



GGV
GLOBAL GROWTH VISION



- EVANGELISM
- DISCIPLESHIP
- HEALTHY LEADERS
- HEALTHY CHURCHES



APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY
OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

GLOBAL GROWTH VISION

STRATEGY OF JESUS / ROADMAP COMMITTEE

Version 1.1 - December, 2025

ADVISOR

Bishop President Felipe A. Salazar

EDITOR

Pastor Gabriel Pereira das Neves

WRITERS

Bishop President Felipe A. Salazar

Bishop Vice President Joseph Rodríguez

Bishop Abner Arias

Bishop Gabriel Calderón

Bishop Sam Rojas

Pastor Daniel Martínez

Pastor Gabriel Pereira das Neves

Pastor Jacob Rodríguez

Pastor Juan Carlos Rodríguez

Pastor Sam Orozco

Pastor Steven Rodríguez

Evangelist Mingo García

Evangelist Víctor Serrato

Dr. Janae Quezada

APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

5401 Citrus Ave. Fontana CA 92336

headquarters@apostolicassembly.org

Phone +1 909-987-3013

United States of America

www.aaofcj.com



Table of Contents

PRESIDENT'S PRESENTATION7

PROLOGUE.....9

THE VISION11

SECTION I: EVANGELISM21

How does the Apostolic Assembly evangelize the lost?

 Introduction to Evangelism.....22

 Chapter 1 – Spiritual Strategy.....23

 Chapter 2 – Evangelism Cycle.....44

 Chapter 3 – Friendship Groups59

 Chapter 4 – The Friends’ Spiritual Retreat.....75

 Conclusion of Evangelism85

 Final self-evaluation questions87

SECTION II: DISCIPLESHIP89

How does the Apostolic Assembly form disciples?

 Introduction to Discipleship.....90

 Chapter 5 – The School of Discipleship91

 Chapter 6 – Friendship Groups and Discipleship.....104

 Chapter 7 – Leaders’ Meetings and Leaders’ Retreats113

 Chapter 8 – School of Local Ministries124

 Chapter 9 – Church Planting.....134

 Conclusion of Discipleship147

 Final self-evaluation questions149

SECTION III: HEALTHY LEADERSHIP.....151

How can we develop healthy leadership?

 Introduction to Healthy Leadership152



Chapter 10 – The Seek of God.....	153
Chapter 11 – Relationship with the Word	165
Chapter 12 – Winning at Home.....	173
Chapter 13 – Ministerial Ethics	185
Chapter 14 – Caring for the Congregation.....	196
Chapter 15 – Teamwork and Delegation.....	206
Conclusion to Healthy Leadership	222
Final self-evaluation questions	224
SECTION IV: HEALTHY CHURCHES.....	225
<i>How can we articulate biblical practices to have healthy churches?</i>	
Introduction to Healthy Churches	226
Chapter 16 – Church Spirituality	227
Chapter 17 – Worship Liturgy.....	239
Chapter 18 – Culture of Love and Acceptance.....	250
Chapter 19 – A Welcoming Church.....	261
Chapter 20 – Healthy Ministries	275
Chapter 21 – Effective Systems	287
Chapter 22 – Call to Stewardship	296
Conclusion to Healthy Churches.....	307
Final self-evaluation questions	309
EPILOGUE.....	310
GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY	311
ADDITIONAL PASTORAL RESOURCES (ON-LINE).....	320



PRESIDENT'S PRESENTATION

Dear Pastor,

The Apostolic Assembly is at a crucial point. The Lord has given us a clear vision: to be an apostolic, cell-based, healthy, growing, and Spirit-filled church. This vision calls us back to the core of our mission — to go, preach, make disciples, and testify to the ends of the earth.

The Global Growth Vision Manual is designed specifically for pastors of the Apostolic Assembly to help them lead and manage their local churches' growth by focusing on key aspects of church expansion.

This manual outlines two key elements and four key pillars that shape the future of our movement:

THE STRATEGY OF JESUS

1. EVANGELISM – proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in small groups
2. DISCIPLESHIP – forming strong, committed believers who grow in faith and purpose.

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP AND CHURCHES

3. HEALTHY LEADERSHIP – developing leaders who operate with integrity, collaborate effectively, and rely on the Holy Spirit.
4. HEALTHY LOCAL CHURCHES – strengthening congregations that are vibrant, well-organized, loving church culture, and Spirit-led.

When these elements work together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church flourishes, believers mature, and the Kingdom of God advances with power.

Our practical goal is for each church to experience steady growth of at least seven percent annually. More importantly, this growth should stem from mature disciples, healthy leaders, and strong local churches—all empowered by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.



This manual is more than a book; it is a pastoral tool designed to support you in your sacred calling to build a church that embodies the vision: cell-based, healthy, growing, and Spirit-filled.

May these pages reignite your passion for souls, reinforce our apostolic culture, and motivate you to fulfill the mission the Lord has entrusted to us with faith, order, and excellence.

The fields are white, and the Lord will build His Church.

In Christ,

Bishop Felipe A. Salazar

International President

Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus



PROLOGUE

The vision of this book is born of a conviction: the Church of Jesus Christ is called to grow not only in number, but in maturity, faithfulness, and spiritual health. That growth does not depend on fashions or human formulas, but on the power of the Holy Spirit working in congregations that take the Great Commission seriously.

The evangelizing mission is not optional; it is at the center of the Lord's charge: to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and teach obedience to His commandments. Therefore, evangelism—sustained in prayer, fasting, and unity—mobilizes the congregation to win souls, open homes for Friendship Groups, and consolidate new believers through retreats and actions that renew spiritual life. When each Evangelism Cycle is carried out in dependence on the Spirit, the church fulfills its task with joy and effectiveness.

Christ's mandate does not end with reaching crowds: it continues in forming disciples who live for Him, grow in the Word, and multiply in service and testimony. Hence discipleship is central. The Discipleship School accompanies believers from new birth to maturity and multiplication, building lives firm in Jesus. Friendship Groups are spaces where faith grows, doctrine is shared up close, and the life of Christ is transmitted person to person, until each member assumes his or her role as a disciple and the congregation becomes a school of leaders and planters.

None of this endures without healthy leadership. The church advances in accordance with the spiritual quality of those who shepherd it. Leaders are required who are integral, consistent, formed in character and doctrine, humble, and dependent on the Spirit. Healthy leadership is not a luxury, but a requirement to sustain the vision and avoid building on fragile structures.

Likewise, a healthy church is not measured by attendance or activities, but by its faithfulness to the Word, the quality of its relationships, and the strength of its systems. It celebrates its services with excellence, evangelizes with passion, integrates newcomers, multiplies groups, manages with transparency, and develops diverse ministries, living in communion with God and in brotherly love. It is light and a testimony to the power of the Gospel.



Global Growth Vision brings together four inseparable pillars: evangelism, discipleship, healthy leadership, and healthy local churches. It is not an academic treatise, but a biblical and practical tool for pastors, leaders, and congregations. May these pages impel us to sow with faith, work with diligence, and trust that the Lord will add daily those who are being saved.

Respectfully,

Pastor Gabriel Pereira das Neves

Editor



THE VISION

By President Bishop Felipe A. Salazar

“Then the Lord answered me and said: ‘Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come...’” (Habakkuk 2:2–3).

1. Introduction

A vibrant and compelling vision is essential to the health and growth of any church. It serves as a powerful unifying force, consolidating the congregation and inspiring a shared sense of passion and purpose.

Without a clear, biblically grounded vision, a church can become aimless, stagnant, and ultimately ineffective in fulfilling its divine mandate.

Scripture repeatedly presents God as the supreme visionary, clarifying what vision is, how it is formed, and how it can be implemented in the local church, giving direction and purpose to His people.

In the Old Testament, God revealed to Moses a vision of the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey—despite Israel’s immediate circumstances (Exodus 3:8). Moses communicated this vision to the Israelites, inspiring them to leave Egypt and endure forty years in the wilderness until the vision was fulfilled and they arrived at the land God had promised.

Just as God’s vision moved Israel toward its future, so a divinely inspired vision can guide a church toward transformation, growth, and greater impact in the world.

Dear Pastor who is working to clarify or create a vision for your local church: this section of our book will help you define what vision is, how it is formed, and how you can implement it in your local church.



2. What is vision?

2.1. Differentiating “vision” from “mission”

When addressing the subject of vision, it is important first to distinguish between mission and vision. In brief, a mission statement for the church answers the question: “What is our task?” That question is answered by Christ in Scripture and is unalterable. It has remained the same for more than 2,000 years. The mission is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:14–18; Luke 24:44–49). The mission of the Church will remain the same until Jesus comes for His church. Vision, on the other hand, answers the questions: “Where are we going?” and “How do we measure our success?” It also provides a means that makes the desired future or ideal attainable.

2.2. Mission and Vision of the Apostolic Assembly

The Apostolic Assembly has both a mission and a vision. The Apostolic Assembly’s mission statement was established and adopted by the pastoral body of our church in 2006. Our purpose is: “Exalt Christ, Evangelize the World, and Equip the Church.” Like other purpose statements, ours answers the essential question: Why do we exist as a church? The answer is that our mission is the Great Commission. Churches of the Apostolic Assembly strive to keep their congregations focused on the Great Commission. Michael Hyatt, in his book *Your Best Year Ever*, writes: “People lose their way when they lose their why.” Keeping our people focused on the answer to the “why” will enable them to maintain a heart full of purpose and meaning.

2.3. A two-part vision

The Apostolic Assembly’s “operational” vision statement is: The Apostolic Assembly is a healthy, growing, Spirit-filled apostolic cell church. This statement seeks to clarify concisely the ideal or destination. We want to become everything our vision statement describes in its fullness. Our vision statement identifies our destination and paints a picture of our “ideal self.” The second part of our vision, *The Strategy of Jesus*, describes the mechanism or means to achieve and sustain our vision of being a healthy, growing, Spirit-filled apostolic cell church. It details our strategy for evangelism and discipleship in small groups, among other elements.



2.4. Mission is primary; vision is secondary

Again, the Apostolic Assembly is a church that has both a mission and a vision. Now, while the Church's mission is primary, the Church's vision is secondary. But although vision is secondary and depends on mission, it remains vitally important.

While mission defines what the church does, vision illustrates where the church is going and how it plans to get there. This distinction is vital: mission focuses on the present, whereas vision projects the future. An effective vision not only provides goals, but also the methodology to reach them.

Vision must be practical. It must have "handles" that make it manageable. Practical steps and strategies bring the vision closer to the congregation, fostering unity and a sense of ownership. As Proverbs 29:18 reminds us: "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint."

3. The importance and formation of a vision

3.1. Vision, leadership, and purpose

A God-initiated vision unites the congregation under a singular, transcendent purpose. The pastor is responsible for seeking the Lord's will through prayer and Scripture when forming such a vision (Proverbs 3:5–6). By grounding the vision in biblical truth, pastors align the church's goals with God's will, asking: in light of what God has called us to do, how can we fulfill it effectively?

Forming vision should involve key leadership and members of the congregation to ensure broad buy-in and participation. Inclusion fosters a sense of ownership and investment. When clearly articulated, a vision cultivates belonging, teamwork, and shared purpose. It also acts as a powerful motivator.

As Bill Hybels said: "Vision is the ability to see beyond what the eyes can look at." When members understand a higher purpose, they feel inspired to work diligently toward its fulfillment (Habakkuk 2:2–3). As John Maxwell notes: "Leadership is about going somewhere. If you and your people don't know where you're going, your leadership doesn't matter."



3.2. Key elements for a clear and compelling vision

In the book *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time*, Jeff Sutherland presents key elements needed to form a clear and compelling vision:

1. A vision must be motivated by purpose and answer: “Why does the work we are doing matter?”
2. A vision must be shared. Its formation should be a group effort.
3. Though the vision may be complex, the vision statement must be simple and focused—concise and easy to memorize.
4. A vision must align with the church’s goals and clarify how the work contributes to the church’s mission.
5. The vision’s success must be measurable, with clear indicators of achievement.
6. A vision must be repeatable and adaptable. Those who execute it must be able to refine or adjust it for broader application.

4. The team that formulates the vision

The lead pastor serves as the church’s primary visionary, and his commitment directly influences its trajectory. When formulating the vision, the pastor should recruit innovative thinkers and people willing to take risks, rather than merely assembling a team of those who hold official titles. They should be a group committed to the Church’s growth.

Church leadership is not limited to pastoral staff; it extends to all loyal individuals who can inspire and mobilize others. By surrounding themselves with mature, creative, and discerning people, the work will advance steadily to completion. A diverse team—including ministers and lay members—will contribute the complementary gifts and perspectives needed (Romans 12:4–8).

As the pastor and key collaborators seek the Lord’s direction, conduct research, and hold honest, open conversations, the Lord will provide clear guidance through the team. Reaching a clear and simple vision is hard work. The team will need to wrestle respectfully with different ideas and inspirations. They must be good listeners, flexible, and open to new ideas if they wish to advance.



Teams matter. Great things can only be achieved by teamwork. Three times in the book of Proverbs, Solomon highlights the importance of gathering diverse opinions and perspectives when making important decisions (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6). The message is clear: teams work.

5. The characteristics of a solid vision

5.1. The vision must be written

First, the church’s vision must be written and declared with complete clarity. Let us hear the prophet Habakkuk: “Then the Lord answered me and said: ‘Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.’” A compelling vision must be clear, simple, and grounded in biblical principles. Clarity will ensure that every member understands the process and his or her role in bringing the vision to pass; simplicity—though not the same as ease—makes it more accessible and applicable; constant communication reinforces focus and commitment; and a biblical foundation provides authority and credibility by anchoring it in God’s revealed truth. Therefore, the team should wrestle until a solid statement is achieved.

5.2. A solid vision statement

To be solid, a vision statement should have at least these six characteristics:

1. Clear
2. Oriented toward a specific future
3. Attainable
4. Reflective of the church’s values
5. A guide for decision-making
6. Sustainable

5.3. Solid vision vs. weak vision

The following table contrasts a strong vision statement with a weak one:



Criterion	Strong Vision Statement	Weak Vision Statement
Clarity	Clear and easy to understand	Ambiguous or full of jargon
Future Orientation	Points to a specific desired future	Focuses on the present or lacks direction
Attainability	Ambitious yet realistic	Too idealistic or too easy to achieve
Alignment with Values	Reflects the organization's core beliefs	Inconsistent with organizational values
Decision-Making Tool	Guides strategy and priorities	Offers no practical guidance
Memorability	Easy to remember and communicate	Too long or easy to forget
Longevity	Sustainable over time	Requires frequent revisions

6. Launching the vision

6.1. The team's commitment

The initial team that helped formulate the vision will play a key role in its launch. Carefully selected for spiritual maturity, alignment with the church's values, and loyalty to the Pastor, this group will give credibility to the launch. Their persistence and mutual support will be key to the initial momentum and long-term success. Ordained ministers, ministry members, and their spouses have a particularly sacred responsibility to help and support the implementation of the vision. Their commitment promotes accountability and unity.

6.2. The importance of a good launch

A successful launch requires detailed planning: establishing timelines, assigning responsibilities, and allocating resources. These leaders should be well informed and trained to propagate the vision throughout the congregation (2 Timothy 2:2). Transparency and participation generate trust and enthusiasm. Both financial and resource investment will demonstrate seriousness and foster a sense of collective ownership.



Launch day should not be ordinary. You only have one chance to launch the vision. The congregation must be convinced that the ministerial leadership is fully committed to the long-term vision. They must be certain the team believes in the vision. People will follow only committed leadership. Joel Barker wisely said: “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision merely passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.” After the launch, demonstrating tangible progress—instead of mere intentions—will reinforce credibility and motivate continued participation.

7. Leading by example

Effective leaders embody the vision through their conviction, commitment, and communication; they live the vision so others can see it. As Jack Welch said: “Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is about growing others.” The order is: first you, then others. The congregation’s commitment to a vision will seldom exceed the Pastor’s and his team’s commitment. Personal faith in the vision and commitment to it are essential. Not all church members will follow the vision from the beginning; only when they see the vision lived out will those who were not initially involved get involved.

It is true that commitment sustains perseverance when things become difficult. Having church leadership model the vision is essential. Church leaders must actively promote the vision at the different stages of implementation and through every communication channel, ensuring it remains at the center of the church’s life (1 Peter 5:2–3).

8. Sustaining the vision

Sustaining a vision requires ongoing promotion. Repeat the vision as often as possible, using diverse methods. Communicate it in sermons, bulletins, posters, banners, and social media. Use every available means. Plan promotion campaigns. All of this will help keep the vision alive in the hearts and minds of the congregation. Use the pulpit wisely and consistently. Leaders should share both victories and challenges, emphasizing that every church member has a role in fulfilling the vision. A vision quickly fades if it is not constantly promoted.



9. Making the vision endure

9.1. Forming a soul-winning culture

When a vision is fully integrated into the church's culture, it shapes behaviors, expectations, and decisions. Forming a soul-winning culture means the vision permeates the entire life of the church until evangelizing and discipling become normal, joyful habits. Beyond one-off strategies, culture —“which eats strategy for breakfast,” as Drucker put it— gives life to the church: people are prayed for by name, the Gospel is shared with clarity and love, hospitality is practiced with newcomers, discipleship accompanies them, and steps toward Jesus are celebrated. When the pulpit, the calendar, and the local budget reflect this priority, the vision ceases to be a slogan and becomes a shared identity (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8).

9.2. Turning the vision into atmosphere

The vision should evolve beyond a simple statement; it must define the church's atmosphere, so that it is perceived in what is preached, planned, and practiced. This transition occurs through the deliberate alignment of practices (preaching, hospitality, discipleship, calendars), policies (service criteria, communication, use of resources), and ministries (goals, training, follow-up) with the vision. Constant reaffirmation from the pulpit and in leaders' meetings, periodic evaluation with tangible indicators and testimonies, and timely adaptation—adjusting processes, retraining teams, reallocating budget—keep the vision relevant and compelling. Over time, this coherence turns the vision into a palpable atmosphere that guides decisions and strategies, which anyone—member or visitor—can experience upon entering.

10. Continuously evaluating the vision

Evaluation is vital to determine whether the church is truly embodying its vision and fostering a culture that communicates its values. Congregational conversations, surveys, and informal feedback can reveal whether the vision is being embraced. Evaluation should be regular (for example, quarterly) and conducted by the pastoral team along with key leaders, contrasting quantitative data (new contacts, discipleship starts, baptisms, team participation) with qualitative evidence (testimonies, growth stories, perceptions of the atmosphere).



The church atmosphere should reflect love, acceptance, and purpose. A welcoming building, a calendar aligned with mission, and financial records that prioritize the vision's objectives are evidence of the church's commitment. Each cycle should close with communicating progress, giving thanks for what has been achieved, adjusting practices, and, if necessary, reallocating resources to sustain the vision's advance.

11. The life cycle of the vision

Various studies indicate that every vision goes through a life cycle with a beginning, development, and, eventually, closure. George Barna, in *The Power of Vision*, notes that strategic planning for the vision must be reviewed periodically to remain effective; otherwise, it risks becoming obsolete or disconnected from reality.

Implementing a vision progresses through identifiable stages, beginning with a launch led by pioneers whose enthusiasm inspires others. Most of the congregation will adopt the vision more gradually, which requires patience and encouragement. If leadership maintains its commitment and promotes the vision strategically, in time the majority will end up embracing it as they clearly perceive its benefits (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

President John Fortino emphasized this point during a presentation to pastors at the 2011 General Convention. Speaking about the RoadMap vision, he showed a chart illustrating how, after initial growth, a church often experiences stagnation and leveling. He called it "the plateau." In that phase—he noted—if growth is to continue, it is essential to introduce significant changes; when such changes are implemented, growth resumes. This pattern is cyclical and demands continuous evaluation of the vision.

12. Conclusion

A compelling, biblically grounded vision is essential for a church to flourish. It must be carefully crafted, clearly communicated, and constantly reinforced. As leaders embody and promote the vision, and members embrace it, the church evolves from a collection of individuals into a unified body guided by mission. Over time, the vision becomes culture, enabling the church not only to fulfill its divine purpose, but also to influence generations to come.



This process requires persevering prayer, obedience to the Word, and practical coherence—so that the calendar, budget, and ministry priorities reflect what is preached—along with periodic evaluation and adjustments to maintain relevance and momentum. Casting a clear vision marks an excellent beginning for the Church’s advance, but sustaining it with unity, perseverance, and excellent dedication will make it a growing church.

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barna, George. *The Power of Vision*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2003.
- Barker, Joel A. *The Power of Vision*. St. Paul, MN: Star Thrower Distribution, 1991.
- Fortino, John. *Presentation of the Bishop President to Pastors of the Apostolic Assembly at the 2011 General Convention*.
- Hybels, Bill. *Courageous leadership*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2002.
- Hyatt, Michael. *Your best year*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House in Spanish, 2023.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2007.
- Sutherland, Jeff. *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time*. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2014.
- Welch, Jack, and Suzy Welch. *Winning*. Barcelona, Spain: Vergara, 2005.





SECTION I: EVANGELISM

*How does the
Apostolic Assembly
evangelize the lost?*



Introduction to Evangelism

The evangelizing task of the Church is not an optional program or a secondary activity, but the very heart of the mission entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. The Great Commission remains today the mandate that defines the purpose of every congregation: to proclaim the Gospel to every creature, make disciples of all the nations, and teach them to observe all things He has commanded us (Matthew 28:19–20).

This section has been designed as a practical and pastoral tool to help ministers evaluate and strengthen the evangelism work in their local churches. Its purpose is not to add another burden to the pastor, but to provide a clear frame of reference—with biblical principles and proven strategies—that enables him to lead the congregation into integral and constant evangelism.

Throughout its pages, four fundamental axes of the Strategy of Jesus are presented: the Spiritual Strategy, which lays the foundation of prayer, fasting, and unity for every effort; the Evangelism Cycle, which mobilizes each member of the church to win their friends for Christ; the Friendship Groups, which constitute the network of care, discipleship, and evangelism in homes; and, finally, the Spiritual Retreats, which consolidate and renew both leaders and new believers.

These four components must not be understood in isolation, but as parts of a mechanism that functions harmoniously. The Spiritual Strategy sustains the Cycle; the Cycle feeds the Groups; the Groups are strengthened in the Retreats; and the Retreats, in turn, renew the spiritual life of the church to begin again with greater strength.

This section seeks not only to instruct, but also to invite reflection and self-evaluation. At the end of each chapter, questions are presented that will allow the Pastor to realistically assess the situation of his church and chart concrete steps toward greater faithfulness to the mission of Christ.



Chapter 1 – Spiritual Strategy

To have a church strong in evangelism

1. Introduction

Evangelism is the very heart of the Church’s mission. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus Christ left His disciples the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). This task was not simply a ministerial option, but the Church’s reason for being in the world.

However, the fulfillment of this mission is not founded solely on human strategies, creative programs, or material resources. Biblical experience and the history of the Church teach us that every work of genuine evangelization must be accompanied by a solid spiritual strategy, for the work of winning souls transcends the natural and is fought primarily on spiritual ground.

The apostle Paul expresses it clearly in his letter to the Ephesians: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Thus, evangelism cannot be understood merely as a human effort to persuade, argue, or attract people, but as a spiritual confrontation in which the Church must be equipped with the weapons God Himself provides.¹

A church strong in evangelism is one that understands that victory is not first achieved in homes or temples, but in the secret place of prayer, in the discipline of fasting, and in the unity of its members.

The spiritual strategy is, then, the invisible yet decisive foundation that sustains every visible evangelism action. Without it, programs become empty activities, the Strategy of Jesus yields superficial results, and believers wear themselves out without fruit. With it, even the simplest efforts become powerful instruments in God’s hands to transform lives.

¹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 9.



When we observe the life and ministry of Jesus, we find a perfect model of spiritual dependence. Before beginning His public ministry, He withdrew into the wilderness for forty days in prayer and fasting (Matthew 4:1–11). Before choosing His twelve apostles, He spent the whole night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12–13). And He would constantly withdraw to seek communion with the Father (Mark 1:35). Jesus shows us that no evangelizing mission can be undertaken without first securing victory in the spiritual realm.²

The early church followed this example. After Christ’s ascension, the disciples gathered “with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14), and it was in that spiritual environment that the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, empowering them to testify with power. It was not a publicity campaign that drew the crowds, but the manifestation of the Spirit in a united church persevering in prayer. As a result, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).³

Besides prayer and fasting, spiritual unity is an indispensable element in every evangelism strategy. Jesus Himself prayed to the Father asking that His disciples be one, “that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Unity is not a secondary value, but a powerful tool of testimony. A divided church loses credibility before the world and lacks spiritual authority; a united church, on the other hand, becomes a living testimony of the love and power of God.

This chapter therefore seeks to set forth the foundations of the spiritual strategy that every church must cultivate to be effective in evangelism. We will analyze the tools God has placed at His people’s disposal—prayer, fasting, unity, the Word, and praise—and show how to use them in a practical and organized way in congregational life. We will also offer pastoral evaluation criteria that will allow each leader to measure the spiritual condition of the church and its readiness for the work of evangelism.

In short, the goal of this chapter is not only to convey knowledge, but to offer a practical and biblical framework so that each Pastor may lead his congregation toward a robust spiritual life that bears the fruit of effective evangelism. For before speaking to the world about Christ, the Church must speak with Christ about the world.

² Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 36.

³ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2023), 9.



2. Biblical foundations of the Spiritual Strategy

The Church's practice in evangelism is not sustained by human creativity—much less by improvisation—but by principles that flow directly from biblical revelation. Scripture clearly presents that the work of reaching the lost must be preceded, accompanied, and sustained by a spiritual strategy that connects the Church with the power of God.⁴

2.1. Spiritual warfare in the Church's mission

Once again, the apostle Paul states categorically: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

This text places evangelism within the framework of a cosmic conflict: it is not just about intellectual persuasion or emotional appeal, but about proclaiming Christ in the midst of a spiritual battlefield where souls are held captive by the power of sin and the devil.

Victory, then, does not come from persuasive techniques, but from the proper use of the spiritual weapons God provides. Spiritual strongholds are pulled down with spiritual weapons (see 2 Corinthians 10:4). This means that the success of evangelism is directly related to the Church's faithfulness in its spiritual discipline.

2.2. Jesus as the model of spiritual strategy

Jesus' ministry was marked by absolute dependence on the Father. Before beginning His public work, He withdrew into the wilderness for forty days in fasting and prayer (Matthew 4:1–11). There He overcame temptation and affirmed His identity and mission. This episode is not anecdotal: it shows that spiritual ground must be taken before undertaking any visible mission.

Likewise, before choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12–13). The selection of leaders—fundamental for the future of worldwide evangelization—was not the result of merely human criteria, but of deep spiritual seeking.

⁴ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 75.



Moreover, the Gospels show repeatedly that Jesus would withdraw to pray (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). In Him we find the conviction that mission without prayer becomes fragile, whereas prayer makes mission a channel of divine power.

2.3. The early church: united prayer and evangelism fruit

The book of Acts offers us a congregational paradigm. Before Pentecost, the disciples continued “with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). That disposition prepared the environment for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), whose manifestation triggered exponential growth in the Church: three thousand converts in one day (Acts 2:41), and a continuing process in which “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

The pattern is evident: united prayer precedes evangelistic expansion. Unity in the spiritual opens the doors to multiplication in numbers. What is more, when the Church faced threats, it responded with corporate prayer; the place where they were assembled was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). The early history of the Church cannot be explained without the foundation of corporate prayer.

2.4. Unity as evangelism testimony

Jesus prayed in John 17 for the unity of His disciples, linking it directly to the Church’s witness to the world: “that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Internal division weakens the Church’s credibility before the world, whereas unity reflects the very nature of God and constitutes a first-order evangelism tool.⁵

Unity is also the necessary condition for the Strategy of Jesus to function: Friendship Groups require harmony among hosts, leaders, and members; the Evangelism Cycle advances only if all participate in prayer and invitation; Friend Day needs a sum of organized efforts; and the School of Discipleship demands cooperation from teachers and collaborators.

A divided church cannot sustain this process; a united church becomes a living testimony of the reconciliation it proclaims.

⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 2: Grow* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 105.



2.5. The Word and praise as spiritual weapons

The author of Hebrews affirms: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). The proclamation of the Word is not a mere moralizing discourse, but a spiritual weapon that confronts hearts, breaks chains, and opens the way to faith (see Romans 10:17).

Likewise, praise and worship appear in Scripture as tools of spiritual victory. Jehoshaphat triumphed over the enemies when the people lifted songs of praise (2 Chronicles 20:22). Paul and Silas, in prison, experienced a liberating earthquake as they sang hymns to God (Acts 16:25–26). Congregational worship is far from being a musical prelude; it is a spiritual act that opens the way for the Gospel to be proclaimed with power.⁶

3. Spiritual tools for evangelism

The effectiveness of the Strategy of Jesus depends to a great extent on how the church uses the spiritual tools God has placed at its disposal. These are not optional, but essential to prevail on spiritual ground and prepare hearts to receive the Gospel.

3.1. Prayer as the foundation of the mission

If we seek to identify the foundation of every evangelism work in the Church, without a doubt prayer occupies a primary place. Spiritually speaking, prayer is not only an act of communication with God, but an exercise in aligning with His will, a discipline that opens the door to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and a weapon of intercession that prepares the hearts of those we desire to reach with the Gospel.

Scripture presents prayer as the hidden force behind the great advances of God’s people. In the Old Testament, we find men like Daniel who, even in adverse circumstances, maintained a constant life of prayer, opening his windows toward Jerusalem three times a day (Daniel 6:10). That faithfulness in prayer not only sustained his faith, but became a testimony to the greatness of the true God before a pagan empire.

⁶ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 2: Grow* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 100.



In the New Testament, the highest model of prayer is found in Jesus Christ. Before beginning His public ministry, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He spent forty days in prayer and fasting (Matthew 4:1–11).

In that time of prayer He obtained the spiritual strength to resist Satan’s temptation and affirm the mission the Father had entrusted to Him. This episode teaches that the evangelizing ministry cannot begin without serious spiritual preparation.

Moreover, before choosing the twelve apostles who would carry forward the evangelizing task, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12–13). The selection of leaders for the mission was not based on charisma, rhetorical skill, or human abilities, but on guidance received in prayer. Even in moments of great pressure, such as Gethsemane, Jesus resorted to prayer as His refuge and source of strength (Matthew 26:36–46). This shows that prayer is not a secondary resource, but the spiritual engine that sustains God’s mission on earth.

The early church learned this fundamental principle from its Master. Acts notes that the disciples “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14). This environment of corporate prayer preceded the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the event that launched world evangelization. The power manifested at Pentecost was not the result of good organization, but the fruit of a church that prepared spiritually through united prayer.⁷

Later, when the Church faced persecution and threats, it did not respond with human defense strategies, but with prayer: “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). Prayer not only brought comfort in the midst of difficulty, but renewed boldness to preach the Gospel with greater fervor.

Within the Strategy of Jesus, prayer is essential at every stage:

- In the Friendship Groups, prayer creates an atmosphere of spiritual openness and prepares the hearts of guests.

⁷ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *52 Lessons for Cell Groups* (Fontana, CA: Strategy of Jesus, 2019), 68.



- In the Evangelism Cycle, specific intercession for friends and contacts softens the soil of hearts so that the seed of the Gospel can germinate.
- On Friend Day, congregational prayer precedes the event, so that what happens there is not the result of efficient logistics, but of a move of the Spirit.
- In the School of Discipleship, prayer sustains the consolidation process of new believers, strengthens their faith, and protects them from spiritual setbacks.

From a pastoral perspective, prayer should be cultivated in three complementary dimensions:

1. **PERSONAL PRAYER:** Each member must have a steady devotional life, nurturing communion with God and developing spiritual sensitivity. A church strong in evangelism is composed of believers who seek God in the secret place (see Matthew 6:6).⁸
2. **CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER:** The Church should join efforts in times of corporate prayer—whether vigils, prayer chains, or services dedicated to intercession. Congregational prayer generates unity, builds shared faith, and releases spiritual power corporately.
3. **INTERCESSORY PRAYER:** This is prayer offered specifically on behalf of others—in this case, for the people one desires to reach. Paul exhorts that supplications and prayers be made “for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life” (1 Timothy 2:1–2). Pastoral and congregational intercession is a strategic labor that anticipates evangelism’s victory.

