It may be envied for its depths of loving relationships or for its spontaneous joy; it may be hated and persecuted for its revolutionary lifestyle exposing the hollow values and destructive selfishness of the society it seeks to serve; but it certainly cannot be ignored. When God reigns among his people, they become a city set on a hill and cannot be hid.<sup>13</sup>

To have succeeded as God's counter-culture must have been very costly for the early church.<sup>14</sup>

#### THEY WERE BAPTIZED AND THEY WERE ADDED (ACTS 2:41B)

"Those who call upon the name of the Lord are those whom the Lord Himself has called--and called effectually."<sup>15</sup> Those calling upon the Lord together become those calling the world to the Lordship of Christ--the ekklesia; those called and summoned together by the heralding of the Holy Spirit and the Word together become the herald of the Lord to all<sup>16</sup> people. As God called the congregation<sup>17</sup> of Israel, He now calls the new Israel, the ekklesia, the church:

1. CALLED OUT: to be a special people for God's own possession through Jesus Christ.

2. CALLED FOR: a special relationship with God's Son, Jesus Christ the Lord.

3. CALLED TOGETHER: as the special community of God, the body of Jesus Christ.

4. CALLED TO: a special journey with God on the way to an eternal inheritance through Jesus Christ.



The new believing community of Acts 2 became the nucleus and model of the new Israel, the ekklesia, the church.<sup>18</sup>

To this community of<sup>19</sup> believers baptism was the mark of Christian belonging,<sup>20</sup> just as love was the mark of the Christian.<sup>21</sup> The invariable pattern of the New Testament was that those who repented and believed the Word were baptized.<sup>22</sup> The significant place of baptism is easily seen in the pattern of conversion in Acts.<sup>23</sup> Baptism for the early church and Christians was indispensable; there is no reason to<sup>24</sup> suppose that there was any other practice in the early church.

As John's converts were required to receive baptism in water as the outward and visible sign of their repentance, so Peter's convicted hearers were now required to submit to it. But there are now two new features in the rite of water-baptism: it is administered 'in the name of Jesus Christ' and it is associated with 'the gift of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>25</sup>

The decisive inward turning to Christ in repentance and faith was now given an outward sign, baptism:<sup>26</sup>

1. It was the mark of incorporation within the Body of Christ--"by one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body."<sup>27</sup>

2. It<sup>28</sup> was the mark of purification, of cleansing from the old sins.

3. It was the mark of justification--"you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus."<sup>29</sup>

4. It was the bath of rebirth, or the water of regeneration.<sup>30</sup>

5. It was the mark of the New Covenant which the prophets looked for with longing, when God's law would be interiorized in the believer.<sup>31</sup>

6. It was initiation into the realm of the Spirit, Himself the first installment of God's eschatological blessings for men and the pledge of ultimate redemption.<sup>32</sup>

7. It meant such a close union with Christ that the believer was a participant in His death and resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

Those who repented and believed the Word were baptized and added; that was the invariable pattern of the early church. Three strands taken together made a person a Christian: the human side--repentance and faith; the divine side--reception of the Spirit, adoption into the family of God, forgiveness of sins, justification, entry into the kingdom; and the church side--identifying with Christ in baptism and with the Body of Christ, the church, in corporate membership as a disciple. Certain characteristics identify an incorporated member:<sup>34</sup>

1. An incorporated member identifies with the goals of the church.

2. An incorporated member is regular in worship attendance.

3. An incorporated member feels a sense of spiritual growth and progress.

4. An incorporated member has taken necessary steps of affiliation with the Body.

5. An incorporated member has new friends in the church.

6. An incorporated member has a task or role appropriate to his\her spiritual gift\s.

7. An incorporated member is involved in a fellowship group.

8. An incorporated member regularly tithes to the church.

9. An incorporated member is participating in the Great Commission.

The church, the body of Christ, lives, gives and serves in the Spirit of Jesus--fluid, mobile, flexible, elastic, sensitive. The early church never heard about club-type membership:<sup>34</sup>

1. The person must attend the meetings.

2. The person must give his\her money.

3. The person must live a life of good character.

The body-type organism of the early church had no idea of good club membership--attending the club, paying the dues to the club and trying not to embarrass the club.<sup>35</sup> The fact is that the word 'member' is never found in the Gospels and the Acts; the word is 'disciples'.<sup>36</sup>

Juan Carlos Ortiz offers tremendous insight on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus making disciples and building the church:<sup>37</sup>

Being a disciple and being a member of the church according to the club-type membership are very different things. When we understood this in Argentina, we said to the people, 'We are no longer going to use the word member. We are going to use instead the word disciple. However, a disciple is one who obeys commands, so we all have a long way to go.' We buried the word 'member'. And we started to use the word 'disciple,' even though we knew that none of us were yet disciples. But at least we were on the way. How did we do it? I preached discipleship for months, before I started practicing it. Then one day, reading the Gospel according to Matthew, I saw that Jesus said all the multitudes were like sheep without a shepherd, and He chose twelve disciples. I said to myself, 'It's time for a change.' I had a club-type congregation. It was like an orphanage and I was The Reverend Juan Carlos Ortiz, director of the orphanage. When I realized this, I decided to start a new underground church in my home. And Johnny stole a group of members from Reverend Ortiz and started to make disciples out of them. I was Johnny. In this

new structure I am no longer needed to be a 'reverend.' Just Johnny. You know why? I had to be respected before. Now all I needed was love. And it's much easier to love a Johnny than to love a reverend. So, I gave my life to these disciples. I served with them. We went out to the country together. We lived together. We ate together. I opened my home to them. They came to sleep in my home. I went to sleep in their homes. Our wives started to meet together. We became like a family. And after six months, more or less--it didn't come overnight--these people were so changed that the whole orphanage noticed it. They stayed in the meetings. They hugged people. They were interested in the work of the people. The people came to them for prayer, for counsel. And after six months, I allowed them to steal other members from Reverend Ortiz's church--to make disciples out of them. Six months later these, also, were allowed to steal more members. It took us almost three years, but we finally stole the whole membership and changed our orphanage into a family.... Gradually, though, we discovered what a 'church member' really is.

FIRST, we understood that a member is NOT INDEPENDENT in the body-type membership. None of us have ever seen a nose walking along the street, or a foot walking by himself. The body must be joined and fitly knitted together. If a member is independent, he is not a member. And if he is a member, he cannot be independent.

SECOND, a member is a part of the body that UNITES two other parts. The forearm unites the hand with the upper arm. A member must be united with the other two.

THIRD, a member is one who NUTURES. He receives nourishment for himself and he passes nourishment along to other members submitted to him.

FOURTH, a member SUSTAINS. The joint sustains. Would my wife ask me when I get home, 'Johnny, where is your right leg?' Impossible, I cannot lose my members. They are sustained.

FIFTH, members PASS ORDERS. The head makes the order of the hand, but the order is passed through the other members. The hand does not ever get offended with the forearm and say, 'No, I will be detached from you. I will put a cable right from my hand to the head.'

SIXTH, this type of membership PROVIDES ELASTICITY TO THE BODY. Organization is rigid. Everybody must do the same thing, sing the same way, be the same thing. People with vision, who have new ideas, new talents, have to get out of the church and into something like Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, the Navigators, and many other extra-church organizations. But the body is elastic. And wherever there is a member of the church, there is the church. A student is going to be the church in his school. A physician is going to be the church in his office or hospital. And from the head goes the order to the whole body, providing elasticity for the church to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

On one single day three thousand were saved, received his word, repented, were baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, received the gift of the Holy Spirit and were added.<sup>38</sup> On 'that day' more individual believers were added to the little band of believers than throughout Christ's entire earthly life.<sup>39</sup> During Christ's lifetime His influence was limited to a comparatively small area of Palestine, now 'greater works' would expand His influence to widely scattered places and an increasingly larger number of people. The words of Jesus were literally fulfilled as these committed and called believers were Spirit-filled to do the 'greater works'.<sup>40</sup> --"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father."<sup>41</sup>

#### JESUS-CENTERED COMMUNITY

'The Coming One' of whom Jesus spoke now had baptized His people.<sup>42</sup> The immediate effect of this outpouring was winning...

an impressively large body of adherents, who formed with them a new religious fellowship in Jerusalem--the fellowship of disciples of Jesus, knit together in unity by the newly imparted Spirit. They followed what they called the Way--the way of faith and life initiated by Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

These were ordinary people responding to the gospel--'God's Only Son Paying Everything Lovingly'--and belonging to an extraordinary community. It was a Jesus-centered community; the quality of life of these disciples in their love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control was in radical contrast to their pagan world. Individually and corporately they lived their immediate and basic confession: 'Jesus is Lord and Christ.'<sup>44</sup> No wonder the early church with its simple confession turned the world upside down. It's unlikely anyone ever asked a person of that early Jesus-centered community, "How many members in your church?" Easily imagined is the spontaneous and loving answer as one of the early disciples refers to the three mistakes in that one question:<sup>45</sup>

First, THIS ISN'T A CHURCH--IT'S A MISSION. The risen Jesus told us that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciple of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."<sup>46</sup>

Second, IT'S NOT MINE--IT BELONGS TO CHRIST. The risen Jesus told us that "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."<sup>47</sup>

Third, WE DON'T HAVE MEMBERS--WE'RE ALL MINISTERS. The risen Jesus told us that we would do His works and even 'greater works.'<sup>48</sup>

And praise Him, it's true!

In Acts 2 a tremendously rich relationship is seen between God and His people in their Jesus-centered community; their distinctives provide a model of what it means to belong to the true way.

#### KERYGMA

The birth of the church began with prayer and praise;<sup>49</sup> it continued with kerygma.<sup>50</sup> It was not sufficient for the Holy Spirit to fill the disciples, but the Holy Spirit prompted them to proclaim 'the mighty deeds of God' in the languages of many nations and Peter to stand and preach.<sup>51</sup> It was not sufficient for the lame beggar to be healed and walking and praising God; Peter again stood up to preach.<sup>52</sup> Nothing stopped those early disciples from preaching; even when they were persecuted and scattered, they went about preaching.<sup>53</sup> --preaching publicly to the crowds and preaching privately to the individual.<sup>54</sup> Everywhere they went, they preached. Those early decades of the church cannot be understood apart from its preaching--twenty per cent of Acts are the summary forms of messages and speeches of the early Christian leaders.<sup>55</sup>

Luke, in fact, lays such stress on the preaching ministry of the New Testament Church that he uses no less than thirteen different Greek words to describe the variety and richness of their verbal proclamation: they preached, heralded, testified, proclaimed, taught, exhorted, argued, disputed, confounded, proved, reasoned, persuaded and pleaded. Elsewhere in the New Testament the apostles announce, explained, confessed, charged, admonished, rebuked--about thirty different terms are used in all.<sup>56</sup>

The themes summarized as the most common in the early preaching are:<sup>57</sup>

1. The age of fulfillment has dawned: the Old Testament prophecies have been realized; the hope of Israel is now a present fact.

2. This fulfillment is shown by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.

3. In virtue of his resurrection he is exalted as Lord.

4. The Holy Spirit's presence in the church is a token of God's favor towards his people.

5. Christ will come again as Judge and Savior.

6. There is an appeal for repentance, an offer of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and an assurance of salvation.

This guide cannot serve as a stereotype summary of the kerygma of the early Christian, but it does indicate the essential content of the proclamation focusing on the mighty acts of God. The spontaneous warmth, tremendous passion, and urgent persuasiveness of that person-to-person proclamation of the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus...lead to an evaluation of His Person as both Lord and Christ...confronted persons with the necessity of repentance...promised forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup> In those early decades people were moved, "What shall we do?";<sup>59</sup> countless individuals made decisions for Jesus as Lord and Christ.<sup>60</sup>

The center of the life of the early church was its kerygma; it was super-charged! "The cosmic Christ can do for you what He has done for me"; "be saved from this perverse generation."<sup>61</sup> Listen as Peter or another of the early disciples tells and applies the story of woman with the hemorrhage:

Look at her state. This flow of blood was only a little thing, but a serious one. It cut her off from her family, her synagogue, and thus from her God, through the ceremonial uncleanness it brought. It gradually weakened her whole constitution as it went on year after year. And, worst of all, it was, humanly speaking, incurable. Is that not the situation you are in? Your sins may not seem large in your eyes, yet they separate you from your family, your fellows, your God. They increasingly grip your life, as you succumb to them time after time; and they are, humanly speaking incurable. Is that not your plight? Then listen to what I have to tell you. This woman had heard about Jesus; she came up behind Jesus in the crowd, she touched Jesus in faith (though it was a very imperfect faith, full of superstition: it is the object on which faith reposes, not the quality which faith possesses that is important); and at once she was healed. Jesus required her to take her stand publicly as one cured by him: she came in great fear and trembling, and told the whole truth. Then she went away--not only with her feeling to rely on, but with a solid word of Jesus, assuring her of her new relationship with him, and of the peace and healing into which she had entered through faith. Well...if Jesus can do it for her, he can do it for you. You have heard; you have come up to him hidden in the crowd, perhaps; will you not touch him for yourself? However defective your faith may be, if it is faith in Jesus, it will not be dissappointed. You will immediately be put in the right with God, and once you have publicly confessed him, you can enter

into the peace and power of the forgiven life: you can be sure of it, not because of your feeling, but because of the Lord's promise.<sup>62</sup>

Those early disciples stood up knowing what Jesus Christ would say if He was standing there and talking. They knew Jesus would not stand there and tell the people what miserable sinners they are. The early disciples became like Jesus as each one immediately began telling their audience, "What great people you can become if you will only let His Holy Spirit of faith, hope and love fill every ounce and fiber of your being!"<sup>63</sup> "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>64</sup>

The kerygma of the early church was so alive that the Christ-centered communication impressed, transformed and inspired their world. They didn't preach sermons but were simply witnesses of the experience with their Lord; they weren't controversial in their messages, but were persecuted because of their alarming enthusiasm for Jesus; they were positive--their wholesome stimulating communication attracted people; they encouraged the positive emotions of the listeners--"Repent! Be saved! Live right now in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, hope, humor, aspiration, respect, confidence, ambition, courage, optimism, creativity, faith, trust, and enthusiasm!"; they kept their messages well illustrated--for them God's mighty acts were His honest down to earth emotion generating stories; they aimed at specific human problems--their God could heal and transform human hurts; they weren't afraid to repeat themselves--they were constantly changing and so were their listeners; they never "preached" on something they didn't feel strong about--people marveled at their enthusiasm and sincerity; their messages were designed to help people be happy problem-solving functioning people--their simplicity strengthened their audience; they expected positive results--decisions were made and even unwanted persecution brought positive results; they always led people to Jesus as Lord and Christ--they knew every person needed an encounter with the inspiring, encouraging and hope-producing Spirit of their Savior,<sup>65</sup> God's Son; and they built people--they never destroyed them.

It was people introducing people to new life in Jesus Christ, people making people successful in their own lives, and people motivating people to serve God and their neighbors, both Christian and non-Christian.<sup>66</sup> At the center of that first century people-movement was its kerygma--reaching into the heart of people with conviction and results!

## DIDACHE

The early church was unquestionably a teaching church. The writer of Acts had already written the Gospel of Luke--facts about the birth, ministry, preaching, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus; that same author mentions in the Acts little detail of the didache--"Acts never quotes a saying of Jesus from His public ministry."<sup>67</sup> Luke's<sup>68</sup> central thrust is the rise and development of the early church and in the account the sharp distinction between kerygma and didache is absent.<sup>69</sup> Just as the two approaches could not be kept completely apart in the life of Jesus, so it was in the life of the early church; at one time one approach would dominate, and at another<sup>70</sup> time the other approach would control the method of presentation. Preaching and teaching are not two completely separate activities<sup>71</sup> but they can be separated.

What are called the 'sermons of Acts' must be thought of as the barest outlines of the preaching message. The actual presentation of these points required expansion to clarify, explain, illustrate, and enforce them. The speaker had to answer the demand for information; he had to answer the objections which arose in the minds of his hearers. In other words, preaching, in the actual expanded form in which it occurred, included a great deal of what we think of as teaching. For the unbeliever this teaching was necessary to clear away haziness, ignorance, questions, and objections. For the believer it was necessary to give a clearer understanding of the basic gospel message which he had already accepted<sup>72</sup> but did not fully understand or know how to spread.

The difference between teaching and preaching is not so much in the content of the materials as in the style of delivery. The art of teaching is intended for a thinking audience. It is the mode of communication we choose when we have a well-polarized group of people who are willing to think with us in logical sequences. With such a group we can explain the doctrines of the church and educate the people about the Christian life. Teaching can be inspirational and very exciting, but it will always have the characteristic of rationality. Teaching is a rational approach to the communication of ideas, with an objective to educate the hearers and produce alterations in their opinions and behavior. Preaching, on the other hand, is an intuitive method. Like an artist's painting, it communicates beyond the level of words by expressing emotion, opinions, and intuitive knowledge. Preaching is not necessarily irrational or illogical, but it does not depend on ordered sequences of thought for its method of expression. Preaching reaches into the heart of man and convinces him that what the speaker has to say is right...whether or not he understands it! Preaching



alone is incomplete. Teaching alone lacks the motivational impact to move large numbers of people at one time, and therefore is insufficient. The two forms of Christian communication complement one another and are essential to the other.<sup>73</sup>

Kerygma and didache were the communication forms of the early church.

The didache of the early church was patterned after the methodology of Jesus:<sup>74</sup>

1. INFORMATION--an exposition of the words and acts of Jesus; salvation-history.

2. FORMATION--an instruction on how to follow Christ totally, ethically, morally, persuasively; world-changing discipleship.

3. REVELATION--an education urgently calling for a 'right-now' decision to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and so receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit; life-transformation.

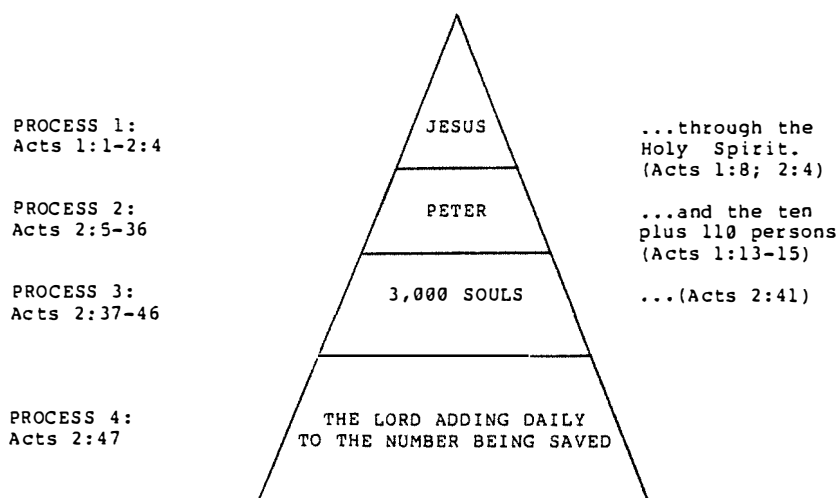
#### MATHATAEUS

Discipleship is communication of life;<sup>75</sup> the early church was built and continued growing through mathataeus--the making of disciples. The pattern of Acts 2 became an explosive catalyst for continued mathataeus:

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DIAGRAM 2.2: MATHATAEUS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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Picture three thousand one hundred twenty duplicates of Peter...totally attaching themselves together in a discipling relationship...living in the dynamic of the Holy Spirit...and continuing to duplicate their lives in Christ.

Fortunately Luke records those explosive acts of Jesus by the early disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit. The early disciples were no longer bound to the presence of the earthly Jesus. Instead, their dwelling in the Word<sup>76</sup> and in the Spirit<sup>77</sup> meant that they, as the disciples<sup>78</sup> of the kyrios, Jesus, remained in full relationship with Him. Already Luke had provided the decisive foundation for mathataeus--faith in Jesus Himself.<sup>79</sup> "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge him before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."<sup>80</sup> With these words of Jesus, Luke already had expressed the whole promise and also the great danger of<sup>81</sup> discipleship--the disciple's faithfulness to his Lord is crucial.

## KOININIA

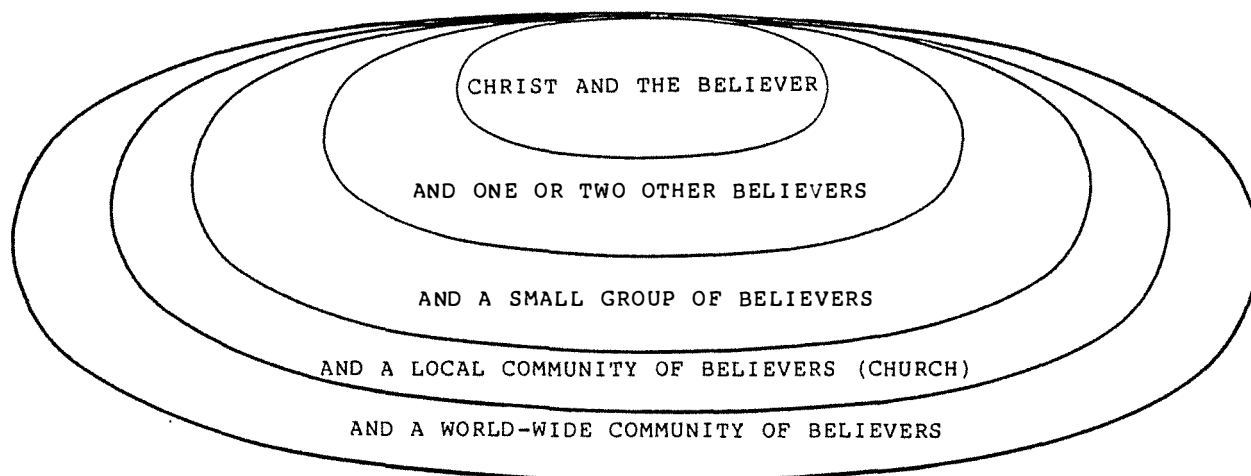
Luke's picture of the early church gives absolute significance to koininia. Yahweh through the Spirit of Jesus had now unilaterally founded and guaranteed a community of believers joined together in koininia--an ultimate fellowship expressing enthusiastic love for God and one another.

The koininia of the early church describes these relationships:

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DIAGRAM 2.3: KOININIA IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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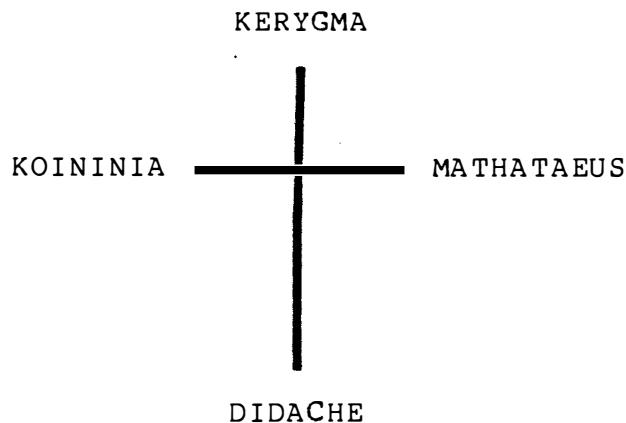


It was new and independent; it was unanimity and unity brought about by the Spirit; it was the individual being completely upheld by the community; it was not organized and is not to be seen in economic categories--private earning continued and sacrifice and gifts to the needy were voluntary; it was the continuance of the common life that Jesus led with His disciples--there was no hint of communal production, communal consumption, communal equality or communal possessions and private ownership continued; it was extraordinary acts of love shared together in an intense and acute expectation of the end.<sup>82</sup>

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DIAGRAM 2.4: A JESUS-CENTERED COMMUNITY

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God had only one Son; He made Him perfect in life and communication of life through kerygma, didache, mathataeus and koininia; and in His absence the community of believers, the church together became Jesus Christ in life and communication through the Holy Spirit.

END NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. McGavran, Understanding, 13.
2. Engel and Norton, Harvest.
3. Gesswein, One, 37.
4. Gesswein, One, 54.
5. Green, Church, 33.
6. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 174-175.
7. Green, Then, 34-35.
8. Green, Then, 34
9. Green, Then, 35-52 and Acts 11
10. Watson, Church, 63.
11. Tozer, A. W., Paths to Power, as quoted (Watson, Church, 63).
12. Phillips, J. B., The Acts Of The Apostles, Preface as quoted (Watson, Church, 63).
13. Watson, Church, 61.
14. Green, Then, 35.
15. Bruce, Acts, 78.
16. Acts 2:39.
17. Watson, Church, 67.
18. Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 303.
19. Green, Spirit, 128.
20. Schaeffer, Mark.
21. Green, Church, 153.
22. Marshall, Luke, 195: "In almost every record of conversion it is explicitly mentioned; the exceptions are Acts 2:47; 4:4, 6:7; 9:42; 11:21-24; 13:48; 14:1, 21; 17:34, and in these cases we have to do for the most part with summary statements in which the interest is not in the fact of conversion as such but rather in the growth and spread of the church."
23. Marshall, Luke, 195.
24. Lampe, G. W. H., The Seal of the Spirit, London, 1951, 33, as quoted (Bruce, Acts, 76).
25. Green, Church, 153.
26. 1 Corinthians 12:13.
27. 2 Peter 1:9.
28. 1 Corinthians 6:11.
29. Titus 3:5.
30. Green, Church, 317/64/153: "See the whole cumulative argument in chapter four of Lampe's Seal Of The Spirit."
31. Ephesians 1:13-14.
32. Romans 6:1f and 1 Peter 3:21-4:3.
33. Arn and Arn, Plan, 153-159.
34. Ortiz Disciple 105 and Ortiz Call 67
35. Ortiz, Disciple, 105.
36. Ortiz, Call, 77.