In conclusion, prayer is the first spiritual tool of evangelism. Without it, programs become limited human efforts; with it, even the simplest resources are transformed into powerful instruments in God’s hands. A praying church does not depend on the visible, but on the eternal; and in that dependence it finds the strength to fulfill the mission.

⁸ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 76.



3.2. Fasting as a spiritual discipline

If prayer is the breath of the Christian life, fasting may be considered the discipline that sharpens the spiritual ear and strengthens the believer's dependence on God. In biblical history, fasting does not appear as an isolated or merely ritual act, but as a recurring practice of consecration, seeking divine direction, repentance, and preparation for mission.⁹

In the Old Testament, Moses fasted forty days on Mount Sinai when he received the Law (Exodus 34:28), showing that fasting accompanied moments of revelation and commitment. At various times of crisis, the people of Israel proclaimed corporate fasts as expressions of repentance and seeking God's favor (Joel 2:12–15). Even kings like Jehoshaphat resorted to congregational fasting when facing superior enemies, acknowledging that victory would not come from military strength but from God's help (2 Chronicles 20:3–4).

In the New Testament, fasting is directly linked to the life of Jesus Christ and the early Church. Jesus Himself, before beginning His ministry, was led into the wilderness where He fasted forty days and forty nights (Matthew 4:2). That time of fasting not only fortified His spirit against temptation, but prepared Him to undertake the evangelizing mission with authority. Later, in the Sermon on the Mount, He taught His disciples about fasting, emphasizing that it must be done rightly and not as a religious spectacle: “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:17–18).¹⁰

The early Church continued this practice as part of its spiritual life. In Acts we read that, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for the missionary work (Acts 13:2–3). This is revealing: the Spirit's direction for evangelistic expansion came in a context of prayer and fasting. Later, when appointing leaders in the churches, the apostles prayed and fasted, commending them to the Lord (Acts 14:23). Fasting, therefore, was not limited to moments of crisis; it formed part of the key processes of mission and leadership.

⁹ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes that Transform Nations* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2016), 289.

¹⁰ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 1: New Birth* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 115.



The prophet Isaiah also offers a deep perspective on the purpose of fasting, stripping it of empty formalism. In Isaiah 58:6–7 God declares: “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him...?” The true fast transforms the heart, sensitizes us to our neighbor’s need, and opens doors to justice and mercy.¹¹

Within the Strategy of Jesus, fasting becomes an indispensable resource to prepare the church spiritually in each phase of the evangelism process:

- In the Friendship Groups, leaders and hosts can dedicate times of fasting to intercede for their guests’ specific needs and prepare the spiritual ground so that the Word touches their hearts.
- During the Evangelism Cycle, the church should establish congregational fasts, seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance for each activity and crying out for the salvation of friends and family members.
- Prior to Friend Day, fasting serves as an act of collective consecration in which the entire congregation disposes itself spiritually to receive and serve guests with a tender heart and renewed faith.
- In the School of Discipleship, fasting helps new believers grow in maturity, learn to depend on God, and develop spiritual sensitivity throughout their formation.

Fasting accomplishes at least three strategic functions in evangelism:

1. IT STRENGTHENS SPIRITUAL LIFE – by abstaining from food or other comforts, the believer centers on God, developing greater dependence on His presence.
2. IT BREAKS SPIRITUAL CHAINS – in keeping with Isaiah 58, fasting opens the door to spiritual deliverance, preparing captive hearts to receive the Gospel’s message.

¹¹ Martín Del Campo, Ismael, *Go and Make Disciples* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2012), 223.



3. IT SHARPENS SENSITIVITY TO GOD’S DIRECTION – many of the Church’s most important decisions were taken in a context of prayer and fasting, which teaches that fasting helps discern the divine will clearly.

In short, fasting is not an empty ritual sacrifice, but a spiritual discipline that equips the Church for the battle of evangelism. A church that fasts recognizes its dependence on God and opens the way for the Holy Spirit’s power to be manifested in its evangelistic efforts.¹²

3.3. Unity as testimony and spiritual power

Among evangelism’s spiritual tools, unity occupies a place of special relevance. It is not merely an ethical value or an organizational convenience, but a spiritual principle deeply linked to the Church’s witness and its effectiveness in mission. A divided congregation loses strength, but a church united in love and purpose becomes a powerful living testimony of God’s transforming work.

Jesus Christ Himself prayed to the Father, interceding for the unity of His disciples: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20–21). This prayer reveals that unity is not an end in itself, but a means to evangelism: the credibility of the Church’s message is directly linked to the quality of its internal fellowship.

Acts shows that from the beginning unity was a determining factor in the expansion of the Gospel: “continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47). Internal unity translated into external favor, and that favor opened the doors for evangelism to advance fruitfully.¹³

Aware of the danger of division, the apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians:

¹² Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes that Transform Nations* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2016), 311.

¹³ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 10.



“Now I plead with you, brethren... that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Fragmentation, jealousy, and strife not only harm church life; they also undermine its evangelizing power, for internal incoherence weakens external testimony.

In the context of the Strategy of Jesus, unity becomes indispensable for the success of each of its stages:

- In the Friendship Groups, unity among hosts, leaders, and participants creates a welcoming and attractive environment for guests. When a group reflects harmony and brotherly love, it conveys a visible testimony of the Gospel.
- During the Evangelism Cycle, unity is expressed in the cooperation of the whole church in prayer, invitation, and follow-up. A congregation that works as one body can sustain the cycle’s sequence effectively.
- On Friend Day, unity is essential to receive and serve guests in an organized, warm, and consistent way. A church that appears divided on that day will lose credibility before visitors.
- In the School of Discipleship, unity among teachers, collaborators, and new believers guarantees a solid and continuous formative process. Where there is division, discipleship stalls; where there is unity, it multiplies.

Unity is cultivated through concrete attitudes that must be promoted and modeled by leadership:

1. FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION – no church can sustain an evangelizing process if resentments and offenses dominate internal relationships. Forgiveness restores communion and opens space for the Holy Spirit.
2. MUTUAL SERVICE – the willingness to serve one another, following Christ’s example (John 13:14–15), generates an environment of humility and cooperation that attracts God’s presence;
3. SHARED VISION – unity is not limited to the absence of conflict, but is strengthened around a common purpose. When the whole congregation



understands and embraces the Strategy of Jesus as a joint mission, unity becomes the engine of evangelism.

In summary, unity is not simply a desirable moral virtue, but an indispensable spiritual tool for evangelism. A church that remains united in love, vision, and purpose becomes a visible reflection of God and a powerful testimony that opens hearts to the Gospel.¹⁴

3.4. The Word of God as a living weapon

Evangelism is not sustained by human opinions or merely philosophical arguments, but by the proclamation of the Word of God. Scripture itself declares: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The Word is not a dead text nor a simple moral code; it is a dynamic instrument, inspired by God, that works with power in the lives of those who hear it.

The apostle Paul emphasizes that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). This principle is fundamental: evangelism bears fruit when the Word is proclaimed, for it is itself a bearer of life and a generator of faith. Therefore, the evangelist or preacher’s task is not to impress with eloquence or persuade with rhetorical techniques, but to faithfully announce the message of Scripture.

In Jesus’ life, the Word played a central role. During His temptation in the wilderness, He answered each attack of the enemy with Scripture: “It is written” (see Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Thus He taught us that the Word is a spiritual weapon capable of resisting and overcoming satanic opposition. Likewise, His teachings and parables conveyed the message of the Kingdom in understandable language, yet always grounded in God’s revealed truth.

The early church also placed the Word at the center of its life and mission. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, believers continued steadfastly “in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). This perseverance in apostolic teaching was the basis of their spiritual and evangelizing growth.

¹⁴ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 69.



Later, when the need arose to attend to widows, the apostles appointed deacons for that service, declaring: “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The ministerial priority remained clear: prayer and the Word.¹⁵

Within the Strategy of Jesus, the Word of God occupies a central place in each of its phases:

- In the Friendship Groups, the Word is shared in a close setting where guests can listen and reflect in a relational context. These are not complex academic studies, but practical biblical teachings that display God’s love and the Gospel’s transforming power.
- During the Evangelism Cycle, the Word guides conversations, motivates prayer, and orients invitations. Every evangelizing action finds its legitimacy and direction in Scripture.
- On Friend Day, the preaching of the Word must be clear, Christ-centered, and aimed toward conversion. The proclamation of the Gospel of Salvation is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to confront the heart and prompt a decision of faith.
- In the School of Discipleship, the Word becomes the foundation of formation and consolidation. The new believer needs to be nourished with biblical teaching in order to grow in maturity and remain firm in the faith.

It is important to emphasize that the Word must not be manipulated or used for purposes other than those God intended. Paul warns that the worker of the Gospel must “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15), which implies faithfulness in interpretation and clarity in teaching. Likewise, the Word must not remain at a merely intellectual level, but must be applied to practical life. The apostle James exhorts: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

In conclusion, the Word of God is the living and effective weapon that sustains every work of evangelism. A church that proclaims the Word faithfully and lives it consistently becomes a channel of transforming power. Where the Word is announced, the Holy Spirit works, hearts are confronted, and lives are transformed.¹⁶

¹⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 105.

¹⁶ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 137.



3.5. Praise and worship as spiritual weapons

Praise and worship are not merely musical expressions or liturgical acts, but powerful spiritual tools that prepare the ground for evangelism and open hearts to the action of God's Spirit. In the Bible we find multiple examples of how praise becomes an instrument of victory and how worship attracts the divine presence in the midst of adverse situations.

In the Old Testament, when Jehoshaphat faced a coalition of enemy armies, he called the people to seek God in prayer and fasting. God's answer was surprising: they would not need to fight, but to trust in the Lord. Jehoshaphat then appointed singers to praise God with these words: "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever" (see 2 Chronicles 20:21).

The account says that "when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir... and they were defeated" (2 Chronicles 20:22). Praise opened the way to victory, showing that it was not a mere accompaniment but a spiritual weapon in the hands of God's people.

In the New Testament, we find the example of Paul and Silas imprisoned in Philippi. At midnight, instead of complaining, they began to pray and sing hymns to God. Scripture says: "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed" (Acts 16:26).

Praise, in the midst of affliction, unleashed a divine intervention that not only freed the prisoners, but led to the conversion of the jailer and his whole family.¹⁷

Praise and worship fulfill at least three strategic functions in evangelism:

- THEY INVITE GOD'S PRESENCE – "But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3). When the Church worships, it creates an environment where God's presence is powerfully manifested, which touches and transforms hearts.

¹⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 2: Grow* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 29.



- **THEY BREAK SPIRITUAL CHAINS** – as in the case of Paul and Silas, praise has a liberating effect. People bound by sin, sorrow, or spiritual oppression can experience freedom in an atmosphere of genuine worship.
- **THEY PREPARE THE HEART TO RECEIVE THE WORD** – worship sensitizes hearers’ spirits, opening their hearts so that God’s Word penetrates with greater clarity and effectiveness.

Within the Strategy of Jesus, praise and worship are fundamental in every stage:

- In the Friendship Groups, simple songs and intimate worship generate an atmosphere of joy and receptivity, showing guests that the Christian faith is a living and joyful experience.
- During the Evangelism Cycle, praise strengthens the church in its commitment, renews members’ courage and faith, and spiritually prepares each gathering.
- On Friend Day, congregational worship creates a conducive atmosphere for guests to experience God’s presence—something that impacts beyond words and opens the way to the proclamation of the Gospel.
- In the School of Discipleship, teaching on the importance of praise and worship helps new believers cultivate a devotional life centered on honoring God at all times.

It must be underlined that praise and worship must not become a musical spectacle or an empty routine, but must be offered “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). Authenticity is key: God does not seek perfect voices or sophisticated melodies, but surrendered hearts that honor Him sincerely.

In conclusion, praise and worship are spiritual weapons that accompany and enhance the work of evangelism. A church that knows how to worship not only proclaims the Gospel with words, but reflects it through a spiritual atmosphere that transforms lives. Where the Church lifts songs of praise in unison, the enemy flees, hearts open, and God is glorified in power.¹⁸

¹⁸ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Groups that Transform Lives* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2015), 140.



4. Pastoral evaluation

A spiritual strategy is not sustained only by theoretical principles; it also requires constant evaluation to measure the church's real spiritual condition and the effectiveness of its practices in the arena of evangelism. The pastor's task, as shepherd of the flock, includes discerning the level of spiritual readiness of his congregation, identifying weaknesses, and fostering growth in key areas.

Scripture reminds us of the importance of self-examination. The apostle Paul exhorts, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). In the same way, pastoral leadership should periodically evaluate whether the church is spiritually aligned with the mission of reaching the lost.¹⁹

Below are practical evaluation criteria to assess the church's spiritual condition in relation to the tools described above:

4.1. Prayer

- Is there a culture of personal prayer among the members?
- Does the church gather regularly for congregational prayer?
- Have specific intercession teams been formed for evangelism?
- Is there intentional prayer for friends invited to Friendship Groups, to the Evangelism Cycle, to Friend Day, and to the School of Discipleship?

4.2. Fasting

- Is fasting promoted as a spiritual discipline in the church?
- Do the leaders actively participate in congregational fasts?
- Are special fasts called before key stages of the Strategy of Jesus?
- Do members understand the spiritual purpose of fasting beyond a ritual practice?

¹⁹ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 7.



4.3. Unity

- Is an atmosphere of reconciliation, forgiveness, and mutual service cultivated among members?
- Is the church's evangelistic vision shared by the whole congregation or only by a small group?
- Are there internal divisions that weaken the testimony toward unbelievers?
- Is cooperation promoted among the different ministries to support the Friendship Groups, the Evangelism Cycle, Friend Day, and the School of Discipleship?

4.4. The Word of God

- Is the Word central in the church's preaching and teaching?
- Are Friendship Groups used as spaces to share Scripture in a practical and accessible way?
- Does Friend Day include a clear, Christ-centered, salvation-oriented biblical message?
- Does the School of Discipleship ensure that new believers grow in knowledge of and obedience to the Word?

4.5. Praise and worship

- Does the church understand praise as a spiritual weapon and not merely a musical act?
- Is authentic worship—"in spirit and truth"—promoted in every context of the Strategy of Jesus?
- Are worship leaders aware of their evangelizing role in preparing spiritual atmospheres?
- Do new believers receive teaching on the importance of worship as a lifestyle within the School of Discipleship?



4.6. Indicators of advance and signs of stagnation

SPIRITUAL ADVANCE:

- Increased participation in times of prayer and fasting.
- Greater unity and cooperation around the evangelistic vision.
- Evident fruit of conversions and consolidation of new disciples.
- Worship services marked by God's presence and genuine adoration.
- Complete processes of evangelism and consolidation in Friendship Groups, the Evangelism Cycle, Friend Day, and the School of Discipleship.

SPIRITUAL STAGNATION:

- Low attendance at prayer meetings and little commitment to fasting.
- Internal divisions or unresolved conflicts.
- Evangelistic activities carried out without evident spiritual backing.
- Preaching and teaching disconnected from the Word of God.
- Incomplete processes where evangelism occurs but consolidation into the School of Discipleship does not.

5. Conclusion

Every work of authentic evangelism stands on a solid spiritual foundation. Biblical experience shows that the great advances of God's people were not the result of human resources, but of a genuine dependence on God's presence and power through prayer, fasting, unity, the Word, and worship. These elements are not optional, but indispensable in the life of a church that desires to be effective in reaching the lost.

The Strategy of Jesus finds in the Spiritual Strategy its true foundation. Without prayer we risk turning the church into a social center; without fasting, our activities can become merely human efforts; without unity, we will lose impact upon the lost world; and without the Word and worship, we will lack the transforming power needed to bring growth and maturity to new believers.



Therefore, the first task of the Pastor and of the entire congregation is to secure victory on spiritual ground before expecting fruit in the visible realm. A church that cultivates the spiritual disciplines we have considered not only strengthens its internal life, but also opens the doors for God to be glorified through evangelism and the multiplication of disciples.²⁰

This chapter has shown us that the spiritual strategy is not a secondary add-on, but the base on which every evangelizing effort is built. The next chapter, devoted to the Evangelism Cycle, will develop in more detail the practical dynamics of the Strategy of Jesus, explaining how the church can structure, step by step, the process of taking friends from the initial contact all the way to consolidation in the School of Discipleship.

In the end, spirituality and mission cannot be separated: a church strong in the spiritual will be a church fruitful in evangelism. And every evangelism strategy that employs God's spiritual weapons will result in transformed lives, restored families, and communities reached by the power of the Gospel.

6. Self-evaluation questions

1. Does my personal life reflect a steady discipline of prayer and seeking God?
2. Does the church I pastor have a solid culture of congregational prayer?
3. Is there specific and constant intercession for those invited to the Friendship Groups, to Friend Day, and to the School of Discipleship?
4. Is fasting a habitual practice in my life and in the life of the congregation?
5. Do I promote congregational fasts in preparation for key moments in the Strategy of Jesus?
6. Is there a spirit of unity in the church that strengthens our testimony before unbelievers?
7. Does the Word of God hold a central place in the meetings of the Friendship Groups, in the church services, and in the teachings of the School of Discipleship?

²⁰ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 110.



8. Is our congregational worship lived as a spiritual act that invites God's presence and prepares the ground for evangelism?
9. Have I instructed the church—especially the leaders—on the importance of prayer, fasting, unity, the Word, and worship as foundations of the Christian life?
10. What concrete evidences of spiritual advance can I identify in the church as a result of applying this spiritual strategy?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bounds, E. M. *Power Through Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.
- Bounds, E. M. *The Weapon of Prayer*. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1993.
- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 1: Nacer*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 2: Crecer*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Martín Del Campo, Ismael. *Vayan y hagan discípulos*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2012.
- Murray, Andrew. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1981.
- Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.



- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *52 lecciones para grupos celulares*. Fontana, CA: Estrategia de Jesús, 2019.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Grupos que transforman vidas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2015.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares que transforman naciones*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth Internacional, 2016.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Tenney, Tommy. *The God Chasers: My Soul Follows Hard After Thee*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1998.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982.



Chapter 2 – Evangelism Cycle

An effective tool for reach and impact

1. Introduction

The Evangelism Cycle is one of the most effective tools of the Strategy of Jesus, since it makes it possible to organize, over a defined period, the efforts of the local church to reach new believers. It consists of a five-week plan in which each member of the congregation—or of a Friendship Group—sets out to win ten friends for Christ, with the purpose of connecting them to the group, to the School of Discipleship, and, finally, to the active membership of the church.

This process is not limited to inviting people to a meeting; rather, it prepares hearts spiritually so that the seed of the Word of God may be sown in them effectively. During the five weeks, believers pray, fast, and act intentionally on behalf of their friends, ensuring that each step is backed by God.²¹

The apostle explains this principle when writing to the Corinthians: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:6–8). The Evangelism Cycle is, then, a coordinated human effort, but with the conviction that it is God who gives the growth.²²

Normally, churches carry out the Evangelism Cycle two or three times per year. Its five-week length follows a clear sequence:

1. Identify the friends
2. Contact them
3. Visit them
4. Invite them to Friend Day
5. Confirm and bring them to the event

²¹ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *52 Lessons for Cell Groups* (Fontana, CA: Strategy of Jesus, 2019), 183.

²² Estrategia de Jesús, *Simplificada: Etapa 1* (Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019), 10.



The high point of this process is Friend Day, a celebration prepared with excellence to receive the guests, minister to them with the Word, and connect them immediately to the School of Discipleship. In this way, the Evangelism Cycle is not an isolated event, but a chain of actions that begins with a personal relationship and ends in the formation of a new disciple of Jesus Christ.²³

2. Biblical foundations of the Evangelism Cycle

The Evangelism Cycle is grounded in clear biblical principles that confirm that the mission of reaching the lost belongs to the whole church and not only to the Pastor or to a small group of evangelists.

2.1. The Great Commission of Jesus

In Luke 24:45–47, after rising again, Jesus opened His disciples’ understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures, and said to them: “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” . The mission of preaching is therefore the direct fulfillment of Christ’s redemptive work.

Matthew’s Gospel also emphasizes the universality of the mission. Jesus commanded: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). This command was not addressed to an exclusive group, but to all the disciples.

2.2. The New Testament Church

The book of Acts reaffirms this truth: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Evangelization is not possible without the power of the Holy Spirit, and this power was poured out on all believers, enabling them to be witnesses.

In turn, the apostle Peter teaches that every member of the church has a priestly calling: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that

²³ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 84.



you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1^a Peter 2:9). This passage confirms that proclaiming the Gospel is the responsibility of every believer, not just a few.²⁴

In this sense, the Evangelism Cycle reflects the biblical design: it activates every member of the church to function in his or her purpose, participating in the sowing and care of souls, trusting that God will give the increase. At the same time, it breaks with the traditional mindset that evangelism is the exclusive task of the Pastor or a few members. Every believer is called to be a sower in God’s field, a coworker in the work, and a witness of Jesus Christ.

3. Results of the Evangelism Cycle

The Evangelism Cycle has proven to be an effective tool to energize the life of churches and to involve all believers actively in the mission Christ entrusted to us. Its results can be seen in three main dimensions: in the church as a body, in believers as individuals, and in the Kingdom of God in its missionary advance.

3.1. Results in the local church

First, the Evangelism Cycle transforms the congregation’s internal culture. For a long time, in many churches, evangelism was considered an exclusive task of the Pastor or of a small group of especially motivated members. This traditional model produced dependence and passivity: while a few worked, the majority remained spectators.

The Evangelism Cycle breaks with this paradigm by mobilizing the whole church. Each member becomes a protagonist of the mission, taking on the responsibility of praying, fasting, identifying, contacting, inviting, and accompanying their friends. In this way, the congregation ceases to be a passive audience and becomes an active army of witnesses.

The cultural change that takes place is profound:

²⁴ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *In the Temple and in every house* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2014), 64.



- The church understands that evangelizing is not an optional program, but an essential part of its identity.
- A spirit of cooperation and unity is generated, since all work toward the same goal.
- Fellowship is strengthened, because members share a common purpose and pray for one another in their evangelizing efforts.

The result is a more dynamic church, focused on the mission and conscious of its calling.²⁵

3.2. Results in believers

The second level of impact is observed in the individual lives of believers. By participating in the Evangelism Cycle, each member:

1. **DISCOVERS HIS OR HER IDENTITY AS A WITNESS OF CHRIST.** Many Christians recognize for the first time that they are called to evangelize, not as an option, but as part of their spiritual nature.
2. **GROWS IN FAITH AND DEPENDENCE ON GOD.** By taking on the task of interceding, fasting, and sharing the Gospel with friends and relatives, believers experience God’s backing and their faith is strengthened.
3. **DEVELOPS SPIRITUAL AND RELATIONAL SKILLS.** Speaking of Christ, praying for others, and bearing witness to one’s faith are practices that are developed and matured during the cycle.
4. **EXPERIENCES SPIRITUAL JOY.** Nothing brings a Christian greater joy than seeing someone close draw near to God. The apostle John wrote: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).

In this way, the cycle not only seeks to win new souls, but also to edify and mature the believers who participate in it.

²⁵ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 3.



3.3. Results in the Kingdom of God

Finally, the Evangelism Cycle produces an impact on the advance of the Kingdom of God in the community and beyond. Each cycle becomes an open door for dozens, and even hundreds, of people to hear the Gospel and have the opportunity to receive Jesus Christ.

As the Word affirms: “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:46–47). The cycle offers the local church a concrete platform to obey this mandate, not only individually, but as an organized body.

Moreover, the cycle ensures that new believers are not left without accompaniment, since from the beginning their integration into the School of Discipleship is planned. In this way, the church not only wins souls, but consolidates them, avoiding the frustration of evangelizing efforts without continuity.

3.4. A new level of reach

The Evangelism Cycle also takes the church to a higher level of faith and commitment. By involving all members in a common mission, a renewed sense of purpose is generated. The congregation learns to think not in terms of “internal activities,” but of outward mission. The language changes: it is no longer only about maintaining the church, but about expanding the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Peter expresses it clearly: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The Evangelism Cycle puts this identity into practice, reminding each member that he or she is a priest and a witness of the Lord.²⁶

4. Practical development of the Evangelism Cycle

The Evangelism Cycle is not an abstract concept, but a concrete plan that guides the church step by step in the task of reaching the lost. Its strength lies in the simplicity and clarity of the actions, so that every member—regardless of experience—can participate actively. For five

²⁶ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 14.



weeks, the entire congregation mobilizes in a process that begins with identifying friends and culminates in Friend Day, an event in which the Gospel is proclaimed clearly and a bridge is established toward the School of Discipleship.

The Pastor or leader plays a central role in this process: he must encourage, motivate, and oversee the congregation, reminding them of the importance of praying and fasting during the five weeks. Without the spiritual dimension, the cycle runs the risk of being reduced to a social activity. But when prayer and fasting accompany each stage, the work is backed by God and bears abundant fruit (see Acts 4:31).²⁷

Below are the details of each week of the cycle:

4.1. Week 1: Identify

The first week is for preparation and intercession. Each church member writes, on a card or marker, the names of ten friends, relatives, or acquaintances for whom he or she will pray throughout the cycle. This list becomes the basis for personal and congregational intercession.

The biblical principle is clear: “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house” (Mark 3:27). Identifying the friends is an act of faith that recognizes those lives are under evil spiritual influence and must be freed through prayer and fasting.

During this week, each believer is encouraged to dedicate at least one day of fasting, asking God to open hearts and remove spiritual obstacles. The focus is not human, but spiritual: we pray that God will prepare the soil where the seed of His Word will be sown.

4.2. Week 2: Contact

In the second week, an initial direct contact is made with the friends on the list, usually by phone call or personal message. The objective is twofold: (1) Let them know they are being remembered in prayer. (2) Identify their needs in order to intercede more specifically.

This simple contact opens the door to deeper dialogue and demonstrates genuine interest in the person. The apostle Paul describes the spiritual opposition in this process: “whose minds the

²⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 85.



god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore, it is not merely a call, but a spiritual act: while speaking with the friend, one intercedes in prayer for God to remove the veil of unbelief.²⁸

4.3. Week 3: Visit

In the third week, a closer step is taken: personally visiting friends in their homes or workplaces. This visit should be brief, respectful, and focused on two main actions: sharing a passage from the Word of God and praying with the person.

The purpose of the visit is to sow the seed of the Gospel directly in the friend’s heart, showing authentic interest in his or her life. Scripture instructs: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6). Thus the believer should prepare to speak with wisdom and sensitivity.

It is not about forcing an immediate decision, but about opening a spiritual space where the Word and prayer touch the guest’s heart. Many times, at this moment, God answers in surprising ways the prayers offered in the previous weeks.

4.4. Week 4: Invite

In the fourth week, friends receive a formal and personal invitation to Friend Day. This invitation may be delivered in physical format (card, flyer) or digital (message, video, social media image), but the essential thing is that it be accompanied by a word of affection and a promise of accompaniment.

The believer not only invites, but confirms the guest’s interest and makes sure he or she has the necessary information: place, time, transportation if needed. Follow-up is key here: a friend may accept the invitation, but needs encouragement and reminders to actually attend.

The invitation is not merely to an event, but to an experience with God and with the church. Therefore, the church member should show enthusiasm and conviction about the importance of that day.²⁹

²⁸ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 21.

²⁹ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 14.



4.5. Week 5: Confirm and bring

The fifth week culminates in Friend Day, but before the event each believer must confirm the attendance of his or her guests. This confirmation is done through calls or brief visits, reinforcing the commitment and offering logistical support.

On the day of the event, the believer ensures personally bringing his or her friends. It is not enough to invite; evangelistic and pastoral commitment is to accompany them, receive them, and introduce them to the brethren. This personal care significantly increases the likelihood that the guest will remain connected after the event.

At this point, the Evangelism Cycle fulfills its immediate goal: to bring friends to an encounter with the Word of God in a prepared and welcoming environment. However, the cycle does not end here: the next step is to link them with the School of Discipleship, to consolidate their faith and lead them to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

The five weeks of the Evangelism Cycle set the whole church in motion in an intentional and organized process. Each stage prepares the ground for the next, so that Friend Day is not an isolated event but the fruit of sequential, progressive, and constant sowing.

5. Friend Day

Friend Day is the culminating moment of the Evangelism Cycle. For five weeks the church has prayed, fasted, identified, contacted, visited, and invited its friends, and now the time arrives to gather them in a special celebration so they can hear the message of the Gospel and have the opportunity to respond to God's work in their lives.³⁰

5.1. Purpose of Friend Day

The objective of this gathering is not simply to achieve high attendance, but to create a meaningful experience that impacts the guests. Friend Day seeks to:

1. PRESENT the Gospel in a clear and simple way, highlighting salvation in Jesus Christ.

³⁰ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 86.



2. RECEIVE the guests with love and excellence, showing them Christian hospitality.
3. FACILITATE a conducive spiritual environment where God’s presence can touch hearts.
4. CONNECT friends to the church, inviting them to continue in the Friendship Groups and in the School of Discipleship.

In this sense, Friend Day is both an evangelistic event and a bridge to discipleship.

5.2. Preparation and excellence

The apostle teaches: “to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews... I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). This principle guides the organization of Friend Day: the entire program should be planned for the guests, adapting to their needs and realities.

Preparation should be careful in every detail:

- PROMOTION: announce the event from the start of the cycle and use all available means (cards, social media, messages, calls).
- RECEPTION: each guest should feel expected, welcomed, and attended to. It is advisable that church members personally accompany their friends from the entrance to their seat.
- ATMOSPHERE: the meeting should convey joy, hospitality, and spiritual warmth. There is no second chance at a first good impression.
- DURATION: the program should be dynamic and brief (approximately one hour to an hour and a half), avoiding tiring the guests.

5.3. Program development

Friend Day can be celebrated in the local church or in the home where a Friendship Group meets. It can also be adapted to specific groups (youth, married couples, women, seniors), adjusting the content to their needs.³¹

³¹ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 11.



The program should include:

- **SPECIAL WELCOME:** guests are received and introduced.
- **SIMPLE AND JOYFUL PRAISE:** select songs that exalt God's love, avoiding complex doctrinal language.
- **GOSPEL MESSAGE:** brief, clear, and centered on the person of Jesus Christ, with a call to faith and repentance.
- **PRAYER FOR THE GUESTS:** an opportunity to minister personally and sensitively.
- **FELLOWSHIP:** this may include a refreshment or meal prepared with dedication, reinforcing the atmosphere of friendship and service.

It is essential that attendees complete a registration card (paper or digital), with their information and prayer requests. This allows for subsequent follow-up and integration into the School of Discipleship.

5.4. Spiritual impact

Friend Day is not an end in itself, but the beginning of a path. It is the occasion when the seed of the Gospel is sown in an environment prepared and watered by weeks of prayer and fasting. The impact of this day is multiplied when the church works with the purpose not only of receiving visitors but of leading each guest toward a personal experience with Jesus Christ. Therefore, everything should revolve around that goal: that friends feel God's love, hear the Gospel, and be motivated to continue in the process of discipleship. A dynamic, joyful, motivating, and unforgettable celebration can mark the beginning of an eternal transformation in the lives of the guests.

6. Follow-up in the School of Discipleship

The Evangelism Cycle does not end with Friend Day. Although this event is the visible culmination of the five-week process, the final goal is that each guest have an encounter with Jesus Christ and be fully integrated into the life of the church. To achieve this, the immediate step after Friend Day is incorporation into the School of Discipleship.³²

³² Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 83.



The School of Discipleship fulfills an essential function: it ensures that new believers receive the fundamental teachings of the faith, grow in their spiritual life, and prepare for baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Without this follow-up, there is a risk that the friends reached in the cycle will not be consolidated in their walk with God, and the fruit of all the prior effort will be lost.