37. Ortiz, Call, 81 and Schaller, Assimilating, 51-68, (Twelve ways to keep people from joining your church).
38. Acts 2:38-41.
39. Acts 2:41.
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41. John 14:12.
42. Acts 1:5; 2:1f.
43. Bruce, Paul, 63.
44. Filson, Decades, 102 and Acts 2:36.
45. Schuller, Church, 59.
46. Matthew 28:18-20.
47. Matthew 16:18.
48. John 12:14 and Ephesians 4:1-16.
49. Acts 1-2.
50. Acts 2:4-13.
51. Acts 2:14f.
52. Acts 3:12f.
53. Acts 8:4.
54. Acts 8:35.
55. Filson, Decades, 10.
56. Watson, Church, 200.
57. Dodd, C. H., The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, as quoted (Watson, Church, 203).
58. Mounce, R. H., The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching, 84 as quoted (Watson, Church, 203).
59. Acts 2:37.
60. See CHAPTER ONE, page 22, 'THE MOVEMENT'.
61. Acts 2:40.
62. Green, Church, 64-65.
63. Schuller, Church, 134.
64. Acts 2:38.
65. Adapted from Schuller, Church, 135-141.
66. Adapted from Cho, Groups, 149.
67. Filson, Decades, 47.
68. Acts 1:8.
69. Filson, Decades, 45
70. Filson, Decades, 34.
71. Filson, Decades, 35.
72. Filson, Decades, 44.
73. Womack, Pyramids, 94.
74. For further discussion: Filson, Decades, 45f; Brown, Dictionary, 3/ 768f; Ortiz, Call, 68f.
75. Ortiz, Disciple, 105.
76. Acts 8:31.
77. Acts 14:15-17; 15:26f.
78. Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 490.
79. Luke 17:5; 22:32; Mark 16:16; Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 490.
80. Luke 12:8f.
81. Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 490.
82. Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 642.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TRAINED

Discipleship training was at the core of the early church; the resulting impact on their world was nothing less than staggering, explosive, unbelievable. They were familiar with only one method of discipleship training; their training modeled the discipleship of Jesus Christ. Their plan was astonishingly simplistic--no political manifestoes, no seeking of public positions to influence society, no educational prerequisites, no power struggles through terrorism and violence, no requirements for previous experience, no printing presses or publicity blitz's; for the early church discipleship training was simply 'life affecting life'.<sup>1</sup>

With Jesus the would-be disciple decided whether or not to pay the costly price--"the surrender of one's whole life to the Master in absolute<sup>2</sup> submission to His sovereignty. There could be no compromise"; there was only one way--the way of the cross. "The cross was but the crowning climax of Jesus' commitment to do the will of God. It forever showed that obedience<sup>3</sup> could not be compromised--it was always a commitment unto death." The call of discipleship from the early church was the same call, commitment unto death--"to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."<sup>4</sup>

The call now came for the Spirit of Jesus through the early church, "Come here after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."<sup>5</sup>

1. THE CALL IS FOR SERVICE--Jesus Himself commissions the disciple to gather men and creates the possibility of such service. "COME WITH ME."

2. THE CALL COMES FROM JESUS--That's the beginning of discipleship. "YOU GO."

3. THE CALL IS TO JESUS--Jesus affirms His relationship with the disciple. "MEN-FISHING."

4. THE CALL MEANS TOTAL COMMITMENT--Old ties must be completely broken. "LEAVE EVERYTHING."

5. THE CALL IS URGENT--Fishing for men is the evidence of and announcement of the time fulfilled in view of the forthcoming judgment of God. "NOW."

6. THE CALL PROMISES EFFECTIVENESS--All disciples reap the harvest for God Who is the ultimate Men-Fisher. "BRING MEN-FISH HOME."

The early church took discipleship training seriously; Jesus did!

He actually spent more time with His disciples than with everybody else in the world put together. He ate with them, slept with them, and talked with them for the most part of His entire active ministry. They walked together along the lonely roads; they visited together in the crowded cities; they sailed together in the deserts and in the mountains; and they worshipped together in the Synagogues and in the Temple...In this manner, Jesus' time was paying double dividends. Without neglecting His regular ministry to those in need, He maintained a constant ministry to His disciples by having them with Him. They were thus getting the benefit of everything He said and did to others plus their own personal explanation and counsel.<sup>6</sup>

The great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve.

Jesus shared with, cared for, taught, corrected, trusted, forgave and loved His small band of disciples; they often failed Him, disobeyed Him, misunderstood Him, hurt Him, dissatisfied Him, yet never did He withdraw His love from them.<sup>8</sup> His sharpest criticisms became tremendous faith-building exhortations. When His men-fishers were anxious about their lives, Jesus said, "O men of little faith?"<sup>9</sup> When His men-fishers were fearful about their lives, Jesus said, "O men of little faith?"<sup>10</sup> When one of His men-fishers was frightened about his life, Jesus said, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?"<sup>11</sup> When His men-fishers misunderstood His concept of life, Jesus said, "You men of little faith..."<sup>12</sup> When His men-fishers failed to renew life, Jesus said, "Because of the littleness of your faith, for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you."<sup>13</sup>

The early church copied Jesus' revolutionary discipleship training; their concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes but with men who the multitudes would follow."<sup>14</sup>

These men-fishers "were the product of the Lord"<sup>15</sup>; through the discipleship training model of the Lord in His men-fishers, the early church became His product:<sup>16</sup>

1. They went where the fish were.
2. They actively tried to catch fish.
3. They liked to catch fish.
4. They took their work seriously.
5. They knew that different fish required different fishing techniques.
6. They knew the work was difficult and often discouraging.
7. They knew fishing was not merely a sport.
8. They knew that to become a top-knotch fisherman took time and effort and practice; even then success would vary.

Following their Lord's model of discipleship training, the early church never considered men-fishing a sport or option but their livelihood until death.

#### THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES (ACTS 2:42)

Jesus Himself was the message and model for the early church. Those who opened themselves to the gospel gathered round Jesus, so to speak, in concentric circles.<sup>17</sup> The early church was the Spirit-baptized community of Jesus confessing 'Jesus is kyrios' in an environment in which there were 'many lords' (kyrioi). Immediately these early believers--eleven core disciples, approximately one-hundred-ten other disciplined believers including women, and three-thousand new converts from at least fifteen separate nations--continually devoted themselves in the teaching of the apostles, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. As the early church focused on building disciples of Jesus, it followed Christ's pattern of discipleship training:

1. It was Christ's idea to focus on the individual.
2. It was Christ's idea to train through small groups.
3. It was Christ's idea to minister through people, both men and women.
4. It was Christ's idea to disciple while reaching out to others, the lost and wayward.
5. It was Christ's idea to send out disciples in partnerships of two.
6. It was Christ's idea to expect results.

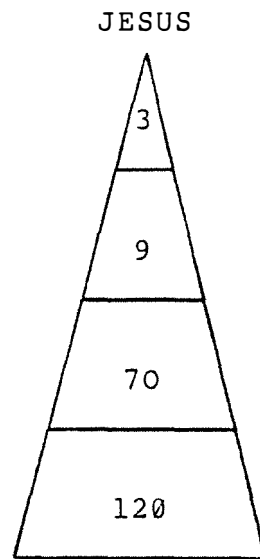
The discipleship training of the early church as described in Acts 2:42 undoubtedly followed the model of Jesus Christ:



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DIAGRAM 3.1: THE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING MODEL OF JESUS

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DIAGRAM 3.2: THE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING MODEL OF THE EARLY CHURCH THROUGH ACTS 2:42

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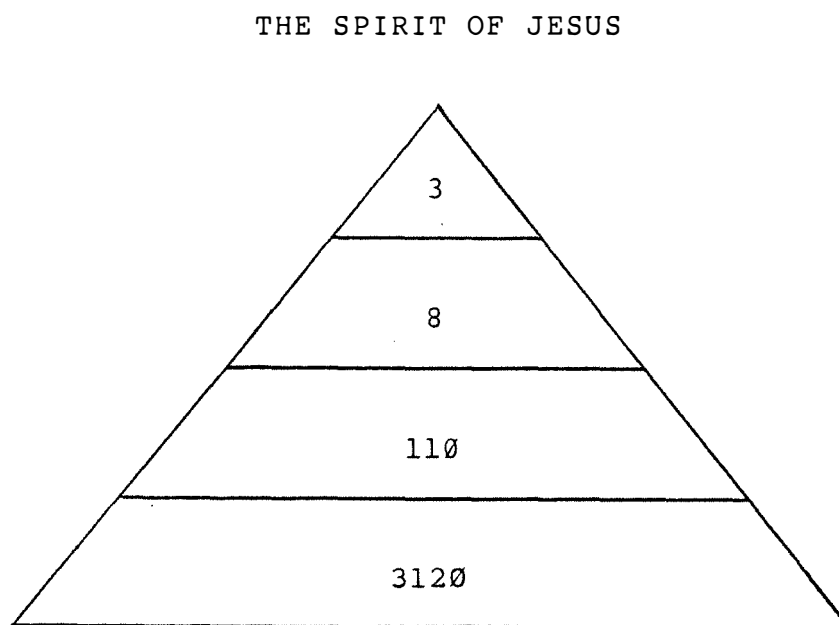


DIAGRAM 3.3: THE EARLY CHURCH IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

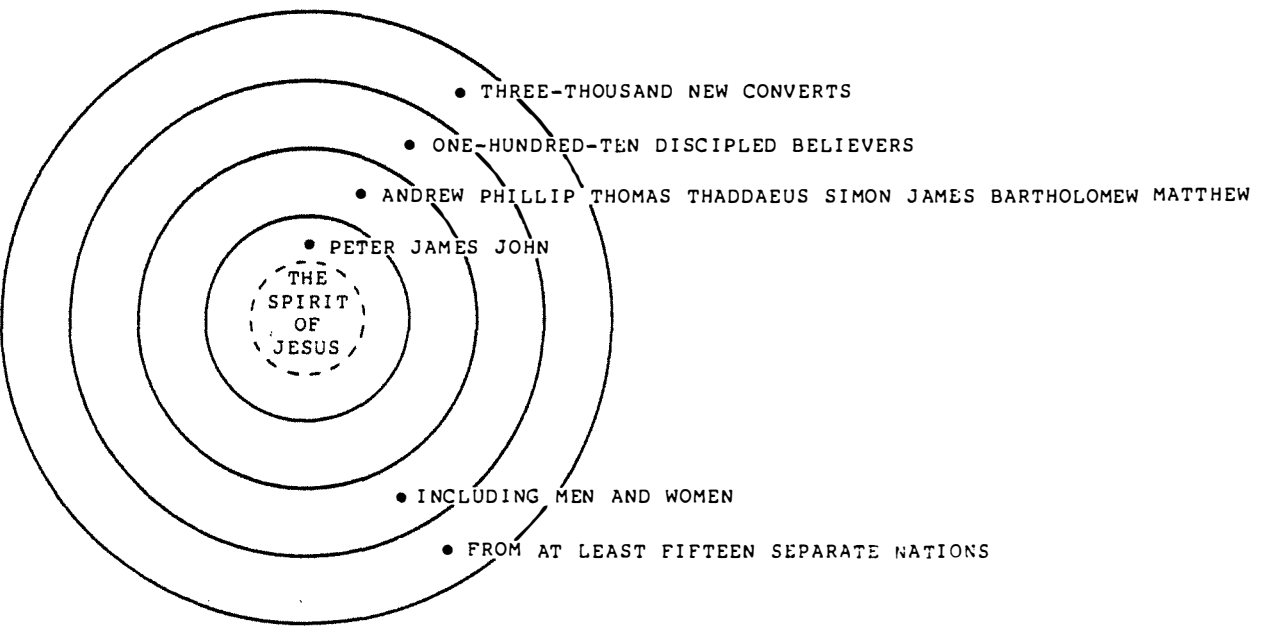
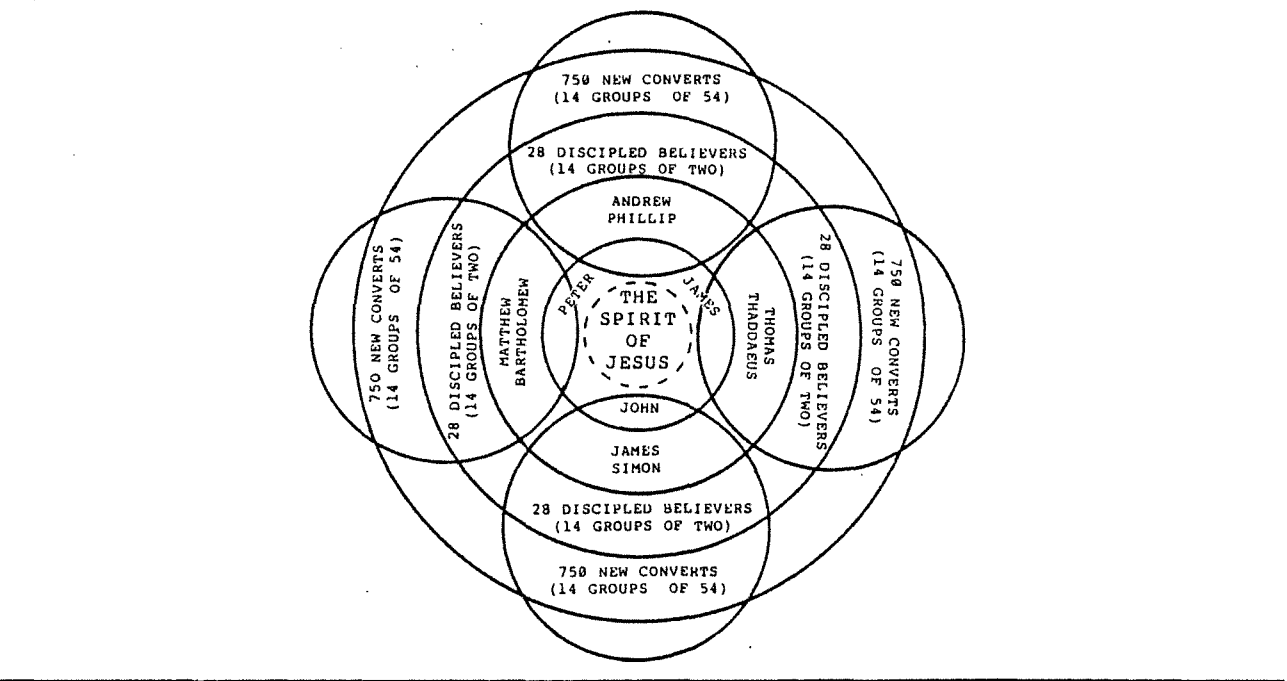


DIAGRAM 3.4: THE EARLY CHURCH IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING



Discipleship training was central in the life of the early church. Jesus-centered disciples reproduced themselves in the model of Jesus:

the Spirit of Jesus affecting...  
the inner core of three who affected...  
four groups of two who affected...  
fifty-six groups of two who affected...  
fifty-six groups of fifty-four who affected...  
Jerusalem...  
Judea...  
Samaria...  
the remotest parts of the earth.

The Spirit-baptized community of Jesus was growing; they received the word, were baptized and added and their entire lives were changed. "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."<sup>18</sup> They were 'continuing steadfastly.'

That is a tremendous word. It denotes a new attitude of life. Life is gathered up, life is intensified, life is devoted, life will now be lived with passion and power. 'They continued steadfastly.' They did not treat the thing cavalierly. They did not join the Church as a man joins a club, just to drop in when he feels inclined...When those people in Jerusalem were added<sup>19</sup> by the Holy Spirit to that holy communion it meant something.

The whole direction of their life changed; they were given direction through discipleship training. The emphasis was fourfold and inseparable: the teaching of the apostles and the prayers gave direction to their vertical relationships; the fellowship and the breaking of bread provided guidance in their horizontal relationships; and Jesus was at the center of their life as 'Lord' and 'Christ'.

## 1. TEACHING<sup>20</sup>

The apostles communicated the teaching of the Lord. Jesus gave His disciples concrete things to do instead of things to merely store away in their brains; they obeyed.<sup>21</sup> Their obedience to their Master Teacher and His Words gave birth to their radical and revolutionary lifestyle and teaching; it was:

A. Informational: the Old Testament, the Person of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the community of believers and the last days as salvation-history;

B. Formational: submission to the Lord and inter-submission to one another in the Lord as the way of world-changing discipleship;<sup>22</sup> and

C. Revelational: freedom to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world through the life-transforming power of the Spirit of Jesus.

## 2. FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship of believers is God's alternative community; for the early church it meant "unconditional availability to and unlimited liability for the other brothers and sisters--emotionally, financially and spiritually."<sup>23</sup> It involved a full commitment of their lives and all that they had to one another--it was in losing their lives for one another that together they became the Spirit-energized community of Jesus in their locale. True discipleship happened because there was true fellowship--people were reached and incorporated as a dynamic functioning indispensable part of the early church. The dynamic of their fellowship proved that the flavor, strength and power of the gospel could not be doubted; it<sup>24</sup> was enthusiastically demonstrated in a continuous cycle of:

- A. PRESENCE
- B. PROCLAMATION
- C. PERSUASION
- D. PRESERVATION
- E. PREPARATION
- F. PROPAGATION

For the early church fellowship was more than casual acquaintance of a working relationship through an institution, an organization, or because we happen to belong to the same group. Fellowship for the early believer was placing himself or herself so completely within a relationship of a small group of believers that their lives became authentic--their authentic life of togetherness produced individual authenticity before God and man.

## 3. BREAKING OF BREAD

Jesus ate with sinners; so did the believers of the early church. It was the practice of Jesus to eat with the tax-collectors<sup>25</sup> and sinners and thus demonstrate the love of God to them; the table of fellowship<sup>26</sup> became a sign of the extension of God's forgiveness to them.

The breaking of bread to those early believers symbolized:

- A. Their relationship with God through Christ who was broken for them in death;
- B. Their relationship with one another as the community of Christ; and
- C. Their relationship with their non-believing neighbors as they shared the forgiveness that was given for every person through Christ.

The actual practice took different forms:

A. The regular observance of the Lord's supper--this celebration by the early church was motivated by the earthly Jesus and the risen Christ sharing the bread and the cup with His disciples;

B. The ordinary taking of meals together--this was a celebration of true fellowship as the community of Christ; and

C. The table of fellowship with those outside the community of believers--on these occasions the celebration of table-fellowship symbolized Jesus as the Messianic Lord Who is the true bread<sup>27</sup> of life and that He will give it to all who come to Him.

In each form of table-fellowship the crucified and risen Kyrios offers Himself in the meal, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."<sup>28</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. PRAYERS

Jesus prayed;<sup>30</sup> His disciples prayed;<sup>31</sup> all of the one-hundred-twenty prayed;<sup>32</sup> and the early church prayed.<sup>33</sup> It was "no accident that Jesus often let His disciples see Him conversing with the Father."<sup>34</sup> "More than twenty times the Gospels call attention to Jesus' practice of prayer...

...It is given special mention during events of momentous decision in His life:

His baptism (Luke 3:21);  
The selection of the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12);  
On the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:29);  
The Last Supper (Matthew 26:27);  
In Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46); and  
On the cross (Luke 23:46).

...The Revelators also were impressed to record their Lord's intercession in connection with their own ministry:

The confession of His Messiahship (Luke 9:18);  
On hearing their reports of evangelism (Luke 10:21, 22);  
Teaching them to pray (Luke 11:1);  
The great high priestly prayer before He goes to die (John 17:6-19);  
The loving concern for Peter (Luke 22:32); and  
At the home of the two disciples in Emmaus after the resurrection (Luke 24:30).

...Prayer is prominent also in the exercise of His power-working miracles:

- Healing the multitudes (Mark 1:35);
- Feeding the five thousand (Mark 6:41; Matthew 14:19; Luke 9:16; John 6:11);
- Feeding later the four thousand (Mark 8:6; Matthew 15:36);
- Healing the deaf-mute (Mark 7:34); and
- Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41).

...Moreover, prayer is on the lips of Jesus as He looks at the multitudes whom He came to save:

- Before conflict with religious leaders (Luke 5:16);
- In the discussion with the Greeks who came to see Him (John 12:27);
- After sending away the five thousand who had been fed (Mark 6:46; Matthew 14:23);
- Blessing little children (Mark 10:16); and finally
- For those who nailed Him to the cross (Luke 23:34).<sup>35</sup>

Jesus just kept praying and the disciples kept observing until they got so hungry to be like Him, "Lord, teach us to pray...."<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus, beginning with a model prayer for a disciple,<sup>37</sup> taught His disciples by example:<sup>38</sup>

- Personal prayer;
- Public prayer; and
- Group prayer.

The early church followed Jesus example of how to pray, but now it was in a totally new way--through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit as a child of God who they now knew intimately as Abba, 'Daddy-God'.<sup>39</sup>

#### A. Personal prayer

Jesus prayed to His Father in solitude. He spent hours and whole nights in solitary prayer.<sup>40</sup> Beyond giving His disciples a prayer formulated in their own language, Jesus taught His disciples to pray in their mother-tongue; in doing so Jesus put prayer in the center of everyday life.<sup>41</sup> The early believers spent time alone with their tremendous Father God in private and personal conversation.

## B. Public prayer

There was probably not a day in the life of Jesus when He did not observe the three separate hours of regular and traditional religious prayer--morning, noon and afternoon.<sup>42</sup> Jesus no doubt also took part in sabbath worship and prayed with the congregation; grace at the table was natural for Him as well.<sup>43</sup> It was not when Jesus prayed but how He prayed that shattered the custom of prayer; it was "with an intimacy unheard of in Judiasm or any other religion."<sup>44</sup> It was the same for the early believers; prayer whether in the temple or synagogue or open air was in joyful confident<sup>45</sup> communication with their Father... 'Yahweh is salvation'.

## C. Group prayer

"We do not have a single example of God being addressed as Abba in Judiasm, but Jesus always addressed God in this way in His prayers."<sup>46</sup> The prayers of the early believers as they talked to Abba was an expression of their heart-relationship with their Father God--confident, secure, reverent and obedient.<sup>47</sup>

The early church prayed, asked, kneeled, begged, worshipped and knocked in communicating with God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>48</sup>--privately in solitude, publicly in worship, in groups, in the open air, in houses; it was the natural thing to do as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ--after all, they were children of Daddy-God, Abba.

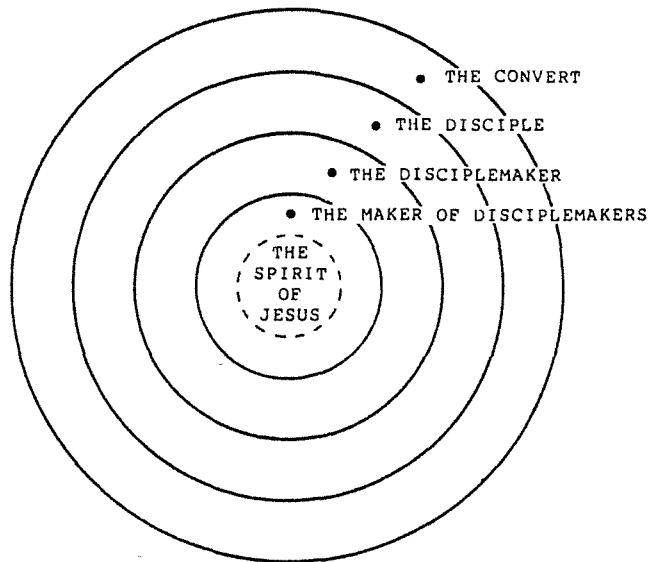
## JESUS CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP

Incredibly simple as it is, relationships are the core of Jesus-centered disciples; there is no other method which can make a disciple who models the life of Jesus. Jesus-centered discipleship training is the intentional process of life affecting life to produce the life of Christ in another person;<sup>49</sup> it is the communication of life that makes the impact. The discipleship pattern of the early church followed the model of Jesus: the maker of disciples<sup>50</sup>; the disciplemaker; the disciple; and the convert.