It is important that, before Friend Day concludes, each guest receive a clear and concrete invitation to participate in the first level of discipleship. This transition should be immediate and well organized, so that new attendees understand that their decision to follow Christ does not end at a special meeting, but marks the beginning of a process of formation and growth.

In conclusion, the Evangelism Cycle prepares the soil and sows the seed; Friend Day represents the moment of the initial harvest; and the School of Discipleship together with the Friendship Group ensure that the fruit remains and grows until it bears more fruit in the Kingdom of God.³³

7. Pastoral evaluation

The Evangelism Cycle is not an end in itself, but a means that requires constant supervision and adjustment. The pastor, as the church's guide, should evaluate objectively how each stage was carried out, in order to ensure that efforts are not diluted and that the fruit is long-lasting.

The apostle taught: “and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:8). This statement reminds us that sowing and watering must be done diligently, conscious that God gives the increase, but also that He honors His people's faithfulness and effort.³⁴

The following are suggested evaluation criteria:

³³ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2023), 4.

³⁴ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 21.



7.1. Participation of the members

- What percentage of believers made their list of ten friends?
- Did most of the church get involved in the five weeks, or only a small group?
- Was the entire congregation encouraged to pray and fast during the cycle?

7.2. Contact with the friends

- Was real contact achieved with most of the people listed?
- Were the friends called and visited intentionally?
- Was spiritual openness or interest noted in the people contacted?

7.3. Friend Day

- Did guest attendance correspond to the five-week effort?
- Was the atmosphere warm, orderly, and well prepared?
- Was the Gospel message clear and centered on Jesus Christ?
- Did the guests receive personal attention and complete registration cards?

7.4. Follow-up

- How many of the guests at Friend Day enrolled in discipleship?
- How many of the guests were connected to a Friendship Group?
- Were they given immediate and personal accompaniment to integrate them?
- Are there clear plans to consolidate those who have not yet committed?

7.5. Indicators of advance

- Greater involvement of the church in evangelism.
- An increasing number of guests and new converts.
- Integration of new believers into the School of Discipleship.
- Integration of new believers into the Friendship Groups.
- Greater unity and motivation in the congregation.



7.6. Signs of stagnation

- Little participation of the membership in the five weeks.
- Guests who were not visited or personally accompanied.
- A Friend Day that was disorganized or more centered on logistics than on the message.
- Lack of connection with the School of Discipleship and the Friendship Groups, leaving new believers without accompaniment.

In sum, pastoral evaluation enables the leader to identify not only visible results—attendance, conversions, discipleships begun—but also the spiritual aspects that must be strengthened. The Evangelism Cycle will be truly effective when it involves the whole church, produces fruit in new believers, and ensures their consolidation in the faith.

8. Conclusion

The Evangelism Cycle is a simple yet very effective tool because it involves the entire church in the central mission entrusted by Jesus Christ: to proclaim His Gospel and make disciples. Its success does not depend on complicated strategies, but on the obedience and joint effort of each believer in identifying, contacting, visiting, inviting, and bringing their friends to an encounter with the Word of God.

This cycle mobilizes the congregation in an integral way:

- IT TRANSFORMS each member into an active witness of Jesus Christ.
- IT DEVELOPS a culture of ongoing evangelization in the church.
- IT CULMINATES in Friend Day, an event where the Gospel is proclaimed in a festive and welcoming environment.
- IT OPENS the door to integration into Friendship Groups and to consolidation in the School of Discipleship, ensuring that the harvest's fruit remains.

The apostle wrote: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). The Evangelism Cycle becomes a practical channel for this power of God to reach families, communities, and entire cities when the church assumes it with seriousness and faith.³⁵

³⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 67.



At the same time, the cycle does not function in isolation. Its strength lies in being integrated into a broader process—the Strategy of Jesus—in which the Friendship Groups are the relational base that sustains ongoing contact with guests. The next chapter will be devoted precisely to developing the role of Friendship Groups as spaces of hospitality, initial discipleship, and spiritual growth, ensuring that the fruit of the Evangelism Cycle is not lost but multiplied.

In conclusion, the Evangelism Cycle reminds us that the Gospel does not require great resources, but faith, willingness, and obedience; and that when the whole church unites in the mission, the house of God is filled with guests, to the glory of His name.

9. Self-evaluation questions

1. How often does my church carry out the Evangelism Cycle—two or three times a year? Is that frequency appropriate to maintain a constant culture of evangelization?
2. What percentage of the members of the congregation participates actively in the cycle?
3. Do believers make their lists of friends and pray consistently for them during the five weeks?
4. Have the Pastor and leaders motivated the church to accompany the cycle with prayer and fasting?
5. Were real contacts (calls, messages, visits) made with the majority of the friends listed?
6. Did the friends invited receive personal attention, follow-up, and prayer at each step of the cycle?
7. Was Friend Day prepared with excellence, joy, and a clear Gospel message centered on Jesus Christ?
8. Were guests' data collected to follow up with them in the Friendship Groups?
9. How many of the friends invited to Friend Day actually integrated into the School of Discipleship?
10. What concrete spiritual fruit did the cycle leave in the church: greater unity, commitment, conversions, growth in faith?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Engel, James F., y Wilbert Norton. *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hybels, Bill, y Mark Mittelberg. *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004 (rev.).
- Páez de la Cerda, Elías. *Escuela Sigame Nivel 3: Madurar*. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *En el templo y por las casas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2014.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *52 lecciones para grupos celulares*. Fontana, CA: Estrategia de Jesús, 2019.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Stetzer, Ed, y David Putman. *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.



Chapter 3 – Friendship Groups

Centers of evangelism and multiplying discipleship

1. Introduction

Friendship Groups, also called small groups or cells, are one of the key pieces in the Strategy of Jesus. They are weekly meetings held in believers' homes and in other nearby, accessible spaces, with the purpose of evangelizing, discipling, worshiping God, and strengthening fellowship among their members.

This model has its roots in the practice of the early church, which combined evangelism in public places like the temple courtyard with gatherings in homes: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). Far from being a modern innovation, Friendship Groups take up Christianity's original dynamic, where the faith was lived in intimate, relational, and participatory spaces.³⁶

In a context where the church grows numerically, Friendship Groups make it possible to care better for believers and, at the same time, to reach new friends with the Gospel. While congregational services strengthen the church's overall vision, small groups attend to the personal and close dimension of the Christian life.³⁷

Therefore, Friendship Groups fulfill a double role: they are a space of relational discipleship for believers and an evangelistic platform for friends. This dual function makes them the heart of the local mission, where the church not only grows in number, but also in spiritual maturity.

2. Biblical foundations of Friendship Groups

The model of Friendship Groups is solidly supported by Scripture. The first-century church developed its life in two complementary spaces: the public gathering in the temple and the intimate gathering in homes. Acts 2:46–47 describes it clearly: “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

³⁶ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 3.

³⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 92.



Believers understood that the Gospel should be lived in small groups; not only in large meetings but also in smaller spaces where it was possible to share life, pray for one another, and proclaim the faith in a personal way. Other passages confirm this practice: “But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

And he said, ‘Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.’ And he departed and went to another place.” (Acts 12:17); “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” (Acts 16:32); “how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,” (Acts 20:20).

Moreover, several New Testament churches met directly in believers’ homes. Paul greets “the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:5; see also Colossians 4:15 and 1 Corinthians 16:19). These references show that homes were not a secondary place, but an essential part of the apostolic mission. Even before all that, Jesus’ ministry was carried out mostly in small groups. He formed an intimate circle with His disciples, teaching them, exhorting them, and sending them to preach. This principle of close and personalized formation is the basis of current Friendship Groups.

In short, Friendship Groups are not a contemporary invention, but a continuation of the biblical pattern. The church grows with power when it combines public teaching with gathering in homes, where the faith is transmitted in a relational and practical way.³⁸

3. Purposes of Friendship Groups

Friendship Groups are not merely social gatherings, nor a reduced version of the congregational service. They are spaces with a defined spiritual purpose that contribute to the church’s integral growth. According to the practice of the early church and the Strategy of Jesus, these groups fulfill at least five main functions: worship, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and evangelism.

3.1. Worship

The first function of a Friendship Group is to lead its participants to worship God. In this context, worship is not limited to singing, but includes prayer, biblical teaching, and obedience to

³⁸ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 49.



the Word. By gathering in homes, believers experience the presence of God in a very close way. Acts 2:46–47 describes how the first Christians, “breaking bread from house to house... [were] praising God, and having favor with all the people”.

Worship in small groups creates an atmosphere of unity, where invited friends can also perceive God’s presence in a simple yet powerful way.³⁹

3.2. Discipleship

Second, Friendship Groups are practical schools of discipleship. In them, believers learn the Word of God and discover how to apply it in their daily lives. Unlike a general service, where the emphasis is often on preaching, small groups encourage participation, dialogue, and personal accompaniment.

The Lord commanded Moses: “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do” (Exodus 18:20). That principle remains valid: discipleship does not consist only in transmitting knowledge, but in showing a way and accompanying in practice. In this sense, Friendship Groups are workshops where mature disciples and future leaders are formed—who will then be able to guide others.

3.3. Ministry

The third purpose is mutual ministry. In a Friendship Group, needs are shared, prayer is offered, and practical support is given. Thus, members learn to serve one another, developing the gifts God has given them.

The apostle Paul taught: “...through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13–14). In this close environment, it is easier to identify and respond to concrete needs, which allows believers to grow in compassion, service, and solidarity.⁴⁰

³⁹ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 14.

⁴⁰ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 15.



3.4. Fellowship

The fourth purpose of Friendship Groups is fellowship. In congregational gatherings, especially in large churches, relationships tend to be superficial. In contrast, small groups develop deep bonds, where believers learn to accept one another with their virtues and faults.

The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us: “For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:10). In Friendship Groups, burdens are shared and joys as well, generating an authentic family where the faith is lived in brotherhood.

3.5. Evangelism

Finally, Friendship Groups are the basic evangelism unit in the church. Evangelism in this context occurs naturally: each member invites their friends and introduces them into an environment of friendship, care, and teaching of the Word. Jesus said: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:19). In practice, this means that every Christian home can become a missionary center where the Gospel is proclaimed. Friendship Groups offer a more accessible space for friends who might not dare to go directly to a church building, but would accept an invitation to a home.

The result is that the church expands not only through large programs, but through personal relationships, where each believer assumes their role as a witness and servant.

4. Dynamics of Friendship Groups

The strength of Friendship Groups lies not only in their purpose, but also in the simplicity and clarity of their dynamics. A well-structured meeting allows each attendee to live a meaningful experience, where worship, teaching, prayer, and fellowship are combined.

4.1. Structure of the meeting

Generally speaking, a Friendship Group meeting can be organized as follows:



1. **WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER:** the leader or a designated member opens the meeting with words of welcome and a brief prayer, inviting God's presence.
2. **PRAISE (10–15 minutes):** simple, joyful songs exalting God's love are sung, preferably accompanied by instruments and/or supported with audiovisual resources. What matters is not musical quality but everyone's participation.
3. **BIBLE TEACHING (25–30 minutes):** this is the core of the meeting. The leader or a collaborator presents the lesson clearly and practically, encouraging participation through questions and comments. The Word should be shared with simplicity, aiming at the edification of believers and the conversion of friends.
4. **PRAYER (10–15 minutes):** intercession is offered for those present, and the teaching of the Word is applied. This moment is key to minister to guests and experience the work of the Holy Spirit.
5. **PLANNING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 minutes):** responsibilities for the next meeting are organized (who leads prayer, praise, who brings the refreshment, etc.), and church activities are communicated.
6. **FELLOWSHIP (20–30 minutes):** by sharing food and talking informally, bonds of friendship are strengthened and guests are integrated. Far from being secondary, this time is essential for retaining newcomers.⁴¹

In total, the meeting lasts between 60 and 90 minutes, with a balance between the spiritual and the fraternal.

4.2. Roles within the group

The meeting is effective when each participant understands their role:

- **THE LEADER** is responsible for directing the meeting, guiding the teaching, and caring spiritually for the group. He or she functions like a pastor of a small flock, in close connection with the church's lead pastor.

⁴¹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 91.



- THE ASSISTANT (or “Timothy”) is a collaborator in training who supports the leader and prepares to assume greater responsibilities. This role ensures the continuity and multiplication of the groups.
- THE HOST opens the doors of his or her home and facilitates a welcoming environment. Hospitality is a ministry in itself.
- THE MEMBERS participate actively by inviting friends, praying for them, contributing to the meeting’s dynamics, and sharing their gifts.

In this way, the load does not fall on a single person, but is distributed among all, fostering co-responsibility and growth in leadership.⁴²

4.3. Flexibility and adaptation

Although this general structure is recommended, Friendship Groups should maintain a certain flexibility. Culture, geographical location, number of attendees, and the group’s stage of development may make some adjustments necessary. What is essential is not rigidity of format, but faithfulness to the purpose: to worship God, edify believers, and reach friends with the Gospel.

5. Benefits of Friendship Groups

Friendship Groups produce a profound impact on the life of the local church. Their close, participatory, and evangelistic character makes them an indispensable tool for the congregation’s spiritual and numerical growth. Their main benefits include the following:

5.1. They break the barrier of anonymity

In congregational gatherings, especially in large churches, some believers may go unnoticed. In contrast, in Friendship Groups each person is known by name, cared for in their needs, and valued as an essential part of the small group. This closeness creates a sense of belonging that is difficult to achieve in a mass service.

⁴² Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 21.



5.2. They generate an environment of close pastoral care

Friendship Groups function as an extension of the pastoral ministry. Each group's leader exercises direct care over its members, supporting the lead pastor in the task of shepherding the flock. Thus the church is organized not only around a pulpit, but also around living, close, day-to-day relationships.

5.3. They strengthen unity and fellowship

Weekly life together in an environment of friendship strengthens bonds among believers. The psalmist's words are fulfilled: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). The unity experienced in small groups not only edifies the church, but becomes a powerful testimony for invited friends.

5.4. They function as spaces of ongoing evangelism

Unlike sporadic programs, Friendship Groups offer a constant testimony in the community. Each week, believers have the opportunity to invite friends, share the Gospel in an accessible environment, and pray for their needs. In this way, evangelism ceases to be an occasional event and becomes a lifestyle for the church.

5.5. They prepare the ground for the Evangelism Cycle

The relational work developed in Friendship Groups facilitates the success of the Evangelism Cycle. Friends invited to the group are more receptive when Friend Day arrives because they have already been welcomed into an environment of trust and friendship. Thus, small groups become the practical base of planned evangelism.

5.6. They contribute to discipleship and multiplication

By providing a space for participatory teaching, Friendship Groups train believers in the practice of the faith, develop their gifts, and prepare them for leadership. Every group that matures is called to multiply, giving rise to new groups and, with them, to new opportunities to evangelize and disciple.



In short, Friendship Groups are not an optional add-on, but a fundamental pillar of the church. In them, Christian fellowship is lived out, believers are cared for, and the lost are reached. That is why we say they are the relational and evangelistic heart of the Strategy of Jesus.⁴³

6. Relational evangelism and testimony

Evangelism is an inseparable aspect of the Christian mission. In the vision of the Strategy of Jesus, Friendship Groups are not only spaces of fellowship and edification, but also strategic platforms of evangelism. There, in a close and familiar environment, believers can reach their friends, relatives, and acquaintances, sharing the Gospel in a natural, relational way and guided by the Holy Spirit.

6.1. Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit

The book of Acts shows that boldness in proclaiming the Gospel does not arise from human character but from the Holy Spirit. “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31). Friendship Groups should begin their evangelistic efforts with specific prayer, asking the Lord for discernment and direction to know whom to reach and how to do it. In each meeting, moments of intercession can be set aside so the Spirit will guide the members toward the people He Himself is preparing.

6.2. Friendship evangelism

Jesus taught that the Gospel flows most effectively through authentic relationships. When Levi met the Lord, he held a dinner in his house with his friends, and Jesus was in their midst (Luke 5:29). Friendship Groups reproduce this model: they become places where fraternal bonds are strengthened and, in that context of trust, the faith is shared. Evangelism, then, is not an isolated event, but a lifestyle lived in the family, at work, in the neighborhood, or at school.

⁴³ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2023), 5.



6.3. The power of personal testimony

Revelation reminds us that believers overcome “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11). One of the most powerful tools in the Friendship Group is the life testimony. Each disciple should be prepared to tell simply what Christ did in his or her life: what he or she was like before knowing Him, how the encounter with the Lord happened, and how life has changed since then. Testimonies open doors to the Gospel because they are living and irrefutable experiences. The church can promote this through “testimony nights” in the cells, where members practice and learn to share their story briefly and clearly.

6.4. Service and demonstration of God’s power

The Gospel is not only announced with words but also with deeds. Jesus preached, but He also healed, delivered, and served people. He Himself affirmed: “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:17–18). Friendship Groups, as extensions of the church, should be spaces where love is expressed in concrete actions: helping a neighbor in need, praying for the sick, accompanying a family in difficulty. These acts of service and compassion open hearts to the Gospel and prepare the ground for the sowing of the Word.

6.5. Discipleship through follow-up

Evangelism does not end when a person believes in Christ. That is when it begins. The Great Commission commands us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). In Friendship Groups, follow-up must be intentional and close. A new believer needs accompaniment to grow, learn the fundamental truths of the faith, and be established in the Christian life. This implies integrating him or her quickly into the School of Discipleship and assigning mature brethren to guide his or her first steps. Personal care and constant accompaniment are key to avoiding spiritual dropout.



6.6. An integral model of evangelism and discipleship

The five elements described—prayer, friendship, testimony, service, and follow-up—are not separate programs but expressions of one integral model. The Friendship Group thus becomes a space where evangelism flows naturally and discipleship begins immediately. Each member participates actively: praying, serving, bearing testimony, and accompanying newcomers. In this way, the church fulfills the apostolic vision of being a body on mission, where all the saints exercise their priesthood in service to God and neighbor.⁴⁴

Friendship Groups are not merely fraternal meetings, but true missionary agencies that embody Jesus' model. There, in a relational environment, believers pray, testify, serve, and accompany others in their first steps of faith. This focus ensures that evangelism is not a sporadic event, but a living culture in the local church, where each disciple participates actively in the mission.

The Pastor must continually evaluate whether the Friendship Groups are fulfilling this evangelizing and discipling function, and how effective these groups are as spaces of evangelism and discipleship.

7. Relationship to the Strategy of Jesus

Friendship Groups are not an isolated program, but an essential part of the Strategy of Jesus, which integrates two other fundamental elements: the Evangelism Cycle and the School of Discipleship. Each fulfills a specific purpose, but all are articulated together to ensure that the church fulfills its mission to win, consolidate, and multiply disciples.

7.1. Connection with the Evangelism Cycle

The Evangelism Cycle mobilizes the whole church in five weeks of intentional sowing. However, Friendship Groups are the practical base that sustains this effort:

- THEY WORK as the space where friends are received before, during, and after the cycle.

⁴⁴ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Lessons for Cell Groups* (Fontana, CA: Strategy of Jesus, 2019), 185.



- **THEY OFFER** a relational environment that increases the likelihood that guests will remain in contact with the church.
- **THEY PROVIDE** continuity, since evangelism is not limited to an event but becomes part of the group's weekly life.

In other words, without Friendship Groups, the Evangelism Cycle runs the risk of being reduced to a one-off program. With them, on the other hand, sustained relational follow-up is ensured.⁴⁵

7.2. Connection with the School of Discipleship

Friend Day, the culmination of the cycle, is not the final goal, but the bridge to the School of Discipleship. Here again Friendship Groups play a decisive role, because they:

- **PREPARE** new believers to begin formal discipleship.
- **MAINTAIN** personal accompaniment while the School of Discipleship grounds them in the fundamental truths of the faith.
- **REINFORCE** the sense of belonging, preventing newcomers from feeling isolated in the process.

Thus, Friendship Groups ensure that the transition from evangelism to discipleship takes place naturally, fluidly, and closely.

7.3. Engine of multiplication

Finally, Friendship Groups are also seedbeds of leadership. The hosts, assistants, and members who serve in them are formed to lead new groups, which allows the church to multiply. In this way, the Strategy of Jesus does not stagnate, but expands continuously, reaching new neighborhoods, families, and communities.

In conclusion, Friendship Groups are the meeting point between sowing (Evangelism Cycle) and consolidation (School of Discipleship). They are the relational structure that allows the fruit of evangelism to remain and multiply, thus fulfilling the Lord's mandate to make disciples of all nations.

⁴⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 16.



8. Pastoral evaluation

The Pastor should not only promote the existence of Friendship Groups, but also regularly evaluate their spiritual health and effectiveness in the mission. As Paul instructed Timothy: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16). This watchfulness includes caring for the groups that sustain the church’s life in homes.⁴⁶ The following are suggested criteria for pastoral evaluation:

8.1. Participation and attendance

- Does the group maintain steady or fluctuating attendance?
- What percentage of church members is integrated into a Friendship Group?
- Do guests return after their first visit?

8.2. Spiritual atmosphere

- Is God’s presence perceived in the meetings through worship, prayer, and teaching?
- Is there evidence of transformation in participants’ lives?
- Do members exercise their spiritual gifts in the group?

8.3. Focus on evangelism

- How often do members invite friends to the meeting?
- How many new guests are registered in a given cycle?
- Are friends being accompanied in their transition to Friend Day and the School of Discipleship?

8.4. Growth in discipleship and leadership

- Do members participate actively in teaching and prayer, or do they depend solely on the leader?
- Are there assistants in training to lead new groups in the future?

⁴⁶ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 91.



- Has the group shown signs of multiplication in recent months or years?

8.5. Pastoral care

- Do group leaders present regular reports to the Pastor or supervisors?
- Is personal attention given to members' needs and those of their families?
- Does the leader remain faithful to the church's overall vision and to the Strategy of Jesus?

8.6. Indicators of health

The Pastor or supervisor should be able to observe the following characteristics in Friendship Groups:

- Dynamic, well-prepared meetings.
- Active participation by all members.
- Frequent guests who integrate into the group.
- Testimonies of answered prayer and transformed lives.
- Formation of new leaders that ensures multiplication.

8.7. Signs of stagnation

A Friendship Group may need attention if:

- Its meetings become routine or predictable.
- There are no new guests for several months.
- Leadership always falls on a single person without delegating responsibilities.
- There is no atmosphere of fervent prayer or authentic worship.
- There are no concrete plans for multiplication.

Pastoral evaluation of Friendship Groups should not be seen as a control mechanism, but as a tool for growth. Its goal is to detect strengths that must be reinforced and weaknesses that must be corrected, so that each group fulfills its mission of being the base of the church's evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication.



9. Conclusion

Friendship Groups are much more than an organizational methodology; they are the place where the church's life becomes close, relational, and practical. In them, faith ceases to be a theory proclaimed from the pulpit to become an experience shared at the home table. There, God is worshiped, fellowship among believers is strengthened, each person receives pastoral care, and—above all—the door of the Gospel is opened to friends who do not yet know Christ. Their role in the Strategy of Jesus is irreplaceable:

- THEY SUSTAIN the Evangelism Cycle, creating an environment of friendship that prepares and retains guests.
- THEY CONNECT with the School of Discipleship, ensuring that new believers advance in their spiritual formation.
- THEY BECOME seedbeds for multiplying leaders, guaranteeing the church's expansion beyond the walls of the temple.

The apostle Paul wrote: “Likewise greet the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:5). That simple phrase sums up the essence of Friendship Groups: every Christian home can and should be transformed into a point of light for its neighborhood, a space where Christ is proclaimed and His love is shared.⁴⁷

As the next step within the Strategy of Jesus, spiritual retreats offer set-apart moments to deepen what Friendship Groups sow week after week. In the next chapter we will see how these retreats complement and enhance the work of the Friendship Groups, contributing to firm decisions and to a renewed commitment to the Kingdom.

10. Self-evaluation questions

1. What percentage of church members is currently integrated into a Friendship Group?
2. Do the group meetings unfold with a clear order that includes welcome, worship, teaching, prayer, and fellowship?

⁴⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Mature* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 89.



3. Do group leaders receive regular training and pastoral accompaniment?
4. Do the groups fulfill the five fundamental purposes: worship, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and evangelism?
5. Do members consistently invite friends to the meetings, and do those friends feel well received when they attend?
6. Is God's presence perceived in the meetings through prayer and the teaching of the Word?
7. Is there a real atmosphere of fellowship where members know one another, support one another, and share their burdens?
8. Are new leaders (assistants or future group leaders) being identified and developed within the framework of the Friendship Groups?
9. Do the groups function as a bridge to the Evangelism Cycle and Friend Day?
10. Is it being achieved to connect friends and new believers to the School of Discipleship to consolidate their faith?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boren, M. Scott. *Missional Small Groups: Becoming a Community That Makes a Difference in the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Comiskey, Joel. *The Church That Multiplies: Growing a Healthy Cell Church in North America*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2007.
- Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.



Gorman, Julie A. *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002 (rev.).

Myers, Joseph R. *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990.

Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *52 lecciones para grupos celulares*. Fontana, CA: Estrategia de Jesús, 2019.

Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.

Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.



Chapter 4 – The Friends’ Spiritual Retreat

Set apart to be freed and transformed

1. Introduction

Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ we find a recurring pattern: He would set people apart to a secluded place, away from distractions, to minister to them more deeply. The Gospels show this when they report that “Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea” (Mark 3:7) and when “He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place” (Luke 9:10).

In that same vein, the Friends’ Retreat is a carefully planned spiritual space so that those who have been reached by the Gospel—after Friend Day and their first steps in the Friendship Group and the School of Discipleship—may experience a personal, transforming encounter with the Lord. Its set-apart environment favors sincere repentance, inner healing, applied biblical teaching, and the work of the Holy Spirit, who renews faith and confirms decisions.

Within the Strategy of Jesus, the Friends’ Retreat is not an accessory event nor a simple social time: it fulfills a specific function in the consolidation of new believers. There, steps of faith are put in order, bonds are broken, and wounds that hinder growth are healed; prayer is made for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and God’s vision for the participant’s life is presented clearly.⁴⁸

In the sections that follow, we describe how to organize and carry out the Friends’ Retreat so that it produces the expected fruit in the local church.

2. Purpose of the Friends’ Retreat

After participating in Friend Day, attending the cell group, and taking the first lessons of Level 1: New Birth in the School of Discipleship, the Friends’ Retreat is the ideal space for new believers to have a personal and transforming encounter with Jesus Christ.

Its purpose is to consolidate their decision of faith, lead them to genuine repentance, open their hearts to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and confirm in them God’s vision for their life.

⁴⁸ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 34.



A retreat is not simply one more church activity or a motivational event, but a special time set apart with God, where spiritual and emotional strongholds that keep a person from bearing fruit are torn down.

Many arrive carrying sins, traumas, wounds, negative influences from the past, or bonds that keep them enslaved (John 8:34–36). The retreat seeks precisely to heal, deliver, and restore, so that new believers not only have a beginning in the faith, but may also remain and grow in it.

What is not achieved at times in months of attending meetings can be achieved in a single retreat weekend: transformed lives, broken and Spirit-filled hearts, and people who discover with clarity God's purpose for their lives.

3. Timeframe and duration

It is recommended to hold this retreat within three months after Friend Day. It may last one or two days, depending on the local church's resources and the availability of trained collaborators. In any case, it should maintain a balance: enough time to address the deepest areas of the heart, yet without extending so much that it loses its intensity and spiritual focus.

4. Spiritual preparation of the participants

Thanks to the teaching previously received in the Friendship Group and in the School of Discipleship, attendees already possess a basic knowledge of the Gospel and are better disposed to receive ministry. The Friends' Retreat offers them the opportunity to step away from routine, disconnect from the world, and dispose themselves for a supernatural experience with God.

It is essential to understand that this is neither a social gathering nor a simple rest; it is a spiritual battle, where the Lord breaks chains and participants receive freedom. Therefore, both organizers and attendees—but above all the former—must prepare themselves with prayer, fasting, and spiritual expectancy, knowing that what is at stake is not passing emotions but the eternal life of many people.



5. Organization and logistics of the Friends' Retreat

5.1. Retreat site

It should be quiet and conducive to prayer and teaching. A mountain or countryside setting is suggested, with an indoor hall for sessions and projection, a secondary space to separate men and women when necessary, and —if overnight— adequate rooms.

5.2. Promotion

Announce it from the close of Friend Day or at least two months in advance. The announcement should include theme and biblical basis, place and date, departure point and time for transportation, recommendations for clothing and personal items, and the cost (only to cover expenses, avoiding any appearance of business). The invitation should be clear and motivating, underscoring that it is an encounter with God.⁴⁹

5.3. Materials

Computer, TV or video projector with screen, packet of sessions, musical instruments, sound system, anointing oil, pens, folders, self-evaluation sheets, Bibles, tissues, water and cups, name badges, flags, and a small keepsake.

5.4. Committee and roles

- **COORDINATOR AND ASSISTANT:** overall management of the event and the team.
- **INTERCESSION TEAM:** prays during the sessions; supports ministry and cases of deliverance.
- **GUIDES:** one for every ten people; accompany at all times; watch over care, prayer, and fellowship.
- **LOGISTICS:** paperwork and materials, moving chairs, setting up tables, messaging.
- **MUSICIANS:** three or four, selected for testimony and preparation; accompany each ministry time.

⁴⁹ Martín Del Campo, Ismael, *Evangelistic Retreats Manual* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2011), 16.



- TECH: sound, projection, and prior review of contents.
- KITCHEN: experienced team to serve on time and without interrupting the program.
- SPEAKERS: selected for holiness and experience; teach in areas they live.
- MINISTERS: minister inner healing, deliverance, and prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

5.5. Planning

- Initial meeting one month in advance to define roles, and at least three additional meetings to align content, timing, and transitions.
- Fasting and prayer. The committee consecrates itself during the last month with fasting and prayer by name list of attendees. Whoever does not attend the training or abandons the consecration should not serve in the retreat.

6. Suggested program for the Friends' Retreat

- Pre-registration to estimate materials and meals.
- Group size between 40 and 80 to encourage momentum and maintain control.
- Do not receive children to avoid distractions and exposure to ministry moments not suitable for them.
- Group arrival and departure at the same time so as not to fragment the process.
- Welcome at the entrance by a greeting team; entry line with servers blessing the guests as they move forward.
- Registration tables in four lines: young ladies, women, youth, and men; delivery of materials.
- Seating in the hall: women on one side and men on the other; youth in front, adults in back.
- Strict adherence to schedules for sessions, meals, breaks, and closing.
- Pastoral opening with reading of the guidelines and a covenant of obedience.



- Sessions kept to the assigned topic so as not to harm the flow or confuse attendees.
- Ministry consistent with the topic presented (for example, forgiving after a teaching on forgiveness).
- Meals as times of fellowship and identifying needs; logistics with tables served as people exit the hall.

As can be seen, the program includes a balance among teaching, confrontation, deliverance, inner healing, and seeking the Holy Spirit. It is important that ministry not be rushed, but accompanied by intense intercession, so that participants may live a transforming experience.

7. Thematic phases of the Friends' Retreat

- **FIRST PHASE: Reflection.** Becoming aware of the real need for an encounter with God.
- **SECOND PHASE: Confrontation.** Self-examination for cleansing and spiritual purity. Here past bonds are broken; forgiveness is extended; sins are renounced; and spiritual strongholds are torn down.
- **THIRD PHASE: Fullness of the Holy Spirit.** Seeking God's presence and personal revival. After deliverance comes fullness: participants are ministered to receive the Holy Spirit and to experience God's power.
- **FOURTH PHASE: Vision.** Orientation to understand and embrace God's purpose in one's personal life.

The order of the phases must be respected because vision is sustained by fullness, fullness by cleansing, and cleansing by recognizing the need.

8. Baptisms and subsequent follow-up

During the retreat some will request baptism. Prudence is required: baptize only those who are duly prepared, understanding the plan of Salvation, the doctrinal principles, and the basic disciplines addressed in Level 1: New Birth.



After the retreat, new believers should continue attending the Friendship Group and advance in the School of Discipleship (levels 2, 3, and 4), to consolidate their faith and serve actively. Thus, the retreat does not become an end in itself, but a bridge that connects the initial experience of Friend Day with a continuous process of formation and growth in Christ through constant participation in the Friendship Group and in the School of Discipleship.