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DIAGRAM 3.5: DISCIPLESHIP

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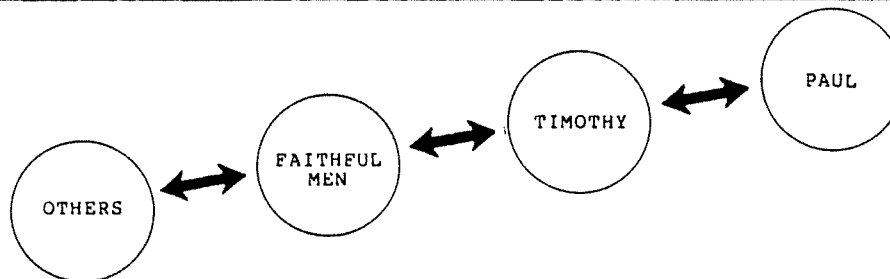
The methodology of Jesus to make disciples became the methodology of the early church--small groups. The purpose of the small group was both subjective and objective. The small group existed for life, internally for life's growing and building up and externally for life's rebirth and reproduction. The focus of the small group in Jesus-centered discipleship was always and consistently inward and outward. It was a life-lab--a laboratory for sharing life as well as a laboratory for serving life. Where the Word and the Spirit were present in honesty, openness and authenticity, God's people were thrust out into believer-unbeliever togetherness; the reverse was equally true: believer-unbeliever togetherness gave paralleled impetus for believer togetherness.

The target of Jesus-centered discipleship is people--inside, His family in relationship, the church, the believers, and outside, His family without relationship, the unchurched, the unbelievers. For small groups to aim at less than the target of Jesus-centered discipleship is to miss the mark and model of Jesus. It was in small groups through the Word and the Spirit that life affected life and gave world attention to a people called Christians, 'the Christ ones'. These small praising communities gave life and birth to lifestyles pleasing to their Lord as they penetrated their world with Christlike love. Their voluntary oneness and togetherness gave birth to tremendous voluntary individual wholeness and holiness as well as corporate togetherness and oneness. It was through spiritual reproduction and multiplication of themselves in the lives of others that touched the people and institutions of those early centuries. They were indeed 'the Christ ones'.



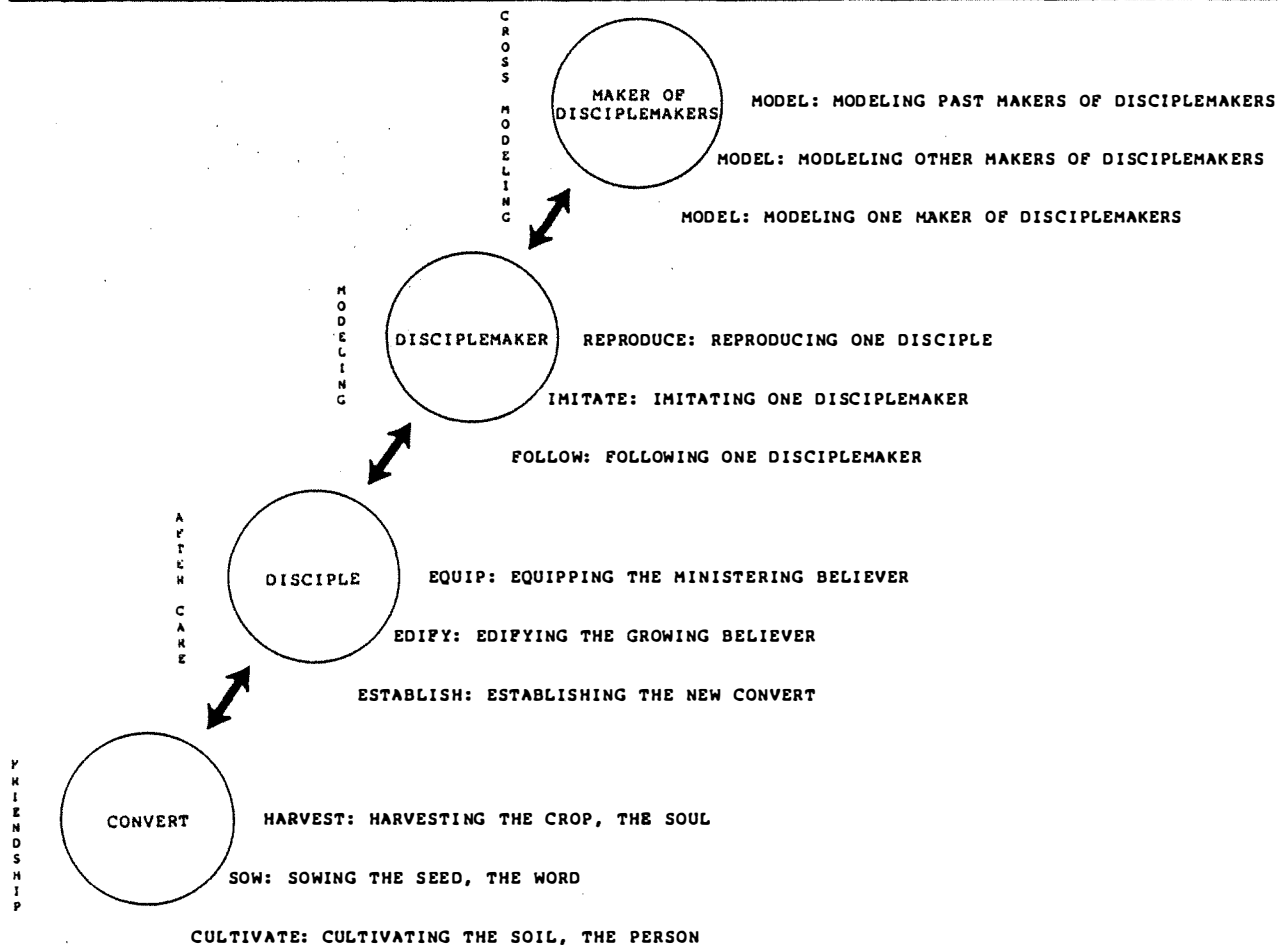
Paul briefly describes Jesus-modeled discipleship as it happened in the early church.

DIAGRAM 3.6: DISCIPLESHIP: 2 TIMOTHY 2:2



Jesus-modeled discipleship can be described and defined as follows:

DIAGRAM 3.7: DISCIPLESHIP: EXPANDED DESCRIPTION



Jesus-centered discipleship can be illustrated from both the life of Jesus and the life of Paul.

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DIAGRAM 3.8: DISCIPLESHIP: JESUS AND PAUL

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<u>JESUS</u>	<u>DISCIPLESHIP</u>	<u>PAUL</u>
JESUS	MAKER OF DISCIPLEMAKERS	PAUL
12	DISCIPLEMAKER	TIMOTHY
70	DISCIPLE	FAITHFUL MEN
120	CONVERT	OTHERS

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Jesus' training of his disciples was a crash course; in less than three years he set out to win their hearts, instruct their minds, bend their wills, bind them together into his new society, and equip them with the power and gifts of his Spirit. He knew that his time with them was short and that he must send them out into a hostile world which would oppose them, persecute them and destroy them. There was no time to lose. Although he had come to bring them "life in all its fullness," and to fill their empty hearts with his love and joy, he warned them of times of suffering: "The hour is coming...when you will be scattered...In the world you have tribulation...They will lay their hands upon you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons...You will be hated by all for my name's sake...Many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another...And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold..."<sup>51</sup> Such words were not a manipulative device, an empty threat. The persecution of the early church was appalling in its severity and cruelty. Only the love of Christ controlling them enabled them to conquer in his name. In their hearts, God's grace welled up so that they were able to praise him with inexpressible joy in the midst of appalling trials.<sup>52</sup>

The early church modeled Jesus training pattern for His disciples:

Initially, you see!  
Intermediately, you can!  
Finally, you do!

Jesus was always aiming toward the time when His disciples would do His ministry, but He patiently and cautiously revealed the nature of their mission. From the record it appears that Jesus initial attitude toward His disciples was 'Yes, you see!' And for a year or more they did not do much more than begin to watch Jesus minister in truth of 'life and lip' through the Holy Spirit. During that time together there was an emphasis by Jesus on keeping the vision of their unknown future ministry before them by His activity. He reminds them that they are called to follow Him in becoming men-fishers like Himself, but the disciples seem to do little about it.<sup>53</sup> Even after He chose and dedicated the Twelve for concentrated discipleship and ministry, they remained followers only with no evidence of doing ministry on their own.<sup>54</sup> It appears that almost spontaneously through watching Jesus in action and observing Jesus' lifestyle, the disciples individually declared 'Yes, I see!'

The next step in Jesus' discipleship training was giving the disciples opportunity to put into practice what they had been seeing Him do.<sup>55</sup> Jesus allowed and encouraged them to join Him in doing His ministry with 'Yes, you can!' The time for only watching was concluded, now it was time to go out under supervision; Jesus began sending them out to work the acts of Jesus in the world. Jesus gave His disciples definite and extensive instructions for their mission and ministry.<sup>56</sup> Each disciple began to do the work of Jesus with 'Yes, I can!' Jesus inspected what He expected of His disciples, their thrills and their irritations, their actions and their reactions, their successes and their failures. During this intermediate supervisory period in training the disciples, Jesus' involvement rotated between:

- A. COMMISSION: present assignment in ministry;
- B. INSTRUCTION: teaching to prepare the disciples for success in ministry;
- C. ACTION: the disciples ministering in the presence of Jesus and by themselves;
- D. EVALUATION: feedback and input concerning the disciples' ministry;
- E. APPLICATION: sharing spiritual truth aimed at their lives and their ministry; and
- F. RELAXATION: sharing of lives and experiences in preparation for assignment in ministry.

Finally, the time came for the disciples to become ministers of Jesus without His personal presence and supervision but with the presence of His Spirit. Jesus had prepared them, 'Yes, you do!' Through the Person of the Holy Spirit the disciples literally fulfilled the post-resurrection and pre-ascension commands of Jesus. Jesus left the accomplishments of His mission entirely with His disciples. They had seen Him in action; they had been involved in doing His work under His personal supervision; now they were to make disciples as Jesus had made disciples of them. And they did! Each of the eleven responded to Jesus' ultimate commission with 'Yes, I do!' Their ministry and discipleship imitated their Lord Jesus Christ in word and works; they were 'the Christ ones'; these disciples did the acts of their Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

The mode for Jesus' discipleship training was the small group, from one-to-one to one-to-twelve and often one-to-three. Jesus knew the necessity of open and close relationships. The small group was indispensable. His ministry would stagnate without growing and functioning life-to-life relationships. Making disciples, disciplemakers and makers of disciplemakers of new converts was the ministry of Jesus and the early church; without the small group Jesus strategy to reach the world would be worthless.

Those early believers enjoyed 'communion' with each other as believers, disciplers and ministers in Christ. It was more than the Lord's supper; they had 'fellowship'--koininia.<sup>58</sup> Otherwise, how could they continue in authentic Christlikeness?

How could they suffer, hurt and weep together? (1 Corinthians 12:26)

How could they laugh, rejoice and get excited together? (Romans 12:15)

How could they carry and share each other burdens and heartaches? (Galatians 6:2)

How could they restore and mend relationships? (Galatians 6:1)

How could they pray and lift each other to their Daddy-God? (Romans 15:30)

How could they teach and admonish each other with word and works and through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? (Colossians 3:16)

How could they find refreshing rest in the company of one another? (Romans 15:32)

How could they encourage and exhort each other? (Romans 1:12)

How could they forgive, be tender-hearted and comfort each other? (Ephesians 4:32)

How could they confess faults, errors, sins, failures and shortcomings to one another? (James 5:16)

How could they be truthful, honest and open with God and each other? (Ephesians 4:25)

How could they stimulate each other toward love and love-acts? (Hebrews 10:24)

How could they give to one another and care about each other? (Philippians 4:14)

Those early believers saw themselves as Jesus. After all, they were 'the Christ ones' and each needed the other and that life-expression could only happen in small groups. The early church experienced the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ in the informal structure of the small group and in the formal structure of corporate worship; both were essential to discipleship training and maturity in Christlikeness.

END NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Ortland, Children, 77.
2. Coleman, Plan, 51.
3. Coleman, Plan, 57 and Philippians 2:6-11.
4. Philippians 1:21.
5. Mark 1:17; Matthew 4:19; and for further discussion: Brown, Dictionary, 1/ 493; Lane, Mark, 67-68; Wuellner, Fishers.
6. Coleman, Plan, 43.
7. Bruce, Twelve, 13.
8. Watson, Called, 3.
9. Matthew 6:30.
10. Matthew 8:26.
11. Matthew 14:31.
12. Matthew 16:18.
13. Matthew 17:20.
14. Coleman, Plan, 14.
15. Harrison, Christ, 136-137.
16. Bonk, Jon, "When Fishing Isn't A Sport", Evangelical Beacon, reprinted in Moody Monthly, February, 1976, quoted by Prince, Life.
17. Jeremias, Theology, 167.
18. Acts 2:42.
19. Morgan, Birth, 161.
20. See DIDACHE, CHAPTER TWO.
21. Ortiz, Disciple, 110.
22. For further discussion: Ortiz, Disciple, 110f.
23. Sider, Christians, 164.
24. For further discussion: Snyder, King, 104f.
25. Marshall, Luke, 138; Luke 5:27-32; 15:1f; 19:10.
26. Marshall, Luke, 138; Hofius, O., Jesu Tischgemeinschaft mit den Sundern, Stuttgart, 1967, as referred to by Marshall, Luke, 138; Brown, Dictionary, 2/ 522f.
27. Jeremias, Parables, 227f: Jesus' table fellowship with the despised are "kerygmatic parabolic actions"--"Jesus' word of forgiveness coming to life in events."
28. John 6:35.
29. John 6:54-56.
30. Jeremias, Theology, 186: "Jesus himself was the model for a new way of praying. Yet apparently we know only a little about his prayers. The synoptic gospels hand on only two prayers of Jesus (Matthew 11:25f. par.; Mark 14:36 par.), and in addition the words from the cross (Mark 15:34 par.; Luke 23:34a, 46). The Gospel of John adds three of Jesus' prayers (11:41f.; 12:27f.; 17), of which at least the high priestly prayer is stamped throughout by the terminology and style of the fourth evangelist. In addition, there is a series of general statements about Jesus' praying, above all his praying in solitude, and a saying of Jesus about his

intercession for Peter (Luke 22:31f.). Secondly, there are also his instructions to the disciples on prayer, among which the Lord's Prayer stands out."

31. Luke 11:1f.
32. Acts 1:13-14.
33. Acts 2:42.
34. Coleman, Plan, 43.
35. Coleman, Plan, 73-74.
36. Luke 11:1.
37. Luke 11:1 and Matthew 6:9-13.
38. Green Then 99-103.
39. Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.
40. Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 6:12.
41. Jeremias, Theology, 189.
42. Jeremias, Theology, 188.
43. Jeremias, Theology, 187.
44. Green, Then, 99.
45. Brown, Dictionary, 2/331.
46. Jeremias, Theology, 66.
47. Jeremias, Theology, 67.
48. Brown, Dictionary, 2/855.
49. Ortland, Children, 77.
50. Warr, Disciples, 39.
51. Luke 5:1-11.
52. Watson, Called, 25.
53. Coleman, Plan, 83; Mark 1:17; Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10.
54. Coleman, Plan, 83; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16. Note that the disciples were involved in the baptism of believers and had positive reactions to early witnessing experiences.
55. Coleman, Plan, 84.
56. Matthew 10:1-11:1; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6.
57. Ortland, Love, 153: " Four phases of leadership seen in Mark: 1. I do it (Mark 1, 2). 2. I do it and they are with me (3:12). 3. They do it and I am with them (6:7-13, 30). 4. They do it and I am in the background (16:15-18)."
58. Ortland, Love, 11.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INVOLVED

Those early believers never quit. They were unstoppable in their witness of the Lord Jesus Christ; to be alive meant Christlike involvement with all people. Luke's summary statements of the spread of the gospel in those three crucial decades give evidence of their lifestyles:<sup>1</sup>

1. Acts 1:1-6:7 tells of the church at Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter and the rest of the Twelve; Barnabas is introduced briefly. The summary in 6:7 reads:

And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

2. Acts 6:8-9:31 takes up the story of the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians and recounts their ministry in Jerusalem, Samaria, the coastal plain of Palestine, and Damascus. Attention returns to Jerusalem at the close of the section, which tells of the choice of the Seven and the work of Stephen, Philip, and Saul. The summary verse, 9:31, reads:

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

3. Acts 9:32-12:24 recounts the spread of the church to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria. Here as in the preceding section attention returns to Jerusalem in the closing portion. The leading figures are Peter, Barnabas, and Saul; James the brother of Jesus is merely mentioned, but in a way that suggests his growing prominence. The brief summary sentence in 12:24 reads:



But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

4. Acts 12:25-16:5 tells first how Barnabas and Saul go from Jerusalem to Antioch, whence they are sent out on a mission which reaches Cyprus and southern and central Asia Minor. Peter and James the brother of Jesus are prominent in the conference at Jerusalem which considers the basis on which Gentiles may enter and live in the church. The summary verse, 16:5, comes after the agreement reached at the Jerusalem conference has been reported to the churches previously founded; it reads as follows:

So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

5. Acts 16:6-19:20 shows Paul as the one prominent figure; Silas, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, and Apollos play quite minor roles; this is the period of the independent Pauline mission to Macedonia and Achaia and to parts of Asia Minor, especially to Ephesus. Again the summary verse, 19:20, is quite brief:

So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

6. The sixth and final section, Acts 19:21-28:31, is by far the longest of the six; it includes nine and a half chapters. To this striking fact we must return. The section opens with Paul's decision to visit Jerusalem and then go to Rome; it tells of his final visit to churches already founded, of his voyage to Jerusalem, and then, after his arrest in Jerusalem and long imprisonment at Caesarea, of his voyage to Rome. It closes with Paul in prison in Rome but free to preach to all who come to him. Acts 28:30-31, the summary sentence and conclusion of the book, reads as follows:

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Picture those early believers--real people in whom Christlikeness was reproduced. They were men and women of vision and action. Their dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ and to one another as believers in Christ exploded into a dynamic determination to be like Christ in their world; they were the living reproductions of Christ. As Jesus had talked, they talked; as Jesus had walked, they walked; and as Jesus had been obedient, they were obedient. The risen Jesus had promised, "...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be 'MY WITNESSES' both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and

Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."<sup>2</sup> Those early believers literally fulfilled these words of Jesus following their baptism in the Holy Spirit. They were living witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ:

### 1. IN EXPRESSION

Speeches and summaries of preaching make up twenty per cent of the Lucan record of the early church. These expressions exemplify the heartbeat of those early messengers of Jesus as they shared with boldness by opportunity and invitation or when attacked and persecuted. Luke's record of "The Acts Of The Apostles" refers to only one member of the Twelve (Peter) among the most active and influential as leaders in the early history of the church (Peter, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Paul and James the brother of Jesus). The recorded expressions of those early decades share the flavor of Christianity in that day--rejection or acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, God, Son, Savior:

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DIAGRAM 4.1: PRIMARY EXPRESSIONS IN ACTS

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PETER	STEPHEN	PAUL	JAMES
2:14-36, 38-40			
3:12-26			
4:8-12			
	7:2-53, 56		
10:34-43, 47			
11:4-17			
		13:16-41	
		15:14-21	
		17:22-31	
		20:18-35	
		22:1, 3-21	
		26:2-23, 25-27, 29	

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### 2. IN EXTENSION

The early church was the extension of Jesus through the Holy Spirit; the community of believers did the acts of Jesus. The ministries of Peter and Paul appear to almost parallel each other and closely follow the miraculous pattern in the ministry of Jesus:<sup>3</sup>

Both Peter and Paul at an early point in their ministry heal lame men (3:2f; 14:8f);

Both Peter and Paul exorcize demons (5:16; 16:18);

Both Peter and Paul have triumphant encounters with sorcerers (8:18; 13:6f);

Both Peter and Paul raise the dead (9:36f; 20:19f);

Both Peter and Paul have miraculous escapes from prison (12:7f; 16:25f); and

Both Peter and Paul heal through other than touching (5:15; 19:12).

### 3. IN EXPANSION

God has a passion to find men and women and He wills beyond question that His lost children be found. The early church knew the God Who finds persons.

He has an overriding concern that men should be redeemed. However we understand the word, biblical witness is clear that men are 'lost'. The Finding God wants them found--that is, brought into a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ where, baptized in His Name, they become part of His Household. He is not pleased when many findable sheep remain straggling on the the mountain, shivering in the bitter wind. The more found, the better pleased is God.<sup>4</sup>

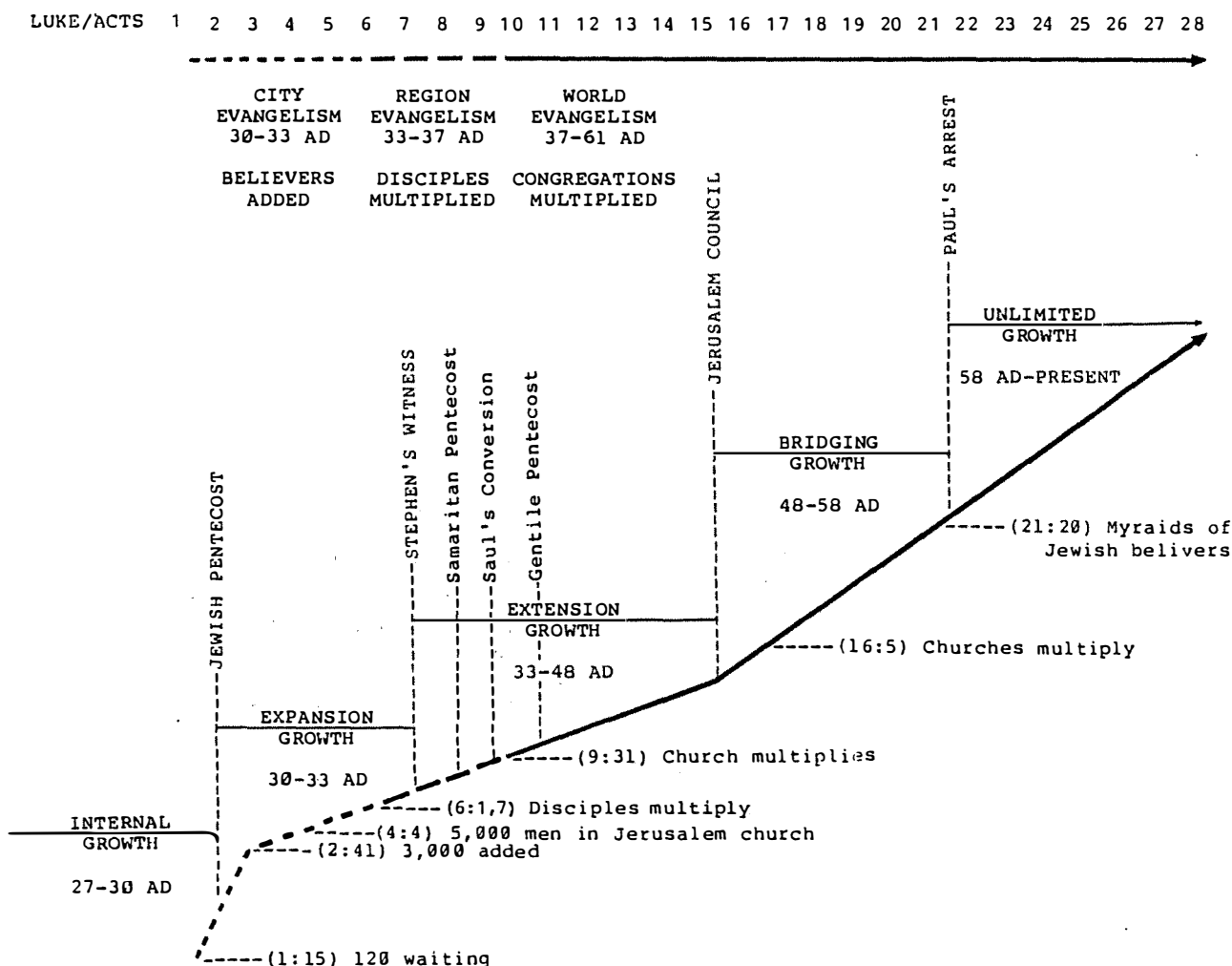
Luke records the amazing expansion of those early believers in Christ: (See DIAGRAM 4.2.)

### 4. IN EXTINCTION

The probability of total extinction has always been a possibility for the Christ-centered people movement--from Christ dying on the cross to an unimaginable small band of followers to the persecution and execution of believers in Christ. From its initial birth the church faced unrealistic hurdles and obstacles, stumbling blocks and roadblocks, death-threats and death; amazingly the church didn't just survive with its meager few followers, it expanded miraculously.

Those early believers lived in a society which had never been won over from paganism.

DIAGRAM 4.2: EXPANSION OF BELIEVERS AND CHURCHES



Wherever they went, Christians were opposed as anti-social, atheistic and depraved. Their message proclaimed a crucified criminal, and nothing could have been less calculated than that to win them converts. To the Greeks such a story showed how ridiculous the new faith was; to the Romans how weak and ineffective it was; while the Jews could not bring themselves to stomach it at all. To Jew and Gentile alike Christians were offensive, on account both of the doctrines and the behaviour credited to them. All this they had to live down if they were going to win anybody at all for Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Although the early believers were threatened inwardly from their own community and outwardly from the world, the relationship they had with their Lord Jesus Christ took them through any and all dangers, challenges and possibilities of extinction:

1. They were too small--their size was too insignificant to ever have an impact on the world, only 120 people. (1:15)

2. They were a divided group--a traitor had previously penetrated their midst, Judas. (1:16-20)

3. They had questionable leadership--their decision making process appeared shaky; leaders had qualifications but were chosen by chance. (1:21-26)

4. They had inadequate qualifications--they were Galileans, uneducated social outcasts, nobodies. (2:7)

5. They were accused drunkards--they were mocked by the public, known as wine bibbers and gave a negative public impression. (2:13)

6. They were too diverse--their group was marked by diversity of culture, sex, background, nationalism, language, ... no homogeneity. (2:41 and 2:8-11)

7. They were jailbirds--they so disrupted the religious life of the day that they were locked in jail and tried publicly. (4:3)

8. They were threatened--they were warned that they faced certain punishment if they continued to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. (4:17-23)

9. They were charitable liars--they attempted to give the impression of wholehearted charity while lying about their gifts...and were killed for their gesture of goodwill. (5:1-10)

10. They were hated--the religious leadership desired to murder them and whipped them for a warning. (5:18, 33, 40)

11. They were inconsistent--cultural complaints existed as certain widows in their group were overlooked and forgotten. (6:1)

12. They were arrested--they were secretly plotted against with false witnesses accusing them. (6:9-14)

13. They were murdered--mobs stoned them to death. (7:57-60)

14. They were persecuted--great persecution scattered them throughout Judea and Samaria. (8:2)

15. They were abducted--persecutors entered their houses and put men and women in prison. (8:3)

16. They were bribed--they were offered money to share their secret power. (8:18-19)

17. They were murderers themselves--they accepted their former persecutors and murderers into their group. (9:17)

18. They were unorthodox--they not only accepted their former persecutors but elevated them to leadership as proclaimers of their message.

19. They were plotted against--the Jews and Hellenistic Jews attempted to kill them. (9:23, 29)

20. They held uncertain beliefs--they weren't even sure of their own beliefs and were often perplexed. (10:13; 11:7)

21. They were mistreated--the political authorities abused them. (12:1)

22. They were executed--the political leadership had them killed. (12:2)

23. They were arrested and guarded for execution. (12:3-6)

24. They were publicly contradicted. (13:45)

25. They were instigated against. (13:50)

26. They were the objects of assassination attempts. (14:1-5)

27. They were worshipped as gods. (14:11-13, 18)

28. They were left as dead. (14:19)

29. They were divided internally--division existed on central issues. (15:2)

30. They were indecisive in leadership development. (15:37-40)

31. They were unjustly beaten and put in stocks. (16:19-24)

32. They were upsetting to city authorities. (17:1-9)

33. They were the object of agitation--crowds were stirred up against them. (17:13)

34. They were repeatedly antagonized against. (19:29-34)

35. They were political prisoners. (21:27-36)

36. They were imprisoned indefinitely. (28:30)

The flame of the early believers as witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ proved to be non-extinguishable in all circumstances, even death.

The most striking feature of this movement were the people--their enthusiasm, their love, their joy, their changed habits, their progressively transformed characters and their faith gave incredible weight to what they had to say. Their spontaneous outreach together as a total community of diverse people from differing ages, backgrounds, sex and cultures gave immense impetus to the movement.<sup>8</sup> The early believers had a quality of living and of outshining the best that unbelief could muster and a quality of dying which could not be found elsewhere; they were ordinary people with an extraordinary Christlikeness that brought individuals and groups from unbelief to faith. Most importantly, the early church was people. The following is a pen-portrait of Paul on his way to Iconium with two companions:<sup>10</sup>

And a man named Onesiphorus, who had heard that Paul had come to Iconium, went out with his children Simmias and Zeno and his wife Lectra to meet Paul, that he might receive him to his house. Titus had told him what Paul looked like; thus far Onesiphorus had not seen him in the flesh, but only in the spirit. He went along the royal road that leads to Lystra, and stood there waiting for him, and looked at those who came, comparing them with Titus' description. And he saw Paul coming, a man small in stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.

Whether or not this description belongs to literary tradition is debatable; what is significant is the impression of realism this pen-portrait makes. Those early believers were real people with a contagious enthusiasm for Christlike involvement with people.

THEY WERE...TOGETHER...ONE MIND...TOGETHER AND THEY WERE HAVING FAVOR WITH ALL THE PEOPLE (ACTS 2:43-47A)

Phenomenal, dynamic, explosive--that was the early church:<sup>11</sup>

43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;

45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

47 praising God, and having favor with all the people.

The two foci of Christ in His relationships with people were the two foci of the early church:

1. 'Reaching in' with the love of the Spirit of Christ to believers--the early believers were "together"<sup>12</sup> ... "one mind"<sup>13</sup> ... "together".<sup>14</sup>

2. 'Reaching out' with the love of the Spirit of Christ to non-believers--the early believers were "having favor with all the people."<sup>15</sup>

"And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe,"<sup>16</sup> "fear came upon every soul,"<sup>17</sup> "and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles."<sup>18</sup> "And great fear was upon all."<sup>19</sup>

Supernatural events were taking place; certain apprehension and caution gripped both the believing and non-believing population.

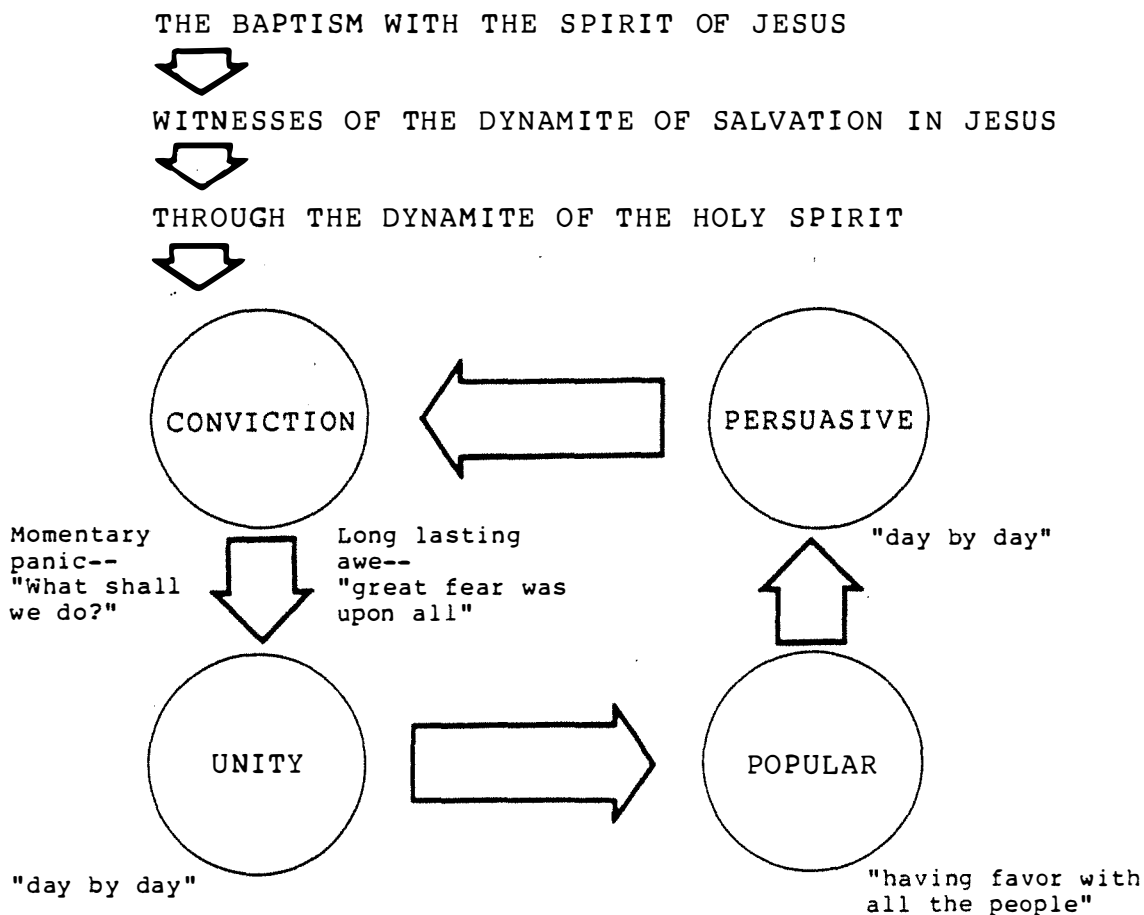
The conviction of sin that followed Peter's preaching was no momentary panic, but filled the people with a long-lasting sense of awe. This impression was intensified by the wonders and signs which the apostles performed.<sup>20</sup>

The 'dynamite of salvation',<sup>21</sup> exploded through the lives of the early Spirit-baptized community of Jesus--'Yahweh is salvation'. They were witnesses<sup>22</sup> of Jesus as Lord and Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit:

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DIAGRAM 4.3: DYNAMITE

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The ultimate Man-fisher was now fishing and harvesting 'relationships' through His body of believers, the early church in Jerusalem.

'Praising God' was certainly a distinguishing characteristic of the early community of believers.<sup>28</sup> Central in their commitment, unity, discipleship training and Christlike involvement was 'praise to Yahweh'. Yahweh...

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things; through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus, the Son, the Lord, the Christ,

...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess<sup>30</sup> that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughter shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophecy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be, that every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.<sup>31</sup>

...God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)--you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit

and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins.<sup>32</sup>

But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for 'Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved'.<sup>33</sup>

Praise to God in thanksgiving, prayers and hymns filled the early church community. The practice of Jesus was to sing hymns with His disciples;<sup>34</sup> praise in the early church followed this pattern with the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.<sup>35</sup> The early believers continually through Jesus offered up a sacrifice of praise to God--the fruit of the lips that give thanks to His name--and a sacrifice of service to God--the fruit of lives that do good and share in His name.<sup>36</sup>

The early community of believers...continued steadfastly...day by day...praising God...pleasing God:

Explosive as a force for God and  
Awestruck in fear of God.

As they were together...with one mind...together...praise to God  
'poured forth':

They were praising God in public worship;  
They were praising God in group worship; and  
They were praising God in personal worship.

Luke mentions the public and group expressions of praise; the personal, private and intimate praise to God gave birth and impetus to the God-centered praise in public and group experience.

Those early believers were together--reaching in to each other in the temple and from house to house--praising God. The public witness for Jesus was evident<sup>37</sup> as the believers met corporately for public worship in the temple. The temple for Jesus in His public ministry remained the focal point of meeting God and worshipping Him; the temple was still the divinely appointed place of worship in the content of believer's koininia--fellowship.<sup>38</sup> The houses of those believers were just as priceless an asset for group gatherings as the temple was for public gatherings. The early believers were together in the informal and relaxed atmosphere of their homes.<sup>39</sup>

1. They were in a private home in Jerusalem praying when the Holy Spirit 'filled the whole house where they were sitting'. (2:2, 1:13)

2. They were in private homes breaking bread--the Lord's supper, a fellowship meal of believers, sharing a meal with non-believers. (2:46, 42)

3. They were in private homes teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ just as they were doing in the temple. (5:42)

4. They were in private homes and were recognized as the church. (8:3)

5. They were together in a private home...praying, prophesying, healing, breaking bread..., the house of Judas. (9:11-18)

6. They were staying together in a private home, the house of Simon. (10:6, 17, 32)

7. They were in the private home of non-believers...preaching to non-believers, seeing non-believers, receiving the word and the gift of the Holy Spirit, baptizing the new converts of Christ, staying with the new believers. (10:22-48)

8. They were in a private home gathering together and praying, the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark. (12:12)

9. They stayed in the private home of new believers, the house of Lydia. (16:15)

10. They went from the prison-house in Thyatira where they were held into the private home of the jailer for table-fellowship with new converts. (16:19-34)

11. They were together in a private home, the house of Jason. (17:5-9)

12. They were in a private home to preach Jesus, the house of Titus Justus. (18:7-11)

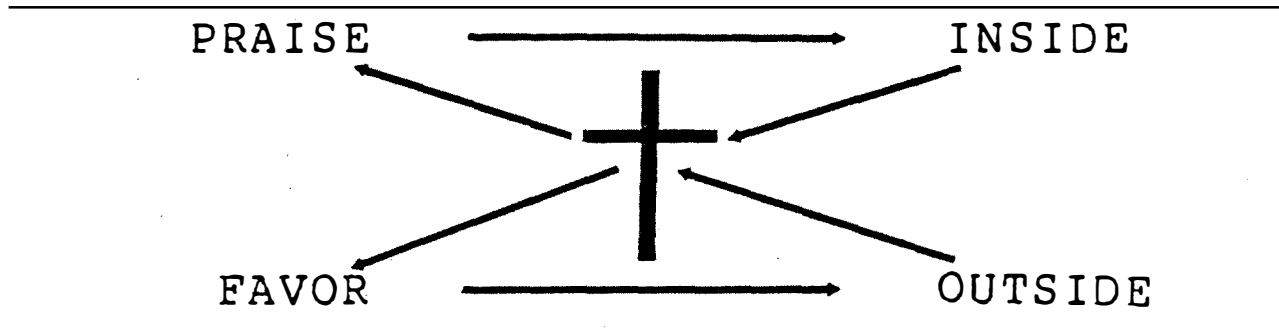
13. They were teaching and preaching to both Jews and Greeks publicly and in private homes. (20:17-21)

14. They were staying together in private homes, the house of Phillip the evangelist. (21:8)

The evidence of authentic 'reaching in' of the early believers was in their effectiveness of 'reaching out' to non-believers in mathataeus-centered evangelism--they were "having favor with all the people".<sup>40</sup> As the believers concentrated on the center--Christ and each believer in the body of Christ, the church--the Spirit of God led them in reaching the local community, the monotheistic fringe of God-fearers and the polytheistic pagan god-believers with their many lords, kyrioi.

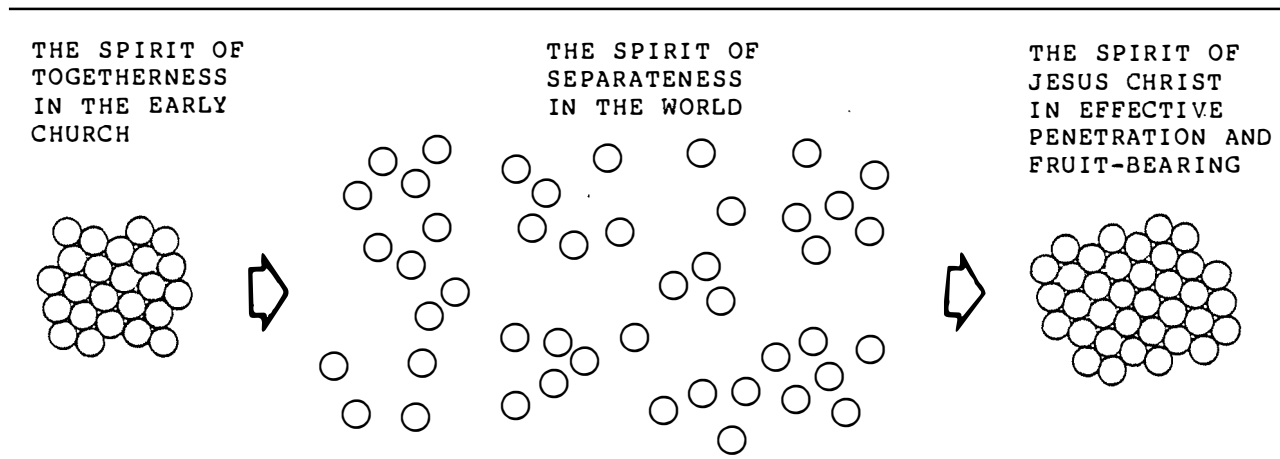
For the early church 'praising God inside'--with each other as the community of Christ--meant 'having favor outside'--with surrounding neighbors and people of the community in Jerusalem; and having 'favor outside' meant increased 'praise inside':

DIAGRAM 4.4: PRAISE AND FAVOR



The Spirit of togetherness of the early believers of Jesus explosively penetrated the spirit of separateness experienced in the world without Jesus and without salvation; for the early church it was the spontaneous and expected fruit of Christlike involvement with people.<sup>41</sup>

DIAGRAM 4.5: THE SPIRIT OF JESUS AT WORK



## JESUS-CENTERED MINISTRY

Jesus was gigantic; there was nothing commonplace about His words and there was nothing colorless about His works.<sup>42</sup> The early church was Jesus in personality, words and works. Any thought of anything less is not tolerated in the New Testament. The early church believed that God called every believer into Jesus-centered ministry. It was a shared<sup>43</sup> ministry with shared leadership and shared responsibility; together they were Jesus. For them Jesus-centered ministry was God through His people and by His Spirit making available all the Jesus is to every person every minute.<sup>44</sup>

The early church wholeheartedly believed in discipleship training; those believers were equally intense in their belief and openness to the Holy Spirit. God was making Jesus available to every person through supernatural guidance both horizontally and vertically. On the human level, God's people ministered as His family, His disciplers, His equippers, His trainers, His ministers and His witnesses. On the Spirit level, God's Spirit ministered in spiritual birth, spiritual growth, spiritual fruit, spiritual gifts, spiritual power and spiritual life. Jesus was being made available to every person because bridges were being built to people through God's Spirit and through God's people. It was these bridges over which Jesus came and still comes to people.<sup>45</sup> Those first century believers were tremendously effective Jesus-centered bridge-builders; they shared the same words and did the same works that Jesus did during His earthly ministry and even 'greater works' through the Holy Spirit and by their solidarity<sup>46</sup> as the community of Jesus. Together they cautioned each other:

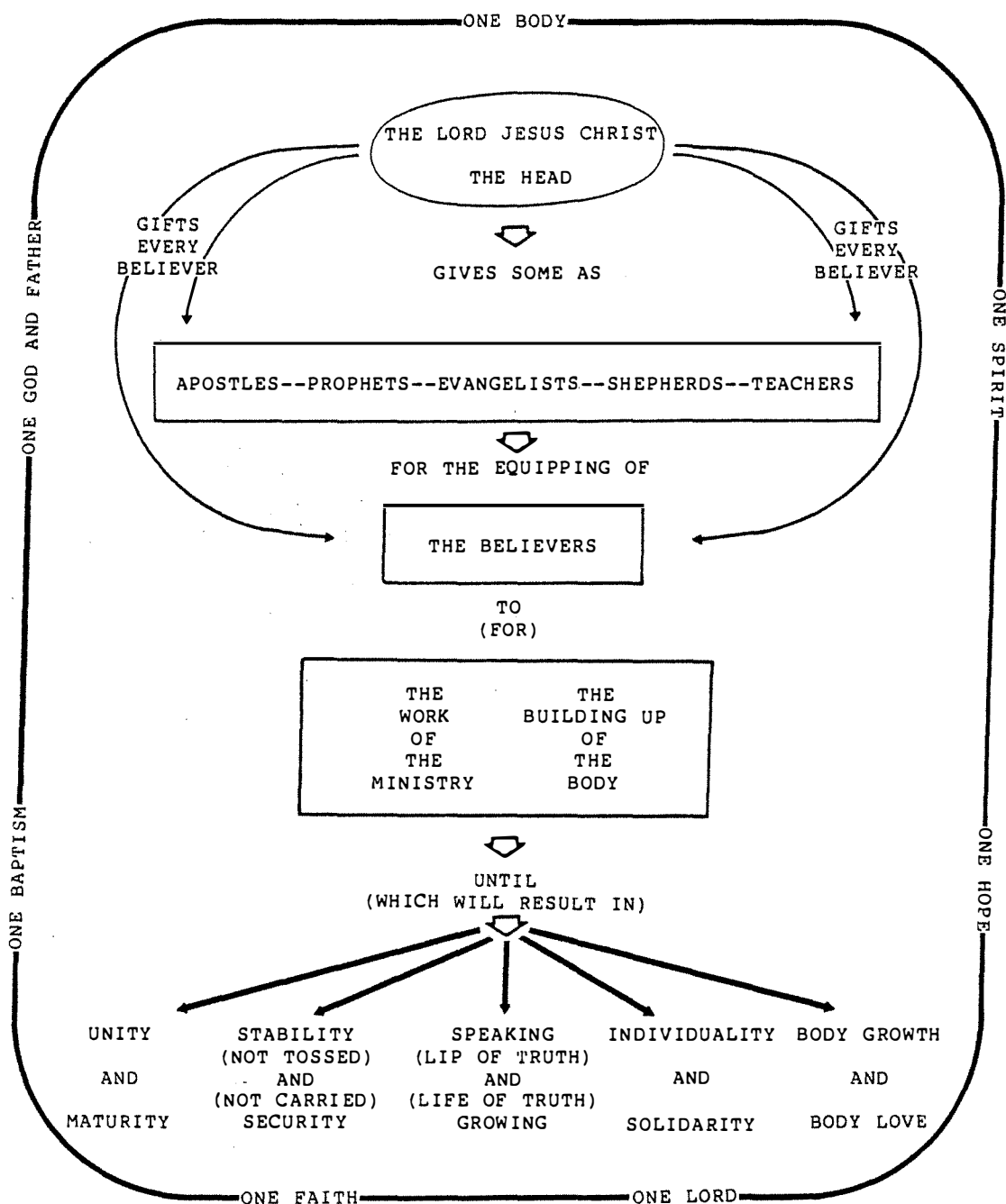
- A. Not to fear the Holy Spirit (Luke 9:13; Acts 1:1-8);
- B. Not to ignore the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; Joel 2:28-32; 1 Corinthians 12:1f.; Romans 12:1f.);
- C. Not to quench the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19);
- D. Not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); and
- E. Not to resist the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 3:7-19; Acts 7:51, 5:39).

The success of their efforts in adding and multiplying believers and churches proves beyond doubt their trust of God's people and God's Spirit; together they were Jesus in their world.

In recognizing the great temptation of the early church to fail to disciple, train and equip every believer for ministry, Paul shared five spheres of ministry. It seems clear from the New Testament that these were never considered to be offices in the church, but functions which enabled the whole community of Christ to be equipped for Jesus-centered ministry;<sup>47</sup> they can be viewed as representations of primary ministries without which the church cannot function as a force for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul saw the dangers: eccentricity--God's ministry is central and unique to the body of Christ; elitism--God's call is equally to every person

in the body of Christ; and individualism--God's ministry involves the whole body of Christ. Forseeing the harmful and unhealthy effects on the local church and Jesus-centered ministry, Paul shares God's plan for the church from a positive perspective.<sup>48</sup>

DIAGRAM 4.6: GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH IN EPHESIANS 4:1-16



Paul's presentation of God's plan for the church strikingly gives the ideal picture of what is to be the church's calling in the world and the practical outworking of this ideal in the everyday life of the local church, individually and corporately. God's intention is to unite one people into one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to grow that local church out of infancy into maturity as it takes on the personality, character and lifestyle of its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Following the Lord Jesus Christ's 'gifting' of every believer, first with His Gift par excellence, the Holy Spirit, and then with some spiritual gift, it is the nature of the local church to equip the believer. The actualization of the church community happens as:

Every believer is established in Christlikeness within and through the unity of the body;

The body is edified within and through the active participating and maturing of every believer; and

Every believer and the entire body is equipped in Christlikeness for ministry, solitarily and in solidarity, 'reaching in' and 'reaching out', in word and in works.