9. Pastoral evaluation

9.1. Evaluation principles

- Evaluation must be biblical, practical, and fruit-oriented.
- Both quantitative and qualitative indicators are considered.
- Every measurement should lead to concrete improvements for the next retreat and for the weekly work of the Friendship Groups.

9.2. Indicators

A. BEFORE THE RETREAT

- **MINIMUM DOCTRINAL PREPARATION:** percentage that completed initial lessons of Level 1: New Birth.
- **PRIOR INTEGRATION:** participation in at least four Friendship Group meetings.
- **LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATION:** registration, materials, and transportation confirmed on time.

B. DURING THE RETREAT

- **FULL ATTENDANCE:** percentage that remains from start to finish.
- **RESPONSE TO THE WORD:** decisions of repentance and baptism recorded by the guides.
- **SPECIFIC MINISTRY:** prayers for inner healing and deliverance consistent with the topics.



- ORDER AND FOCUS: speakers kept to the topic; times and transitions respected.

C. AFTER THE RETREAT (2 to 12 weeks)

- BAPTISMS WITH DISCERNMENT: baptized persons who met doctrinal and preparation criteria.
- FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT: speaking in tongues, visible life changes, testimonies of sustained seeking of God.
- CONNECTION TO THE FRIENDSHIP GROUP: continued attendance for eight consecutive weeks.
- PROGRESS IN DISCIPLESHIP: advancement in Level 1: New Birth and transition to levels 2 and 3.
- RETENTION AT 3 AND 6 MONTHS: percentage of attendees who remain active in group, services, and discipleship.

D. FOLLOW-UP TOOLS

- INDIVIDUAL FILE for each participant with data, accompaniment, and next steps.
- SURVEY 24–48 hours after the retreat for impressions and follow-up needs.
- PASTORAL REPORT at 30 days with progress in baptism, cell group, and discipleship.
- COMMITTEE FEEDBACK MEETING the following week to adjust contents and logistics for the next retreat.
- MONTHLY DASHBOARD of indicators integrating data from groups, Evangelism Cycles, and the School of Discipleship.

E. SUGGESTED THRESHOLDS FOR INTERPRETATION

- START-TO-FINISH ATTENDANCE $\geq 85\%$: adequate; 70–84%: improve logistics and communication; $< 70\%$: review registration and transportation.



- CONNECTION TO THE GROUP for eight weeks $\geq 70\%$: adequate; 50–69%: strengthen guides and follow-up; $< 50\%$: redesign the accompaniment plan.
- ENROLLMENT IN DISCIPLESHIP within two weeks $\geq 70\%$: adequate; 50–69%: improve the bridge with teachers; $< 50\%$: align schedules and responsible parties.

10. Common mistakes and corrective actions

- An approach that is merely emotional, without doctrine or follow-up. Action: require minimum preparation, align contents, and ensure the immediate bridge to the Friendship Group and the School of Discipleship.
- Logistics that interrupt ministry. Action: clear roles, prior run-throughs, and a contingency plan.
- Commissionings without accountability. Action: written commitments, assigned mentor, and 30- and 60-day reviews.
- Rushed baptisms. Action: better-defined pastoral criteria, prior interviews, and confirmation with discipleship teachers.
- Team burnout. Action: rotation of functions, pastoral care for the committee, and a realistic calendar.

11. Conclusion

The Friends' Retreat is a decisive link within the Strategy of Jesus: it takes the harvest that arrives through Friend Day and, in a set-apart and orderly environment, leads it toward genuine repentance, inner healing, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the confirmation of an obedient faith. It does not replace congregational life or the formative process of the School of Discipleship—it enhances them!

When the Friends' Retreat is prepared with prayer, executed with excellence, and integrated with the Friendship Group and the four levels of the School of Discipleship, the retreat becomes a firm gateway that leads from initial enthusiasm to perseverance, maturity, and multiplication.



Therefore, we do not treat it as just another event, but as a pastoral tool with clear objectives, contents, and metrics: summon with purpose, minister with the Word, accompany with trained guides, pray persistently, and provide follow-up until each participant is well connected to his or her Friendship Group and advances in Level 1: New Birth and the subsequent levels. Done this way, the Friends' Retreat helps close frequent gaps (dropout, stagnation, doctrinal doubts) and kindle convictions that translate into devotional life, obedience, and service.

In sum: a Friends' Retreat that is biblical, excellent, and well articulated with the Friendship Group and the School of Discipleship produces fruit that remains. In the second manual we will go deeper into another type of spiritual retreat: the Leaders' Retreat—equally vital in the Strategy of Jesus—whose meaning and contents serve to care for those who shepherd others and to sustain over time the health of all evangelistic work.

12. Self-evaluation questions

Before organizing or leading a Friends' Retreat, it is important that the Pastor reflect on his or her preparation, vision, and commitment to this key space for consolidating new believers. These questions are intended to help discern whether the Friends' Retreat is being planned and conducted according to God's purpose.

1. Is the purpose of the Friends' Retreat clearly defined in my church as a space for a transforming encounter with Christ?
2. Are we ensuring that the retreat is held at the right time—within three months after Friend Day?
3. Do participants receive the basic preparation in the Friendship Group and the School of Discipleship before attending the retreat?
4. Am I leading the congregation in specific prayer and fasting for each person who will attend the retreat?
5. Have I selected speakers, guides, and ministers with discernment, seeking that they be full of the Holy Spirit and of good testimony?
6. Does the proposed retreat program integrate biblical teaching, spiritual confrontation, ministry, and seeking the Holy Spirit in a balanced way?



7. Are we taking care of logistics (place, materials, schedules, organization) so that nothing interrupts the work God wants to do?
8. Have times and dynamics been planned for inner healing, deliverance, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
9. Are we prepared to act prudently in the case of baptisms requested during the retreat, ensuring that the candidate understands the plan of Salvation?
10. Is there a clear follow-up plan so that retreat participants continue in the Friendship Group and in the School of Discipleship after the event?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Neil T. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000 (rev.).
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2018 (40th anniv.).
- Martín Del Campo, Ismael. *Manual de Retiros Evangelísticos*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2011.
- Páez de la Cerda, Elías. *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3: Madurar*. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017 (updated ed.).
- Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.
- Wimber, John, con Kevin Springer. *Power Healing*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987.



Conclusion of Evangelism

In this section we have considered four links which, properly interlaced, form an integral vision for the local church within the Strategy of Jesus.

First, we saw the importance of the Spiritual Strategy. Prayer, fasting, unity, and dependence on God's power are the foundation of every evangelizing work. Without this foundation, human efforts wear out; with it, the Holy Spirit backs and opens doors.

Second, we studied the Evangelism Cycle. This process, developed over five weeks, mobilizes every believer to identify, contact, visit, invite, and finally bring their friends to Friend Day. There, the seed of the Gospel is sown in an environment of faith and love. The Cycle turns the entire church into an army of sowers, breaking the idea that evangelizing is the task of a few.

Third, we reflected on the Friendship Groups, cells that function as the heart of the church in homes. In them, God is worshiped, the Word is studied, prayer is offered, service is rendered, and—above all—friendships are cultivated that draw in and confirm newcomers. Local cell groups are the net that sustains those who arrive for the first time and the workshop where each believer learns to serve and to grow.

Fourth, we considered the Friends' Spiritual Retreats. These set-apart spaces offer intense times of encounter with God, of healing and deliverance, of Salvation. They are the natural complement to the Cycles, the Groups, and Discipleship, since they consolidate what has been sown and prepare new believers for what God has for them.

Thus, the four topics should not be understood as isolated compartments, but as gears that connect and enhance one another. The Spiritual Strategy sustains the Evangelism Cycle; the Cycle feeds the Friendship Groups; the Groups are strengthened in the Friends' Retreats; and the Retreats, in turn, renew the Spiritual Strategy. The result is synergy: a living, dynamic church in constant movement toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

In this light, this section seeks to be a practical guide, but above all a pastoral invitation to intensify our action and renew our commitment to the mission our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to



us. Evangelism is not an occasional event, but a lifestyle which, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, transforms churches and reaches entire cities and nations.

When the Spiritual Strategy, the Evangelism Cycle, the Friendship Groups, and the Friends' Retreats are interwoven, the church becomes an unstoppable force that advances with power toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Amen.



Final self-evaluation questions

1. Have I established in my church a solid foundation of prayer, fasting, and unity as the basis of evangelism?
2. Is the Evangelism Cycle carried out with the active participation of the whole congregation and with visible results?
3. Do the Friendship Groups function consistently and effectively as networks of care, discipleship, and evangelism?
4. Are the Friends' Retreats integrated into the church calendar and producing lasting fruit in new believers?
5. Can I affirm that the four elements addressed in this manual work in sync in my church as an integral system to develop evangelism?







SECTION II: DISCIPLESHIP

*How does the
Apostolic Assembly
form disciples?*



Introduction to Discipleship

The mission Christ entrusted to His Church is not limited to gathering crowds, but to forming disciples who live for Him, grow in His Word, and multiply in service and testimony. The Strategy of Jesus, which we present in this manual, offers a proven path so that each local church can faithfully fulfill the Great Commission: win, consolidate, disciple, and send.

Throughout these pages we will discover that discipleship is not an option among many church activities, but the very essence of its reason for being. The School of Discipleship forms firm believers who build their lives on Jesus Christ, moving from the rudiments of the faith to maturity and multiplication. The Friendship Groups become the space where faith grows in community, where doctrine is shared in a close way, and where authentic relationships make it possible for the life of Christ to be transmitted from person to person.

Leaders' meetings and retreats strengthen the heart of leadership, renew the pastoral vision, and consolidate teams prepared to sustain the work. Finally, the training of church planters reminds us that the mission is not exhausted in caring for what we already have, but extends toward new fields, neighborhoods, and cities that still await a living church faithful to the apostolic Gospel.

This section does not aim to be a set of theories, but a practical and above all spiritual tool. It is born from the conviction that the Kingdom of God advances when each believer assumes his or her role as a disciple and each church embraces its calling to be light in the midst of darkness. Our prayer is that these pages will inspire, challenge, and guide pastors, leaders, and church members to work together in the most glorious task: to make disciples of Jesus Christ in all nations.



Chapter 5 – The School of Discipleship

Building lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ

1. Introduction

The School of Discipleship constitutes the third fundamental piece of the Strategy of Jesus, together with the Evangelism Cycle and the Friendship Groups. While evangelism opens the doors of faith and small groups provide the relational context for the initial follow-up, it is in the School of Discipleship where the new believer receives the systematic formation that leads to spiritual maturity and multiplication in the work of God.

The book of Acts shows how the early church experienced remarkable growth not only in numbers, but also in the quality of Christian life: “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying [...] Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:1, 7). The key was not only public preaching, but the intentional process of forming disciples, ensuring that each convert advanced on a path of faith, obedience, and service.

The School of Discipleship, as we develop it in the Strategy of Jesus, is organized into four progressive levels: New Birth, Grow, Mature, and Multiply. Each level contains a set of doctrinal and practical lessons that guide the believer from his or her first steps in the Christian life to preparation as a leader capable of winning and shepherding others. The ultimate purpose is not only to transmit knowledge, but also to form disciples who produce abundant and lasting fruit: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples... You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...” (John 15:8, 16).⁵⁰

In this way, the School of Discipleship enables each member of the church to develop simultaneously a mission in the world—to be a witness of Christ to the lost—and a ministry in the church—to serve with the gifts and training received for the edification of the body of Christ.⁵¹ Without this formation process, the fruit of evangelism would risk being lost; but with it, the church ensures the permanence, maturity, and multiplication of new believers.

⁵⁰ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 116.

⁵¹ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes Saving Lives* (Fontana, CA: Christian Education Department, 2021), 189.



2. The four levels of the School of Discipleship

The School of Discipleship of the Strategy of Jesus is structured in four progressive levels that accompany the believer in his or her spiritual development, from the new birth to the multiplication of leaders. Each level has a defined purpose, a set of specific lessons, and a clear goal in the disciple's formation.⁵²

2.1. Level 1 – New Birth

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3). This level offers 21 lessons of basic doctrines, designed so that the new believer understands the rudiments of the Christian faith and is duly prepared for water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

- OBJECTIVE: to guide the student to genuine conversion and to the conscious decision to follow Christ.
- DURATION: between 11 and 22 weeks, depending on whether two lessons or one lesson per week are taught.
- CONTENT: foundations of salvation, faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, water baptism, and the initial Christian life.
- FINAL GOAL: that the believer sign a Commitment with the local church and be integrated as an active member of the congregation.

This first level lays the foundation so that the new convert does not remain an occasional sympathizer, but becomes a disciple in the process of formation.

2.2. Level 2 – Grow

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

Once baptized, the believer enters the second level, where he or she receives another 21 lessons oriented to the development of Christian disciplines and the consolidation of spiritual life.

⁵² Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 24.



- **OBJECTIVE:** to help the disciple grow healthy and strong in the Kingdom of God.
- **CONTENT:** prayer, Bible reading, devotional life, worship, fellowship, spiritual gifts, and Christian witness.
- **FINAL GOAL:** that the believer be a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit, with firm convictions and solid spiritual habits.

At this level, the teaching seeks to deepen communion with God and with the brethren, ensuring balanced growth in faith and Christian character.

2.3. Level 3 – Mature

“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). The third level also comprises 21 lessons, oriented to the disciple’s spiritual and ministerial maturity.

- **OBJECTIVE:** to form believers capable of assuming responsibilities in the church and of serving actively in the Kingdom of God.
- **CONTENT:** Christian service, basic leadership, ministerial formation, functions in the cell group, life of holiness, and responsibility in the mission.
- **FINAL GOAL:** that the disciple begin to carry out practical functions as a host or assistant (“Timothy”) in a Friendship Group, integrating theory and practice in his or her formation.

This level introduces the believer into practical discipleship, helping him or her understand that every member of the church is also a priest of the Lord (1 Peter 2:9).

2.4. Level 4 – Multiply

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem; and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

The fourth level prepares the disciple to become a leader of a cell group, providing the necessary tools to guide and multiply others.

- **OBJECTIVE:** to equip the believer to be a leader of excellence in the local church.



- **CONTENT:** principles of Christian leadership, Bible teaching, pastoral care, meeting organization, and strategies for multiplication.
- **FINAL GOAL:** that the disciple be ready to plant and lead a Friendship Group, thus contributing to the expansion of the church through the multiplication of leaders and disciples.

This level marks the culmination of the formative process: the disciple becomes a maker of new disciples, closing the cycle and ensuring the continuity of the mission. In summary, the School of Discipleship ensures a comprehensive and progressive process: from new birth to maturity, and from maturity to multiplication. Each level is coordinated with the previous ones and prepares the way for the following, so that the church may faithfully fulfill the Great Commission.⁵³

3. The discipleship of Jesus

Every discipleship program in the church must have as its main reference the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. He not only proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom, but also invested His life in forming disciples who would continue and multiply His work. The School of Discipleship finds in Him its foundation and model.⁵⁴

3.1. Jesus' commitment to discipleship

Jesus understood that the expansion of the Kingdom did not depend solely on great crowds, but on the formation of a small group of men who, once transformed, would transform the world. For more than three years, He devoted His time and energy to teaching, modeling, and accompanying the Twelve. Even after His resurrection, He continued instructing them, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Discipleship was, therefore, central in Jesus' ministry. He did not limit Himself to attracting followers; He formed disciples with the capacity to disciple others, establishing a model of generational transmission that Paul would later summarize thus: “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).⁵⁵

⁵³ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela de Discipulado Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 39.

⁵⁴ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 2.

⁵⁵ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *52 Lessons for Cell Groups* (Fontana, CA: Strategy of Jesus, 2019), 187.



3.2. A practical and exemplary discipleship

Luke describes that Jesus “began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). The order is not casual: first He lived what He taught, and then He transmitted that teaching with authority. His example was His main pedagogical tool.

Jesus’ discipleship united doctrine and practice, Word and experience. He taught about faith and showed how to trust in God; He spoke of service and washed His disciples’ feet; He taught about prayer and spent entire nights in communion with the Father. This principle remains valid: disciples do more of what they see in their leaders than what they hear from them. Therefore, the School of Discipleship cannot be limited to imparting content, but must be based on the living testimony of teachers and leaders who model what they teach.⁵⁶

3.3. A relational and close discipleship

Jesus did not form disciples from a distance. He shared daily life with them, walked their roads, ate at their table, and attended to their questions. That closeness generated trust and friendship, allowing His teachings to sink deeply into their hearts.

Discipleship, then, is not only the transfer of information, but also the building of relationships. The biblical term “to speak” applied to Jesus implies much more than instructing: it means communicating love, conviction, passion, and correction. Thus, Christ’s discipleship was profoundly relational, and that same model must guide the church today.

3.4. A discipleship based on obedience

Jesus made it clear that the true disciple is not only the one who hears, but the one who obeys: “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (John 14:21). Discipleship includes teachings, commandments, and disciplines that do not seek to impose heavy burdens, but to offer a solid foundation for spiritual life (Luke 7:24–25).⁵⁷

For this reason, the School of Discipleship must emphasize that being a disciple means being a keeper of the Word and obedient to the will of God. Biblical knowledge is essential, but it must lead to practice and to a transformed life.

⁵⁶ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes that Transform Nations* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2016), 103.

⁵⁷ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Groups that Transform Lives* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2015), 78.



3.5. A discipleship empowered by the Holy Spirit

The ultimate purpose of Jesus' discipleship was not only to teach or to form, but to empower. Before ascending, He ordered His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father: "... 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...'" (Acts 1:8).

Discipleship reaches its fullness when the believer receives the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, which enable him or her to be an effective witness of Christ and to serve in the Kingdom with spiritual authority. Without this dimension, discipleship runs the risk of becoming a mere academic program.

In summary, Jesus' discipleship was committed, practical, relational, obedient, and empowering. These five traits must also characterize the School of Discipleship in the church today, ensuring that believers not only learn, but become true disciples and multipliers.⁵⁸

4. Implementing the School of Discipleship

Forming true disciples is not an option within the life of the church: it is the main task that Christ entrusted to all believers. We can attract crowds through evangelistic services, special activities, or Friend Day, but only through a solid process of discipleship—in Jesus' way—will we achieve that those souls remain in the faith, grow in maturity, and become winners of others.

The central objective of the School of Discipleship is to recover in the church the priesthood of all the saints, forming disciples who do not settle for attending meetings, but who embrace their calling to serve, to multiply, and to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20).

4.1. Start in small churches and in cell groups

When the local church is still small, the School of Discipleship can be implemented directly in the Friendship Groups. In this context:

- The cell leader dedicates an additional day in the week to teach the lessons of Level 1: New Birth.
- The house where the group meets thus becomes a classroom of discipleship.

⁵⁸ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela de Discipulado Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 47.



- The same leader or a mature member of the cell assumes the role of teacher, ensuring that new believers receive basic formation from the beginning of their journey of faith.

In this way, the cell fulfills a double function: a space of fellowship and evangelization, and also a platform of consolidation through discipleship.⁵⁹

4.2. Immediate connection with new friends

It is essential that leaders do not delay in connecting new attendees with the School of Discipleship. The moment a friend arrives at the group or at the temple must be seized as an opportunity to integrate him or her into the formative process. Thus, the seed sown during the Evangelism Cycle and Friend Day finds continuity in discipleship, preventing the fruit from being lost.

4.3. Pace and continuity of the process

Given that the Evangelism Cycle is carried out three times a year—every four months—the School of Discipleship must be kept running in parallel. This ensures that each new harvest of souls can be quickly incorporated into the teaching process. The levels Grow, Mature, and Multiply can also be taught in homes or in specific church spaces, depending on the resources available.

4.4. Three essential steps in discipleship

Practical implementation must ensure that each believer goes through three basic steps in his or her formation as a disciple:

1. Be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ (John 3:5; Acts 2:38).
2. Receive the Holy Spirit as an experience of fullness and power (Acts 1:5, 8).
3. Bear abundant fruit, becoming a winner of souls (Matthew 13:23; John 15:8, 16).

These steps ensure that discipleship does not remain a theoretical instruction, but produces a transformed life that is active in the mission.

⁵⁹ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 25.



4.5. Involvement of the whole church

The School of Discipleship is not the exclusive task of the teachers. The entire congregation must feel responsible for this process:

- SOME will teach the lessons directly.
- OTHERS will support as hosts, mentors, or intercessors.
- ALL will be able to invite people to join the School, promoting the growth of the church.

What is essential is that each member understands that the purpose is not merely to impart information, but also to form disciples capable of ministering to others and multiplying in service to Christ.

In summary, implementing the School of Discipleship involves pastoral vision, organization, and the commitment of the whole church. Its success lies in integrating evangelism with systematic teaching, so that each convert advances toward spiritual maturity and becomes a multiplier of disciples.⁶⁰

5. The Teacher of the School of Discipleship

The quality and impact of the School of Discipleship depend, to a great extent, on those who bear the responsibility of teaching. It is not enough to have good materials and a clear structure; it is essential to have teachers who are prepared, faithful, and committed to the vision of forming disciples for Christ.

5.1. Calling and responsibility

The discipleship teacher takes part in the church's most noble task: building lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20). His or her responsibility goes beyond transmitting information; it involves modeling with one's life the principles being taught, cultivating relationships of trust, and guiding students toward a real experience with God.

Scripture is clear on this point: "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). Therefore, teaching is a ministry that requires vocation, perseverance, and pastoral responsibility.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2023), 1.

⁶¹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 123.



5.2. Basic Requirements for the Teacher

The teacher must possess several indispensable qualities:

1. FAITHFULNESS TO GOD AND TO THE LOCAL CHURCH. Their spiritual life must be consistent with the doctrine they profess.
2. BIBLICAL AND DOCTRINAL KNOWLEDGE. They must handle the Word and the organization's guidelines with confidence.
3. ONGOING TRAINING. Teaching requires ongoing development in areas such as hermeneutics, exegesis, biblical history, pedagogy, and didactics.
4. HUMILITY AND SELF-DISCIPLINE. Pride hinders learning and effective teaching; discipline ensures perseverance in ministry.
5. A SPIRIT OF SERVICE. The teacher must view their work as an act of love and edification toward others.

5.3. Developing the gift of teaching

The gift of teaching requires practice and training. It is not enough to have understanding; it is necessary to learn to communicate with clarity, to motivate students, and to guide them toward practical obedience to the Word. For this reason, the teacher should make the most of every training opportunity the church provides and cultivate a continual learner's attitude. Before being a good teacher, every servant of God must be a good disciple. The willingness to learn, to listen, to receive correction, and to grow in knowledge is the foundation for teaching with excellence.⁶²

5.4. Coordination and teamwork

Discipleship is not the work of a single individual, but of a coordinated ministry team. Communication among pastors, cell leaders, and teachers is essential to ensure coherence in teaching, continuity in processes, and close accompaniment of disciples. In this way, the School of Discipleship does not become a series of isolated courses, but an integral part of the life of the church.

⁶² Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 124.



5.5. Testimony as a pedagogical resource

Finally, the discipleship teacher must understand that his or her personal testimony is one of the most powerful resources in forming disciples. Students learn not only from words, but from the way their teacher prays, serves, forgives, worships, and perseveres. Teaching with love, patience, and example is the key for the Word to be incarnated in the lives of the disciples.

In summary, the teacher of the School of Discipleship is more than an instructor: he or she is a mentor, a guide, and an example. Doctrinal preparation, a life of integrity, and the capacity to serve will make the difference between merely academic instruction and a formation that transforms lives for the glory of God.

6. Pastoral evaluation

The evaluation of the School of Discipleship should not be reduced to the number of enrolled students or the number of lessons taught. The pastor must consider qualitative and quantitative indicators that reflect whether the process is fulfilling its purpose. The main criteria include:

1. **CONVERSION:** Are participants in Level 1: New Birth actually reaching water baptism and a clear experience of new birth?
2. **RETENTION:** Do new believers remain in the church and in the Friendship Groups, avoiding spiritual dropout?
3. **GROWTH:** Do students in Level 2: Grow show consistent spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and Christian service?
4. **MATURITY:** Do believers in Level 3: Mature assume practical responsibilities in the Friendship Groups and support their leaders?
5. **MULTIPLICATION:** Do graduates of Level 4: Multiply become new group leaders, contributing to the church's growth?
6. **INTEGRATION:** Does the School of Discipleship function in harmony with the Evangelism Cycle and with the Friendship Groups, ensuring a continuous process?



7. TESTIMONY: Do the disciples show evidence of a transformed life and a firm Christian character?

A school that meets these criteria is producing true disciples and ensuring the healthy expansion of the church.

7. Conclusion

The School of Discipleship is the means God gives us to transform believers into true disciples of Jesus Christ. It is not an optional program or a simple series of Bible studies, but an integral process that guarantees the permanence, maturity, and multiplication of new believers.

Knowledge by itself can produce pride (1 Corinthians 8:1), but when imparted with love and accompanied by example, it builds solid and fruitful lives. Therefore, the task of discipling requires both teaching and relational accompaniment, both doctrine and practice, both instruction and testimony.

The fruit of this process is a church able to grow in quality and in quantity: disciples firm in the faith, filled with the Holy Spirit, committed to service, and prepared to multiply. Thus, the local church not only retains what it gains through evangelism, but becomes an army of disciples who make disciples, faithfully fulfilling the Great Commission the Lord left us (Matthew 28:19–20).

The School of Discipleship is, ultimately, a reminder that the Christian call is not simply to believe, but to follow, to learn, and to multiply. Therein lies the strength of the church: in a formation that produces abundant and lasting fruit for the glory of God.

8. Self-Evaluation Questions

1. How many participants in Level 1—New Birth reached baptism during the last year?
2. How many of them have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in new tongues?
3. What percentage of new converts remains active in the church after six months?
4. How many students in Level 2—Grow regularly practice prayer and personal Bible study?



5. What evidences of Christian maturity are observed in the students of Level 3?
6. What degree of involvement in the work of the Friendship Groups have they developed?
7. How many disciples from Level 4 have become leaders of Friendship Groups?
8. Is the School of Discipleship working in coordination with the Evangelism Cycle?
9. Is there a visible change in the character and testimony of the participants?
10. Is the School of Discipleship helping the church to form disciples who make disciples?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Making Disciples in the 21st Century Church*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2013.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.
- Marshall, Colin, y Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*. Kingsford, NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016 (rev.).
- Páez de la Cerda, Elías. *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3: Madurar*. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017.



- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *52 lecciones para grupos celulares*. Fontana, CA: Estrategia de Jesús, 2019.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Grupos que transforman vidas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2015.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares que transforman naciones*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth Internacional, 2016.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares salvando vidas*. Fontana, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2021.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Wilkins, Michael J. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007 (rev.).



Chapter 6 – Friendship Groups and Discipleship

The faith of disciples grows in the space of homes

1. Introduction

Friendship Groups are an essential part of the Strategy of Jesus, as they provide a space in which evangelism and discipleship are interwoven in the daily life of the church. While in the previous chapter we analyzed the School of Discipleship, now we will focus on how Friendship Groups become a privileged place to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Lord left us a clear mission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:19). The mission is not simply to preach the Gospel, but also to form disciples who live according to the Word of God.

Friendship Groups are a practical and biblical response to this mandate. There, meaningful relationships are developed, sound doctrine is transmitted, spirituality is cultivated, and lives are built that later multiply into new disciples. For this reason, the groups are not mere social gatherings, but spiritual spaces where the life of Christ is shared, lived, and transmitted.

In this chapter we will study how relational discipleship constitutes the foundation of Friendship Groups, how apostolic doctrine must nourish them, why the spirituality of the discipling leader is indispensable for that task, and what challenges we face in building up believers. Finally, we will propose pastoral self-evaluation questions to help pastors measure the health and effectiveness of their groups in the development of discipleship.⁶³

2. Relational discipleship as the foundation

Discipleship begins not in a classroom but in a relationship. Jesus Himself established this principle by walking alongside the Twelve. The Gospel of Mark says: “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). Note the order: first, “that they might be with Him,” then, “that He might send them.”

⁶³ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 90.



Friendship Groups reproduce this model, since closeness, friendship, and mutual trust are the basis on which discipleship is built. The apostle John expressed it memorably: “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us...” (1 John 1:3). Discipleship begins by sharing life.

2.1. Jesus’ example with the Twelve

Jesus drew multitudes, but it was with a small group of disciples that He invested most of His time. To them He explained the parables; with them He shared His table; to them He showed His miracles up close. The great multitudes listened, but the Twelve lived with Him. That relational model made the difference and transformed their lives until it turned them into Apostles.

Friendship Groups reproduce that closeness. They are not an anonymous crowd, but an intimate community where each member can be known, heard, and accompanied. There, the most authentic discipleship takes place, because the truths of the Gospel are, above all, reflected in the daily example of the brethren.

2.2. The value of close relationships in discipleship

Relational discipleship is based on the conviction that the Christian life is transmitted from person to person. Paul told the Thessalonians: “So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

That is precisely what discipleship is: imparting not only words, but one’s own life. The teacher becomes an example and a companion. Friendship generates trust, and trust opens the heart to receive correction, teaching, and spiritual direction.⁶⁴

2.3. Risks of methods centered only on information or events

The temptation of our time is to think that with more information we will change lives. We organize seminars, congresses, and conferences, thinking that information will bring transformation. However, experience shows that information, without relationship, becomes sterile.

⁶⁴ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiplying* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 96.



Another mistake is to believe that urgency justifies superficial processes. Large events are organized with thousands of people, but without a relational process to accompany them, most do not persevere. Finally, there is the false belief that success depends on the size of the crowd. Jesus never measured His success by crowds, but by disciples.

Friendship Groups rescue us from these deviations and return us to Christ’s model: relational, deep, and transforming discipleship.

3. Apostolic doctrine as a pillar of discipleship

Relationships are fundamental, but they cannot stand without truth. A friendship group without biblical doctrine becomes a social club. Therefore, sound doctrine is an essential pillar of every discipling process. The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy with forceful words: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16). In Friendship Groups, apostolic doctrine must always be present as the nourishment that strengthens and guides believers.⁶⁵

3.1. The importance of guarding sound doctrine

The danger of false doctrines has been present since apostolic times. Paul warned: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers” (2 Timothy 4:3). In the current context—abounding with messages on the internet, social networks, and all kinds of literature—pastors and leaders must watch to ensure that their groups remain firm in apostolic teaching.

3.2. Faithfully transmitting the teaching to others

Paul instructed Timothy: “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This principle of faithful transmission is essential for discipleship in friendship groups. The leader is not the owner of a message of his own, but a channel of the apostolic Word he has received.

⁶⁵ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 3.



3.3. The group as a classroom for doctrinal formation

Friendship Groups offer an ideal environment to teach doctrine. It is not about lengthy sermons, but about sharing the Word in a space for dialogue and practical application. Unlike a mass service, in the group one can ask questions, converse, and clarify doubts. The teaching becomes experiential and contextualized. When Friendship Groups are nourished with apostolic doctrine, believers not only strengthen their faith, but learn to defend it and share it. Doctrine thus becomes part of their daily life.

4. The spirituality of the discipling leader

No Friendship Group will advance without a leader filled with the Holy Spirit. The spirituality of the discipling leader is characterized by a real and deep relationship with God that impacts those around him or her.

4.1. Communion with God as the basis of spiritual authority

Jesus Himself gave us an example of spirituality. Before beginning His ministry, He was led into the wilderness to pray and fast. During His ministry, He withdrew to solitary places to pray. That communion with the Father was the source of His authority. The discipling leader must imitate this example. It is not only about preparing lessons or leading meetings, but about cultivating a spiritual life that conveys the presence of Christ. The apostle John wrote: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).⁶⁶

4.2. The leader’s impact on the atmosphere of the group

The atmosphere of a friendship group reflects the spiritual condition of its leader. If the leader lives in prayer and dependence on God, the group will breathe faith, enthusiasm, and passion for Christ. If the leader neglects his or her spiritual life, the group will become routine and cold. The story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 illustrates how a transformed life can spread enthusiasm. She had no theological training, but her encounter with Jesus made her a powerful spiritual influence in her city. Likewise, a discipling leader impacts with his or her testimony and enthusiasm more than with techniques.