Without the equipping of the believer for Christlike involvement in ministry, God's ideal plan for His people to represent Him in reaching people will fail to be practiced. God's people are strengthened internally through equipping and training to be God's external visible force in the world. They are equipped for the work of Jesus-centered ministry and the building up of the local community of Jesus Christ. Ministers are to bring forth, beget and produce ministers; that's God's plan! A faith-encounter with Christ is not the diploma of Christianity; baptism is not the diploma of Christianity; body membership is not the diploma of Christianity; the filling of the Holy Spirit is not the diploma of Christianity; tongues or any other gift is not the diploma of Christianity. The diploma of Christianity is a Jesus-centered relationship with God and His people in continuous Christlike ministry as an equipped and equipping minister of the Lord Jesus Christ continually making available until death all that Jesus is to every person every minute. The equipping ones in the body, as shared by Paul, are:

#### APOSTLES

Apostle simply means messenger, envoy or emissary. The uniqueness of the first apostles can never be repeated; they were chosen by Christ and were the eyewitnesses of His ministry and resurrection. There could be no successors in the sense of being an eyewitness like the Twelve or Paul nor in the sense of apostolic succession, but there was the apostle in the Gentile church sense--a foundation-laying preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a church founder possessing the authority of Jesus Christ, and a community of faith builder as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Apostle is

used by Paul in this final unlimited sense, the continuing of Jesus as initiators and leaders of the whole church.

## PROPHETS

A prophet is one who speaks forth or speaks for another. Although the role of prophet is a possibility for every believer, "it is primarily identified with certain leaders who exercise it as a ministry."<sup>49</sup>

The true prophetic message has two sides which belong indissolubly together: it is proclamation of salvation and proclamation of condemnation. There are profound reasons for this: grace and judgment belong together. So, Jesus, too, announced not only the gracious dawn of the time of salvation, but also the catastrophe that precedes its full revelation. The good news is announced in the final respite before the judgment.<sup>50</sup>

Prophet as used by Paul is the the sense of Jesus' forthtelling of God's pressing nearness and the inauguration of His world-wide kingdom and dominion;<sup>51</sup> the prophet's ministry is described as exhortation, edification, consolation and admonition as God reveals Himself 'right now' to the believer and/or to the community of believers; the proclamation is in complete harmony with the once for all delivered Word.

## EVANGELISTS

An evangelist is a person who proclaims the good news.

Christians claimed that one God, good, loving and upright, was the creator of the whole world; that he had disclosed Himself personally in Jesus of Nazareth, through whose death and resurrection a new relationship with God was available for all men who wished to have it; and that his Spirit was available to enter human lives and morally transform them from within, while at the same time binding the Christians together in a loving fellowship to which there was no parallels in antiquity. Moreover, it was seen to be the task of every member of this fellowship to do all in his power to spread the gospel to others.<sup>52</sup>

The evangelist also proclaimed the truth and relevancy of this message in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.<sup>53</sup> Like Jesus, the connection between belief and behaviour gave incredible persuasive power and credibility to the word of God through the evangelist; a holy quality of life and lip was inseparable with effective evangelism.



## SHEPHERDS

A shepherd is one who takes care of God's people. Every believer has the opportunity and responsibility to take care of other believers in the body. In another sense it is a primary function of the church community through the shepherd function to relate to the people of God as a shepherd in freeing people from oppressive isolation and gathering them together as the flock of God.<sup>54</sup> Shepherds are people-centered and pour out their attention and love on others; the voluntary laying down of the life of the shepherd makes this unique relationship with God's people possible. The gentle and tender caring<sup>55</sup> of God's people by the shepherd is as it was with Jesus:

1. A true shepherd will be involved in the process of bringing life to new sheep (10:9, 28);
2. A true shepherd is involved in feeding the sheep (10:9);
3. A true shepherd wants the sheep to be healthy, happy and strong (10:10);
4. A true shepherd is willing to die for the sheep (10:11);
5. A true shepherd is intimately acquainted with the sheep (10:12);
6. A true shepherd is well known by the sheep (10:14);
7. A true shepherd speaks often with the sheep (10:14);
8. A true shepherd is concerned that the sheep love one another (10:16);
9. A true shepherd is looking for the dangers that could harm the sheep (10:16);
10. A true shepherd is concerned about the future and security of the sheep (10:27-28); and
11. A true shepherd always leads the sheep (10:27).

## TEACHERS

A teacher is a person who shares thoroughly acquireable knowledge and skills through repeated activity and in relationship with one or more pupils. All members of the church are required to be teachers in the larger sense, but within the body it is the teacher's right and duty to teach. It is the teacher in relationship with learners whose responsibility is to hand down fixed knowledge as well as bring people to Christ through the Word, strengthen people's faith, and nurture and lead believers in maturity. Like Jesus, teachers share facts of knowledge to be known and facts of life to be experienced; either without the other voids the teacher-learner relationship.

These spheres of ministry identified may answer the cry to get back to the New Testament church. They should be recognized as the fruit bearing community of the first century in ministry but never rigidly imposed as God's structure for ministry. Certain principles of Christian ministry forever free the body of Christ from strict rigidity:<sup>56</sup>

1. No distinction in ministry

The New Testament church does not distinguish in form, language, or theory between clergy and laity.

2. No division in ministry

They were all equal extensions of Jesus in space and time, men and women alike.

3. No dominance in ministry

The early church functioned under a plurality of leadership.

4. No uniform models of ministry

The models of ministry in the New Testament are flexible and versatile.

5. No hierarchical structure in ministry

Submission to Christ and inter-submission to each other in Christ is the clear emphasis of the New Testament concerning leadership and authority.

6. No solitary leaders in ministry

There were creative and gifted ministers like Paul who made an unbelievable contribution through the Holy Spirit, but there is never the slightest hint of a solitary leader minister like Jesus. The New Testament model is shared responsibility in ministry.

7. No ministries more highly approved than others

There existed the different functions of the local and itinerant ministers but one ministry was not more highly acclaimed than another.

Although there were creative and gifted leaders in the early church, there was an absence of status seekers. The sharing of ministry and authority in the early church as one in Christ gave significance to the believer and force for the community of believers in agape-action; all of the many individual parts of the body worked together as the body of Christ. For God there was no substitute for the witness and ministry of the rank and file believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; together as His Spirit-baptized community they filled their world with His presence.

The five spheres of ministry, as listed by Paul, are the primary functions enabling the local community of believers to equip and train believers in Jesus-centered lifestyles, in Jesus-centered community, in Jesus-centered ministry. Each function was visible in the life and ministry of Jesus and was intended to be modeled and patterned after Him. These spiritual trainers guide and equip the local church community of believers as:

Apostles providing spiritual design for the body of believers through vision and action; a primary ministry in the mature oversight of planting, growing and renewing of churches.

Prophets giving spiritual direction to the body of believers through immediate emphasis on the eternal and the profitable; a primary ministry that 'oils' the corporate organism as well as the individual believer with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelists encouraging spiritual decisions of the unbelievers and/or unchurched with an accepted friendliness focusing on another person(s) future and faith; a primary ministry in cultivating the soil, sowing the seed and harvesting the crop.

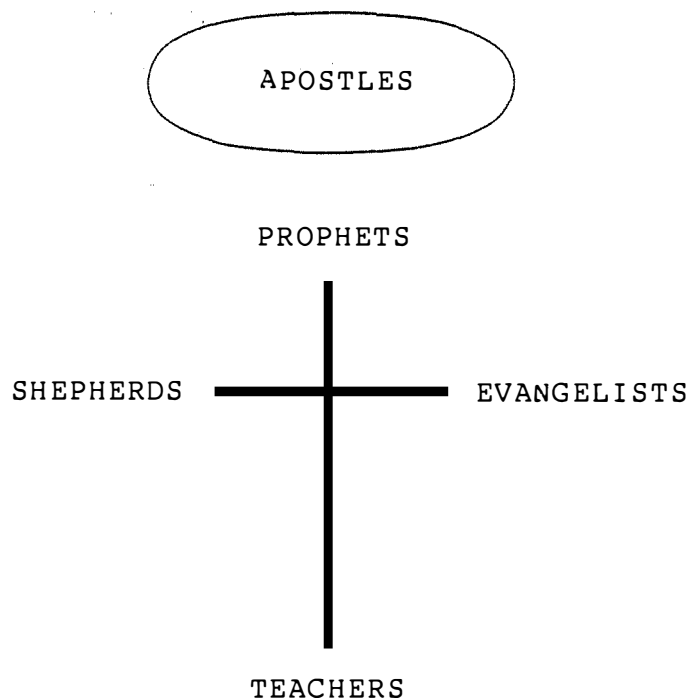
Shepherds building spiritual determination in the body of believers by caring and challenging; a primary ministry of tending and feeding God's people.

Teachers providing spiritual depth through explanation and example; a primary ministry of information about God and formation of God-centered lifestyles.

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DIAGRAM 4.7:PRIMARY FUNCTIONS IN EQUIPPING FOR JESUS-CENTERED MINISTRY

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END NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. Filson, Decades, 12-13.
2. Acts 1:8.
3. Bruce, Acts, 387-389.
4. McGavran, Understanding, 32.
5. Green, Church, 29.
6. References are to "The Acts Of The Apostles".
7. Green, Church, 274.
8. Green, Church, 274.
9. Green, Church, 275.
10. Hennecke, E., W. Schneemelcher, R. McL. Wilson, (editors), The New Testament Apocrypha, E.T., ii London, 1965, 353f. as quoted by Bruce, Paul, 468. The reference to "the face of an angel" is reminiscent of Stephen in Acts 6:13.
11. Acts 2:43-47a.
12. Acts 2:44.
13. Acts 2:46.
14. Acts 2:46.
15. Acts 2:47.
16. Acts 2:43.
17. Acts 2:43 (RSV).
18. Acts 2:43.
19. Bruce, Acts, 80: "Codd. ~~N~~ AC and some other authorities add: 'in Jerusalem; and great fear was upon all.'"
  20. Bruce, Acts, 80.
  21. Romans 1:16.
  22. Acts 1:8 verified.
  23. Acts 2:38.
  24. Acts 2:43.
  25. Acts 2:46.
  26. Acts 2:47.
  27. Acts 2:47.
  28. Acts 2:24.
  29. Hebrews 1:1-4.
  30. Philippians 2:6-11.
  31. Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17-20.
  32. Acts 10:34b-43.
  33. Romans 10:8-13.
  34. Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26.
  35. Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
  36. Hebrews 13:15-16.
  37. The healing of the lame man at the temple led to impromptu preaching and witness for Jesus in the temple (Acts 3:1f).
  38. Brown, Dictionary, 3/781-794.
  39. References are to "The Acts Of The Apostles".
  40. Acts 2:47.

41. For a discussion of 'aloneness': Watson, Evangelism, Chapter One.
42. Morris, Lord, 16.
43. Watson, Church, 264.
44. Adapted from Paul Landry, Pastor of Word of Life Church in Lynden, Washington, January, 1984.
45. Feuckt, Everyone, 107.
46. Watson, Called, 74-75.
47. Watson, Church, 257.
48. Adapted from MacArthur, Shepherdology.
49. Brown, Dictionary, 3/87.
50. Jeremias, Theology, 122.
51. Brown, Dictionary, 3/1106.
52. Green, Church, 178.
53. 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
54. Jeremias, Theology, 168.
55. MacArthur, Shepherdology.
56. Adapted from Kirk, People, 164.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVANGELIZED

Love unlimited typified the early believers. Could they possibly love God enough? Could they possibly love their non-believing neighbors enough? No, alone they could not, but together through the Spirit of Jesus they could. And they did! Their love had been converted; for them a conversion that didn't convert their basic love was less than Christian conversion. Their love became a fire that was unquenchable, unstoppable, unbelievable, unlimited. God had revealed His love in an incredible and impossible way--at the cross. The cross was the ultimate in love and opened the possibility of unlimited love through people--it broke them up, it broke them down, it repaired them, it restored them, it made them over, it redeemed them in love. Those early believers loved with the love of Jesus--it could be no other way.

'As they had been evangelized, now they began to EVANGELIZE (verb)--to proclaim the gospel. They were no longer spectators in their unloved and unloving neighborhoods, but were engaged with Christ in EVANGELISM (noun)--to proclaim the gospel. They were Christlike participants in EVANGELIZATION (noun)--the act of proclaiming the gospel. Each of them lived the Christlike role and some through spiritual gifts were known as EVANGELIST (noun)--a person who proclaims the gospel in expectation of a person(s) receiving salvation through Jesus Christ. Individually and co-operatively as the church community they were EVANGELISTIC (adjective)--refers to anything related to the proclamation of the gospel. The world knew them as EVANGELICAL (adjective)--refers to persons or churches who proclaim the gospel, especially to those who take a theological position on the subject.'<sup>2</sup> They talked little about the subject; like Christ they actively were doing something about it. Their love had been converted and like Jesus they lived and longed for this conversion of love in people--their families, their neighbors, their cities, their world.

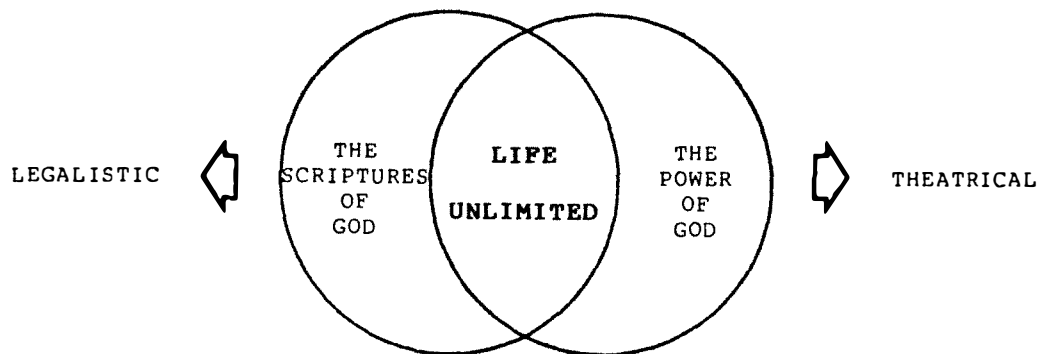
The early Christian, like Christ, was unpredictable in words and activity; what was predictable was their motivation--the love of God as demonstrated by Jesus on the cross:

1. Like Jesus, they demonstrated **LIFE UNLIMITED**.  
The scriptures of God and the power of God were inseparable and totally linked with their eternal future. For them life was neither a legalistic display nor a theatrical performance as mistaken by some.<sup>3</sup> The power of God came from the scriptures of God and the scriptures of God gave birth to the power of God.

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DIAGRAM 5.1: LIFE UNLIMITED

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2. Like Jesus, they shared **LOVE UNLIMITED**.  
Individually as one in Christ and corporately in oneness in Christ they penetrated their world as salt and light with the love of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

3. Like Jesus, they reached out to **NEEDS UNLIMITED**.<sup>5</sup>  
Whether reaching out to needs in bringing people to a faith-encounter or beyond the needs which brought people into a trust-relationship toward other clusters of needs, the early believers ministered to people--the believers and the nonbelievers--and their continuous needs. (See DIAGRAM 5.2.)

4. Like Jesus, they proclaimed a **MESSAGE UNLIMITED**.

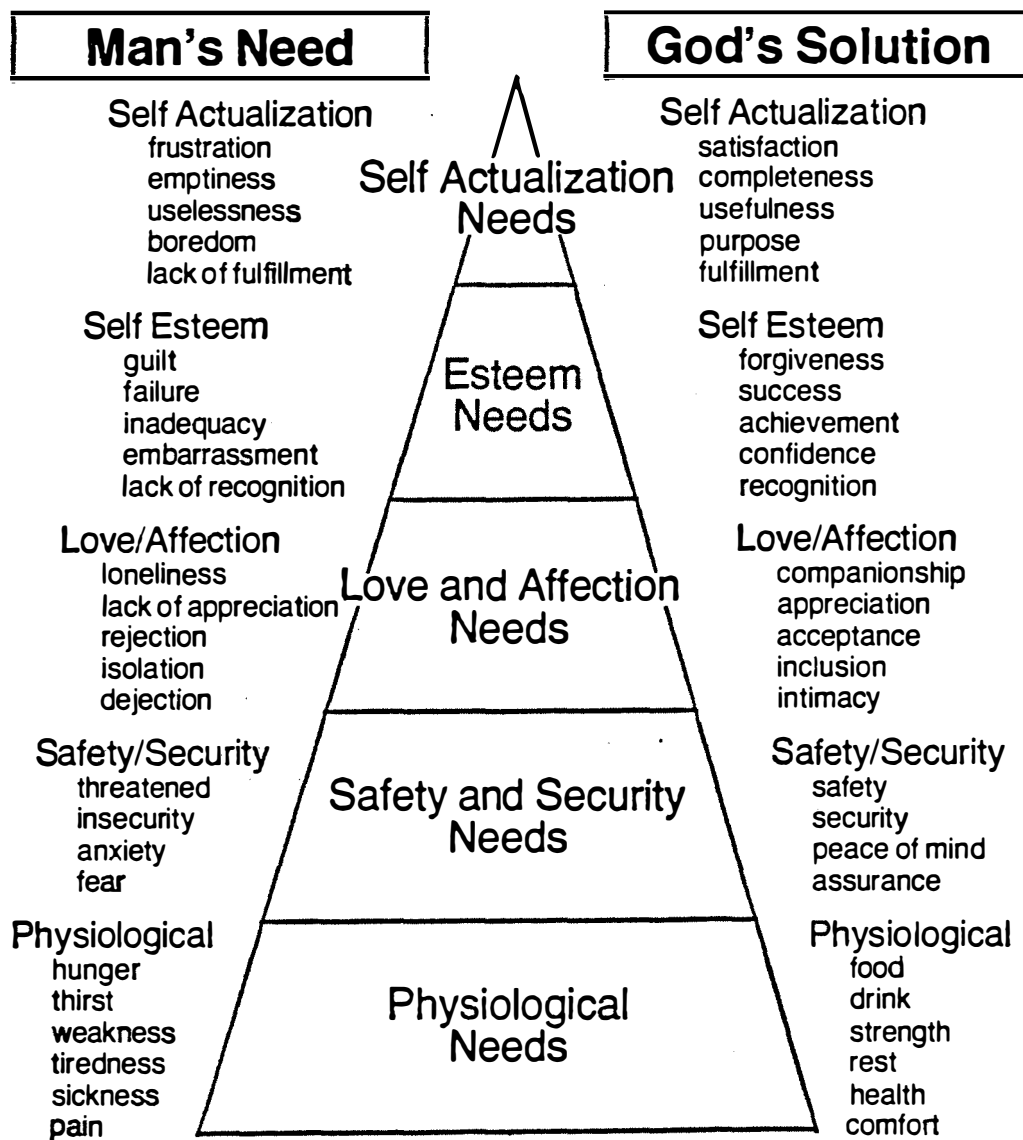
The Christian gospel was intended for all men everywhere. The early Christians had no hesitations on that point: it was the agreed starting point for mission. The very nature of God demands a universal mission; if there is but one God, whose will for all men is that they should be saved, then the preaching must be worldwide. If this supreme God has revealed himself uniquely in Jesus of Nazareth, and in him has acted decisively for man's redemption, then the news of this greatest of all events must be spread far and wide. The nature of the gospel no less than the nature of God involves the Church in a mission to all mankind.<sup>6</sup>

The first generation of the early church was both the message and the medium for that message.

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DIAGRAM 5.2: NEED-CENTERED REACHING

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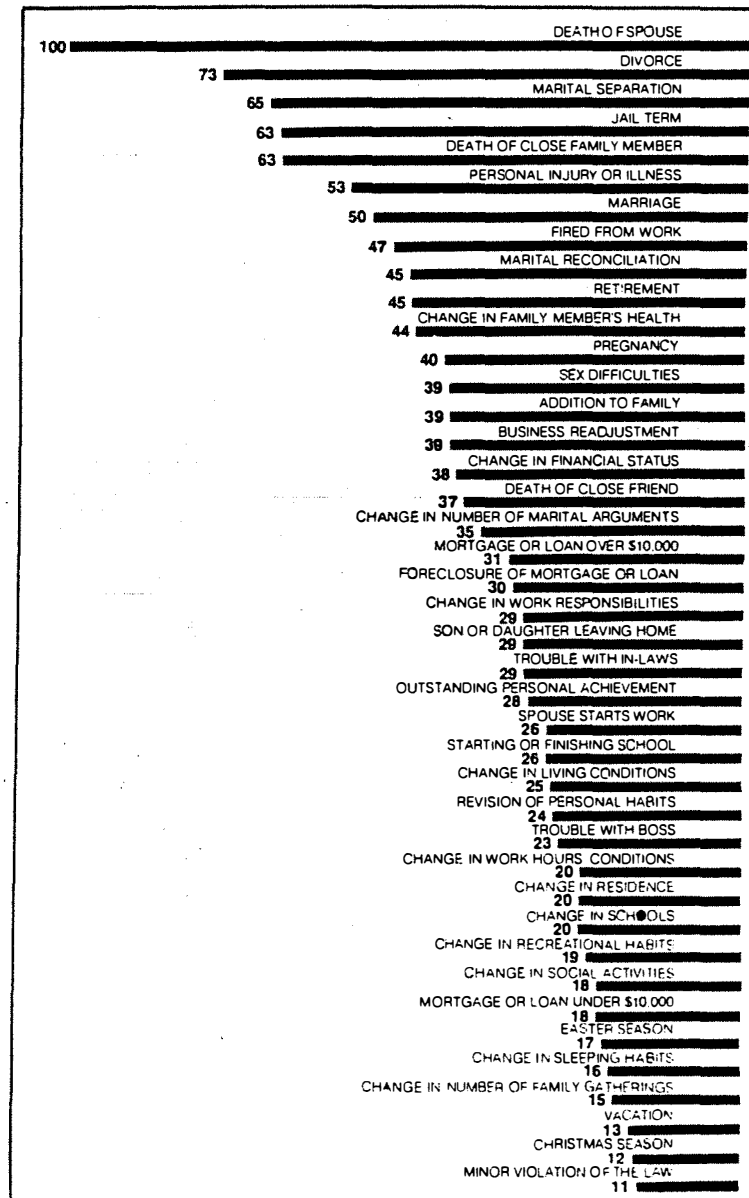



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5. Like Jesus, they ministered in TRANSITIONS UNLIMITED.<sup>7</sup> The Lord of the early believer was the Lord of all of life. Their 'life and lip' message of God's love and caring was shared during the significant transitions of changes and crises which people experience. Their God and gospel were creatively relevant for every person in the total life experience.



DIAGRAM 5.3: TRANSITIONS AND STRESS



#### 6. Like Jesus, they harvested FRUIT UNLIMITED.

The early harvesters of the Lord produced spiritual fruit. Their greater works yielded fruit in quality of Christlikeness and quantity of Christlikeness.

For the early Christians, their world was not composed of prospects but with people whom God had given them the privilege, responsibility and nature to love with the love of Jesus--the unlimited love of the cross.

THE LORD WAS ADDING TO THEIR NUMBER DAY BY DAY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED (ACTS 2:47B)

"And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."<sup>9</sup> Imagine Jerusalem with approximately twenty-five-thousand adults<sup>10</sup> and the Lord adding from that population to the church congregation new converts daily; if Jerusalem hadn't been saturated with the message of the salvation of Yahweh through the crucified criminal named Jesus, it would be. God used both the public witness and the private witness to reach people. Undoubtedly the family tree of daily converts grew largely out of the family tree of relationships--it was through the web of routine relationships that God shared and demonstrated the message of faith.<sup>11</sup> The witness about Jesus was heard by people known and trusted<sup>11</sup>--friends, extended family, associates.<sup>12</sup> The New Testament refers to this natural network of social relationships as oikos--a person's sphere of influence; a person's established social system; a person's household; a person's life relationships of:

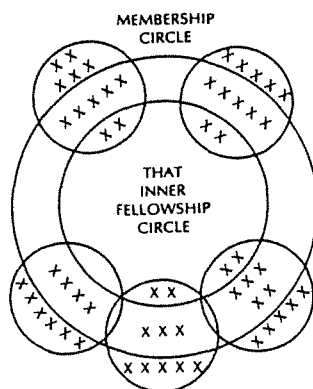
Common kinship--the larger family;  
Common friendship--friends and neighbors  
Common associates--special interests, work and recreation.

This natural web of relationships became the communication networks for the early believers. With two-hundred-fifty as the acceptable average web of relationships,<sup>13</sup> God undoubtedly penetrated the Jerusalem population several times over with the message of Jesus, 'be saved'; and they were! The church grew phenomenally! The church in public and in groups was together day by day and the Lord added new converts day by day. The webs of relationships became natural group discipleship training centers--the new convert could continue in his or her web!<sup>14</sup>

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DIAGRAM 5.4: WEBS OF RELATIONSHIPS

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Nor was involvement in Jesus-centered ministry unusual--it was the dynamic norm as these new converts modeled other believers in their unlimited love, reaching in to each other in Christ and reaching out to those without Christ.

It's unlikely the early church formed a committee on evangelism to plan mass evangelism campaigns or personal witnessing conferences. It's even more unlikely that they sat down and worked out a plan to spread the message of Christ.<sup>15</sup> What happened was that the natural networks of relationships became God's strategy for every person evangelism:<sup>16</sup>

1. Webs were the natural way for the church community of believers to grow.

2. Webs didn't require mass publicity campaigns.

3. Webs were the most fruitful way for people to be saved by the Lord.

4. Webs provided a constantly enlarging group of people to share with.

5. Webs and the receptiveness of non-believers to their message brought the greatest satisfaction to believers involved in Jesus-centered ministry.

6. Webs were tremendously effective in assimilating, training and stimulating the new convert.

7. Webs tended to reach entire families.

8. Webs used existing social relationships.

9. Webs provided the early church with the continuing possibility of becoming a people-movement.

For the early Christian it was potential unlimited; their potential congregation through their natural web of relationships became their potential harvest for their Lord. For the Lord and the early believers, it was unlimited love and church unlimited.

## JESUS-CENTERED EVANGELISM

Jesus-centered evangelism is a show and tell process; for the believers in the early church evangelism was the natural enthusiastic result of Jesus-centered lives and lips. Those harvested became the laborers of the harvest; those found became the searchers of the lost; those saved became the seekers of the dying; those won became the persuaders to those not yet convinced; and those caught became the fishers of all. It could be no other way; God's love had so infected them that not to spread their infectious lifestyles was impossible. They were ordinary people with a new and supernatural brand of love; they simply took the initiative to share Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and left the results up to God and themselves as communicators of His love.<sup>17</sup> There were results; they reached people.

How did they reach people? What principles did they follow?

What practical methods did they use? Were there certain steps that guaranteed success? Their method undoubtedly was spontaneous and the definite result of Jesus-centered lifestyles. The 'how evangelism actually happened' varied but a specific process can be identified---in this evangelism process the phases of cultivating, sowing and harvesting may or may not be followed or emphasized.<sup>18</sup>

DIAGRAM 5.5: THE EVANGELISM PROCESS

PHASE C	PERSUASION	HARVEST	CONVERSION	LORD
PHASE B	PROCLAMATION	SOW	CONVICTION	LIP
PHASE A	PRESENCE	CULTIVATE	COMMUNICATION	LIFE

People possibilities for evangelization emerge from natural webs of contact in the norm of life:<sup>19</sup> (See DIAGRAM 5.6.)

From a variety of people contacts, specific persons or families are identified spontaneously or strategically for a 'personal plan of action':<sup>20</sup>

DIAGRAM 5.7: PERSONAL PLAN OF ACTION

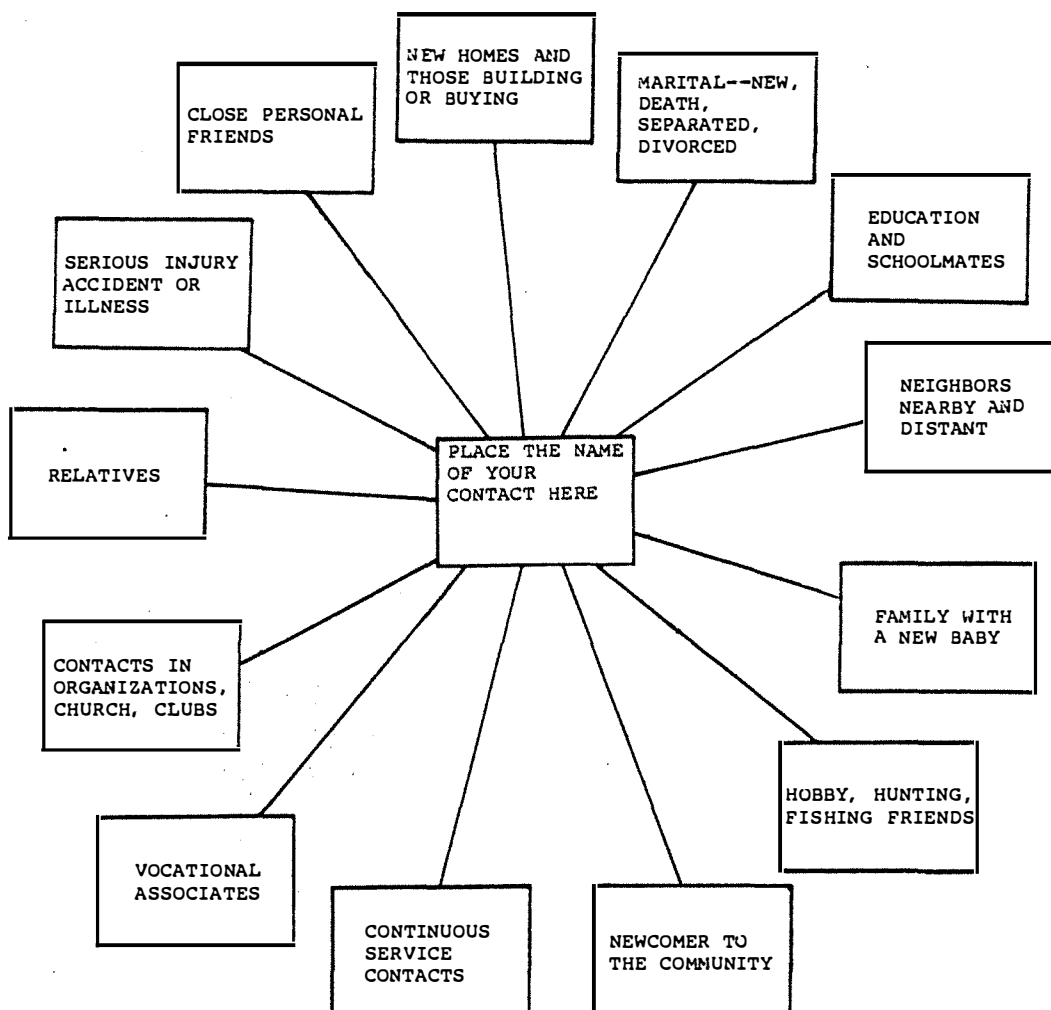
MY MOST WANTED LIST	PRESENT PHASE IN THE PROCESS				AREAS OF COMMON GROUND (eg. Family, Work, Sports, etc.)	ACTION STEP OR SOCIAL CONTACT NEEDED TO DEVELOP RELATIONSHIP	DATE TO BE DONE
	Cultivate	Sow	Harvest	?			
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____

*I will faithfully pray for the salvation of the above people and will attempt to reach them for Christ through my life and personal witness*

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DIAGRAM 5.6: PEOPLE POSSIBILITY SEARCH FORM

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## 1. Cultivating

'Evangelized' is defined as both the committing of oneself to Christ and the uniting of oneself to the body of Christ, specifically a local church in membership-discipleship. Therefore, both those without a relationship to Jesus Christ or those without a relationship with a local church are eligible to be evangelized.

In the process of evangelism, the target for cultivation is the 'unchurched'. The unchurched draw a picture of their real world from experiences, attitudes, hurts, hostilities and convictions. Listen to the unchurched as they describe themselves from 'inside their culture' and 'outside the church'--ten different categories of unchurchedness are described, several with subcategories:<sup>21</sup>

#### Type 1--THE ANTIINSTITUTIONALISTS

These defectors from the church think of themselves as solitary Christians, unaffiliated fellow travelers, better Christians outside than inside, the noncontaminated and purer. They fault the church's organization, politics, disunity, doctrines, emphasis and irrelevancy. And they defect because of the preoccupation of the church with itself and its own self-maintenance.

#### Type 2--THE BOXED IN

These freedom fighters describe their church experiences as overly confining. Most of them have been church members but have left because their lives were restrained, controlled and without room to move or breathe. Subtypes include: the Constrained--feeling the fresh air of freedom outside the church; the Thwarted--growing beyond the boxed-in-ness that prevented their continued growth toward maturity; and the Independent--fierce individualists who want none of the restraints of a prison or straightjacket.

#### Type 3--THE BURNED OUT

These dead batteries have been utterly consumed by the church; they have worked too hard and died at the task without energy, resources, talents or time. They are the Used--active and exploited, participating and manipulated, weary yet demanded of--and the Light Travelers--the baggage of those earlier years was needed for family, togetherness and values but now that church involvement is no long desireable or needed.

#### Type 4--THE FLOATERS

These bobbers and drifters stayed on the surface and never anchored in a church. There was never more than fringe membership, marginal association, occasional attendance, infrequent participation and peripheral involvement. There are both the Apathetic--lacking any deep feelings for the church and insensible to claims or loyalties--and the Marginal--habitually drifting from church to church without ever establishing strong or meaningful ties.

#### Type 5--THE HEDONISTS

These leisure-lovers see the church as an intruder into time that can be spent more profitably on instant gratification, whether pleasures of the moment or a succession of pleasure-satisfying activities. These compulsive hedonists explicitly or implicitly make it known that their free time is life's greatest good and goal and that the church is viewed as poor competition.

#### Type 6--THE LOCKED OUT

These unwanted believe that the church does not want them inside and has closed its doors and barred them from entering. These include the Rejected--hurt through disapproval, excommunication, disobedience to moral codes or self imperfections, real or imaginary--the Neglected--feeling slighted, overlooked, disregarded, forgotten and lost as a minority because of overt acts of the church--and the DISCRIMINATED--specifically citing deliberate prejudiced acts of the church to freeze out, snub and openly exclude them.

#### Type 7--THE NOMADS

These wanderers feel they are strangers to the religious communities they find along their migratory trail. These are the rovers of American society with no fixed abode. In their pursuit of a better life or upward mobility, they have become casual in their relationships and often feel in virtual exile with a community or in their long past meaningful religious preference.

#### Type 8--THE PILGRIMS

These adolescents are always on a ideological journey toward final or ultimate truth but they never arrive. Their central characteristic is tentativeness; they fear permanent closure and expect to be tolerated by others for their own unformed beliefs, meanings and values.

#### Type 9--THE PUBLICANS

These half-hearted perceive those within the church to be half-hearted--hypocrites, phonies, persons living double lives between profession and performance, fakers and scandalous. Their self-image is that of the publican--unable to measure up but at least honest enough to stay out.

#### Type 10--THE TRUE UNBELIVERS

These evaders to the church are outside; their act may be deliberate or unconscious. They are: the Atheists-Agnostics--denying the existence of any ultimate reality or God or holding that it's unknown or unknowable; the Diests-Rationalists--basing their theology on human reason rather than supernatural revelation; and the Humanists-Secularists--embracing worldiness and reason as the pathway to dignity and worth.

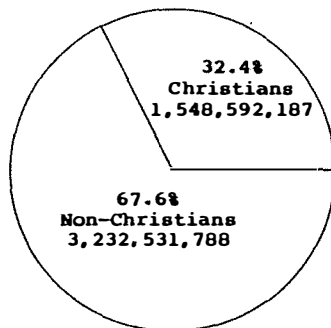
That describes unchurched neighbors--who they are and why they stay away! And yet out of that<sup>22</sup> soil God has and is building a powerful community of believers.

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DIAGRAM 5.8: HOW MANY ARE CHRISTIANS?

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4,781,123,975  
WORLD POPULATION:  
How many are Christians?



235,058,787  
U.S.A. POPULATION:  
How many are Christians?



The secret to reaching the unchurched is cultivation through friendship and trust. The importance of friendship in the process of becoming a believer was shown in a research study which...

identified two hundred forty (240) new Christians presently active and involved in their churches. In addition, a second group of 240 people were identified who could be classified as "drop-outs" (they had made a recent decision but had since lapsed into inactivity). A third group of 240 people were identified who had been presented with the Gospel message, but had chosen not to make a positive decision. In individual interviews with these 720 people, each was asked to classify the person who had presented the Gospel into one of three categories: "Friend," "Salesman," "Teacher." The results provided some startling conclusions. The people who saw the church member as a "friend" were almost all now Christians and active in their churches (94%). On the other hand, those people who saw the church member who presented the Gospel as a "salesman" often made an initial decision, but soon dropped out in large numbers (71% later dropped out). Finally, those who saw the church member as a "teacher" generally tended to not respond at all (84% said "no thanks"). The implications are clear. The non-Christian person who perceives your relationship as one of a "friend" is far more likely to eventually respond to Christ's love than the person who sees you either as a "teacher"--instructing on doctrine, sin, and morality; or as a<sup>23</sup> "salesman"--manipulating them toward an eventual decision.

A meaningful description of this cultivation process is 'friendship evangelism'. The greatest resource in building a genuine friendship is in simply being yourself--natural, sincere, unmasked, caring unconditionally. A variety of experiences and activities normal to life and life in Christ make friendship evangelism possible. Certain keys provide guidance for developing these relationships with unbelieving and/or unchurched neighbors:<sup>24</sup>

1. VISUALIZE THE NEIGHBORHOOD READINESS FOR CHRIST.  
Visualize the Spirit of God hovering over your neighborhood.
2. MAKE AN INITIAL ACQUAINTANCE.  
Those people who respond to you socially are possibilities for discovering Christ.
3. ESTABLISH A GROWING RELATIONSHIP.  
You get acquainted by building relationships through names, smiles, friendliness and friendship activities.
4. EXTEND AN INVITATION TO YOUR HOME.  
Invite them into your home.
5. CULTIVATE COMMON INTERESTS.  
Do things together.



6. MAKE HOLIDAYS COUNT.

Capitalize on the holiday season by showing your friendship and love in special ways.

7. BE AVAILABLE FOR THE HURTING.

Be available to help when people hurt.

8. BECOME A GIVER OF BOOKS.

Casually give them something to read or listen to.

9. FIND AN APPROPRIATE HARVEST VEHICLE.

Look for an appropriate harvest vehicle.

10. PLANT SEEDS FOR SALVATION.

Be a good seed planter.

11. BE READY TO SHARE.

Be prepared to set the hook.

The Holy Spirit provides the sensitivity to develop a friendship and determine a friend's readiness for sowing the word:<sup>25</sup>

1. BACKGROUND--What do you know of the person's religious background?

2. CONVERSATIONS--What opportunities have you had to share and plant seeds and what was the response?

3. FUN--Do you sense that your friend enjoys being with you?

4. NEEDS--What needs have you discovered which relate to the gospel solution.

5. BARRIERS--What caricatures have you been able to eliminate from his or her arsenal of questions and excuses.

6. OPENNESS--What signs of openness have you detected: questions about religious things; general freedom to discuss religious concepts; openness to reading materials and other resources; willing involvement in some harvest vehicles; and positive seeking attitude.

7. TESTIMONY--How much of your personal testimony have you had a chance to share?

Continuous cultivation of the soil takes time. This time given to a growing friendship relationship is foundational to both the evangelism process and the discipleship process. Interest questions can help prepare the transition to sowing the seed:<sup>26</sup>

PILGRIMAGE QUESTIONS:

Do you ever think about spiritual things?

At what point are you in your spiritual pilgrimage?

OPPORTUNITY STATEMENTS:

Sometime I'd like the opportunity to share how I began to have a personal relationship with God.

Sometime I'd like the opportunity to share four principles with you which will help you understand what it means to have a personal relationship with God.

#### INTEREST QUESTIONS:

Could I share with you how I began to have a personal relationship with God?

Could I share those four principles with you?

## 2. Sowing

Beyond an honest open growing friendship of a few minutes, a few days, a few weeks, or a few years, three practical skills are essential for every Christian:

A Testimony;

A Gospel Presentation; and

A Closing.

Sowing the word involves a clear positive personal testimony and a clear understandable<sup>27</sup> presentation of the gospel; harvesting is closing with a positive opportunity for commitment.

A testimony is a person's experience of faith in Jesus Christ. Beyond the cultivation of a friendship with any unbeliever and or unchurched, the personal testimony whether described as...

...trusting Jesus,

...becoming a Christian,

...making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, or

...accepting Christ as Savior,

cannot be doubted, challenged or debated. It is a historically verifiable lifetime event. It is a person-to-Person man-God life-saving life-changing encounter. It is an experience entirely undeniable and indisputable without regard to the surrounding circumstances. What happens in those moments of decision that so affect the total person have been written about, sung about, preached about, taught about, prayed about, talked about and witnessed about for these two-thousand years since the initial faith-encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ, living, resurrected and ascended.

Paul's encounter with Jesus and his testifying and re-telling of this event which happened on a road to Damascus leaves no room to disregard the absolute nature of his experience. The persecutor of the Way became the promoter of the Way; the attacker of the Messiah became the applauder of the Christ; the hater of the criminal Jesus became the lover of the crucified Jesus; the enraged enemy of all Christians became the enthusiastic encourager to all Christians; the 'justification by the law' person became 'the justification by faith through grace' person; Saul became Paul! It was astonishingly sudden. Paul intelligently and deliberately surrendered his will to the risen Christ.

With no conscious preparation, Paul found himself instantaneously compelled by what he saw and heard to

acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one, was alive after his passion, vindicated and exalted by God, and was now conscripting him into his service. There could be no resistance to this compulsion, no kicking out against this goad which was driving him in the opposite direction to that which he had hitherto been pursuing. He capitulated forthwith to the commands of this new master; a conscript he might be,<sup>28</sup> but henceforth also a devoted and lifelong volunteer.

Luke shares three accounts of Paul's conversion:

Acts 9:1-30  
Acts 22:1-21  
Acts 26:1-29

Whatever the variations identified in Paul's testimony, visible are three divisions<sup>29</sup> which serve as an excellent guide for Christian testimony:

Before I received Christ  
How I received Christ  
After I received Christ.

Sowing the word involves both the Christian testimony and the gospel presentation. The seed planted through individual, group and community prayer can powerfully penetrate the unbeliever and/or unchurched person, convict him or her to call to the Lord in repentance and faith by:

Praying to receive Christ;  
Receiving God's forgiveness for sins through Christ; and  
Knowing Christ lives inside and having eternal life through Him.

A suggested outline for a gospel presentation follows:<sup>30</sup>

- I. The introduction
  - A. Their secular life
  - B. Their church background
  - C. Our church
  - D. Testimony: personal and/or church
  - E. Two diagnostic questions:
    - 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?
    - 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?

## II. The gospel

- A. Grace
  - 1. Heaven is a free gift
  - 2. It is not earned or deserved
- B. Man
  - 1. Is a sinner
  - 2. Cannot save himself
- C. God
  - 1. Is merciful--therefore doesn't want to punish us
  - 2. Is just--therefore must punish sin
- D. Christ
  - 1. Who he is--the infinite God-man
  - 2. What he did--he paid for our sins and purchased a place in heaven for us which he offers as a gift
- E. Faith
  - 1. What it is not--mere intellectual assent nor temporal faith
  - 2. What it is--"trusting in Jesus alone for our salvation"

## III. The commitment

- A. The qualifying question: "Does this make sense to you?"
- B. The commitment question: "Would you like to receive the gift of eternal life?"
- C. The clarification of commitment
- D. The prayer of commitment
- E. The assurance of salvation

## IV. The immediate follow-up

Diagnostic or transition questions shift the focus of the conversation from friendship and testimony to a gospel presentation. These questions give the unbeliever or unchurched person the opportunity to respond positively for a clear presentation of the good news of Jesus Christ: <sup>31</sup>

### RELATIONSHIP

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?  
Would you tell me about your relationship with Jesus Christ?

### ETERNAL LIFE

That's really great. Then do you know for sure that you have eternal life?

Good. Share with me how you know you have eternal life.

### HEAVEN

Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you can say that you know for certain that if you were to die tonight you would go to heaven?

Suppose you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to ask you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What would you say?

### JOYFUL

Are you living the joyful, fruitful, abundant life?  
Are you sharing Jesus with others and having the excitement of people receiving Jesus and seeing their lives change? Would you like to?

## RECEIVE

When did you receive Jesus Christ?

Tell me how and when you became a Christian.

## CHURCH

Perhaps you have some questions regarding what our church believes.

Perhaps you have some questions regarding church membership.

The Holy Spirit and discipleship training equip the Christian with spiritual sensitivity for:

- A. Preparing a positive personal testimony.<sup>32</sup>
- B. Handling objections with a positive attitude.<sup>33</sup>
- C. Answering often asked questions.<sup>34</sup>
- D. Illustrating and illuminating the gospel.<sup>35</sup>
- E. Avoiding human and spiritual pitfalls.<sup>36</sup>
- F. Listening carefully to the other person(s)

- (1.) Listen with your ears humanly.
- (2.) Listen with your heart experientially.
- (3.) Listen with your soul spiritually.
- (4.) Listen with your person potentially.
- (5.) Listen with your spirit eternally.

The Holy Spirit releases and energizes every believer to sow the word through the thoughtful preparation of a testimony and gospel presentation. These evangelistic tools were used and shared with enthusiasm by Paul and the early believers.

## 3. Harvesting

Harvesting a soul is an act of God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can draw a person into a salvation relationship with Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit. Often Jesus wins a convert by His Spirit witnessing through the tremendous lifestyle of one 'super' Christian; other times it is a chain of 'life and lip' witnessing Christians who are enthusiastic about the Lord Jesus Christ that win a new believer through the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes God works quickly, immediately. Sometimes slowly, patiently. Sometimes we may be the first person, sometimes the fifth, sometimes the twenty-fifth in the process. Not everyone with whom we share Christ will respond. Not all of those who respond will do so sincerely. Not all of those whom we think are sincere will last. Some will go up and down. But as we have patient faith in the power of the gospel, as we continue patiently to share, we will see enough lives transformed to see that the gospel really does have power.<sup>37</sup>

An accumulation of excuses and prejudices can hinder or halt the spiritual decision process: the lack of an authentic Christian friend or witness; ignorance; pride; a moral problem; and fear.

The easiest way to overcome any barriers is to be so full of the Lord that you can't help overflowing with enthusiasm--it begins conversations, it continues conversations, it opens opportunities for personal testimony, it provides the atmosphere for a gospel presentation, and it readies receptiveness to Jesus Christ. Today as in that first century, people want to know why--Why the enthusiasm? Why the joy? Why the peace? Why the love? Why the bubbling? Why the dynamic? Why the confidence? Why the fire?

When people see that we have found treasure in Christ, and are not ashamed to talk about it, the questions come thick and fast and we are into <sup>38</sup>conversations about the Lord before we know what is happening.

Personal conversation is the best way of evangelism, but you're just a conversationalist if you can't close. Cultivating the soil and sowing the seed are rather insignificant without harvesting the crop; the entire process is aimed toward a decision for Christ--a person who understands that Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer to life and repents and confesses. Jesus promised success in harvesting; the Holy Spirit gives the harvester sensitivity in attitudes and techniques to harvest the crop. Following are several closing techniques that can <sup>39</sup>be used to harvest a soul through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Stay on track! Don't let the prospective Christians sidetrack you from the closing and asking them to receive Christ.

2. Review and close! Review the gospel and lead right into the closing.

3. Imagine tasting it! Imagine what it is going to be like to receive Jesus.

4. Imagine missing it! Imagine what life is really like without Christ as Savior today, tomorrow and forever.

5. Share emotionally! More people are won to Christ by emotions and love than evidence and arguments.

6. Watch for willingness! Many times a person will begin agreeing and nodding and it's time to close.

7. Right now! Often a person can be lead into a prayer of faith by clarifying that now is the time for their salvation!

8. Close dramatically! Tell a strong story that touches the heart of what happened when a person gave his or her life to Jesus

9. Repeat and reaffirm! Outline and repeat what is true about the gospel message and lead into the prayer of faith.

10. Either-Or! Either pray openly by my leading in prayer or bow silently before the Lord and invite Him into your life.

11. One more question! As you're leaving and as everyone is relaxed, ask one final question.

Don't be turned off by the use of techniques in witnessing. Remember the story of the lady who criticized D. L. Moody for his methods of winning people.

"I agree with you," Moody said, "I don't like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?"

The lady said, "I don't do it."

Moody replied, "Then I like by way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."  
The point--do it!<sup>40</sup>

The early church did it and God continually calls and commissions the local church community of believers to do it. And He promises success in the harvesting of souls!

The biggest problem in evangelism is not methods or motivation but making fishers. The early church did not have anything extraordinary in the area of methods nor in the area of motivation, but they were extraordinary in making fishers and multiplying their lives in Christ. The early believers modeled the life of Jesus. They were full of the fire of the Holy Spirit. God loved them; they loved God and one another; and God was loving their neighbors through them. Enthusiasm gave birth to energy which gave birth to tireless effort, even pain, suffering and death. After all, Jesus gave, Jesus served, Jesus suffered, Jesus died, Jesus disciplined, so can we! And they did! And when a person converted to the Way of Jesus, they disciplined him or her as they had been disciplined...I see! I can! I do! And they made new fishers who were unstoppable in their fishing efforts through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus-centered evangelism requires contact with people. Every Christ-centered communicator as a witness for Jesus Christ begins by focusing on other people; every person has an inner emptiness that can only be filled by the Lord Jesus Christ. The communicator's lifestyle results in relationships which naturally open opportunity for cultivating and/or sowing and/or harvesting. A family tree of relationships often result in a family tree of converts. As a church family 'reaches in' to each other in koininia they soon discover multiple opportunities to 'reach out' in mathataeus; the relationships formed inside provide a growing network of relationships outside. Every Jesus-centered believer and every Jesus-centered church has unlimited possibilities to reach people. (See DIAGRAM 5.9.)