⁶⁶ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes that Transform Nations* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2016), 53.



4.3. Practical counsel to cultivate enthusiasm and faith in the cell

The discipling leader should:

- ALWAYS give glory to God for the growth of the group.
- FACE failures responsibly and encourage the group to press on.
- REMAIN open to learning new ways of ministering and avoid monotony.
- ACKNOWLEDGE personal weaknesses and rely on the team.
- PROMOTE working together and listen to every member.

In summary, the discipling leader must be a clean vessel in God’s hands, full of the Spirit, humble, and willing to serve.

5. Challenges and opposition in building the group

The work of discipleship is not carried out on neutral ground. Just as Nehemiah faced opposition when rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, every pastor and leader will encounter resistance when building Friendship Groups.

5.1. Lessons from Nehemiah for cell leadership

Nehemiah faced mockery, threats, and discouragement. His enemies said, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall” (Nehemiah 4:3). Nevertheless, he persevered, trusting in God and encouraging the people: “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome” (Nehemiah 4:14). A group leader must learn this lesson: attacks will come, but faith and determination will sustain the work.⁶⁷

5.2. The enemy’s strategies against edification

The enemy will try to:

- DISCOURAGE with thoughts of incapacity.
- RIDICULE the group’s efforts.
- EXAGGERATE difficulties to sow fear.
- ATTACK internal relationships through murmuring and division.

⁶⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 98.



The discipling leader must discern these strategies and respond with faith, prayer, and determination.

5.3. Prayer as the main weapon in building

Prayer is not an accessory element in the life of a friendship group, but the force that sustains it and keeps it standing in the face of any opposition. When confronting mockery, scorn, and threats from his enemies, Nehemiah was neither paralyzed by fear nor did he respond with the same carnal attitude. He prayed constantly and trusted God to protect the work. Prayer was his primary resource and most powerful weapon.⁶⁸

In the ministry of Jesus we see the same principle: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Without prayer, the group becomes vulnerable to the temptations of routine, to discouragement when there are no immediate results, or to the internal conflicts that the enemy sows to divide. But when members pray together, the Holy Spirit brings unity, discernment, and spiritual strength.

A group that makes prayer a constant practice remains strong against any attack. It not only prays in its meetings, but establishes chains of intercession, early-morning prayer, and specific times of crying out for the people they want to reach. Prayer is what opens the hearts of friends, what pulls down spiritual strongholds, and what allows the Gospel to be received with faith.

The building of friendship groups, like the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, is not possible by human effort alone: it requires total dependence on the power of God. And that power is activated and manifested through the persevering prayer of leaders and members.

5.4. The vision of multiplication as the fruit of discipleship

A Friendship Group that grows in prayer, doctrine, and healthy relationships cannot remain static. The natural fruit of a healthy group is multiplication. The enemy knows this and therefore opposes it strongly: because he understands that when a group multiplies, the reach of the Gospel expands, new families are reached, and more disciples are formed.

⁶⁸ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *As for Me and My House, We Will Serve the Lord* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Christian Education Department, 2013), 158



The ultimate purpose is not to maintain a small circle of believers gathered indefinitely, but to reproduce disciples who in turn start new groups. This is the essence of the Strategy of Jesus: to make disciples who make disciples. Just as the mustard seed grows until it becomes a leafy tree, so Friendship Groups must multiply to fill the city with the teaching of Apostolic Doctrine.

The experience of Nehemiah reminds us that when the people work with faith and perseverance, the Lord accelerates processes and grants surprising results: the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in fifty-two days. In the same way, when Friendship Groups focus on relational discipleship and on the mission to multiply, the Lord grants fruit in a short time.

To multiply does not mean to divide because of conflicts, but to reproduce because of maturity. A group that multiplies has reached the level at which it can support new leaders, send out formed disciples, and continue growing. This vision of multiplication ensures that the work of God does not stagnate, but advances from generation to generation, thus fulfilling the Great Commission in every neighborhood, city, and nation.⁶⁹

6. Conclusion

Friendship Groups are much more than informal meetings. They are spaces where the discipleship of Jesus becomes reality: deep relationships, doctrinal teaching, spiritual leadership, and solid edification in the midst of opposition.⁷⁰

A healthy Friendship Group is one where members feel accompanied, learn sound doctrine, see the example of a spiritual leader, and are motivated to multiply. The pastor must ensure that each group is a true workshop of discipleship, not merely a bridge of evangelization.

Christ's model remains the most effective: walking together, teaching the Word, living in communion with God, and persevering until the fruit is produced and remains. Thus, Friendship Groups become the foundation of discipleship in the local church.

⁶⁹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 7.

⁷⁰ Salazar, Felipe A., *Presidential Message* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2023), 6.



7. Pastoral self-evaluation questions

Pastoral work requires continually discerning whether Friendship Groups are fulfilling their purpose as spaces for discipleship. It is not enough that they meet faithfully each week; it is necessary to verify whether there is real transformation in them, the teaching of sound doctrine, constant prayer, and a vision for multiplication. These questions will help the pastor evaluate with sincerity and objectivity the state of the groups and the commitment of their leaders, in order to make decisions that strengthen the work of the Lord.

1. Do I promote authentic relationships in Friendship Groups, or have I reduced them to simple formal meetings?
2. Have I clearly taught my leaders that relational discipleship is the basis of spiritual growth?
3. Do I make sure that apostolic doctrine is faithfully transmitted in the Friendship Groups?
4. Am I attentive to detect and correct any influence of strange doctrines in the groups?
5. Do I cultivate and model a solid spirituality as a leader, so as to inspire confidence and enthusiasm in others?
6. Do I pray regularly for each Friendship Group, its leaders, and members, interceding for their specific needs?
7. Have my leaders understood that prayer is the main weapon to sustain and build their group?
8. Am I motivating the groups to have a vision for multiplication, or have I settled for keeping them small and indefinitely stable?
9. How am I evaluating the fruits of the groups: conversions, baptisms, multiplication of disciples?
10. Is there a clear plan for group multiplication in my church?
11. Do I evaluate with the leaders the obstacles and attacks they face, and help them overcome these with faith and perseverance?
12. Am I myself prepared to face the spiritual opposition that arises in cell work?



13. Am I accompanying my leaders in prayer and pastoral support so that they do not wear out?
14. What adjustments should I make so that my Friendship Groups become true spaces of discipleship?
15. Can I affirm that my Friendship Groups are producing committed disciples, capable of opening and sustaining new groups?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009.
- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Making Disciples in the 21st Century Church*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2013.
- Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016 (rev.).
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares que transforman naciones*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth Internacional, 2016.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Yo y mi casa serviremos al Señor*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2013.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.



Chapter 7 – Leaders’ Meetings and Leaders’ Retreats

Two key tools to consolidate fruitful leaders

1. The Leaders’ Meeting

1.1. Introduction

The Leaders’ Meeting of local cell groups is closely connected to the church’s vision. Vision is the divine revelation that enables the Church to be effective in its mission. God has given us a charge that does not change: to take the Gospel to the whole world. However, the strategies and methods to fulfill it must be renewed, because we live in a world in constant transformation. The Leaders’ Meeting is the space that ensures that renewal of vision takes place and that the entire cell structure remains aligned.

1.2. Biblical–theological foundation

The practice of gathering leaders for instruction, guidance, and accountability has a clear biblical foundation. In the Old Testament, Moses regularly convened the heads of Israel to receive God’s direction and transmit it to the people. Exodus 18:25–26 relates how he established a tiered leadership system in which each leader had to render accounts and care for the people under his responsibility.⁷¹ In the New Testament, we see Jesus frequently gathering His disciples to teach, correct, and renew them in the vision of the Kingdom (Mark 4:10; Luke 9:1–2). After each time of public teaching, Jesus set the Twelve apart to give them deeper explanations and assign them specific tasks.

The apostle Paul also practiced this model, as seen in Acts 20:17, where he summoned the elders of Ephesus to give them direction and final exhortation before departing. The pastoral meeting of leaders, therefore, follows this pattern: a space where the Pastor ministers, teaches, and guides, ensuring that all leadership is aligned with the church’s vision and mission. In this way, the leaders’ meeting is not merely an administrative gathering, but a spiritual moment in which God’s servants receive focus, encouragement, and clarity to guide the people faithfully in the Great Commission.

⁷¹ Páez de la Cerda, Elías, *Escuela de Discipulado Sígame Nivel 3 Madurar* (Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico: Ministerios La Misión, 2017), 83.



1.3. The leaders' meeting and administration

Jesus taught us that one day we will give an account of how we steward what He placed in our hands. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–19) illustrates this responsibility: the servants were not owners, but stewards. In the same way, the Pastor of the local church administers the spiritual, human, material, and financial resources that God has entrusted to His Church.

The leaders' meeting is the place where this administration is exercised in practical terms. There resources are organized, fruit is reviewed, and plans are drawn. That is why we call this meeting “Meet,” a term that summarizes its four main purposes: Minister, Empower, Evaluate, and Trace (set a course).⁷²

1.4. Pastoral vision and influence

The leaders' meeting enables the Pastor to exercise spiritual influence over those who work within the cell structure. That influence is vital, because leaders reproduce the vision they receive. If the Pastor communicates a clear vision, leaders will multiply it; but if there is a lack of direction, the groups will drift.

The Meet is not merely an administrative meeting: it is the space where leaders are pastored by their Pastor, receive his teaching, and renew their commitment to the church's vision. There divisive tendencies are corrected and faithfulness is strengthened. As a result, the cell groups move forward united in the same direction, with greater effectiveness in the mission.

1.5. Keeping the focus

Every church faces the danger of routine and loss of passion. Over time, leaders can grow weary or drift from the priority of winning souls. The leaders' meeting functions like a “sharpeners of axes” (Ecclesiastes 10:10): it renews, corrects, and motivates the work team.

In this space, the Pastor offers feedback, listens to his leaders, and guides them in solving practical problems. Even more, he keeps the central purpose alive: to present every disciple perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28–29).

⁷² Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 109.



1.6. The Meet plan

The Meet is organized according to its four purposes:

1. MINISTER. The leaders who serve weekly in the cells also need to receive ministry. The Pastor should pray for them, counsel them, and encourage them, recognizing that they too carry needs.
2. EMPOWER. The Pastor raises his leaders' confidence by recognizing their abilities and delegating authority to them. Empowerment keeps motivation alive and prevents burnout.
3. EVALUATE. Each week it is necessary to review the fruit: attendance at cells, guests for Friend Day, enrollments in discipleship, baptisms. Evaluation is not rigid control, but a dialogue that helps improve.
4. TRACE (set a course). Finally, the Pastor gives clear direction for the week: concrete goals, prayer plans, and specific strategies. In this way, leadership alignment with the church's overall vision is ensured.⁷³

1.7. Pastoral evaluation

The leaders' meeting will be effective to the extent that it fulfills three basic criteria:

- Leaders leave strengthened spiritually.
- The church's vision is renewed and reaffirmed.
- There are concrete goals and real follow-up on the fruit.

When these three elements are present, the Meet becomes the engine of the local Strategy of Jesus, keeping the cell leaders—and the entire church—in continuous growth.

1.8. Self-evaluation questions

1. Do we show faithfulness and commitment to the leaders' meetings?

⁷³ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 114.



2. Is there ministry and spiritual renewal in these meetings?
3. Is the church's vision made clear through the Meet?
4. Are leaders being motivated to persevere in their work?
5. Is the weekly evaluation of fruit oriented toward growth?
6. Are the plans and instructions being faithfully applied in the Friendship Groups?
7. Is the leaders' meeting strengthening discipleship in our local church?

2. The Leaders' Retreat

2.1. Introduction

The Leaders' Retreat, also called the Launch Retreat, is an essential instance in the Strategy of Jesus. It is not merely an occasional spiritual event, but an intentional space of formation, consecration, and sending. In it, the leaders of Friendship Groups are deeply ministered to, receive practical training, and are commissioned to carry out their work with greater vision and commitment.

While the weekly Leaders' Meeting (Meet) keeps leadership sharp and focused through ongoing accompaniment, the Leaders' Retreat provides a prolonged and intensive time of renewal and equipping. Many testimonies confirm that what is not achieved in months of regular meetings, God does in a weekend retreat: burdens are released, hearts are transformed, and leaders are filled with new fire for the work of the Lord.

2.2. Biblical foundation

The Leaders' Retreat has a solid foundation in Scripture. In the life and ministry of Jesus we find that He set His disciples apart for times of formation, ministry, and vision. Mark 3:13 says: "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him." . There Jesus instructed them, gave them authority, and prepared them for the work.



Likewise, after intense days of ministry, the Lord sought to take His disciples to secluded places to rest and be renewed in His presence: “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). In this way, He separated them from the noise of the crowd to minister first to their hearts.⁷⁴

In Acts we also find this pattern: before sending them to new tasks, the apostles prayed, fasted, and commended the servants to the Lord (Acts 13:2–3). The leaders’ retreat, then, is a pastoral and biblical means to renew the Lord’s servants, heal their inner wounds, free them from bonds that could hinder their ministry, and remind them of the vision of the Kingdom.

2.3. Purposes of the Leaders’ Retreat

The retreat fulfills several strategic purposes that strengthen the spiritual and ministerial life of those who lead cell groups:

- LEAD leaders to a personal encounter with God in a setting set apart and conducive to ministry.
- BREAK spiritual and emotional strongholds that hinder personal and ministerial growth, such as lack of forgiveness, fear, discouragement, or traumatic experiences old or recent.
- TRAIN leaders in the practice of spiritual disciplines and in the practical dynamics of the Strategy of Jesus.
- MINISTER inner healing and deliverance from every bond, so that leaders may serve the Lord in full freedom and authority.
- RENEW commitment to the local church’s vision and to the Great Commission.
- COMMISSION and send new leaders who are beginning their service in Friendship Groups.
- PLAN the start of a new Evangelism Cycle, so that the retreat functions as a launch platform for the whole church.

⁷⁴ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Homes that Transform Nations* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2016), 267.



In summary, the purpose of the Leaders' Retreat is that each servant returns to his or her field of labor strengthened in spirit, free of burdens, renewed in vision, and filled with the Holy Spirit to multiply disciples.⁷⁵

2.4. The spiritual dynamic of the retreat

A Leaders' Retreat is not a mere extended conference or a recreational camp. It is a time of spiritual intensity. In it, worship, teaching, intercession, brokenness, restoration, and vision converge. The atmosphere is designed so that leaders can step out of the hurried pace of daily life, examine themselves before God, and allow the Holy Spirit to deal with the depths of their being.

In these settings, bonds are broken and spiritual freedom is experienced. As Jesus said: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). A leader who suffers from unhealed wounds will hardly be able to guide others to healing. That is why the retreat becomes a place of inner healing, where many leaders experience the restoring power of Christ.

Experience shows that when leaders are freed from bitterness, resentments, or fears, they return with a renewed heart to serve with joy and authority. What is sown in those days does not remain merely as a memory, but marks a before and after in their ministry.

At the same time, the retreat is a space of intercession and spiritual warfare. The apostle Paul reminded us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers..." (Ephesians 6:12). During a retreat, participants pray intensely to break spiritual strongholds and prepare to face the challenges of the work with authority. The joint prayer of the pastor and leaders creates an environment where the Holy Spirit is poured out in power.

For this reason, it is advisable that the leaders' retreat be preceded by times of fasting and prayer for all who will participate. It is not only about organizing a well-planned program, but about preparing the spiritual ground. Leaders who enter the retreat already in an attitude of seeking and humbling themselves before the Lord are more willing to receive ministry and to be deeply renewed.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 21.

⁷⁶ Pereira das Neves, Gabriel, *Groups that Transform Lives* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth International, 2015), 21.



2.5. Program dynamics

The leaders' retreat is organized around a carefully designed program that includes:

- Times of worship that center the heart in God's presence.
- Biblical teachings on discipleship, holiness, leadership, and vision.
- Prayers of consecration and times of crying out for deliverance and spiritual renewal.
- Self-evaluation exercises in which each leader examines personal and ministerial life.
- Acts of communion such as the Lord's Supper and foot washing, which reaffirm unity, humility, and service.
- Practical training sessions on the dynamics of the Friendship Group, Discipleship, and the Evangelism Cycle.
- Commissioning and sending, where leaders are presented to the Lord with prayer and anointing, and then publicly confirmed in their ministry.

Ideally, these retreats should be held two or three times a year, preferably before each Evangelism Cycle, so that the church's cell structure begins each stage with renewed strength.

2.6. Expected results

A well-developed retreat leaves visible fruit in the life of the church:

- Leaders restored and strengthened in their spiritual life.
- New leaders confirmed and sent with spiritual authority.
- Greater unity and fellowship among the ministry team.
- Growth in vision and commitment to the Strategy of Jesus.
- Greater fruit in the following cycle, with more friends reached and more disciples and cell groups multiplied.
- A church renewed in prayer and spiritual fire, with leadership that serves in freedom and dependence on the Holy Spirit.



The leaders' retreat, then, is not a waste of time or an optional luxury, but a strategic investment in the church's spiritual health and expansion. A congregation that takes time to set its leaders apart to minister to them and send them forth ensures not only the success of the next cycle, but the long-term permanence and multiplication of fruit.

2.7. Complementarity with leaders' meetings

While the Meet provides ongoing pastoral accompaniment, the retreat offers a time of greater depth and intensity. Both spaces complement each other: the Meet gives weekly follow-up to goals and challenges, while the retreat opens a new cycle, breaks spiritual barriers, and renews the vision in each leader. A church that consistently combines both tools will experience stronger, more committed, and more effective leadership.

2.8. Pastoral evaluation

For the Pastor, leaders' retreats represent an invaluable opportunity to gauge the spiritual and ministerial condition of the team. The way leaders participate in worship, respond to ministry, and commit themselves during times of consecration reveals the level of maturity reached and points to areas that still require work. Likewise, the fruit of the retreat will be evidenced in the leaders' performance during the next Evangelism Cycle. If after the retreat the Friendship Groups grow in unity, spiritual fruit, and numbers, one can affirm that the retreat fulfilled its purpose.

2.9. Self-evaluation questions

1. How often are leaders' retreats held?
2. Do leaders have a personal and profound encounter with God in these retreats?
3. In what way does the retreat prepare and strengthen leaders to begin a new Evangelism Cycle?
4. What concrete results are observed in the leaders' lives after the retreat?
5. What aspects could be improved in the organization and execution of upcoming retreats?
6. How does the leaders' retreat complement the weekly meetings (Meet)?



3. Conclusion

Leaders' meetings and leaders' retreats are two inseparable instruments to sustain and multiply the work of the Strategy of Jesus in the local church. The weekly meeting (Meet) keeps leadership focused, motivated, and in constant communication with the pastoral vision, while the retreat provides a time of greater spiritual depth, intensive training, and consecration.

When both spaces are developed with excellence, leaders receive both the ongoing accompaniment and the periodic renewal they need to guide their cell groups effectively. The combination of meetings and retreats ensures that leadership remains sensitive to God's voice, aligned with the vision, and willing to work with passion in the Great Commission.

In this balance between the weekly and the extraordinary, between accountability and spiritual renewal, lies one of the greatest strengths of the Strategy of Jesus to raise up mature and fruitful leaders in the Kingdom of God.

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:1–2.

4. Pastoral evaluation

1. Am I consistently holding the weekly leaders' meeting (Meet) in my local church?
2. In my meetings, am I ministering, empowering, evaluating, and tracing the vision clearly?
3. Is my influence over the leaders evident in their faithfulness and commitment to the Strategy of Jesus?
4. Do I review and seriously analyze the reports from each cell group to provide proper follow-up?
5. Do I devote sufficient time to preparing biblical teaching for the Meet, ensuring it is practical and motivating?



6. Do I schedule Leaders' Retreats with due frequency, considering their importance for launching the Evangelism Cycle?
7. Am I using the retreats to minister to deep areas of my leaders' lives, helping them heal and consecrate themselves?
8. Do I involve my whole team in planning and conducting the retreats, ensuring organization and excellence?
9. After each meeting and each retreat, is there noticeable growth in my leaders' commitment, unity, and passion?
10. Can I affirm that the meetings and retreats are producing stronger, more faithful, and more multiplying leadership in my local church?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cole, Neil. *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church: New Testament Insights for the 21st Century Church*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2012.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Cell Church Solutions: Transforming the Church in North America*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2005.
- Comiskey, Joel. *How to Be a Great Cell Group Coach: Practical Insight for Supporting and Mentoring Cell Group Leaders*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2022 (rev.).
- Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012 (3.^a ed.).
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.
- George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1992.



Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990.

Páez de la Cerda, Elías. *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3: Madurar*. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017.

Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Grupos que transforman vidas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2015.

Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares que transforman naciones*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth Internacional, 2016.



Chapter 8 – School of Local Ministries

Serving with order and excellence in the house of God

1. Introduction

The Lord's church is not merely a meeting place, but a living body that must function in harmony, with order and purpose. For this body to effectively fulfill the mission Christ has entrusted to it, each of its members must understand his or her role, prepare to carry it out, and do it with excellence. An army without organization cannot sustain a battle; in the same way, a church without order and clarity in its ministries loses strength in its service.

The School of Ministries arises as an essential tool to equip, organize, and guide the members of the church in service. Its purpose is not bureaucratic, but pastoral: to help every believer find his or her place in the body of Christ and fulfill it with faithfulness and quality. The lack of a ministries manual can produce improvisation, disorder, and confusion, whereas its implementation provides unity, clarity, and excellence.

In this chapter we will reflect on the importance of establishing a School of Ministries in every local church, review its biblical and spiritual foundations, highlight the benefits of serving with excellence, and show how this instrument can help equip all believers to fulfill their mission and ministry in the work of God.

2. Biblical foundation of ministry in the church

Service in the church is not a human invention nor a modern organizational resource, but a biblical mandate. From the earliest times of God's people we see the importance of organizing ministries to attend to the spiritual and material needs of the people. In Exodus 18 we read how Moses, following Jethro's counsel, established a system of leaders and helpers who could attend to the people in smaller groups. This avoided overloading the leader and ensured that needs were met in an orderly manner.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Strategy of Jesus, *Simplified Stage 1* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2019), 33.



In Acts 6 we find another fundamental example: the selection of the seven deacons. The church was growing and the apostles could not take care of everything. Therefore, they established a specific ministry to serve tables and care for widows, so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. This decision not only solved a practical problem, but also consolidated a spiritual principle: organized service in the church is part of God's plan.

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:11–12, lays the foundation of the fivefold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These ministries do not exist to exalt those who exercise them, but “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Although in our time we do not recognize with formal titles ministries such as that of apostle or prophet—at least not as they were understood in the primitive era of the Church—we do affirm that the principles of the fivefold ministry remain valid as gifts of Christ to His church.

Moreover, in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul reminds us that the church is a body with many members, and that each has a different function, yet all are necessary. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” In the same way, in the church there are no insignificant members or irrelevant tasks. Every ministry is vital, because all contribute to the growth and edification of the church.

Therefore, having a School of Ministries is nothing more than applying these biblical principles to our current reality: organizing the body so that each member serves in his or her place, with order and excellence.

3. Excellence as the standard of Christian service

Excellence is not a luxury; it is a mandate from God. The apostle Paul exhorts us: “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” (Colossians 3:23–24). This text reminds us that every service in the church—from preaching to cleaning the temple—must be done as an act of worship to God and, therefore, must be done with excellence.



The Old Testament shows that God always demanded excellence in service. Joshua was instructed to be courageous and to meditate in the law day and night in order to prosper in all he undertook. David was called a man after God’s own heart because he did all the Lord’s will. Daniel stood out in Babylon because there was in him an excellent spirit and no fault was found in his conduct. Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and God accepted it.

These examples show us that God is not pleased with mediocrity or with half-hearted service. He expects of us faithful, integral, and excellent service, because He Himself is excellent in all He does.⁷⁸ The School of Ministries, then, becomes a tool to foster this excellence. It is not about imposing human rules, but about establishing clear guidelines that help each ministry serve with order, quality, and a spirit of excellence that honors the Lord.

4. The importance of order in the ministries

When writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul said: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40). This instruction applies not only to worship itself, but also to the ministerial life of the church. Order does not quench the Spirit; it creates the framework in which the Spirit can move freely and without confusion.

The School of Ministries contributes precisely to that order. It defines roles, establishes responsibilities, provides clarity regarding requirements, and helps avoid conflicts or duplication of functions. Many problems in the church do not stem from a lack of spirituality, but from a lack of clarity in functions. When each ministry knows what is expected of it and what its responsibilities are, the church flows in harmony and effectiveness.

Disorder in ministries can generate weariness in leaders, frustration in members, and stagnation in the work. In contrast, order produces peace, unity, and effectiveness. A well-crafted manual ensures that each area works in a coordinated manner, under the same vision and with the same values.

5. The ministries manual

A ministries manual in the church—also called an Operations Manual—has multiple purposes that can be summarized in four major axes:

⁷⁸ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 130.



- **EQUIP:** not everyone immediately knows how to serve in the church. The manual offers a clear guide so that each believer can learn what is necessary to serve in the area where God calls him or her.
- **GUIDE:** the manual establishes conduct guidelines, biblical principles, and practical directives that orient ministerial life.
- **UNIFY:** when all ministries work by the same manual, fragmentation is avoided and coherence in practice is ensured.
- **INSPIRE:** a good manual not only instructs; it also motivates to serve with passion, humility, and excellence.

These purposes show that the manual is not a mere rulebook, but a pastoral instrument that seeks to edify, motivate, and guide the church toward more excellent service.

6. Common areas included in the manual

Each church, according to its size and context, will develop different ministries. However, there are common areas that are usually present in all congregations and that a ministries manual should address:

- **ALTAR:** includes those who preach, teach, pray from the pulpit, or lead services. This ministry demands high requirements of holiness, doctrinal preparation, and testimony.
- **WORSHIP:** musicians, singers, worship leaders. Here both musical skill and a consecrated spiritual life are required. Musical excellence must be accompanied by holiness and humility.
- **SUPPORT:** ushers, receptionists, welcome team, deacons. These ministries are the first impression a visitor receives and must be carried out with love, cordiality, and order.
- **INTERCESSION AND VISITATION:** prayer warriors, counselors, visitation teams for the sick or new converts. Their work is fundamental to sustain the church spiritually.



- **CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES:** children’s Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, marriage ministry. Here the Christian character of new generations is formed and the family is strengthened.
- **PRACTICAL SERVICE:** sound, multimedia, cleaning, administration. Although sometimes less visible, these ministries are indispensable for the church to function with order and quality.

By detailing each ministry in the manual, the church helps every member prepare, understand his or her responsibilities, and serve with clarity and commitment.

7. Unity and commitment as the basis of excellence

Excellence is not achieved only with manuals and classes, but with united and committed hearts. Scripture insists on unity as a condition for God’s blessing. Psalm 133 says: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples would be one, as He and the Father are one, so that the world would believe.

The School of Ministries contributes to this unity because it ensures that everyone works under the same vision. It is not about each ministry functioning independently, but about all serving with one purpose: to glorify God and edify His church.

Commitment is also essential. The manual may be written and the school may be functioning, but if members do not commit to follow the given guidelines, it will be of no use. Each believer must embrace the church’s vision, commit to it, and strive to serve with excellence.⁷⁹

8. Ongoing training in the ministries

Developing a ministries manual does not replace ongoing training. On the contrary, it should be the starting point for establishing a School of Ministries in each local church. Just as we have a School of Discipleship, we should have a space to train those who serve in the different areas.

⁷⁹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 48.



Ongoing training ensures that ministries do not stagnate, that members grow in their skills, and that they remain up to date in both practical and ministerial matters. It also prevents service from becoming routine or mechanical.⁸⁰

Workshops, ministry retreats, and regular trainings should also be part of the church's life. In this way, the School of Ministries becomes a living instrument that organizes training and is nourished by practice.

9. Spirituality and character of those who serve

The classes of the School of Ministries must keep the emphasis that ministry is not merely a technical function, but a spiritual service. More than abilities, God seeks holiness, faithfulness, and character. Those who serve in the church must be examples in their personal, family, and social life.

Paul told Timothy that leaders must be blameless, sober, prudent, hospitable, and able to teach. Daniel stood out because he had an excellent spirit. David was chosen because he was a man after God's own heart.

Spirituality is indispensable. A musician may play well, but if he or she has no communion with God, the ministry will be barren. An usher may be cordial, but if he or she does not pray or seek the Lord, the service will lack anointing. The classes of the School of Ministries must always emphasize that the character and spiritual life of those who serve are fundamental requirements for excellent ministries.

10. Benefits of the School of Ministries

The School of Ministries is not optional; it is a necessity. A ministries manual is not an accessory; it is a very useful tool. Without this school, the church runs the risk of falling into improvisation, disorder, and mediocrity. With it, by contrast, it can organize itself, be trained, and move toward excellence in service.

Among the most notable benefits of having a local School of Ministries we can mention:

⁸⁰ Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 1998), 386.



- FASTER and more effective training of new workers.
- ORDER and clarity in every function.
- PREVENTION of divisions and conflicts.
- EVERYONE knows what is expected of them.
- UNITY in vision and coherence in practice.
- A HEALTHIER church, where each member knows that his or her service has value and purpose.
- GREATER confidence among members, knowing that ministries are carried out with order and excellence.

The Word teaches us that we all have mission and ministry. The mission is toward the world: to win souls and make disciples. The ministry is toward the Church: to serve in the body of Christ with the gifts God has given us. The School of Ministries is the tool that helps fulfill this twofold task with order and excellence.

11. Implementation challenges

We cannot ignore that implementing a School of Ministries may face certain challenges. Some members may resist change, thinking it is unnecessary or that it limits spiritual freedom. Others may interpret the school's manual as a rigid regulation rather than a pastoral guide.

Therefore, it is essential that the classes of the School of Ministries be presented with a clear pastoral vision: not as corporate control, but as a biblical and practical tool to serve the Lord better. In addition, these classes must be adapted to the local church, respecting its context, size, and culture; and of course, maintaining the essential principles of the Word of God.

Thus, despite any challenge, each local church should commit to drafting its ministries manual, establishing its School of Ministries, equipping its members in it, and periodically updating the program, adjusting it to current needs.



12. Pastoral self-evaluation questions

1. Do I have a ministries manual in my local church?
2. Do the members know and use that manual to serve with order and excellence?
3. Is there clarity about responsibilities and requirements in each area of service?
4. Am I providing ongoing training to each ministry?
5. Is unity and commitment perceived in the church's service?
6. Is it evident in practice that we do everything as unto the Lord?
7. Have I integrated this area of ministerial training with discipleship and with leaders' retreats?
8. Am I conveying the importance of character and spirituality above abilities?
9. Is it evident that the ministries of my church work under one and the same vision?
10. Am I willing to invest time and resources in ministerial excellence by implementing the School of Ministries?

13. Conclusion

The Lord has called us to serve Him with all our heart and with the excellence He deserves. We cannot settle for improvisation or for service done halfway; we serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every ministry in the church, whether it seems small or great, is valuable in God's eyes and contributes to the fulfillment of the mission.

This excellence is sustained by a comprehensive vision of the church's life. The School of Discipleship grounds the believer in the Word and establishes him or her in the faith; the Friendship Groups provide the relational context where the life of Christ is shared and multiplied; the Meetings and Retreats renew the vision and strengthen those who guide the flock. On that foundation, the School of Ministries completes the picture: it organizes the gifts, orders the teams, and aligns every task with the mission.



The School of Ministries is not a compendium of cold rules, but a pastoral tool at the service of the Holy Spirit. Its purpose is that every member find his or her place in the body, be trained, and serve with faithfulness and order. When implemented with prayer, unity, and commitment, it prevents the work from depending on a few and activates the whole body to edify. Thus, each area shines as a testimony that in our church everything is done “as to the Lord and not to men.”

The result is a church that not only wins souls and forms disciples, but also strengthens its ministries so that every believer serves effectively. The body functions with greater harmony, service becomes more fruitful, and the name of the Lord is glorified. All this culminates in the greater purpose of the Great Commission: to raise up workers with proven character and clear vision, ready to be sent, to plant new churches, and to extend the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. To this we will dedicate the next chapter.

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Geiger, Eric, y Kevin Peck. *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2016.
- Marshall, Colin, y Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*. Kingsford, NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009.



O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Rainer, Thom S., y Eric Geiger. *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006.

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995.

Warren, Rick. *Una Iglesia con Propósito*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 1998.



Chapter 9 – Church Planting

Preparing faithful workers for the spiritual harvest

1. Introduction

Planting churches is not a modern project nor an optional denominational growth strategy. It is the heart of the mission Jesus entrusted to His Church. Every time the Gospel reaches a new place and a new work or mission is established, the Great Commission is being fulfilled. From the beginning, God’s plan was not only to save individuals in isolation, but to gather them into a body—a holy people who worship Him and proclaim His name.

The book of Acts does not only present powerful sermons or individual conversions. It also shows the birth of local churches that became beacons of light in the midst of darkness. Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and so many others were the fruit of the work of men and women who, sent by God, planted new apostolic works where Christ was not known.

In our day, the challenge remains. Millions of people around the world still do not have access to a church that preaches the apostolic Gospel. Even in contexts where churches exist, there are entire neighborhoods, cities, and regions where there is no strong, living congregation that makes true disciples of Christ. Therefore, the training of church planters is one of the most urgent tasks of our time.

In this chapter we will reflect on the biblical foundations of planting, the planter’s character and spirituality, the different possible models, and the challenges we may face—all with the purpose that each church in the Apostolic Assembly may commit to the formation and sending of new planters.

2. Biblical foundation of church planting

Church planting is deeply rooted in Scripture. From the Old Testament we find God’s desire to form a holy people. Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations and a testimony of the true God. But with the coming of Christ, that plan reached its fullness: now the Church is the new people of God, called to extend to the ends of the earth.



In Acts 13 we see the church in Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas to the mission field. They were sent not only to preach, but also to establish new works. Throughout his journeys, Paul founded churches, organized them with local leadership, and then maintained communication with them through letters and visits.

In Acts 14:21–23 we are told that after preaching the Gospel in various cities, “they appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed”. This pattern of preaching, discipleship, and establishing churches is repeated throughout the New Testament.

Without church planting, the Great Commission is left incomplete. The foundation is clear: the mission of the Church is fulfilled not only by winning souls, but by establishing new churches that live the faith, teach the doctrine, administer the gifts, and multiply into new disciples and churches.

3. The church planter

3.1. The planter’s calling and vision

No one should launch out to plant a church by mere human initiative. A clear calling from God is necessary. That calling may come in different ways: through the Word, through a deep sense in prayer, through the confirmation of spiritual leaders, or through the evident need in a place. But in any case, the planter must be convinced that it is God who is sending him or her.⁸¹

The calling is not only to preach, but to give one’s life for a community. Planting a church demands sacrifice, perseverance, and surrender. There will be moments of scarcity, loneliness, and opposition. Only the one who is sure of the calling will endure.

Along with the calling, the planter needs a vision. Vision is the picture of the future that God wants to accomplish through that new church. Will it be a church focused on youth? Or on families? Will it have a strong missionary emphasis? How will it reach the community where it is being raised up? These questions must have an answer. A vision without a calling is weak. A calling without a vision is blind. But a confirmed calling and a clear vision constitute the basis for a fruitful ministry.

⁸¹ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 36.



3.2. The planter's character and spirituality

More than titles or technical skills, what God seeks in a planter is character. The planter must be a man or woman of integrity, who lives what he or she preaches and reflects the character of Christ. The Bible sets clear requirements for those who exercise spiritual leadership: they must be blameless, sober-minded, prudent, hospitable, able to teach, not given to anger nor to the love of money (1 Timothy 3:1–7).

Furthermore, spirituality is vital. Church planting is a spiritual battle. The planter must be someone who prays, who knows the Word, who depends on the Holy Spirit, and who maintains intimate communion with God. Without that spiritual life, every strategy will prove barren.⁸² The planter's spirituality influences the atmosphere of the church that is born. A cold, superficial leader will raise a cold church. A leader passionate for Christ, who prays and seeks the Lord, will raise a fervent church. Therefore, before sending someone to plant, it is essential to evaluate his or her spiritual life.

3.3. The planter's preparation and training

Although calling and character are essential, preparation is also needed. Paul spent time in Tarsus before beginning his public ministry. Timothy was disciplined by Paul before assuming greater responsibilities. Jesus Himself spent three years forming the Twelve before sending them. The training of a planter should include:

- BIBLICAL and doctrinal foundations.
- PERSONAL discipleship.
- PRACTICAL leadership skills.
- TRAINING in counseling, conflict resolution, and administration.
- EXPERIENCE in small groups and evangelism.

A key aspect is the accompaniment of mentors. The planter must not walk alone. He or she needs to be guided, counseled, and corrected by more experienced pastors. The biblical model of 2 Timothy 2:2 is clear: “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”.

⁸² Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 4: Multiply* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 68.



4. First stages of the planting

The process of forming a church planter and launching the plant can be organized in a one-year plan divided into four quarters, each with a defined general objective:

- In the **FIRST QUARTER**, the emphasis falls on establishing conviction of the calling and laying the biblical and doctrinal foundations that will support the entire work.
- In the **SECOND QUARTER**, the purpose is to shape the planter's character through personal discipleship and the practice of spiritual disciplines, ensuring maturity and consistency of life.
- The **THIRD QUARTER** focuses on the development of practical leadership skills and on direct experience with small groups and evangelism, consolidating the planter in active service.
- Finally, in the **FOURTH QUARTER**, the previous learnings are integrated in a process of supervised practice, accompanied by mentors, to consolidate the planter's vision and commitment.

Let us now see, step by step, the development of the four quarters.

4.1. Quarter 1 – Biblical foundations and spiritual life

Objective: to establish conviction of the calling and lay solid doctrinal and spiritual foundations.

- **INTERVIEW WITH PASTORS/MENTORS** to validate the plan and set quarterly goals.
- **BIBLICAL AND DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS**: biblical overview; doctrine of Christ, Salvation, the Church, and mission.
- **PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP**: daily habits of prayer and the Word, weekly spiritual self-examination, accountability.
- **HEALTH OF THE SOUL AND CHARACTER**: identity in Christ, handling temptations, stewardship of time and resources.



4.2. Quarter 2 – Ministerial skills and supervised practice

OBJECTIVE: to form the planter’s character through personal discipleship and spiritual practices.

- SERVANT LEADERSHIP: vision, planning, delegation, communication, team formation.
- BASIC COUNSELING AND PASTORAL CARE: knowing how to listen, giving emotional first aid, setting healthy boundaries, and delegating responsibly.
- CONFLICT RESOLUTION: using biblical principles, employing mediation, fostering restoration.
- PRACTICE IN FRIENDSHIP GROUPS: leading a group, designing inductive lessons, following up with newcomers.

4.3. Quarter 3 – Launch and contextualization

Objective: to develop practical leadership skills and gain experience in small groups and evangelism.

- EVANGELISM AND MULTIPLYING DISCIPLESHIP: building good relationships, having spiritual conversations, follow-up and consolidation.
- BASIC ADMINISTRATION: simple budgets, local legality, safety protocols, files and reports.
- CONTEXTUALIZATION: reading the community well, partnerships with local actors, community service.

4.4. Quarter 4 – Post-launch consolidation and multiplication

OBJECTIVE: to ensure the health of the plant after the public start, stabilize rhythms, form new workers, and prepare the next multiplication of groups and ministries.

- BASIC HERMENEUTICS workshop to prepare faithful and applicable teachings.
- HOMILETICS WORKSHOP: 15-minute preaching, clear illustrations and testimonies, concrete “landable” conclusions and applications.



- **CHURCH-PLANTING plan:** a comprehensive document with vision, values, and a strategy for the next twelve months, with quarterly goals and indicators.

In this twelve-month formative-practical plan, each stage complements the previous one, forming an integral path toward the mission of planting healthy, multiplying churches. The aim is to chart a concrete, measurable, and coachable path, so that the planter's calling and character are expressed in serious preparation that provides pastoral care for him or her, for the family, and for the new church.

4.5. Other aspects to care for in the first year

- If the planter is bi-vocational, he or she must maintain balance, a good testimony at work, clear boundaries, and an appropriate routine of rest and nutrition.
- For marriage and family, there must be calendar agreements and protection of time at home, as well as a balanced participation of the family in the planting work.
- Burnout must be prevented, with the accompaniment of mentors and peer friends and, when necessary, a physician and/or counselor.

4.6. The second year of the plant

The following steps should be taken to consolidate the new work or mission:

1. Implement a simple system of pastoral care and accountability.
2. The planter should master Level 1 Be Born and Level 2: Grow discipleship manuals in order to teach them in simple language to new believers.
3. Consolidate attendance, membership, and follow-up of new believers.
4. Prayer guides for intercessors and a fasting calendar.
5. Establish Evangelism Cycles: spiritual strategy; identify, contact, invite; bring to Friend Day—cell or general; accompany; integrate into discipleship; consolidate.
6. Multiply at least one Friendship Group, raising up new hosts, assistants, and support members.



7. Conversation guides for common crises such as grief, anxiety, addictions, family conflicts, etc.
8. Confidentiality and boundaries in counseling.
9. Clear protocols for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults—regarding abuse, domestic violence, and other threats.
10. Financial budget for the plant; record of offerings and tithes; transparency; external audit.
11. Basic financial control system and a minimal administrative structure.
12. Calendar; meetings with the core team of collaborators.
13. Minutes and agreements; follow-up of tasks and goals.
14. Team formation: identifying gifts and roles, team covenants, a culture of feedback.
15. Mastery of Level 3: Mature and Level 4: Multiply discipleship manuals in order to teach them to collaborators.
16. Meet agenda with the sending pastor/mentor; simple fruit reports.
17. Implement the ministries manual.
18. Place—location for meetings.

5. Key elements of planting

5.1. Prayer as the foundation

Prayer is not a complement, but the very foundation of planting. No church can be born without fervent intercession. Nehemiah, before rebuilding the walls, spent time in fasting and prayer (Nehemiah 1:4). Jesus, before choosing the twelve apostles, spent the night praying to the Father (Luke 6:12–13). In the same way, every initiative must begin on our knees: days of fasting, night watches, prayer-walks through the neighborhood, and specific prayer lists that are updated and celebrated when God answers.⁸³

⁸³ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 79.



The planter must be a person of constant prayer. Moreover, he or she must raise an intercessory team to sustain the work. Every advance in the planting will be the fruit of prayer. Every soul won, every discipleship formed, every door opened in the community will be an answer to prayer. It is advisable to organize weekly intercession watches, prayer chains at key times, and a small council of “watchmen” who discern spiritual battles and cover the planter, the family, and the new believers.

Prayer not only opens spiritual pathways; it also transforms the planter. It gives patience, strengthens in trial, reminds that the work belongs to God and not to the planter. In addition, it aligns decisions with the Lord’s will, keeps the heart broken before God, and delivers from self-sufficiency. A praying planter walks less by impulse and more by direction; less by anxiety and more by peace.

5.2. Teaching the Word

Planting a church consists not in gathering crowds, but in making disciples. Jesus commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). A disciple is not merely someone who attends a service, but someone who follows Christ, learns from His Word, and practices the faith.

Therefore, from the outset the new church must be a space for discipleship. The planter must invest time in a few, as Jesus did with the Twelve, so that they in turn invest in others. This multiplication process ensures the stability and growth of the work. A church with programs but without discipleship will be weak. A church that disciplines, that teaches the Word, though small, will be strong and will grow healthily.

5.3. The formation of leaders

From the beginning, local leaders must be raised up. The planter cannot and should not centralize everything in himself or herself. The goal must be to form others to help lead the church. Paul and Barnabas, after evangelizing, appointed elders in every city (Acts 14:23). This presupposes an intentional process: praying for workers, observing carefully, approaching faithful and available people, and offering them a clear path of formation.

Raising leaders involves identifying gifts, giving responsibilities, accompanying them in practice, and confirming callings. Leadership is not improvised; it is formed in the daily life of the church. A simple and reproducible pathway may be: observe, invite, train, send, and accompany.



Begin with small, measurable assignments (host, prayer, follow-up of newcomers), then move to roles of greater scope (leading a meeting, conducting a visit, coordinating a team). Then add doctrinal formation and character evaluation according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Lastly, train in ministerial skills, with regular feedback, goal fulfillment, and a progress log.

When a new church has solid local leaders, it is more stable and autonomous. When it depends entirely on one leader, it risks stagnating or disappearing. Therefore, the planter should establish co-leaderships, rotation of responsibilities, and periodic work meetings.

But premature appointments must be avoided. Faithfulness and fruit must first be tested; accountability and ethical safeguards must be maintained. The goal is not merely to cover tasks, but to raise honest and sincere servant-leaders, capable of caring for people, multiplying disciples, and sustaining the work over time.

6. Methods and models of planting

There are different ways to plant churches. None is the only valid one; each context requires discernment. Among the main models we can mention:

1. **MOTHER-DAUGHTER PLANTING:** a mother church sends a group of members to start a new congregation.
2. **CELL-GROUP PLANTING:** when a Friendship Group multiplies until it becomes an autonomous church.
3. **PIONEER PLANTING:** a planter arrives in a city with no prior work and starts from scratch, generally with evangelism in homes and personal discipleship.
4. **TEAM PLANTING:** a group of leaders with complementary gifts settles in a place to open the work.
5. **BI-VOCATIONAL PLANTING:** the planter supports the ministry through secular work, as Paul did in Corinth working as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).

Each model has advantages and challenges. What matters is not the method, but faithfulness to the purpose: preaching Christ, discipling believers, and forming a healthy church.



7. Challenges and opposition in planting

Every planter must be prepared for opposition. The enemy does not remain passive before a new church. He will attack with discouragement, criticism, persecution, or temptations. Nehemiah faced mockery and threats while rebuilding the walls, but he was not intimidated (Nehemiah 4:1–3). His response combined prayer and action: he cried out to God, set guards, and reorganized the people. That balance remains key for the planter: pray first, but also adjust the plan, reinforce teams, and care for others' morale.⁸⁴

In church planting there will always be spiritual opposition. Sometimes it will come as doctrinal confusion; other times as internal conflicts, emotional wear, or doors that seemed open but then close. The planter must learn to stand firm in faith, not be discouraged by small beginnings, and trust in Christ's promise: "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

Healthy rhythms of spiritual warfare must be practiced: constant intercession, periodic fasting, pastoral covering, accountability, and a life of holiness that closes breaches. Establish prayer chains, call the brethren to night watches when necessary, and sustain newcomers in the battle with counseling and accompaniment—teaching them above all to seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This is essential.

It is also necessary to design responses to foreseeable attacks: in the face of criticism, meekness and clarity; in the face of confusion, sound teaching and biblical dialogue; in the face of discouragement, remembering testimonies and promises; in the face of persecution, prudence and unity. Do not fight alone: surrounding oneself with a mature team reduces the impact of fatigue and isolation. Cultivate the joy of the Lord, which is strength in trial, and celebrate every small advance.

Thus, while the planter builds with one hand and holds the sword of faith with the other, he or she sees God make a way where there is none and establish the work until it multiplies.

⁸⁴ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 96.



8. Multiplication as the expected fruit

The ultimate objective of planting is not to maintain a small, motionless church, but to multiply it. Every church must have the vision of planting other churches in its DNA. We see this in the New Testament: the churches were multiplied and the Lord added daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). The Christian fellowship of Jerusalem expanded toward Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth; Paul's letters bear witness to churches that were born, grew, and then became new platforms for expansion.⁸⁵

A church that does not multiply stagnates. It may enjoy a good internal atmosphere and have a certain stability, but it risks becoming a closed circle focused only on its own comfort. By contrast, a church that plants other churches extends the Kingdom and fulfills the mission. It is not merely a matter of increasing numbers, but of taking the Gospel to new places, reaching new families, and raising up new workers. The vision of multiplication is not optional; it is part of the nature of the Church of Christ, like a living organism that reproduces and bears fruit.

Therefore, the formation of planters must not be an isolated event, but a continuous process in every congregation. Intentional programs of discipleship, mentoring, and sending are needed—programs that identify those with a calling, prepare them, and accompany them along the way. Each church must ask itself: whom are we forming today so that tomorrow they may plant new works? The dream must not be simply to fill a local sanctuary, but to see new congregations arise in different neighborhoods, cities, and nations. A church with a vision for multiplication keeps the flame of the mission alive and becomes an effective instrument in God's hands so that the world may be filled with the knowledge of His glory.

9. Conclusion

Church planting is not a secondary option; it is God's primary method for fulfilling the Great Commission. The calling is clear: to form, send, and sustain planters who open new works. The pastor-mentor must ask: am I identifying those who have a calling? Am I investing in their formation? Am I sending and supporting those whom God raises up? A church that does not send planters closes in on itself. A church that plants becomes a powerful instrument in God's hands.

⁸⁵ Strategy of Jesus, *Discipleship Level 3: Maturing* (Fontana, CA: Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, 2024), 139.



The challenge is great, but the promise is sure. The Lord has said that He will be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). With that certainty, let us advance in the formation and sending of planters so that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

10. Pastoral self-evaluation questions

1. Am I convinced that church planting is an essential part of the biblical mission?
2. Have I identified in my congregation people with a calling to plant churches?
3. What concrete steps am I taking to form them and accompany them?
4. Does my church have a specific plan of prayer for new plants?
5. Do I know the different planting models and which one best fits our context?
6. Are we practicing solid discipleship that will be the basis of future churches?
7. How are we raising local leaders in the new works?
8. In what way are we facing the opposition and spiritual challenges of planting?
9. Does our vision include the continuous multiplication of disciples and churches?
10. Am I willing to send and sustain those whom God calls, even if that implies sacrifices for the mother church?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Comiskey, Joel. *De doce a tres: Cómo aplicar los principios G12 a tu iglesia*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2002.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Elim: Cómo los grupos celulares penetraron una ciudad entera para Jesús*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2005.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.



Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.

Stetzer, Ed. *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003.

Towns, Elmer. *Getting a Church Started*. Lynchburg, VA: Church Growth Institute, 1982.

Wagner, Peter. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.



Conclusion of Discipleship

In this section there is a thread that connects each of its chapters: Christ's call to make disciples. Everything we have studied—the School of Discipleship, the Friendship Groups as centers of discipleship, the leaders' meetings and leaders' retreats, the School of Ministries, and the formation and sending of Church Planters—are not loose pieces, but parts of the same divine purpose: to raise up a church that grows in maturity, multiplies in mission, and expands in power.

The School of Discipleship reminds us that it is not enough to lead people to a first experience with God; it is necessary to guide them in an intentional process of spiritual growth, grounded in the Word and in practical obedience to Christ. There convictions are formed, spiritual habits are developed, and Christian identity is strengthened.

Friendship Groups are the heart of that discipling life. In them, teaching is incarnated in living relationships where faith is shared, prayer is offered together, victories are celebrated, and struggles are faced in community. They are spaces where each member learns that no one walks alone and that faith is nourished in the family of God.

Leaders' Meetings and Leaders' Retreats are necessary instances to care for those who guide others. The leader who does not feed himself or herself, who is not renewed in God's presence, and who does not walk in fellowship with peers will, sooner or later, grow weak. Therefore, the church that invests in times of formation and spiritual renewal for its leaders is ensuring the future of its ministry and the health of the entire work.

The School of Ministries is a necessary instance to equip those who serve in the work of God. The church that invests in forming its servants in every area of ministry—from those who serve at the altar to those who welcome the brethren at the door—is ensuring the continuity of the vision, the quality of service, and the edification of the whole body of Christ.

Finally, the Formation of Church Planters projects us toward the broader mission: it is not only about strengthening what already exists, but about opening new fields, extending the Kingdom, and sowing the Word in territories where there is still no apostolic church. Every church planted is a light lit in the darkness—a testimony that the Kingdom of God keeps advancing.



Thus, this section has shown us a complete path: from personal discipleship to group life; from caring for leaders to the multiplication of new churches. Everything is united by the same Spirit and sustained by the same purpose: that Christ be formed in us and proclaimed throughout the earth.

The vision is not small. It requires effort, unity, perseverance, and total dependence on the Lord. But He assures us that His Spirit is with us, guiding and enabling us. This manual is only an instrument; the true work is the Holy Spirit's in the life of every leader and every disciple.

May what has been shared in these pages leave in our hearts a cry and a determination: to be disciples who make disciples, leaders who raise up leaders, and a church that multiplies for the glory of God.



Final self-evaluation questions

1. As a Pastor, am I investing time and effort in forming believers in the Word through the School of Discipleship, so that they grow firm in the faith and are able to teach others also?
2. Am I ensuring that my Friendship Groups are spaces of true fellowship, discipleship, and the formation of new leaders, or have I settled for them to be routine weekly meetings?
3. Am I seeking that my leaders receive spiritual renewal, clear direction, and pastoral accompaniment, or am I placing responsibilities on them without strengthening them?
4. Am I identifying, equipping, and assigning each believer to the appropriate ministry so that the whole church serves with excellence, or am I allowing a few to do the work of many?
5. Am I leading my church to a vision of multiplication, raising up workers and preparing planters, or have I settled for maintaining what we already have?
6. Am I faithfully fulfilling the mission of making disciples, organizing the local church according to the Strategy of Jesus, and depending fully on the Holy Spirit at every step?







SECTION III: HEALTHY LEADERSHIP

*How can we develop
healthy leadership?*



Introduction to Healthy Leadership

The first two sections of this book put the heart of our mission in its place: Evangelism called us to go out—to proclaim Christ with compassion and boldness—and Discipleship oriented us to form Christ in people—to accompany them with patience until maturity. Now, our third section asks realistically: what kind of leadership can sustain both without burning out or losing the way? The answer is not technical but spiritual: healthy leadership, rooted in God, ordered at home, upright in public, and able to multiply in team.

Therefore, we bring here six chapters that link together like steps on the same path. Chapter 10 — The Search for God affirms the priority: before leading, we dwell in God’s presence. Chapter 11 — Relationship with the Word secures ministerial authority: we do not lead from personal opinions, but from Scripture, which establishes authority, corrects, consoles, and guides. Chapter 12 — Winning at Home puts the thermometer on what is intimate: public fruit loses legitimacy if the home is neglected. Chapter 13 — Ministerial Ethics sets the framework of integrity that guards the testimony and protects the church. Chapter 14 — Caring for the Congregation reorients us to the concrete shepherding of people, where the Gospel comes close. And Chapter 15 — Teamwork and Delegation shows how healthy leadership multiplies: it shares the load, trains others, and organizes for mission.

Thus, this section reaffirms Evangelism and Discipleship; because to evangelize without healthy leadership becomes short-lived, and to disciple without it becomes too heavy. Our desire is simple and demanding at once: leaders who seek God, love His Word, honor their home, practice the truth, care well for the flock, and raise up teams. Only then can the Gospel keep running and disciples keep growing.



Chapter 10 – The Seek of God

Only from the presence of God can we lead well

"Glory in his holy name; rejoice the heart of those who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his power; continually seek his face." 1 Chronicles 16:10-11.

1. Introduction

A spiritual leader's relationship with the Lord requires setting apart time alone with God: prayer and the reading/study of His Word, for one's own growth. If we want to lead effectively, we must submit to God and seek His will. This seems obvious, basic, but the cause of the fall of many has been precisely this: ceasing to set apart time to pray and study the Word of God, thus drifting from divine direction and instruction.

To lead healthily, we must go before the people in the spiritual disciplines. Only then will we know where to go and what to do. We need a daily devotional time with God. Our devotional time must not be dictated by what happens in our life or ministry. The opposite is right and desirable: our devotional time should shape our decisions and responses. If God is truly greater than anything, then our devotional time will transform our heart and, consequently, determine our circumstances.

In this chapter we will consider the following matters:

- Foundations of the search for God
- We must return to the beginning
- United with God
- Identity and integrity of the leader
- Connected to the Source
- Practical considerations

2. Foundations of the search for God

When I was younger, I used to hear the phrase, "Get with God." I often wondered, "What does that actually mean?" I also received the usual advice: "Pray, fast, and read the Bible." Of



course that is excellent counsel, but no one told me how to pray, what to fast for, or how to study the Bible.

It seems this still happens far too often today. The lack of proper teaching and accompaniment leads many to learn spiritual practices on their own. The absence of mentoring friendships, rooted in God’s path, leaves many leaders with the problem unresolved.

Our relationship with God is the starting point of our leadership. Our vision and effectiveness will depend directly on the intensity of our search for God—on how we practice it. There are five things we must consider regarding our need for God:

WHEN?	David sought and praised God in the morning (Psalms 5:3; 59:16; 63:1; 88:13; 90:14; 119:147; 143:8). Jesus rose very early to pray (Mark 1:35).
HOW?	In leadership everything is relationship, as with the teacher and disciple or the shepherd and the sheep. It is about cultivating a faithful, steady, and growing friendship with God.
WHY?	Gifts and talents help, but they do not replace the Source. No one gives what he does not have: either we live from God or we live from the world; either we walk by His Word or we walk by our emotions.
WE MUST INVEST IN OUR CALLING	“To whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48). Just as an attorney or a physician stays current in their field, we must remain connected to what God is doing.
BECAUSE WE DO NOT WRESTLE AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD	This is a spiritual battle. The supernatural realm is real and active (Ephesians 6:12). If those who practice the occult fast and pray regularly, how much more should we—who serve Almighty God—do so, to remain connected with Him and to intercede against the powers and principalities that seek to rule our cities and destroy our churches!



Here is the issue all this raises: if not to minister in the power of the Spirit, why were we anointed? The anointing is not adornment; it is enablement, it is calling; and to fulfill that calling we need a living connection with God, for without it ministry becomes a merely human enterprise.

If we do not seek God and are not filled with His power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), our labor becomes ineffective. The Gospel without power reduces to philosophy. Ministry without the Spirit becomes manipulation. The difference between the merely religious and the truly spiritual is one: the power of God.

No matter how much we “declare,” plan, preach, or move: without the Spirit of God, there is no power (1 Corinthians 2:4–5); and without power, like Nadab and Abihu, we end up offering “strange fire” that only produces smoke (Leviticus 10:1–2). Our God is not smoke—He is a consuming fire; He is power and life (Hebrews 12:29). So either we follow this calling, or we leave it. No half measures. If you have not received this calling, it is best that you not force yourself into ministry, because ministry carries a high price: the constant search for God.

3. We must return to the beginning

If our relationship with God is suffering, then we need to fall in love again, so to speak, with our calling. Seeking God consists in having a fresh encounter with Him every day. Some questions we, as leaders, should ask ourselves often:

- Why am I here?
- Who sent me?
- Is it by divine commissioning that I am in this place?
- Am I doing what God wants?
- Am I making a difference?

Being a spiritual leader in the church is more like a marriage than a business because it demands covenant, faithfulness, and care. Congregations cannot prosper without the pastor’s love and care. Sheep grow restless without an attentive shepherd. William Willimon said: “People are ready for a voice that gives them something meaningful to live and die for.”



The issue is not to choose between usefulness, ease, fruit, opportunity, or satisfaction, but from where we serve. A fruitful ministry does not depend on ideal conditions, but on intimacy with Christ. True satisfaction is born of walking with God. Therefore, we must view our calling from His perspective and not through the lens of comfort or affirmation.

Sometimes opportunity and joy coincide in the same assignment; other times, the most fruitful fields are also the most demanding. In any case, the essential thing is not our comfort nor circumstantial happiness, but the faithfulness that produces impact.

4. United with God

Being united with God in a holy cause makes every leader a powerful instrument of righteousness in any setting. A relationship with God will help us see that the task before us demands a vigorous confidence that the Gospel is the only answer to the moral disaster society faces. Longing for an easy assignment in a pastor is as incongruent as a missionary preferring a field already widely reached over one where Christ has not been announced. Ministry health requires seeing our reality through God's eyes.

Our sense of fulfillment cannot depend on applause, roles, or results: it is cultivated in His presence. It is an inner work—of grace and discipline—to which anyone can dispose himself. No one can give meaning to our ministry for us; God defines it with His calling and we embrace it with faithfulness.

We need a spiritual revolution—the Spirit's work—that cleans the well of immorality that is choking us. It is urgent to intercede for an awakening and to preach the Gospel again with supernatural anointing. The approval of those we serve can move us, but it can also deceive us: they often assume we preach better than we preach, that we pray more than we pray, and that we study more than we study. They frequently attribute to us a stature we know we do not have.

Let this awareness lead us, not to complacency or discouragement, but to brokenness, dependence on God, and the renewal of our disciplines.

In this bewildering time in history, we are needed more than ever as competent ambassadors, courageous prophets, and perceptive envoys of the eternal Gospel. Times like these require that we devoutly demonstrate Christ's message in our own life. Do you remember the moment when God asked you to fulfill impossible dreams in partnership with Him?



5. Identity and integrity of the leader

5.1. Focus and identity

Love for Christ keeps us centered on what truly matters. Every ministerial calling is born and bears lasting fruit from a personal relationship between God and the leader. Leaders need to know who they are—or be persuaded of it—because credibility matters: a life centered in Christ helps the church believe that holiness and integrity are possible and desirable. Heart-alignment is essential for the flow of grace. We are instruments in God’s hands. God uses people—and especially leaders—as His instruments in the church.

5.2. Code of personal purity

We propose that each one affirm before God the following code of purity:

- I will be fair, trustworthy, and conscientious in my relationships with my family, congregation, community, leadership peers, and in faith. I will remember who I was when the Lord called me to His sacred service.
- I will adopt the apostle Paul’s teaching as the standard: “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.” (Ephesians 5:3).
- I will live by the humble standards of Jesus found in the New Testament.
- I will obey the law and do good whenever it is within my power.
- I will resist the temptations of money, sex, and power that come to every leader, and I will correct promptly if I fail in any of these matters.

5.3. A necessary self-evaluation

1. Does my leadership flow from a life sustained by prayer and the Word?
2. Is my ministry consistent with what I truly believe God wants my life to be?
3. Is there a gap between my beliefs and the quality of my teaching and leadership?
4. Do I tell half-truths or exaggerate my achievements?
5. Do I deceive myself (self-deception)?
6. Do I accept my part in the failures of life and of the church?



7. Do the people I lead consider me unquestionably trustworthy?
8. Is the church's handling of money completely transparent?
9. Is the use of my time ethically sound?
10. Do I flirt with potentially destructive relationships?
11. Is my marriage as pleasant and satisfying as God intended?
12. Do my spouse and children have to compete with my ministry?

We must ask the Lord to make us faithful to the priorities of the Kingdom. May He use our gifts for His glory, our skills for His people, and our strength for His service.

6. Connected to the Source

Being connected to the Vine is indispensable for producing anything that truly matters. Attempting to do ministry without God's power is madness. Personal intimacy with Christ is our essential source: devotion to God is the fertile soil where ministry takes root and grows to maturity.

For lasting satisfaction, the leader must accept his inexperience, his weaknesses, and the toxic need to be perfect. We were not called to be "religious robots," but compassionate leaders.

The ability to preach, biblical/theological knowledge, or even ministerial experience are not enough. Handling sacred things or communicating deep ideas does not make us holy. Competently leading events, preaching, or teaching does not equal godliness.

For soul health, the leader must draw on the rich resources of prayer, Scripture, and the spiritual disciplines. Personal spiritual growth is essential for any leader seeking lasting satisfaction and a fruitful ministry.

Spiritual well-being requires more than praying louder or longer: the goal is to find spiritual nourishment in every expression of devotion. On the Day of Judgment we will not be asked how much we read, but what we did; not how eloquently we spoke, but how holily we lived. Prayer can change our ministry forever. Pray: "Lord, search me, break me, stretch me, guide me, use me."



Not everything is spiritual attack. Many of our struggles are born of a neglected prayer life, self-sufficiency, or pride. God’s holy standards apply equally to laypeople and leaders. No one is greater than his prayer life.

Vision and passion are requirements for a fruitful Christian life, and both are born and sustained in a deep life of prayer.