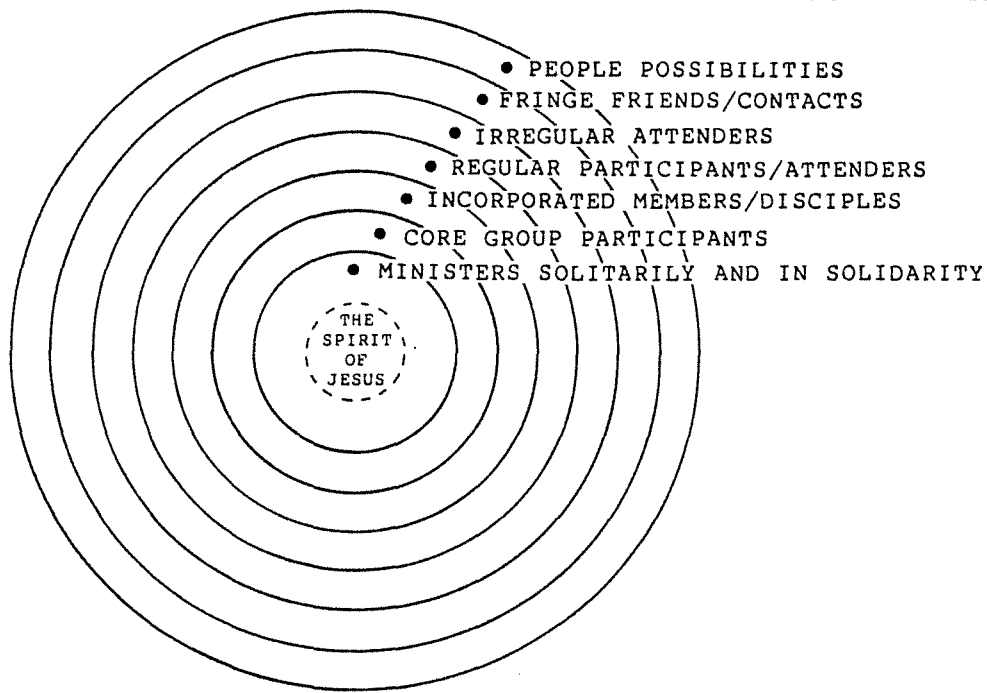
Every person is a potential communicator of Jesus Christ commissioned by Christ to reach his or her network of relationships for the Lord Jesus Christ; God's plan is to give each person both the freedom and the responsibility for decision and resulting lifestyle.

Contemporary Christian communication differs little from first century Christian communication. Certain elements open the unbeliever and/or unchurched to receive the word of the Christ-centered Christian communicator:

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DIAGRAM 5.9: GOD'S PEOPLE POSSIBILITIES

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### 1. Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm makes the difference! The Christian communicator filled and overflowing with life-generating enthusiasm is dynamically contagious. His or her enthusaism continually flows from a Jesus-centered and Spirit-filled lifestyle. The enthusiasm of the early church sparked their communication, shaped their message and stimulated the unchurched hearer toward decision.

### 2. Understanding the spiritual decision process

Crucial in evangelism and discipleship is a clear understanding of the spiritual decision process:

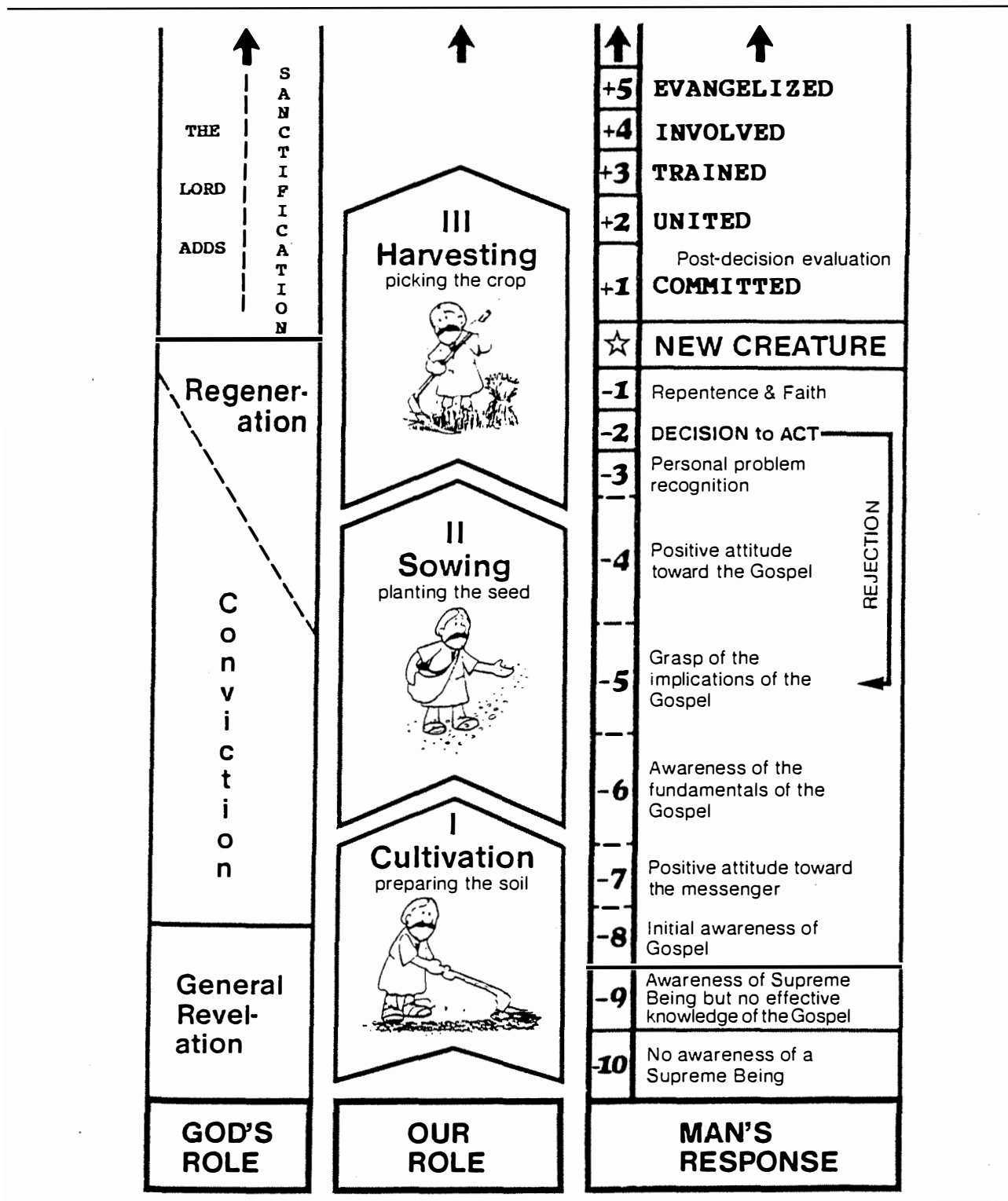
First, a person's response to God, the message of His gospel, and the messenger as a Christian communicator;

Second, the role of the Christian communicator; and

Third, God's role as He reaches out through His Holy Spirit in general revelation, special revelation, personal revelation and through His people. How God draws a nonbelieving pagan unto Himself, the trust-encounter itself and the unlimited potential for individual and community growth is every person's spiritual journey. Understanding this process increases God's possibility to influence every person's decision process:<sup>41</sup>



DIAGRAM 5.10: THE SPIRITUAL DECISION PROCESS:  
PAGAN-TO-PERSONAL-TO-POTENTIAL



### 3. Trust

Without trust Jesus-centered evangelism is impossible. The two core issues are truth and trust:

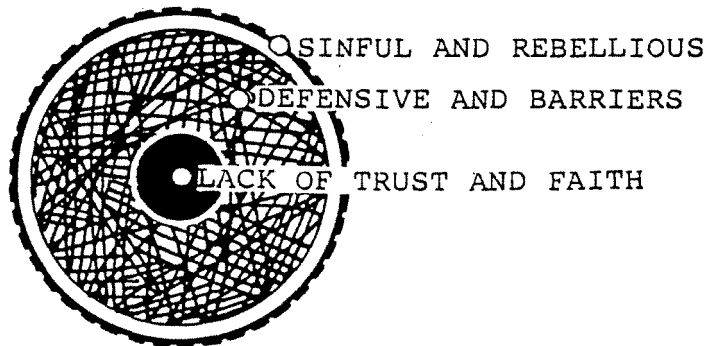
What is truth?  
Who can I trust?

The truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection and the historical witness of these facts through the Bible have never been disproved. The question is trust. Every child is born nontrusting, disconnected, alienated, out-of-touch, detached.<sup>42</sup> This negative self-image or inherited inferiority complex motivates each person to project a multiplicity of defense mechanisms and subconscious barriers<sup>43</sup> to protect deep rooted insecurity and an inner absence of trust:

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DIAGRAM 5.11: THE HUMAN GOLF BALL

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Into this maze of conscious and subconscious human nature, Jesus knocks and waits for a trust-encounter. Lack of trust subtly weaves a humanly unpenetratable web:<sup>44</sup>

(1.) We withdraw from a belief in God for fear that our sins will be exposed, and we cannot stand the prospect of being embarrassed. So, doubt becomes an early defense mechanism of a nontrusting, guilty soul.

(2.) Since we are unable to throw off our natural religious instincts, we fabricate our images of God. As insecure people, our natural fears take the face and form and force of anger. We appear to be mean, but actually, we are afraid. No wonder then that the unsaved human being imagines God to be angry rather than loving.

(3.) We withdraw even further from a God that our fears have pictured as a threatening rather than a redeeming figure. The name of the true God of mercy who longs to save His children is not taken seriously.

(4.) We project these same patterns of human behavior to our other interpersonal relationships. Since we dare not trust, we lie. We are dishonest lest our imperfections be revealed. (Only self-esteeming persons dare to freely admit imperfections.) Coupled with this is an ever-recurring threat of boredom. We covet, hoping the conquest or the acquisitions will somehow give us the deep security we need. And often, adultery becomes the quick fix as it offers stimulation to the bored and a false sense of value or power to the ego-faltering philanderer.

Jesus calls, "Trust Me!" Humanly we are unable to untangle the maze; our inability to trust God and adequately value ourselves lies at the root of 'original sin.' Freedom from this nontrusting web of entanglements happens only as we trust the Person known as Jesus; encountering Jesus and His nonjudgmental love, unconditional acceptance and unreserved forgiveness becomes our life-changing experience. We become born again by His Spirit; our life-relationship with Him begins with trust. We are changed from a negative self-image to a positive-self image, from inferiority to self-esteem, from fear to love, from doubt to trust.<sup>45</sup> We are released to be like Jesus in our life-relationships--trusting God, trusting one another in the family of God, trusting God to use us in the beautiful work of sharing His love, acceptance and forgiveness in this world.

#### 4. Spiritual Antenna

God loves us, equips us and prepares us for<sup>46</sup> every life-situation and activity. He gives us spiritual antenna so we can understand people, diagnose spiritual status, share ourselves and the word with spiritual awareness and discern spiritual attitudes and beliefs. The key is using our spiritual antenna as we 'reach in' and 'reach out.' Spiritual antenna give every believer the freedom to be unique and Christlike. Christians do have a model for growth, but the concept of a rigid, squeezed out, assembly line, pre-molded, standardized model, labeled 'Christian' is unacceptable. From the initial trust-encounter with Jesus every Christian blossoms into a tremendous enthusiastic spontaneous Christ-centered person equipped with spiritual antenna and individually growing in...

Love as a disciple of Jesus Christ;  
Joy as a part of a local church;  
Peace as a doer of God's Word;  
Patience as an intercessor through prayer;  
Kindness as a servant to all;  
Goodness as a steward of life and possessions;  
Faithfulness as a witness of God;  
Gentleness as a participant in body life; and  
Power as a minister through spiritual gift(s).<sup>47</sup>

The early church did not waver in its beliefs and actions; the early Christians did the acts of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. What happened then can happen now!

END NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. Jones, Conversion, 71.
2. Womack, Pyramid, 106.
3. Matthew 22:23-33.
4. Matthew 5:13-16 and DIAGRAM 4.5.
5. Aldrich, Life-Style, 91.
6. Green, Church, 256.
7. Arn and Arn, Plan, 90-91.
8. Quality--Matthew 3:8-10; 7:16-23; Luke 3:8-9; 6:43-45; Acts 26:20; Romans 6:22; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11--and quantity--Matthew 13:1-9, 19-23; John 15.
9. Acts 2:47b.
10. Estimates of the Jerusalem population vary from twenty-five thousand to seventy-five thousand. Jeremias, Jerusalem, 83-84 and Bruce, History, 38 and 371.
11. Green, Church, 210.
12. Arn and Arn, Plan, 38.
13. Girard, Sell, 48.
14. Schaller, Plans, 26.
15. Green, Church, 256.
16. Arn and Arn, Plan, 33-60.
17. Adapted from a Campus Crusade for Christ definition of witnessing.
18. Business, Evangelism, 18 and Aldrich, Life-Style, 82.
19. Adapted from Chaney and Lewis, Design, 216.
20. Business, Evangelism, "Personal Plan Of Action"; Proverbs 11:30
21. Hale, Unchurched, 99-108.
22. Barrett, World, 18 and Arn "Report", 3.
23. Arn and Arn, Plan, 104.
24. Aldrich, Life-Style, 201-211.
25. Aldrich, Life-Style, 220-221.
26. Aldrich, Life-Style, 223.
27. Matthew 13:3f and Mark 4:3f.
28. Bruce, Paul, 75.
29. For further study see Kennedy, Explosion, 70f. and Navigator's 2-7 Series"; suggested study also includes Galatians 1:15f., Jeremiah 1:5f., Isaiah 6:1f., and Ezekiel 1:4f.
30. Kennedy, Evangelism, 16-17; this outline serves as an excellent guideline for a presentation of the gospel in one setting or over an extended period of time; and specifically note 'II. The Gospel'.
31. Each word introduces two transition questions; these words can be memorized for immediate recall of the transitions questions.
32. Kennedy, Evangelism, 75-76.
33. Kennedy, Evangelism, 77-78.

34. Green, Joking; Ford, News, 89-203; Little, Faith, 63-81; Moody, Good, 76-91; and Prince, Life.
35. Kennedy, Evangelism, 105-110.
36. Kennedy, Evangelism, 111-112.
37. Ford, News, 49.
38. Green, Then, 134.
39. Moody, Good, 108-110.
40. Moody, Good, 110-111.
41. Adapted from: Business, Evangelism, 58; Engel, Communication, 83 and 183; and Engel, Harvest, 53.
42. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 65-67.
43. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 67.
44. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 67.
45. Schuller, Self-Esteem, 68.
46. Engel, Harvest, 78.
47. Sorensen, "Super-Charged" and Galatians 5:22-23.

## EPILOGUE

The whole life of the individual believer and the Christian community is determined by its relationship to the kyrios, Lord.<sup>1</sup> Lord means 'the maximum authority'; the Lord Jesus Christ is at the very center of the whole of life.<sup>2</sup> The lordship of the kyrios cannot be accepted as merely theoretical or emotional but manifests itself practically in concrete space and time action. Absolute loyalty to the kyrios grasps the mind, will and emotions to give unconditional binding direction; the essence of this lordship relationship is unending love--the Lord for the believer and the believer for the Lord. Jesus was showing what the lordship of the Lord actually was when He asked, "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"<sup>3</sup> Jesus is recognized, acknowledged and confessed as Lord when His people, whether a collective community or an individual believer, hear and do.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus' lifestyle was human and supernatural; His early community was the continued expression of His Person in lifestyle and personality. The impact of His local church communities of believers was nothing less than dynamic and impressive. The lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ as 'the maximum authority' gripped men and women. Through the individual and collective life of the believers, life's target became visible. The life of any person could have meaning, measure and purpose. Lives of loneliness, abandonment, emptiness, crippling or waywardness became transformed by His touch through His community. 'They drew men and women of all kinds. And not only did they draw them but they held and inspired them. They were so amazingly and absolutely transformed by the Spirit of Jesus through His community that they never went back again to the life they had lived before willfully giving their allegiance and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. As these new Christ ones came in close touch with the community of Jesus, they came in close touch with God; their lives were so enriched by the experience that they themselves also became like Jesus to their world individually and in oneness with His community. Together and alone, the early believers lived as their Lord had lived in personality and lifestyle, supernaturally and humanly. Jesus was Lord and God, personally and permanently, privately and publicly,<sup>5</sup> powerfully and purposefully. Jesus was the kyrios from heaven.'

The evidence of the lordship to the Lord Jesus Christ then and now is in relationships:

First comes Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Then comes one another in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Then comes the world for which Christ died--our work in it, our service for it, our witness to it.<sup>8</sup>

These three relationships are not hatched out of human brains nor are they directed at a particular culture at a particular period of time; these<sup>9</sup> three priorities are God-given and shine repeatedly from the Word.

Ray and Anne Ortland have helped believers to biblically focus their life-relationships into three priorities, three commitments, three loves!<sup>10</sup> These three priorities--loving God, loving each other, loving the world--are the subjects of Jesus' concern in dialogue with His Daddy-God and His disciples immediately prior to the cross.<sup>11</sup> In John 15, Jesus commanded these three priorities of His followers:<sup>12</sup>

1. Jesus says that His followers are to abide in Him and in His love (1-11);

2. Jesus commands His followers to love each other (12-17); and

3. Jesus describes the relationship of His followers to a hostile world and says that they are to witness to the world when the Holy Spirit is given to them (18-26).

In John<sup>13</sup> 17, God the Son prays to God the Father through God the Spirit:

1. Jesus prayed for His Father's glory and that the Son would also be glorified (1-5);

2. Jesus prayed for the men out of the world that God the Father gave to Him, His followers, the disciples, for their protection and sanctification and for us believers to follow (6-20); and

3. Jesus prayed for the world to believe and know the truth (21-26).

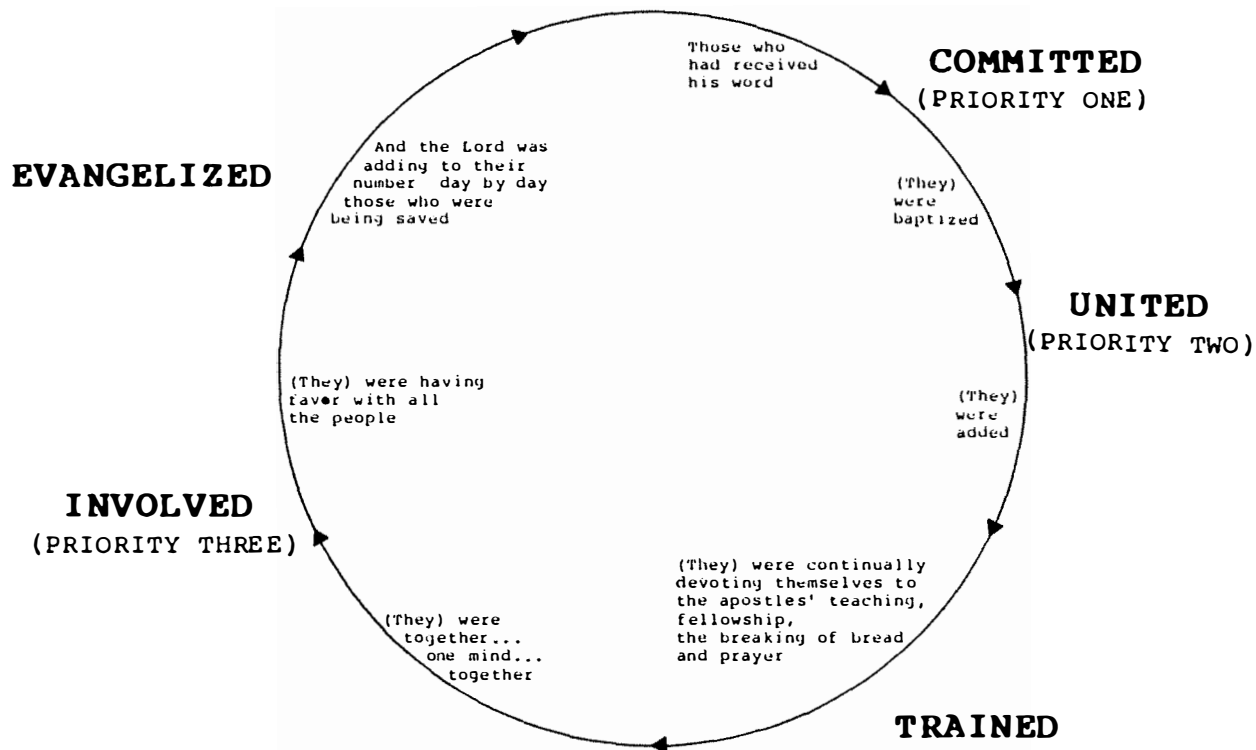
Three of the five growth steps in the model for individual Christian growth and corporate church growth biblically parallel these three life-relationships.



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DIAGRAM 6.1: THE DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE FOR ANY CHRISTIAN, FOR ANY CHURCH

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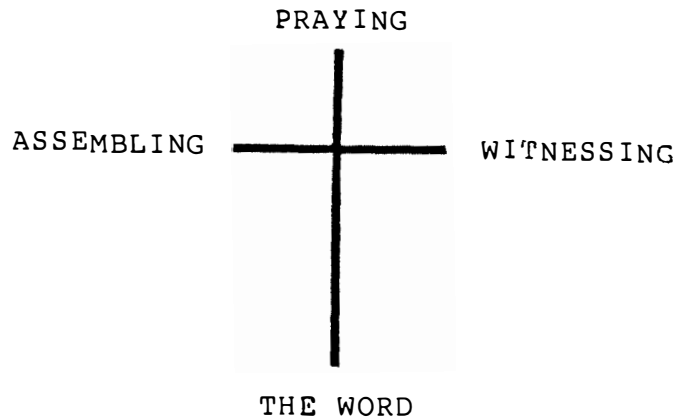
**STEP ONE: COMMITTED--BELIEVING!**

Life-centeredness determines life. As believers we are either centered on ourselves or centered on God; either we sacrifice our God to our idols or our idols to our God. Believing demands God-centeredness; Jesus as Lord and God is the center of the universe and our love. As believers, our lives model the commitment and lifestyle of Jesus and the early church:

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DIAGRAM 1.2: A JESUS-CENTERED LIFE (CHAPTER ONE)

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Believers continually practice their belief:<sup>14</sup>

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DIAGRAM 6.2: PRIORITY ONE

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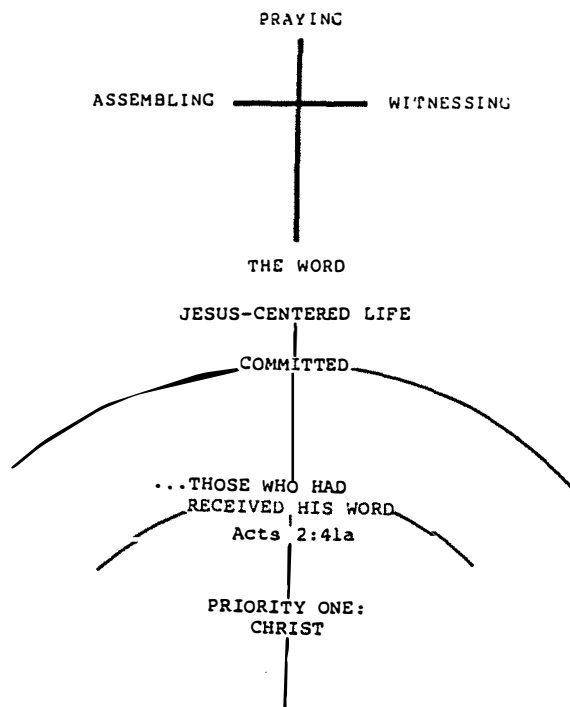
**THE HIGHEST  
PRIORITY OF  
YOUR LIFE:  
GOD**

**PRACTICING HIS PRESENCE  
DAILY QUIET TIMES  
OCCASIONAL LARGER  
PERIODS OF TIME ALONE  
WITH HIM  
REGULAR PUBLIC WORSHIP  
LOVING GOD THROUGH  
FINANCIAL GIVING**

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### DIAGRAM 6.3: COMMITTED

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### STEP TWO: UNITED--BELONGING!

God anticipated the community of believers, the church. Believing in Jesus means belonging to others in Jesus; a Jesus-centered life demands Jesus-centered community. The presence of life in Jesus is demonstrated by the presence of life in the community of Jesus. The local church community minimally guarantees Christlike consistency in:<sup>15</sup>

Love--always, under every circumstance;  
Acceptance--totally, with no exceptions; and  
Forgiveness--unreserved forgiveness for the asking,  
without bitterness and no matter how miserably the failure or  
how blantly the sin.