7. Practical considerations

The following are things spiritual and at the same time practical that we must consider when entering the powerful place of prayer:

SET NON-NEGOTIABLE PRAYER TIMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a time that suits you and works with your daily rhythm. • Treat it like a leadership meeting—it is sacred. • It is fine to do it alone. Jesus often prayed in solitude (Luke 5:16).
LEAD FROM THE SECRET PLACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you model will multiply in your ministry and leadership (Matthew 6:6). • Let prayer guide decisions, not merely react to crises. • Public authority must be backed by private intimacy with God.
MAINTAIN A PRAYER LIFE INFUSED WITH FASTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fasting increases spiritual sensitivity and breaks resistance. • Consider weekly or monthly fasting accompanied by prayer.
PRAY AND DECLARE THE WORD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Scriptures as weapon and foundation (Ephesians 6:17). • Declare a word—spiritual promises and decrees—over your leadership, your church, your region, and God’s calling on you.
PRAYER IS COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is two-way. • Speak with God, but also make space for God to speak to you.

Forming a routine is always costly, but this is urgent, not merely important. If we treat prayer as merely “important,” it will get lost among other “important” things. Priorities do not seek balance: they put first what matters most. Reorder whatever is necessary.



Without a deep well of prayer, spiritual authority becomes hollow. Prayer is your lifeline and your source of power; consistency must be the norm. I once saw a sign in a church that said: “A week without prayer makes you weak.”

8. Conclusion

What rules our hearts controls our ministries. Very often, people live with the following priorities:

- Me
- Work
- Relationships
- God

God is not synonymous with ministry. Too often we put ministry first and God afterward. How much time do you devote to prayer and the Word—not to prepare a message, but to grow? The first commandment is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37).

We need clear principles and good stewardship of time. The leader’s most important activity is prayer. Without the Holy Spirit we can lead, but not shepherd spiritually. Prayer sets us apart, aligns us, and consecrates us.

At times the leader must withdraw from people, pray, and wait for the Lord’s work. Being a leader does not mean we stop growing; being a praying leader makes you into the person God called you to be and enables you to do what He called you to do.

9. Self-evaluation questions

These questions are designed to help you examine your spiritual habits, your priorities as a leader, and your relationship with God. Answer them honestly and prayerfully.

Sección 1: Tu estilo de vida y prioridades

1. What does your current daily schedule say about your relationship with God?

- God is my highest priority



- God is one of many priorities
 - I include God when I can
 - I rarely spend time with God intentionally
2. How often do you set apart intentional time for prayer and the Word (not for ministry, but for your own growth)?
- Daily
 - Several times a week
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
3. When challenges arise, what do you usually do first?
- Seek God in prayer
 - Ask others for counsel
 - Try to handle it alone
 - Avoid it or feel overwhelmed
4. What governs your schedule the most right now?
- My personal goals
 - My ministry responsibilities
 - My relationship with God
 - Others' expectations

Section 2: Your relationship with God

1. How would you describe your current relationship with God?
- Growing and deepening
 - Stable, but not growing
 - Distant or dry
 - Uncertain or inconsistent



2. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice consistently? Check all that apply.

- Personal prayer
- Bible reading/study
- Fasting
- Listening to God (stillness, journaling, etc.)
- Worship and thanksgiving
- None consistently

3. What does this spiritual discipline look like in your life? Write your answer:

4. When you lead others in ministry, family, or work, out of what does your leadership flow?

- Time spent in God's presence
- Knowledge and past experiences
- Pressure and obligation
- Desire to please people

5. What does "being connected to the Source" look like in your daily life? How much time do you devote to that connection? Write your answer:

Section 3: Commitment and growth

1. What barriers keep you from prioritizing time with God? Check all that apply.

- Busyness and distractions



- Ministry demands
- Lack of discipline
- Emotional or spiritual fatigue
- Not knowing where to start

2. What is one habit or adjustment you sense God is calling you to make to deepen your relationship with Him? How will this habit break those barriers?

3. In what ways do you sense God inviting you to grow as a spiritual leader right now?

4. Identify something God has asked you to do that you have not yet begun to do.

5. Write a personal prayer or commitment based on this reflection:



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bounds, E. M. *Power Through Prayer*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009.
- Ravenhill, Leonard. *Why Revival Tarries*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1959.
- Ravenhill, Leonard. *Por qué no llega el avivamiento*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Peniel, 2013.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life. Updated ed.* Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014.
- Willimon, William H. "Preaching to the Disinclined." *Christianity Today*, May 1, 2004. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/may/7.42.html>



Chapter 11 – Relationship with the Word

Healthy leadership that is renewed by the Word of God

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (Genesis 1:1–3)

1. Introduction

A healthy spiritual leadership must be constantly nourished and strengthened by the Word of God. This chapter explains in detail how sound church leadership is rooted in a living, intimate relationship with the Word of God in its three expressions:

- Manifested Word
- Written Word
- Spoken Word

The Word of God—which is His very Spirit—manifests His presence and reveals Himself to those who hear, offering us clear instructions and tracing the specific direction in which God wants us to advance. We could address various aspects of our relationship with the Word of God, but here we will focus on the chapter’s central point: how to walk with God in order to receive precise, detailed instructions that allow us to implement, successfully, strategies that maximize the use of our time and resources.

2. The Manifested Word

2.1. The origin of everything

God’s manifested Word is His active presence; His revelation. It brings light and direction to leaders and followers. Genesis 1:1a declares: “In the beginning God created...” We do not know when that beginning was. But we do know that everything began with God creating; that He was present at the origin of all that exists, both visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16). The apostle John adds that the beginning of all things is tied to the power of God’s manifested Word: “In the beginning was the Word... All things were made through Him...” (John 1:1, 3).



2.2. The Word is light

The creative act is, in reality, God revealing His will. That is the Word: revelation and light. Thus we understand Genesis 1:3: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” This does not refer to the sun, the moon, or the stars —created only on the fourth day— but to the establishment of revelation or spiritual light as the prelude to everything God would do. In the same way, every effective ministry or leadership initiative begins with God’s revelation; with light that is not mere intellectual understanding, but spiritual illumination that establishes knowledge of what is to come.

2.3. Walking in the Word

In Genesis 5:24 we read: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Besides foreshadowing the Rapture of the Church, this passage teaches us the call to an intimate walk with God —something that pleases Him. Likewise, Exodus 33:11 affirms that “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend,” a sign of closeness that included direct revelation and concrete divine instructions to lead Israel’s exodus. Thus, walking intimately with God predisposes us to receive His Word clearly; and the effectiveness of our leadership depends on that clarity to guide followers toward the right vision and to walk until that vision becomes reality.

2.4. The Word in us

The Gospel of John teaches us that the divine plan is fulfilled only through Christ, the incarnate Word, who with His Spirit brought new revelation to humanity. John 1:4: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The light, the creative word, became flesh; which alludes not only to the day He would be among us, but also to His being in us, to work through us in all things. John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” John 14:17: “...for He dwells with you and will be in you.” Ephesians 4:6: “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” John 15:5: “...for without Me you can do nothing.”

2.5. The Word and the divine plan

To begin Israel’s deliverance from Egypt —after more than 400 years of waiting— Moses had to go up to the “mountain of God” (Exodus 3:1–2) and experience God’s presence. There, on the mountain, in intimacy, God revealed His plan.



Leaders like Moses or Enoch experienced God’s manifested presence because they prioritized their relationship with Him above results. Experiencing God’s presence is to interact with Him genuinely, despite our many shortcomings. And it is in that interaction that leaders develop true intimacy with God.

Healthy leadership arises from continually seeking —before His hand— God’s face. The result of entering God’s presence is that He gives us a plan that describes His will for our ministry. An important recommendation: small beginnings matter. Although they often seem insignificant, good results are born of modest starts that must not be underestimated:

“For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” (Zechariah 4:10) Let us remember: God rejoices not only in the final result but in faithfulness to the process.

2.6. The manifested Word and our habits

The manifested Word dwelling in a healthy leader is externalized or demonstrated in concrete practices, in healthy habits. Let us consider a few:

- **PRIORITIZE GOD’S PRESENCE:** set apart time for solitude and worship, not only for planning. Always go to the Source who provides what is necessary for the task. “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)
- **AVOID MICROMANAGEMENT,** remembering where true ministerial success comes from. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” (Psalm 127:1a) “...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)
- **PERSEVERE IN THE WORK** with the conviction that it is God who gives the increase. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6–7)



- **STAY SENSITIVE TO DIVINE INITIATIVES:** like Moses before the burning bush, recognize God’s “interruptions” in your routine, bearing in mind that these are often invitations to enter His greater plan.
- **AND REMEMBER THIS PRACTICAL RULE:** “Great things are small things done correctly, multiplied many times.”

3. The Written Word

3.1. In our heart

In the wilderness, Moses went up Mount Sinai to have an encounter with God. Exodus 31:18: “And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” This verse teaches us three things:

- God determined what Moses should receive from Him.
- God determined when He had finished speaking with Moses.
- “The finger of God” represents His supernatural power over the natural world and over human nature.

God wrote His Word on inert stone tablets, figuratively anticipating how He would write His Word on the inert heart of men, to make them His children. God’s intention is not simply to impose external rules, but also to write His Word on our hearts, making us living letters to the world: “Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.” (2 Corinthians 3:3)

3.2. The Word is vital

The written Word of God is His very breath. The dust from which Adam was formed had no life until “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7). The written Word is Spirit; it is God’s inspired revelation that establishes authority, principles, and boundaries for leadership and daily life. God has put His breath of life in His Word so that, through it, we lack nothing in the work of His Kingdom.



“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

The written Word equips leaders for every good work. Sound biblical doctrine is essential for healthy leadership and church life. Without it, leaders and churches drift into error. The written Word is, therefore, vital.

3.3. Some practical applications

The written Word in the hearts of healthy leaders will be evident through practices such as the following:

- **DAILY IMMERSION:** develop the habit of reading, meditating on, and studying Scripture. Write down what God shows you at the very moment He shows it. Let that shape your way of thinking, your values, and your leadership decisions.
- **MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE:** God will not take second place to your availability for His Word. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” (Galatians 2:20)
- **WRITE THE VISION:** what He shows you by illumination has power insofar as you can—and must—convey it to your followers.
- **BELIEVE IN THE VISION:** it is necessary to establish structures/strategies before expecting God to give you the results you have foreseen. At first, such structures will seem mechanical and lifeless, but you...
- **TRUST THE PROCESS:** God is committed to making your structures/strategies fruitful so long as they are means given by His Wisdom.
- **AND REMEMBER THIS PRACTICAL RULE:** “God must give you the necessary spirit to successfully implement any structure/strategy He has indicated to you.”



4. The Spoken Word

4.1. Rhema, divine guidance

From the beginning, all things were created by the breath of the spoken Word. The spoken Word—or Rhema—is the specific, timely communication through the Spirit to guide leaders in particular situations.

Returning to the example of Moses, God showed His servant how he was to build the Tabernacle. “And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.” (Exodus 26:30). Although it is not clear whether Moses received that pattern in a vision, it becomes evident that God had given him instructions clear enough to be written down. On the Mountain of God, Moses received from God the complete blueprint of the Tabernacle.

When God speaks, what He says comes to life and begins to operate according to His spoken Word. “For the word of God is living and powerful...” (Hebrews 4:12a) “[He] upholding all things by the word of His power...” (Hebrews 1:3b)

“Word” in these texts refers to the Logos, God’s inspired Word; and also to Jesus, the Word made flesh. The Logos is unchangeable. Rhema, on the other hand, is the specific and personal word God speaks at a given moment, in a particular situation.

The Logos is what establishes us, and the Rhema is what guides us in the details. Both—Logos and Rhema—are essential and always align with each other, since God never contradicts Himself.

Healthy leaders cultivate sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, learning to recognize God’s voice—the divine Rhema—clearly distinguishing it from their own thoughts or from external influences. Familiarity with the written Word protects the leader against any false Rhema, as well as against misinterpretations and erroneous doctrines.

4.2. Putting Rhema into practice

The spoken Word present in healthy leadership will become evident by cultivating the following practices:



- **SEEK HIS FACE FIRST:** go first to God for the design of what you must build, trusting that it is His plan—not yours—that God will bring to fulfillment and success. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...” (Hebrews 12:2a).
- **CONSISTENCY OVER ACTIVITY:** guard your time with God, especially when ministry becomes demanding. Intimacy with Christ is the source of effective leadership.
- **DISAGREEMENT AMONG YOUR FOLLOWERS:** when they do not agree with the structure/strategy God has given you, teach them to ask God for understanding to avoid a divisive spirit.
- **CONTINUAL DIALOGUE:** speak with God throughout the day, not only at set times. This keeps your leadership rooted in a living relationship rather than a routine. “The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” (Luke 3:2)
- **AND REMEMBER THIS PRACTICAL RULE:** we must be familiar with the Logos (God’s inspired Word) so as not to misinterpret what we believe is a Rhema.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY AND MENTORING:** seek spiritual mentors and allow trusted members of your team to speak into your life, fostering growth and humility.

5. Conclusion

Healthy leadership in the church is not a matter of techniques only, but above all of a deep relationship with the Word of God—an intimate walk with Him. In considering the three dimensions of this great theme—Manifested Word, Written Word, and Spoken Word—we encourage you to prioritize God’s presence, immerse yourself in the Scriptures, and listen to His specific guidance. Thus you will discover God’s plan for your life, personally, in your Relationship with the Word. It will lead you to clarity, integrity, and spiritual authority. In the manifested Word, the written Word, and the spoken Word you will find the specific details of what God wants to accomplish in your life; and you will verify that everything you receive outside of it is information and nothing more.



That is the path to a leadership that not only completes tasks, but also transforms lives and families for the glory of God. Our desire is that God reveal His “manifold wisdom” (Ephesians 3:10) in your ministry, providing you with His unique plan through His Holy Word. May God clothe your ministry with the deep riches of His wisdom and knowledge (Romans 11:33). Amen.

ONLINE REFERENCES

Roberts, Mark D. Leaders and the Word of God. De Pree Center – Life for Leaders. November 6, 2018. <https://depree.org/life-for-leaders/leaders-and-the-word-of-god/>. Accessed October 6, 2025. depree.org

Andy Spurlin Ministries. God’s Words of Logos and Rhema. Andy Spurlin Ministries. n.d. <https://andyspurlinministries.org/rhema>. Accessed October 6, 2025. Andy Spurlin Ministries

Enjoy Leadership by Keeping Your Relationship With God Fresh. Pastors.com. n.d. <https://www.pastors.com/free-resources/enjoy-leadership-by-keeping-your-relationship-with-god-fresh>. Accessed October 6, 2025. pastors.com

Koch, Aaron. God Has Manifested His Word Through Preaching. Mt. Zion Lutheran Church. December 1, 2021. <https://www.mountziongreenfield.org/posts/sermon/god-has-manifested-his-word-through-preaching>. Accessed October 6, 2025. mountziongreenfield.org

Irving, Justin A. Healthy Christian Leaders Prioritize Their Relationship with God. Church Executive. November 29, 2022. <https://churchexecutive.com/archives/healthy-christian-leaders-prioritize-their-relationship-with-god>. Accessed October 6, 2025. Church Executive

Murrell, Steve. Church Leadership: What Is a Healthy Church? Steve Murrell. n.d. <https://stevemurrell.com/church-leadership-what-is-a-healthy-church>. Accessed October 6, 2025.



Chapter 12 – Winning at Home

Keys to cultivating a healthy pastoral family

Exodus 18:6: “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.”

1. Introduction

1.1. A good decision

Someone once said, “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.” These words ring true for those of us who serve as pastors or leaders in the church. Some years ago, this old saying took on a deeply personal meaning. I found myself at a crossroads, as ministry opportunities and family obligations grew at a pace that felt impossible to manage without something losing out. Invitations to preach came by the handful, the church was thriving, and I even had the chance to run for another term as president of the National Messengers of Peace.

For months, I wrestled with the decision to run or withdraw my name. Deep down, I knew something had to give. My wife was patient and understanding, but I could see the concern in her eyes. My children were growing up fast and, although I was “present” for important moments, I wasn’t really present. Even when I silenced my phone notifications, my mind didn’t easily change focus. Silencing the phone didn’t silence my thoughts.

One day I was driving a pastor friend to the airport when he noticed the indecision on my face and gave me a word of wisdom that confirmed what I already felt: it was time to let go of the idea of a broader ministerial platform and focus fully on my calling as a husband and father. His words hit me like a cold splash of water.

Looking in the rearview mirror, I saw my wife’s eyes filled with tears. That sealed the decision. In that instant, I realized I was trying to pastor the world while losing influence in my own living room. My son especially was reaching an age when he needed a fully engaged father—present not only in the house, but in his world and in his ear. It was time to reevaluate what success really meant.



I understood that the size of the platform didn't matter as much as the strength of the dining table; that it didn't matter how many sermons I preached if my wife still felt loved and if my children still saw me as their hero at home. That moment was a turning point for me, not only as a minister, but as a man.

A few days after receiving that pastor's wise counsel, I submitted a letter to the General Board informing them that, at the end of that term, at the next convention, I would not seek reelection. That turned out to be one of the best decisions I have made.

1.2. Keeping balance

A similar dilemma occurred in the life of Moses—though on a much larger scale—when he tried to save the world while losing his own family in the process. Picture the scene: Moses, fresh from his encounter with the burning bush, is on a mission to deliver Israel.

He has seen God's power firsthand. The plagues are looming. Pharaoh hardens his heart. The future of a nation is at stake. But before Moses can reach Egypt, he faces a deadly crisis in his own home.

Exodus 4:24–26 recounts a chilling moment when God sought to kill Moses because he had neglected to circumcise his son—leaving that burden to his wife, Zipporah. This was a turning point. Somewhere between God's call and family responsibilities, Moses lost his balance.

Sound familiar? How many pastors and leaders have felt overwhelmed by ministry demands while their families bear the consequences of their neglect? How many marriages have suffered under the weight of saving others while losing ground at home?

Thank God, Moses' story doesn't end in tragedy. And neither does yours have to. But that will depend, to a great extent, on how you respond to God's grace. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, later brought this broken family back together (Exodus 18) and, in doing so, illustrated a powerful truth: if we want to win and lead God's people well, we must first win at home.

In this chapter we will explore Moses' journey as a husband and father, drawing out four key principles every pastor and leader must embrace to win at home and cultivate a healthy relationship with spouse and children. By the end of this study, you will be able to:



1. RECOGNIZE the warning signs of a home in crisis.
2. LEARN strategies to prioritize family amid ministry demands.
3. STRENGTHEN your marriage and family by adopting a team approach to ministry.
4. APPLY the wisdom of Moses' mistakes and Jethro's intervention.

2. Your first ministry is at home: family is the foundation

2.1. The foundation of healthy ministry

Being a pastor is a calling, not a career. It is completely different from any other vocation, because our task is to help people reach Heaven. This implies feeding, caring for, and protecting the flock God has placed under our care. No other job on earth carries such responsibility and, rightly so, one day we will give an account to the Lord. However, the weight of this calling can create tension with an even greater responsibility—the one we have toward our spouse and children. Moses learned this lesson the hard way. He learned, through conflict and pain, that before standing before Pharaoh he had to stand in his home as a husband and father.

The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reminds us that spiritual leadership begins at home: “(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:5). The message is clear: a healthy marriage and family are the foundation of a healthy ministry. We must resist the tendency to view our families as secondary to our calling or, worse, as obstacles to fulfilling it. Instead, we must embrace the truth that our families are an integral part of our spiritual assignments. I believe this principle has two important branches.

2.2. The two branches of family-first ministry

First, we must include our families in the journey of our calling. Let them see what God is doing. Involve them in ministry moments and make them feel part of the mission. Of course, it is wise to protect our children from the harsh and painful realities of church leadership, especially when they are still small and impressionable.



But there is a big difference between protecting them from unnecessary burdens and compartmentalizing our lives so much that they feel excluded. Our families should never feel like spectators of our ministry—they should feel like partners in it.

The second branch of this principle is to balance life at church and at home by doing the ordinary things that strengthen families: spending time together, having fun, and connecting daily. Sometimes the most spiritual thing a pastor can do is laugh with his children or go on a date with his wife. What I am about to write may be the most moving line in this entire chapter.

Here it is: a church can find another pastor, but your wife has only one husband, and your children have only one father. You can be replaced at church, but you cannot be replaced at home. If you don't preach this Sunday, someone else will stand behind the pulpit. But if you don't go to your child's game or recital, no one can take your place.

Branch	Perspective	Truth	Action Steps
<p>1. INVOLVE YOUR FAMILY IN THE JOURNEY</p>	<p>Ministry should include, not exclude, your spouse and children. They should feel like partners, not spectators.</p>	<p>Inclusion fosters unity and prevents resentment. When your family feels excluded, they may come to see ministry as a threat to closeness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share testimonies and answered prayers with your family. • Invite your wife into ministry conversations. • Allow your children to participate in safe, meaningful ways (e.g., helping prepare for the service).
<p>2. BALANCE LIFE AT CHURCH AND AT HOME</p>	<p>Ordinary moments—laughing together, sharing meals, spending time as a family—build spiritual strength.</p>	<p>What happens at home is the most honest reflection of your leadership. Neglect at home weakens your public message.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule weekly family nights and protect them. • Set regular one-on-one time with each child. • Plan consistent date nights with your wife.



3. Small things can become big problems

3.1. The cost of overlooking the small

You've perhaps heard the phrase "the devil is in the details," which basically means that small or seemingly insignificant things can become larger problems when left unattended. This was especially true for Moses, who did not circumcise his son. It might seem a minor omission, but in God's eyes it was a serious breach of covenant. Circumcision was not only a rite; it was a sign of belonging to God's covenant people. Moses knew this, but evidently he was so busy—so focused on delivering Israel—that he perhaps assumed God would overlook that detail or that it wasn't as important compared to his greater mission. He was wrong, and he discovered it the day God appeared to take his life for it.

It is shocking to think that such a small act of negligence became a grave crisis within Moses' family. His failure not only endangered his life, but also caused a rupture between him and his wife. Zipporah was forced to intervene and resolve the issue by performing this emergency circumcision herself. She saved her husband, risking her own life in the process. The trauma of the moment surfaced when she cried out, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" (Exodus 4:25). Zipporah was not only disturbed by the act, but also hurt with Moses for not being the man her family needed. She blamed him for leaving the burden to her—physically and emotionally.

3.2. Watch the small cracks

When home care is sacrificed to public ministry, it's not only dangerous—it can be potentially disqualifying. Moses barely escaped total catastrophe. We must learn from this example by seriously examining the small things we may be neglecting at home. Even if our omissions don't carry the same gravity as Moses', they are risks we cannot afford. As pastors and leaders, we are often so focused on shepherding others that we overlook subtle signs in our own home—missed family dinners, conversations that never happen, unexpressed hurts, emotional distance, or a child's silent struggle. What begins as a slight disconnection in the family can grow into resentment, frustration, or even separation—just as it did, at least temporarily, between Moses and Zipporah.



When you're exhausted by ministry demands, you're tempted to neglect the small things. It's easy to assume those minor matters will resolve themselves or disappear over time, but that is rarely the case. Small things can accumulate until they become major crises. Like tiny leaks in a dam, small problems may seem harmless until pressure builds and they burst, causing lasting or even irreversible damage. Don't let a drip become a flood.

Warning	Perspective	Truth	Action Steps
<p>NEGLECTING SMALL THINGS CAN DAMAGE YOUR HOME AND YOUR MINISTRY.</p>	<p>What looks insignificant can become a big problem if ignored. Small cracks often lead to relational collapse.</p>	<p>When care for the home is sacrificed on the altar of public ministry, the cost can be spiritual, emotional, and relational loss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to small daily moments with your spouse and children. • Notice emotional or behavioral changes and address them promptly. • Don't wait for a crisis—invest consistently in your relationships.

4. Ministry is a team effort: include your wife

4.1. Communication and inclusion prevent wounds

Zipporah was not just a spectator in Moses' ministry; she was an active participant in his life and calling. She walked alongside him and even saved his life when he neglected a crucial responsibility. However, that failure revealed a deeper issue: Moses had, unintentionally, placed his wife in a role she was left to fulfill alone—a role that was not hers. It seems what most bothered Zipporah about this incident was not so much the shock of having to circumcise her son, but being caught off guard. Likely what hurt her most was that Moses had not truly prepared his family for the weight of his calling. Had these matters been discussed earlier in their marriage, she might have encouraged him, supported him, and even reminded him of his responsibility.



Instead, she was forced to act in the moment—alone, unprepared, and overwhelmed. We can only speculate how Zipporah felt, but any wife placed in that situation would likely feel the same—overborne by what was happening, sidelined, relegated.

Can you recall a time when your wife didn't seem as engaged with your ministry—when she felt overlooked, disconnected, or excluded in some way? Perhaps she smiled in public but struggled in private, unsure exactly what her place was within the calling that consumes so much of your life.

Here's what I've discovered about that. I am more effective when my wife is equally committed—not necessarily in the same roles, but with the same level of devotion and a shared vision. When your wife is not involved in some way, she may eventually begin to feel she is competing with the church for your attention. And if that happens, it won't be long before she starts trying to pull you away from ministry—not because she despises it, but because that ministry is pulling you away from her.

4.2. Ministry is done as a team

If you are a pastor like me, you know your wife probably won't be with you behind the pulpit every Sunday—and that's fine. But even if she doesn't preach by your side, she can certainly walk with you in many meaningful ways: accompanying you on assignments, helping pray for others, offering counsel, or ministering through her own gifts.

Perhaps one of the richest opportunities to adopt a true team approach to ministry is in the context of a cell group or home group. In that environment, you and your wife can complement each other naturally as you minister together at home.

A powerful example of a couple focused on ministry is Aquila and Priscilla. Introduced in Acts 18, they were not only spouses but also mission partners. Their home became a center of ministry and discipleship. Paul even greets “the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:5), showing that they regularly opened their home for ministry. Together they discipled others—among them Apollos—and demonstrated that the Lord's work was not limited to the pulpit, but could flourish in a small group at home.



Challenge	Perspective	Truth	Action Steps
<p>MINISTRY WITHOUT MUTUAL PARTICIPATION BREEDS DISCONNECTIO N AND TENSION IN MARRIAGE.</p>	<p>Your wife may not be behind the pulpit, but she must be at your side in ministry. Partnership in the calling fosters unity and satisfaction.</p>	<p>When your wife is excluded, she may feel she is competing with the church. A shared vision prevents division.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate openly about your calling and challenges. • Include her input in ministry and family decisions. • Serve together in a space like a small group or home-based ministry.

5. You need a Jethro in your life: receive his counsel

5.1. A timely intervention

Moses is one of the most iconic figures in Scripture. He was a legendary leader who faced Pharaoh, raised his rod over the Red Sea, went up Mount Sinai, carried the tablets of the Ten Commandments, spoke face to face with God, and, ultimately, bore the weight of an entire nation on his shoulders.

Moses was in a unique category, but even with all his anointing and authority, he needed an outside voice to help him navigate the complex paths of life and leadership. That voice was not an angel, a prophet, or a king; it was a Midianite priest named Jethro —Moses’ father-in-law.

Imagine this: Moses was already center stage, leading a national movement with signs and wonders, when Jethro reappeared in his life —not to applaud his achievements, but to show him, lovingly, that his personal life was out of order. While the people admired him, Jethro was concerned. He winced while the Hebrews celebrated.

He watched from a distance and saw something others did not: a man saving a nation but on the verge of losing his family. Jethro knew things about Moses that the public did not. He saw the dysfunction in his private world. He saw a wife who needed her husband and a grandson who needed his father.

So Jethro gathered his daughter and her family, hoping to reunite them with Moses. He didn't come with reproach or resentment, but with restoration in his heart. When they finally arrived, the old priest looked his son-in-law in the eyes and spoke words that weighed more than a thousand sermons: "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her" (Exodus 18:6). Read between the lines: this was not a mere introduction; it was an intervention.

5.2. Counsel that can prevent burnout

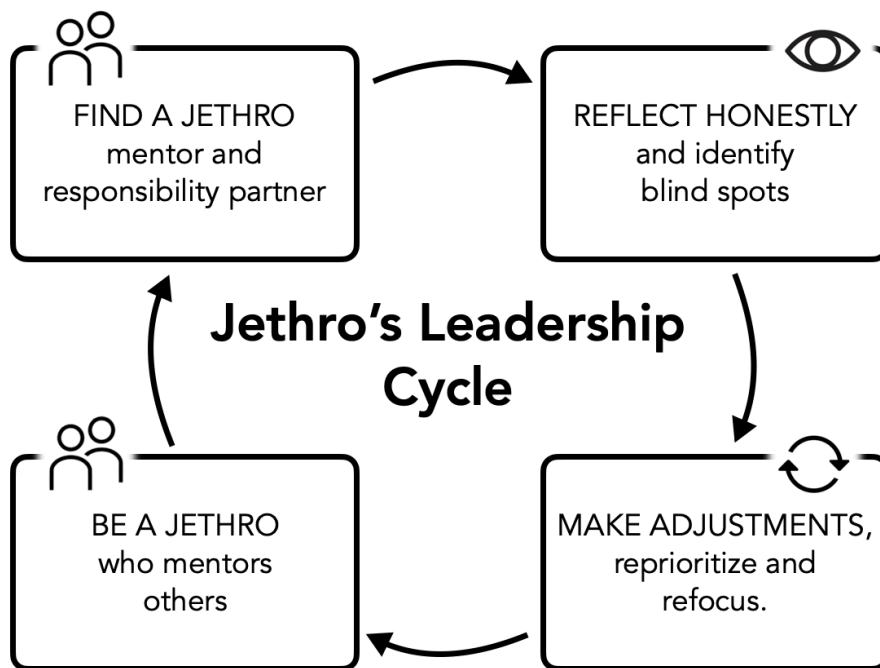
We all need a Jethro—an elder or mentor who cares less about our platform and more about our priorities. Someone truly interested in our well-being and our family's health. Thank God, He places in our lives men with Jethro's spirit, anointed to counsel us in matters that could affect our family and our future.

A Jethro doesn't come to compete with your calling; he comes to ensure your calling does not invalidate your covenant. Moreover, a Jethro can offer you wisdom about your leadership. Just as he helped Moses restructure a model that was wearing him out, a Jethro can help you lead more effectively and avoid ministry burnout.

As I write this, I can think of at least three men—including my father—who have Jethro's spirit and full permission to speak into my life freely. I thank God for them. But I also recognize I must be more intentional about seeking their counsel in advance, instead of waiting for them to show up with a concerned look while my priorities are out of order.

Let's see how that principle works in Jethro's leadership cycle represented in this outline:





6. Conclusion

It is crucial to remember that your official role in ministry will, sooner or later, come to an end. Titles change, churches go through transitions, and new leaders emerge. One day you will retire. And when that day comes, do you know who will stand by your side? Not the crowds or committees, but your family. After you preach your last sermon, officiate your last wedding or funeral, or make your last decision as a leader, the people you will most want by your side will be your wife, your children, and your grandchildren.

But here is the question: Will they still be there? Allow me to suggest —humbly— that the decisions you are making today —how you invest your time, where you put your energy, and what priorities you set— are already answering that question. If you have drifted from what truly matters, it is not too late to begin correcting course.

I leave you with this thought: Noah preached to the world, but in the end, only his family entered the ark. That is not failure; that is success. He didn't win the crowd, but he won his household. I do not think Noah would have been satisfied with the opposite scenario —winning the world but losing his family. Dear pastor, let us win at home. In God's eyes, that is the legacy that matters most.



7. Self-evaluation questions

1. Does my weekly schedule reflect that my first ministry is my family?
2. Does my wife feel loved and heard above public ministry?
3. Is my wife a partner —and not a spectator— in my ministerial calling?
4. Do I identify and resolve “details” at home before they become cracks?
5. Do I have a Jethro/mentor with permission to speak truth to me, and did I consult him in the last month?
6. Do I maintain healthy boundaries between church and home—day off, phone-free hours, uninterrupted dinners?
7. Am I truly present at home (full attention), not just physically?
8. Do I keep the small promises I make at home—schedules, commitments with the kids?
9. Do my children know they are not competing with the church for my attention? What evidence do I have that this is so?
10. Have I recently chosen the dinner table over the platform? What was the concrete decision?
11. Do I integrate my family into natural ministry spaces (cell group, hospitality, prayer) without placing undue burdens on them?
12. If my formal role ended today, would my wife and children be close to me with gratitude and peace? What indicators do I see?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Ray S. *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Blackaby, Henry, and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001.