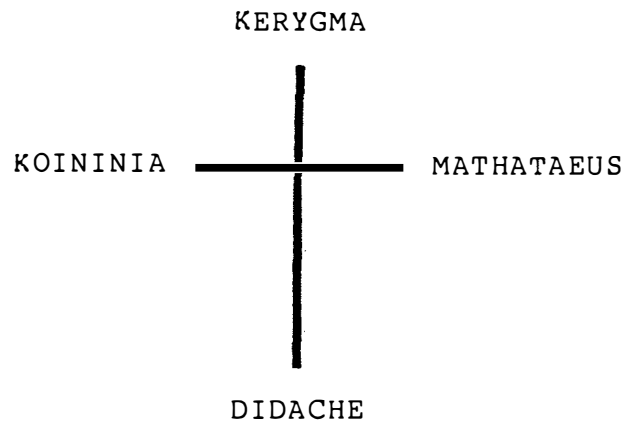
Modeling Jesus and the early church, a Jesus-centered community:<sup>16</sup>

Celebrates life in Christ...through kerygma;  
Cultivates personal growth in Christ...through didache;  
Cares about one another in Christ...through koininia; and  
Communicates Christ to the world...through mathataeus.

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DIAGRAM 2.4: A JESUS-CENTERED COMMUNITY (CHAPTER TWO)

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A local Christian community practices Jesus-centeredness through: <sup>17</sup>

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DIAGRAM 6.4: PRIORITY TWO

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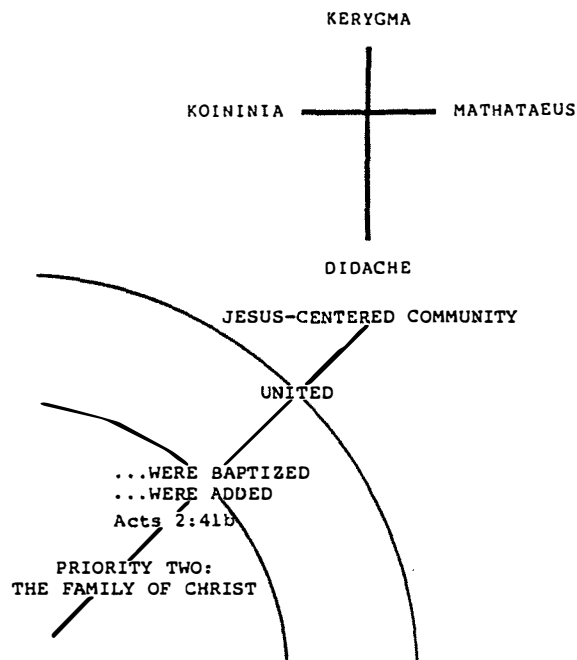
THE SECOND  
HIGHEST PRIORITY  
OF YOUR LIFE:  
YOUR FELLOW  
BELIEVERS

DISCIPLING AND  
STRENGTHENING EACH  
OTHER THRU SMALL  
GROUPS (PRAISE, BIBLE  
STUDY, SHARING, PRAYER,  
ACCOUNTABILITY)  
LOVING EACH OTHER THRU  
GIVING

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DIAGRAM 6.5: UNITED

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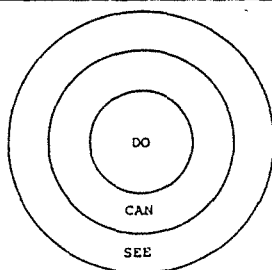
STEP THREE: TRAINED--BEGINNING!

"Off the benches and into the trenches!" cries the Lord, "Follow Me!"<sup>18</sup> "I will make you to become fishers of men!"<sup>19</sup> Responding to the Lord's call to training is the beginning of discipleship; it's wholehearted enthusiasm and love for the Lord as 'the maximum authority'--I see! I can! I do!

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DIAGRAM 6.6: DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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Discipleship training aims at simultaneously establishing wholeness in relationships:

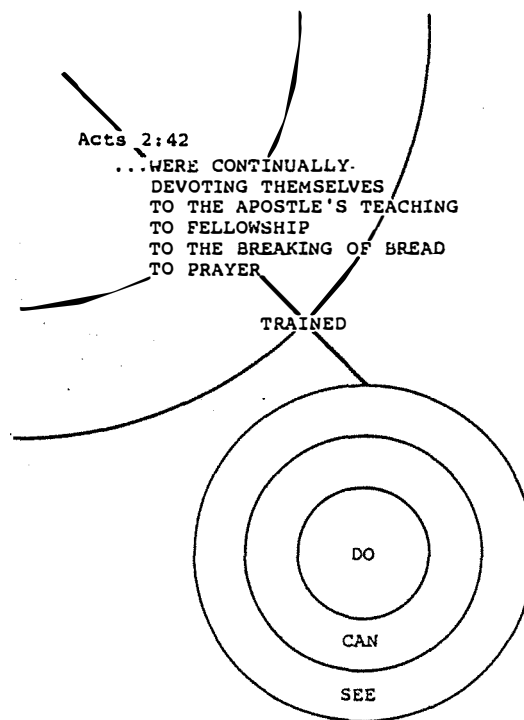
Loving Christ solitarily;  
Loving the body of Christ in solidarity; and  
Loving the world to Christ solitarily and in solidarity.

The small group experience explosively opens the believer's to Christlike relationships--vertically by reaching up and reaching down and horizontally by reaching in and reaching out. The small group becomes the vehicle as life affects life to make responsible reproducing Christians and responsible reproducing churches.

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DIAGRAM 6.7: TRAINED

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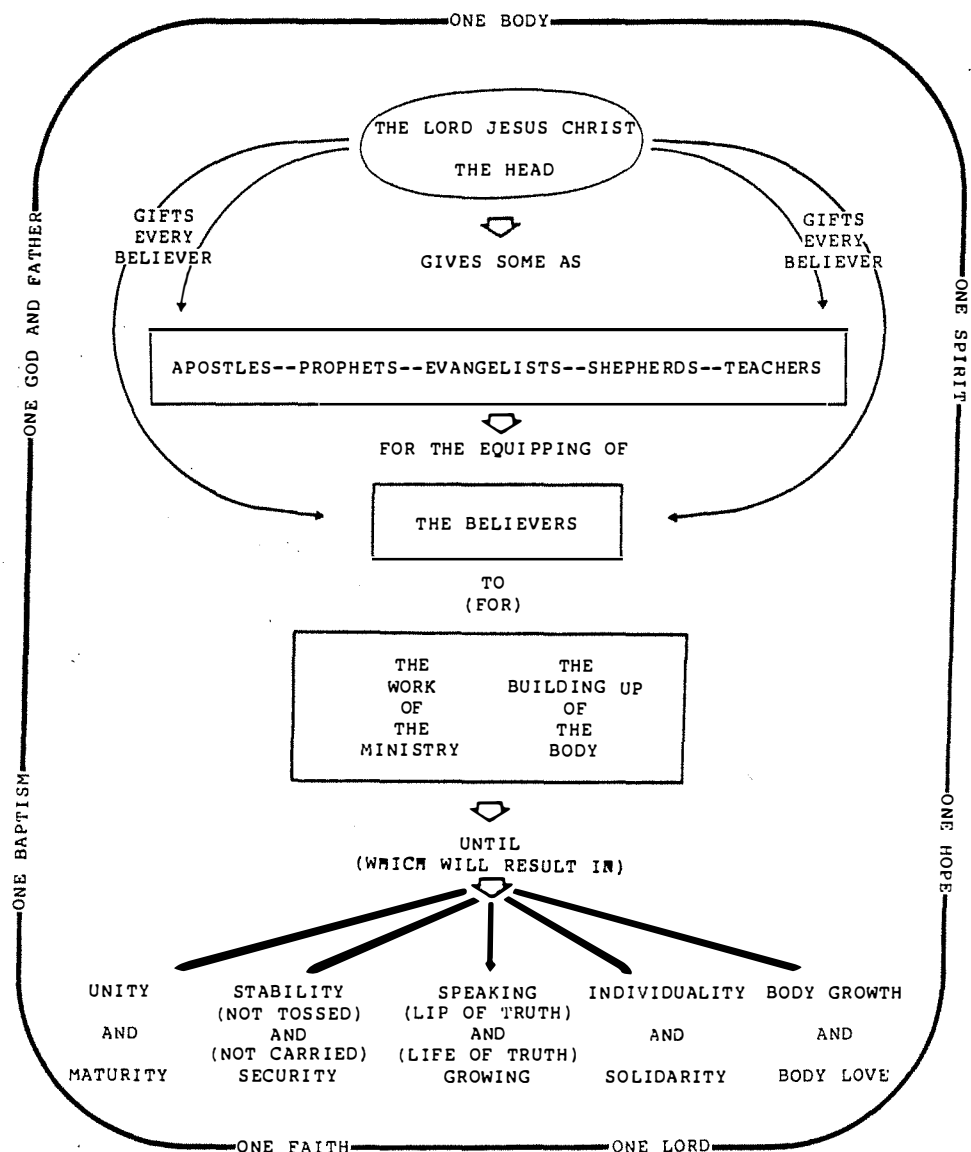
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STEP FOUR: INVOLVED--BECOMING!

Out of the believers commitment to Christ and to the body of Christ flows commitment to the world. Believers reaching and reaching and reaching and reaching...until death. Paul describes reaching as "the work of the ministry" and "the building up of the body of Christ."<sup>20</sup> Every believer is to be equipped for and involved in Jesus-centered ministry--reaching vertically to the

Lord and His Word and reaching horizontally to 'the Christ ones' and to the ones without Christ. God's love prohibits exclusivism. The ultimate Man-Fisher seeks and loves every person and group of people and His body represents Him in love-actions through the primary ministries of:

DIAGRAM 4.6: GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH IN EPHESIANS 4:1-16 (CHAPTER FOUR)



These Jesus-centered ministries parallel life-relationship  
three:<sup>21</sup>

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DIAGRAM 6.8: PRIORITY THREE

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**THE THIRD  
HIGHEST PRIORITY  
OF YOUR LIFE:  
YOUR WORK AND  
YOUR WITNESS IN  
THE WORLD**

**EXCELLENCE OF LIFE AS A  
GOOD REPRESENTATIVE  
OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD  
YOUR CHRISTIAN SERVICE  
YOUR EVANGELISM  
LOVING THE WORLD THRU  
GIVING**

---

Through the kyrios, the Lord, the Christian community and individual believers continually experience the spiritual life process of becoming--the goal of Christlikeness in life, community and ministry is a path not a place.<sup>22</sup> Believers<sup>23</sup> become increasingly Christlike in lifestyles as they experience:

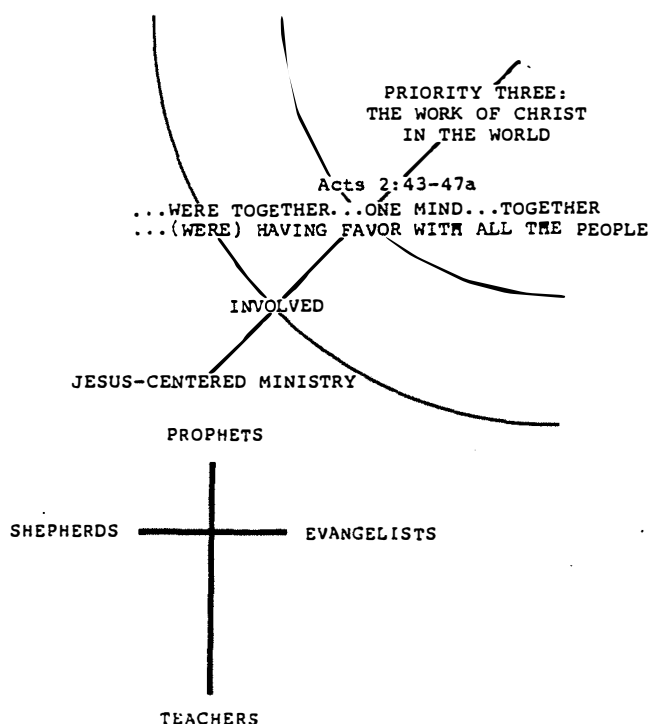
Unity and maturity;  
Stability and security;  
Speaking and growing;  
Solidarity and individuality; and  
Body-growth and body-love.



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DIAGRAM 6.9: INVOLVED

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STEP FIVE: EVANGELIZED--BEARING FRUIT!

Bearing fruit represents the reality of a person's faith encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ; the secret of the power to bear fruit grows out of a believer's close relationship with the Lord.<sup>24</sup> 'Fruit-bearing' is not a question of man's natural gifts nor deliberate self-determined actions, but only by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> The believer's abiding in Christ through obedience to 'the maximum authority' and Christ's abiding in the believer through their Christ-centered lifestyles are the necessary prerequisites of fruitfulness.<sup>26</sup> Abiding and fruitfulness are the absolute proofs of being a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ sends through His people the life-giving power of fruitfulness.<sup>28</sup> And His friends<sup>29</sup> bear useable and eternal<sup>30</sup> fruit. Spontaneous and supernatural joy overflow from the lives of His friends who are His ministers as their habitual Christlike love and their unexhausted and inexhaustible power combine to bear fresh fruit.<sup>31</sup> Evangelism happens as God's friends together do the love-acts of Jesus through the Holy Spirit as His ministers through:

DIAGRAM 6.10: FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

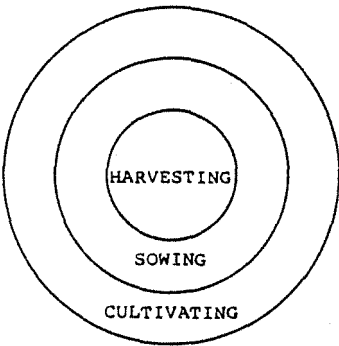
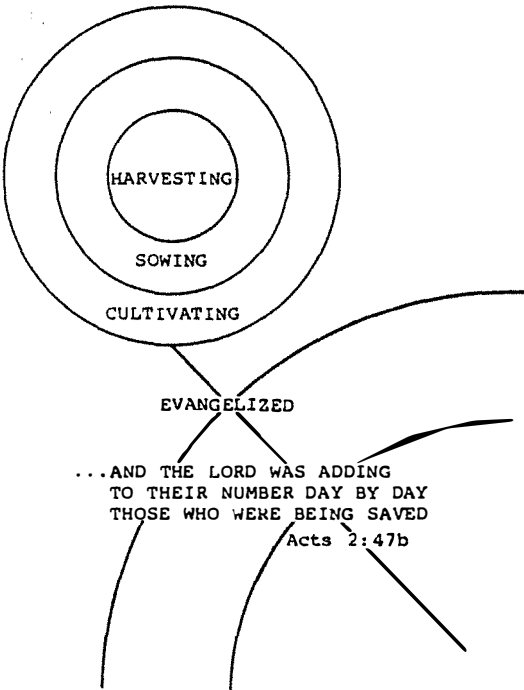


DIAGRAM 6.11: EVANGELIZED



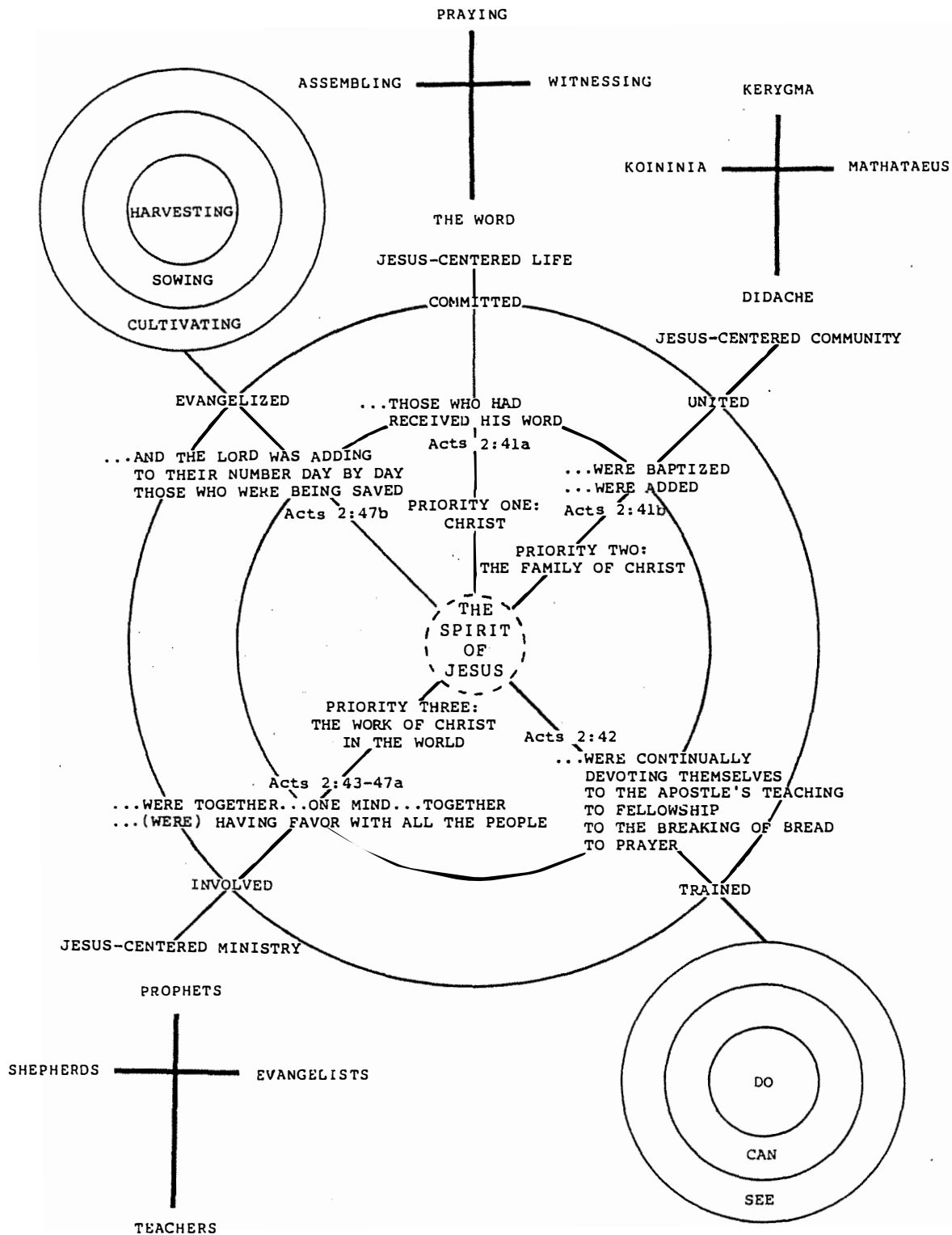
## SUMMARY

The lifestyle of the early church typified the lifestyle of Jesus; their love exploded into life and their life exploded into love. The early church of believers reached as Jesus had reached--up and down, in and out. Their was nothing uneventful or shallow about their lives; individually and together they cherished their life-relationships--loving God, loving the family of God, loving the world for God. Consider the lifestyle of faith-actions of the early church as ministers of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

It is heartening to remember that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks. These early Christians were on fire with the conviction that they had become, through Christ, literally sons of God; they were pioneers of a new humanity, founders<sup>32</sup> of a new Kingdom. They still speak to us across the centuries.

Perhaps if we believed what they believed and modeled what they modeled, we might achieve what they achieved.<sup>33</sup>

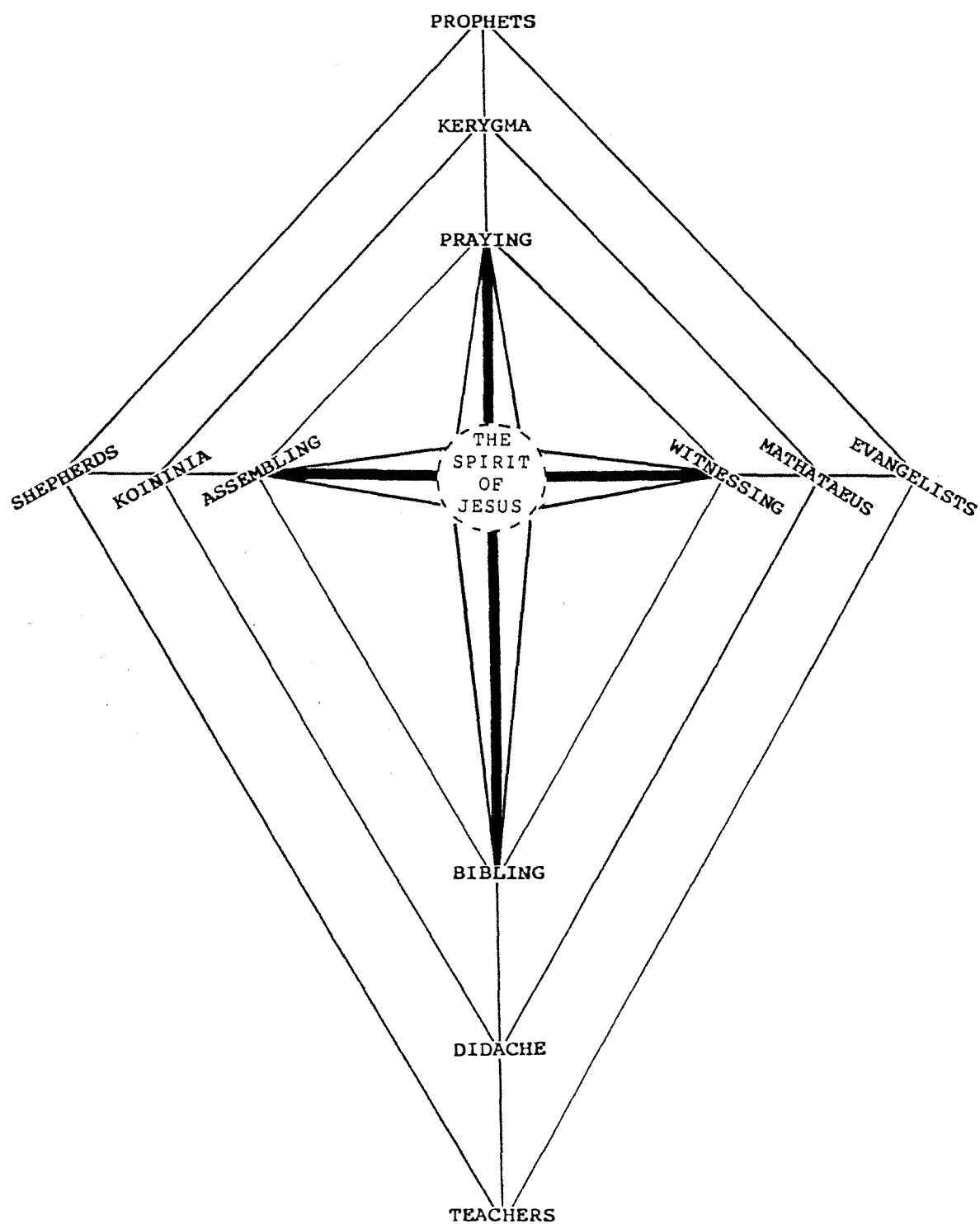
DIAGRAM 6.12: THE AMPLIFIED GROWTH MODEL



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DIAGRAM 6.13: RELATIONSHIPS AND PRIORITIES IN THE GROWTH MODEL

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END NOTES: EPILOGUE

1. Brown, Dictionary, 2/517.
2. Ortiz, Disciple, 12.
3. Luke 6:46.
4. Luke 6:47-49 and Exodus 24:7.
5. Adapted from Morris, Lord, 16-17; John 20:28.
6. Ortland, Church, 19.
7. Ortland, Church, 19.
8. Ortland, Church, 19.
9. Ortland, Church, 19.
10. Ortland, Children; Ortland, Love; and Ortland, Miracle.
11. John 15 and 17; Ortland, Church, 26-28; and Ortland, Love, 154.
12. Ortland, Church, 20.
13. Ortland, Church, 19.
14. Ortland, Love, 171.
15. Cook, Love, 11.
16. The phrases with words beginning with the letter 'c' were shared by Larry DeWitt, Pastor of the Calvary Community Church, Westlake Village, California, 1981.
17. Ortland, Love, 171.
18. Mark 1:17.
19. Mark 1:17.
20. Ephesians 4:13.
21. Ortland, Love, 171.
22. Philippians 3:8-14.
23. Ephesians 4:13-16.
24. John 15:2.
25. Brown, Dictionary, 1/722-723.
26. John 15:4.
27. John 15:8 and Matthew 7:16f.
28. John 15:15 and Luke 12:4.
29. Matthew 7:19 and Luke 3:19; 13:6f.
30. John 4:36; 15:16.
31. Morris, John, 674.
32. Phillips, Letters, Translators Preface.
33. Phillips, Letters, Translators Preface; in DIAGRAM 6.13 BIBLING refers to actively relating to THE WORD.

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