- Briscoe, Stuart, and Jill Briscoe. *Married for Ministry: The Husband and Wife Team in Christian Service*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1986.
- Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 1995.
- Clinton, J. Robert, and Paul Leavenworth. *The Making of a Leader*. Miami, FL: Editorial Unilit, 2008.
- Dobson, James. *Focus on the Family: What Matters Most*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2003.
- McIntosh, Gary L., and Samuel D. Rima. *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.
- Ortberg, John. *Soul Keeping: Caring For the Most Important Part of You*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *The Pastor: A Memoir*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Yancey, Philip. *The Bible Jesus Read: Why the Old Testament Matters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.



Chapter 13 – Ministerial Ethics

Living and modeling a biblical ministerial ethic

1 Timothy 4:6–16: “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach. ¹² Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Introduction

Paul’s relationship with young Timothy shows the care and love he felt for this young pastor/minister. In his letter, Paul uses terms such as “my son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2), “Timothy, my son, I give you this command” (1 Timothy 1:18), and “you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (1 Timothy 4:6).

When studying the importance of ministerial ethics, we must consider how a minister in the Apostolic Assembly is formed, taught, and trained. God’s Word has much to say on this topic and, of course, we have our ministerial training courses that extend over four years through our excellent educational program, IABC (Internacional Apostolic Biblical College).



In recent decades, however, one of the most challenging aspects has been the mentor–student relationship. Ethics is transmitted more by example than by theoretical teaching. All young ministers and deacons must serve under their local pastor’s leadership, in the context of the local church. This relationship must be fully developed and cultivated to produce men who will have a lasting ministry at whatever level they serve.

We all know young leaders —and also more experienced ones— who did not live according to the ethics of ministerial leadership, and this has caused pain and disappointment for many within the church. As a church, we must begin the process of successfully equipping men who will become the best pastors, ministers, deacons, and cell group leaders, under the highest code of ethics in every aspect of their leadership.

This lesson will cover six areas of ministerial ethics that are crucial for every apostolic leader’s life.

1. Your mentoring relationships

1 Timothy 4:6: “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.” Apostolic leaders —bishops and pastors— must prepare the next generation of leaders. A great leader once said, “I don’t want to be the last apostolic in my family.” That statement resonated in my heart about 24 years ago, and since then it has been the model for my ministry. Our work as pastors is to develop, equip, guide, and mentor younger leaders to do the work of the ministry —a code of ethics that includes the following aspects:

1.1. Explain the difference between truth and deception

Paul charges Timothy to teach the church that there will be false teachers who will depart from the truth, follow deceiving spirits, and teach doctrines of demons. The mentor must make sure his young leader stays close to him, communicating and teaching sound doctrine at every level. He must not allow him to fall quickly for any preaching or teaching circulating, for example, on social media (YouTube, Instagram, etc.). He must ensure the young leader tests every spirit and stands firm on his biblical foundation.



1.2. Be a servant worthy of Christ Jesus

The word “servant” here is *doulos* —a slave, one who has no rights, who has renounced his rights, and who serves selflessly. The idea is that the young leader should serve “without expectations.” For some leaders, the code of ethics has turned into “unrealistic expectations.” This style of leadership asks: “What’s in it for me?” or “How will this benefit my ministry or leadership?” The mentor must make sure from the outset that all his young leaders understand that service is a lifelong journey that never ends. The ethic of all apostolic leaders is to be found as servants worthy of God.

1.3. Follow good teaching

Healthy leaders use the mentoring relationship to invest in the younger generation. They pour into the hearts of young and impressionable leaders, taking time to teach doctrine, values, moral principles, and the Word of God. I can always discern —by listening to an experienced leader or a new one, and by observing his conduct— whether he was well taught. Teaching is a lifelong process. Healthy leaders never become “unteachable”; rather, they are always seeking new ways to learn and to model a Christian ethic that inspires others to follow them. Good learners become good teachers, and good teachers are worthy of being followed.

2. Manage your time well

1 Timothy 4:7: “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.”

Healthy leaders know how to steward their resources well. One of the most important resources is time. If we surveyed the most successful pastors and leaders and asked them to show us their calendar and how they manage their time, we would find that they value every minute of the day. Paul advises young Timothy not to waste a minute on discussions that have no eternal value. The challenge for Timothy was to avoid distractions —perhaps one of the greatest challenges leaders face in this postmodern world with so many voices pulling apostolic leaders away from their God-given focus.



2.1. Guidelines for good time management

Within the parameters of the Strategy of Jesus —especially Evangelism and Discipleship as developed in the first two sections of the book— the leader must steward his time wisely to focus on implementation, follow-up, and training more leaders. Helpful guidelines include:

- **PLAN:** Develop a detailed schedule, allocate time for tasks, and create a plan for the day, week, or month.
- **PRIORITIZE:** Identify the most important tasks and focus on them first.
PREPARE: Ensure you have everything you need—materials, tools, and a suitable workspace.
- **PACE YOURSELF:** Keep a steady rhythm, avoiding both rushing and procrastination. Techniques like Time Blocking or the Pomodoro Technique can help.
- **PERSIST:** Stay focused, be resilient, and do not give up when challenges arise.

2.2. Benefits of good time management

Those who practice good time-management techniques often find that they:

- Are more productive.
- Have more energy to fulfill responsibilities.
- Feel less stressed.
- Have more free time to do what they wish.
- Get more done.
- Relate more positively to others.
- Feel better about themselves (Dodd & Sundheim, 2005).

3. Your example to others

1 Timothy 4:11–12: “These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”



Every healthy apostolic leader must be “worthy of being followed.” That is, someone who inspires, motivates, and models a life of faith and honor. Although Timothy was about 30 when he began his pastoral ministry, he took the lead in Ephesus, a world center of commerce and business—prosperous, but also full of idolatry and witchcraft, dominant elements of daily life.

Paul encourages Timothy to become a godly example to believers and unbelievers alike so that the Gospel would spread throughout the region. The standard for Timothy was higher—and it should be for all leaders in the church.

Paul points out five areas to Timothy:

3.1. Be an example in what you say (communication)

Words matter. How and what we say matters. A healthy leader is a person who communicates with clarity and positivity. The simplest thing that can be said about this point is that all healthy leaders tell the truth.

Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” The ministerial code of ethics is clear here: nothing makes a leader lose credibility more than a lack of truthfulness and honesty in his words. That undermines every other area of ministry, including gifts and talents.

We have heard great messages and seen men of God used in the gifts of the Spirit (which should be a daily practice in our church), but all this can be nullified if truth is lacking in our communication with those who follow us. As mentors, we must establish this fundamental code in our ministry; failure to do so can destroy everything else and eventually we will lose influence over the new generations of leaders.

Proverbs 15:1 says: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Another important area is how we speak to others. There can be a great difference between how we speak to our superiors and how we speak to those under our authority. Be careful. We must be consistent. A healthy leader shows who he is more by how he communicates with his followers than with his superiors.



3.2. Be an example in your way of life

Healthy apostolic leadership is defined by lifestyle, not by oratory, titles, positions, years in ministry, invitations to preach, or public perception. The ethics of ministry in the Apostolic Assembly is demonstrated by the leader's daily life and practices. We must have a good balance between family and church, take care of our marriage and children, and make sure that we are first husbands and wives, fathers and mothers to our family. The leader's life is an open book, and it is important to understand the weight of that responsibility.

Having a great vision or cause is not enough for others to follow you. First you must be a better leader; people have to believe in you. That is the necessary investment if you want your vision to become reality. As John Maxwell says: "People buy into the leader first, and then the vision." Does the church believe in you? Do you give reasons for them to believe in you? Perhaps our congregations will more readily embrace the church's mission and vision when they embrace us as their leaders and believe in our godly lifestyle.

3.3. Be an example in love

People have a great capacity to detect when a leader truly loves them and cares for them. This area of healthy leadership emphasizes the importance of lasting, loving relationships within your sphere of influence. Healthy leaders do not use people—they love them. Nothing discourages a local leader more than a pastor who only speaks to him when he needs something. This is where loyalty and genuine relationships matter. The influence that Paul had over Timothy was manifested in how he viewed his young disciple: he genuinely loved him and considered him a "son in the faith." Now he encourages his young ministry colleague to do the same with others. Our responsibility as leaders is to develop a team of leaders through meaningful interactions and genuine care for their spiritual well-being.

3.4. Be an example in faith and purity

In Timothy's early years of spiritual formation, there were two key women in his development: his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. 2 Timothy 1:5 says: "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Scripture is fairly silent regarding his father, but from what we see Timothy was a man of strong faith and purity thanks to the influence of his mother and grandmother.



3.5. Be a leader of steadfast faith

Healthy leaders demonstrate a firm faith in God and do not waver before life's circumstances. One of the greatest examples a leader can give is how he handles adversity in the church. This becomes evident when the leader faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles that could divert the vision and mission, yet remains firm in his faith. All great leaders must have great faith to overcome challenges, especially those related to the church's vision and its implementation.

4. Guard your private life

1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

Paul reminds Timothy to remain faithful to what is right, both for his own good and for the good of those who hear him. Ministerial integrity and honesty are often demonstrated in our private life. Every minister or leader in the church has two active lives: his public life and his private life. In a certain sense, we can say that a leader's true integrity and honor are demonstrated in his private life. Healthy spiritual leadership includes protecting our private life and making sure we are accountable to others.

This is one of the most challenging areas of ministerial ethics. The reason is that, in many cases, ministers or leaders (bishops, pastors, ministers, and friendship-group leaders) do not have a mentoring relationship or a spiritual guide who understands the challenges they face. This can become an unaddressed, years-long struggle that generates an immense burden that no leader can bear alone.

The enemy uses this tactic to destroy any sense of vision and passion, and discouragement settles in the leader's heart. This halts the church's growth, weakens the ability to inspire others, and generates a lack of focus and purpose. That is why Paul speaks clearly about the need to take heed to oneself and to sound doctrine. The idea is to preserve yourself, that is, to keep watch over yourself in all aspects of the ministerial or leadership calling. It also means keeping a close watch, being awake, not lowering your guard, and remaining constantly alert regarding our private life.



5. Integrity in leadership

2 Corinthians 4:2: “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

This code of ethics simply teaches us that all healthy leadership must operate under the principle of integrity. One cannot lead, inspire, be worthy of being followed, implement the vision and mission of the local church, preach, teach, administer, or guide the family without integrity. The core of ministerial ethics is integrity. The urgency and importance of integrity suggest one thing to the committed heart: the need for discipline. God wants us to be men of principle.

G. K. Chesterton said: “Morality, like art, consists in drawing a line somewhere.” We must let the Word of God draw that line, not culture. The high ethic of Holy Scripture must be maintained at any cost, even if culture considers it outdated or impossible. And we must discipline ourselves, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep it.

6. Ministerial Code of Ethics / Apostolic Assembly

Recognizing our dependence on the Holy Spirit, the following standards are presented as a code of ethics to establish professional understanding, preserve dignity, maintain discipline, and promote the integrity of our chosen profession: the ministry of Jesus Christ. This code of ethics is applicable to all ministerial and leadership personnel.

Reference Scriptures:

- 1 Timothy 4:7b–16; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:1–2
- James 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5
- 1 Peter 5:1–3; Matthew 28:18–20

I covenant before God and my
colleagues in the ministry to keep this
Apostolic Assembly Ministerial Code of Ethics



6.1. My Person — I commit to:

- Strive to pray daily, read, study, and meditate on the Word of God; and maintain extended times of contemplation.
- Plan quality time with my family, recognizing my special relationship and responsibility toward them as important members of my congregation.
- Keep my body physically healthy through periodic medical exams, good nutrition, adequate rest, and planned exercise.
- Keep myself emotionally healthy through supportive relationships and available assessments.
- Seek continual growth through reading and professional education opportunities.
- Avoid lust, pornography, and sexual sin.
- Not abuse my body and avoid addictions of any kind.
- Not abuse emotionally, verbally, physically, or sexually my wife, children, or any other person.
- Seek professional help immediately when I need personal support or intervention.
- Develop accountability relationships with one or more same-sex peers.

6.2. My Profession — I commit to:

- Conduct myself consistently with my calling and commitment as a servant of God.
- Prioritize my congregation and accept additional responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the effectiveness of my local ministry.
- Use pulpit freedom responsibly, preaching with conviction and love the truth of the Word of God, acknowledging, when appropriate, the use of material prepared by others.



6.3. My Finances — I commit to:

- Be honest in my financial stewardship, pay my bills on time, and not ask for personal favors or discounts because of my ministerial position.
- Tithe and give offerings as a good steward and example for the church.

6.4. My Congregation — I commit to:

- Treat all people in the congregation with the same love and concern, ministering impartially and avoiding divisive behaviors.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, recognizing the right to form close friendships within the congregation.
- Trust lay leadership, assisting in their training and encouraging their creativity.
- Lead the church in a positive direction, remaining open to constructive criticism and suggestions that strengthen our shared ministry.

6.5. My Colleagues — I commit to:

- Maintain supportive, caring, and accountable relationships with my colleagues in the ministry.
- Respect all commitments made with other pastors and the pastoral relationships my colleagues have established with their congregations.
- When leaving a congregation, end my pastoral relationship with it, recognizing that all pastoral functions must be carried out by my successor.
- Not serve nearby congregations without the approval of the official leadership of the church I left.
- Not accept pastoral functions in a church I previously served without the current pastor's permission.
- When I retire or leave ministry, refrain from performing pastoral functions in our church unless expressly requested by the pastor in office.



I affirm my commitment to obey the Apostolic Assembly’s Ministerial Code of Ethics:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

7. Conclusion

This chapter reminded us that ministerial ethics is not an add-on, but the foundation of the ministerial calling. As ministers and mentors of others, we steward time wisely, serve as examples in word, conduct, love, faith, and purity, and guard our private life with accountability. Integrity sustains the vision and protects the church. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word, we embrace a code that orders our life, strengthens character, and multiplies healthy leaders in the Church. May God find in us faithful, worthy, and persevering servants!

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blue Letter Bible. “*GI401 – doulos.*” Accessed October 8, 2025.
- Cirillo, Francesco. *The Pomodoro Technique: The Acclaimed Time-Management System That Has Transformed How We Work*. New York, NY: Crown Currency, 2018.
- Dodd, Pamela, and Doug Sundheim. *The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done Without Driving Yourself Crazy*. Peak Performance Press, 2005.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Rev. & updated 10th Anniversary ed.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles. Word Biblical Commentary 46*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- Newport, Cal. *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
- O’Toole, Garson. “*Art, Like Morality, Consists in Drawing the Line Somewhere.*” Quote Investigator, July 20, 2014. Accessed October 8, 2025.
- Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus. New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders. 2nd ed.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.



Chapter 14 – Caring for the Congregation

Cultivating a culture of comprehensive care and follow-up

1 Peter 5:1–4: “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

1. Introduction

Many years ago I sat to hear a great preacher of the Gospel. It was a crucial time of formation and development, not only for me but for other young people who were there. His messages moved our hearts, and they were very well presented and communicated. There was an eloquence that surpassed anything I had heard before.

One day I asked the preacher if he would allow me to visit an elderly member of the church to pray for him and bring him provisions. His answer was: “It isn’t necessary; our job is to preach the Word.” To put it plainly, his response surprised me greatly; however, I submitted without insisting further.

Years later, I sat to hear another great preacher and afterward asked him the same question, to which he replied: “Of course, we must care for all our members, especially the elderly and the sick. That is what the Gospel is about.”

The contrast in the theology of care of these two preachers was evident to me —and strikingly, so was the difference in the condition of each respective church. The church that did not practice pastoral care lacked a key element of the Gospel message, while the other, which did so, prospered and grew exponentially.

This chapter will focus on the importance of being a healthy local church that provides pastoral care to its disciples.



2. Caring for the congregation begins with the pastor and the leaders

V. 2a: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you...” Peter is emphatic in his description of caring for God’s flock. Every apostolic pastor must understand that we are under-shepherds of His flock. We care for God’s people whatever their spiritual, emotional, or physical condition may be; that is, we care for everyone in the church, regardless of people’s socioeconomic or demographic condition.

In the original language, the word *poimainō*, translated “to shepherd/care,” also means “to feed,” which has several applications, such as providing pasture for food, nourishing, caring for the body, attending to and providing what is necessary for the soul. Therefore, the pastor-leader not only has the responsibility to lead from the pulpit, but also to provide a comprehensive approach to caring for the congregation.

If we only care for the flock by speaking to them instead of living life with them, we will create a culture of theologians and not of servants. The apostolic leader feeds his flock, which of course includes a weekly dose of the Word of God. But our pulpits must also reflect intentional care for the souls of all who attend our church.

Feeding includes being well prepared, speaking, and delivering the Word clearly and concisely. The second part of verse 2 says that this task has been “entrusted” to us directly by God. This expression alludes to the flock that is “among you,” that is, locally: in a particular place, in the midst of the community, within the bounds of a space.

Interestingly, it is observed that leaders exercise their spiritual care best when they are “among” the people. Healthy leaders know that the flock they guide has been given or entrusted to them directly by God, but they must be among the people, close to the congregation. This works best in the local church setting.

The care we give to God’s people can only be achieved with close contact, constant communication, and presence at important and serious events in the lives of the families of our church. Many successful pastor-leaders “smell like sheep,” because they have understood that more than 85% of their ministry is outside the confines of the platform, beyond the pulpit. They have learned that the secret of congregational care is to be with the people.



3. Caring for the congregation includes serving willingly

V. 2b: "...serving as overseers... willingly, not by compulsion."

Observing the second part of verse 2, we see that Peter exhorts his fellow elders to watch over the church willingly —voluntarily— which suggests that in Peter's time there were some who were reluctant to serve with the right spirit and who might have been serving out of loyalty to their leadership or for personal motives. In short: out of obligation.

Therefore, it is imperative that every apostolic pastor serve and care for his church for the right reasons. Otherwise, a toxic leadership culture is created, and the congregation senses that the pastor's heart is not with them, but elsewhere. Leaders, we cannot emphasize this enough. God's people have a keen conscience and spiritual discernment that enables them to perceive when a leader does not care for them willingly. We can be physically present, but our heart and mind may be somewhere else.

Mark Lau Branson gives us some key counsel on how to care for God's people:

- **PRIORITIZE CONVERSATIONS:** Speak to and greet everyone in the church as much as possible. This is a challenge when the church grows, but we care for our people when we recognize them as part of the flock.
- **USE A DIVERSITY OF PLACES:** Meet in different places, such as restaurants, homes, sporting events, birthday parties, weddings, graduations, etc.
- **FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES TO BE IN HOMES —cell groups:** Most growing churches have a vibrant mission and vision for cell groups. The ministry model of Acts 2 meets needs and cares for the church in different places throughout the community.
- **INQUIRE INTO PERSONAL AND FAMILY STORIES:** Nothing communicates more care and concern than actively engaging by sharing personal stories with the flock. They sense that the leader truly cares about them. They are not just a number on a membership list or a statistic. Genuine care is sharing experiences that forge lasting relationships and help the church grow healthy.



4. Caring for the congregation includes serving selflessly

V. 2c: "...not for what you will receive, but because you are eager to serve God."

The culture of a caring church is reflected in its leadership and structure. Nothing is done out of selfish ambition, but the Spirit of God moves the heart of every member of the church to fulfill this task.

4.1. The example of the early church

In Acts, chapter 6, the disciples identified a problem in the care of the widows in the church. When they realized that the widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, they appointed seven leaders to oversee this responsibility. They prayed, laid hands on them, and commissioned them to lead the ministry of caring for the widows of the church. It was thanks to their intentionality in caring for the poor and needy that the Gospel spread in Jerusalem.

The example of the early church reminds us that the care ministry attends to physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational needs:

- **PHYSICAL:** The disciples met the widows' immediate need for food.
- **EMOTIONAL:** Those in charge of the care ministry relieved the widows of the stress and anxiety of not knowing where their next meal would come from.
- **SPIRITUAL:** The Gospel spread and more people became obedient to the faith after seeing the disciples care for these widows.
- **RELATIONAL:** When the Hellenistic Jews complained that their widows were being overlooked, the Hebrew Jews found a solution to the conflict and repaired the division among them.

Believers in the early church knew that loving and caring for the needy would bring the glory of Jesus and turn hearts toward Him. Their care for others reflected Jesus' care for His people.



4.2. Christ's care

As part of Jesus' ministry model for healthy leadership, we see many examples of attending to people's physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational needs, including those who were not necessarily His followers and disciples. One such example is found in Luke 9:12–17:

Luke 9:12–17: “When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’¹³ But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.’¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down.¹⁶ Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude.¹⁷ So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.”

The first thing we notice is the disciples' mindset. They were not interested in meeting the people's physical needs because their minds did not see that as a priority at the moment. Their focus was more on positions, titles, and who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God.

In many ways, Jesus was guiding and training them to see the importance not only of the spiritual aspects of ministry but also of the physical. At that moment, they were not healthy leaders. This is reflected in the indifference they showed toward the needs of the multitude.

Unhealthy leaders become indifferent to the needs of others in the church. Healthy leaders respond to every need and care for people. Sometimes this includes helping people we may not know; however, this is how seeds of the Gospel are sown and a religious praxis is demonstrated that communicates care and the power of the Gospel.

Jesus answers them by saying, “You give them something to eat,” which is extraordinary given that they had only five loaves and two fish. We also see a lack of faith in their reply: “Do You expect us to go and buy food for all this multitude?” Healthy apostolic leaders understand that caring for the community opens the door to the miraculous. They do what they can, and God does what they cannot.



From this biblical passage we can draw several important points on congregational care:

- Healthy leaders never refuse to care for others.
- Jesus specifically instructs us to care for people —“You give them something to eat.”
- Healthy leaders care for people even when they do not have the resources.
- Healthy leaders know that God works with what we have —five loaves, two fish.
- Healthy leaders always obey the Word of God —“Make them sit down in groups of fifty.”
- Healthy leaders understand that when they are willing to care, God always provides— Jesus kept giving the bread to the disciples.
- Healthy leaders know that only God can fully satisfy people’s needs —they ate and were filled.
- Healthy leaders who care for others will always have abundance left —twelve baskets of leftovers were collected.

5. Caring for the congregation includes serving with humility

V. 3: “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you...”

5.1. Opposition vs. grace

Healthy apostolic leaders draw people to their churches and ministries when people see their humility of spirit. The word “lords” in this context alludes to “domineering,” that is, controlling or subjugating; it carries the sense of exercising dominion over someone. This posture runs counter to all references to genuine care for people in its purest sense.

A leader who serves and cares for his church with a spirit of humility will always have God’s favor and people’s favor. The principle here is summed up in two words: OPPOSITION and GRACE. James 4:6–7, 10: “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you...¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”



Unhealthy leaders are those who have motives other than service and care for others. This results from arrogance, selfish attitudes, caring only about oneself, and failing to care for the congregation in all its aspects. This places the leader in a precarious position: God resists him or her! I cannot imagine a worse position for a leader than to be in opposition to God in his ministry or service.

On the other hand, a healthy leader is one who cares for his flock with a spirit of humility. This places the leader in a powerful position: God grants favor or grace! The word “grace” in this context refers to that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, and loveliness; also grace in speech. Apostolic leaders who care and are healthy find joy and delight in caring for the congregation. To summarize:

- Humility rejoices that God receives all the credit for choosing us, so that we glory only in Him and not in man.
- Humility gladly admits that everything we have is a free gift of God, so we cannot boast of it.
- Humility rejoices to affirm that God, sovereignly, governs the beats of our heart and guards our departures and arrivals—even with “delays.”
- The root of Christian humility is the Gospel: Christ died for our sins. That sinful we were. That dependent we are.
- Humility is manifested by serving everyone, instead of seeking to be served.
- And humility rejoices in affirming that this service is true greatness.

5.2. Care ministries

Below is a list of care ministries (not exhaustive and adaptable) that depend on humble servant-volunteers:

- Parking team and hospitality/greeters.
- Ushers and welcome teams at all campuses or services.
- Information points, kiosks.
- Ministries for persons with disabilities.



- Nursery and early childhood care —the youngest.
- Children (elementary) —Sunday School and midweek gatherings.
- Young adults; teens (secondary) —midweek gatherings.
- Worship and music ministries.
- Media and production ministries.
- Small-group leaders.
- Family life ministries.
- Women’s ministries; older women to mentor younger women.
- Accompaniment and formation for children and teens —especially where parental references are lacking.
- Evangelism and community outreach on scheduled days.
- Language classes and adult literacy programs.
- Child support centers in urban contexts.
- Church bookstore/resources.
- Congregational library.

6. Conclusion

V. 3b: “...but being examples to the flock.”

As we conclude this chapter, let us remember that we must be worthy of being followed. Leadership is our life, our example, our communication, our attitude, and chiefly our treatment of others. We all know leaders who exercise great gifts and are used powerfully; however —and to put it a certain way— their example does not impress. When Peter uses the word “example,” he alludes to someone who leaves a mark or imprint, a figure struck —impressed; in the technical sense, the pattern according to which a thing must be made.

In other words, the healthy leader will always care for the congregation in practical, spiritual, relational, and emotional contexts. This care will leave a mark on the life of each member, on the community, and on the world. This imprint nourishes a culture of care and comprehensive ministry within the congregation that is vital to the success of the local church.



Most growing churches have this comprehensive approach to congregational care. Comprehensive ministry happens in a comprehensive church. If you have been in such a church, you recognize it. If you are not in one, you feel that something is missing. There is an indescribable quality in a church committed to living the Gospel that whispers in your spirit.

“Comprehensive” can take many forms, among them a comprehensive understanding of the church’s mission, a dynamic spirituality, healthy dynamics in the congregation, and a comprehensive practice of ministry. An apostolic church that is spiritually dynamic, prophetically bold, sacrificially caring, and lovingly nurturing is God’s chosen vessel for authentic change in people and in the community.

7. Self-evaluation questions

1. Am I caring for the flock willingly and not out of obligation or personal convenience? Cite 1 or 2 recent decisions that demonstrate this.
2. How much real time do I spend among the people, outside the pulpit, accompanying lives and processes? Estimate hours/week and mention visits, calls, follow-up.
3. How am I attending to physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational needs in the congregation? Give one specific example in each area.
4. Have I exercised dominance or authoritarian attitudes in any recent situation? How did I correct course and ask forgiveness if necessary?
5. What decision have I made lately that sacrificed a personal benefit to favor the good of the flock? Describe the case.
6. Do my messages and teachings reflect intentional care for souls? What adjustments did I make in preaching/teaching to accompany concrete needs without exposing anyone?
7. Do we have appointed persons/deacons (Acts 6-type) with clear roles, prayer, and commissioning to care for widows, vulnerable families, and new believers? What needs strengthening?



8. In what ways has recent pastoral care opened doors to the Gospel — conversion, reconciliation, restoration, peace? Mention evidence.
9. If I were absent for three months, what care practices would remain because they are already formed in the team and church culture? Point to two or three habits that no longer depend on me.

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004.
- Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martínez. *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.
- Danker, Frederick William, ed. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996.



Chapter 15 – Teamwork and Delegation

The power of unity to serve and lead

Numbers 11:17: “Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.”

1. Introduction

Teamwork is essential to accomplish something great. It has been rightly said that teamwork makes dreams work. Pastoral experience confirms this truth: the better the church team, the greater its growth potential. No congregation grows steadily if it depends on isolated efforts or on a single figure, no matter how charismatic. Growing in Christ, caring for the brethren, and reaching the lost requires many active members, coordinated and empowered.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 expresses this with beauty and realism: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” This text does not idealize things; it recognizes that there will be falls, weariness, and stumbles, and for that very reason it vindicates the strength of walking together. In ministry it is the same: team service yields more, cares better, and endures more.

From the beginning, God showed that His work advances when the load is shared. In Numbers 11:17, the Lord orders Moses to gather seventy elders to transfer of the Spirit that was upon him to them, so that they would bear the burden of the people with him. It is not only a redistribution of tasks; it is a transfer of authority, wisdom, and responsibility under God’s government. Delegation, therefore, is not a modern trick, but a divine strategy: God inspires this delegation to care better for His people, form leaders, and sustain the mission without breaking His servants.



2. Moses: from the autocratic model to the theocratic model

2.1. The autocratic model

Religious tradition tends to crystallize practices that, over the years, stifle the life of the body of Christ. One of the most damaging is the myth that “only the Pastor can care for the people.” That assumption concentrates authority, turns the rest into resting spectators, and feeds a culture of dependence that exhausts a few and lulls many to sleep—a picture all too common in our churches.

Exodus 18 offers us an honest scene: Jethro, priest of Midian, sees Moses exhausted, attending line after line, resolving every matter himself. His diagnosis of Moses is as pastoral as it is forceful: “What you are doing is not good... you will surely wear out, both you and these people” (Exodus 18:17–18). The problem was not Moses’ zeal—his heart was right—but the model of governance he was practicing: autocratic, centralizing, unable to sustain a large people on the move.

Jethro introduces a merciful correction: it is not about working harder, but about working differently. God’s wisdom proposes structures that share the load, levels of responsibility according to the complexity of cases, and a clear distinction between what the principal leader must indeed keep—principles, vision, direction, and every major matter—and what others, faithful and capable, can carry out with real authority. When ministry ceases to be a pastoral “monologue” and becomes the chorus of many gifts, the church breathes, worships, matures, and advances.

2.2. The theocratic model

Jethro’s counsel, born of practical wisdom and—let us note—backed by God (“If you do this thing, and God so commands you...,” Exodus 18:23), establishes...

- LEVELS OF AUTHORITY: thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens.
- CRITERIA OF COMPLEXITY: small, medium, and large cases.
- LIMITS FOR THE PRINCIPAL LEADER’S FUNCTION: teach principles and address major matters.



The result can be seen immediately: “So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you” (Exodus 18:22). Delegation does not dilute the Pastor’s authority; it focuses it on what only he must do, and multiplies the care of the people. Later, in Numbers 11:17, this shift will be confirmed: God Himself distributes authority, from the spirit of Moses, so that the load is shared.

The lesson for us is compelling: an autocratic leadership that concentrates functions “because the people come to me” (Exodus 18:15) always ends up slowing progress. In contrast, the theocratic model—the government of God—distributes authority according to gifts and responsibilities, preserving the pastoral role in what is his—direction, Word, principles—and releasing the Body to serve.

3. Exegesis of passages

3.1. Exodus 18

Exodus chapter 18 leaves us three emphases that strengthen our understanding of the issue of delegating authority.

- **FIRST**, the filter of character (v. 21): Jethro calls for “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.” The priority is clear: integrity before ability; the work rests better on trustworthy shoulders than on talent without roots.
- **SECOND**, a structure proportional to scale: thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Not all decisions demand the same level of authority; some matters are resolved “near” the people and only the complex ascends. This principle avoids bottlenecks and shapes judgment at every level.
- **THIRD**, Moses’ function is non-delegable (v. 20). He must teach statutes and laws, and intercede for the people before God. His role is theological, spiritual, governing—not merely administrative. If Moses tried to do everything, he would neglect what only he must safeguard.

In sum: Exodus 18 speaks to us of proven character, clear levels, and pastoral focus. When these three pieces fit together in the local church, authority is neither diluted nor concentrated: it is ordered, and the people cease to wait for one alone, giving many the opportunity to serve.



3.2. Numbers 11

In Numbers chapter 11 we find not a spiritual superhero, but a weary pastor in the midst of a restless people. Complaints pile up, the desert seems more arid when murmuring runs from tent to tent, and Moses —honest before God— lets slip a groan every leader recognizes: “I am not able to bear all these people alone” (vv. 11–15). Three lessons we learn from this passage:

Moses’ cry is not a cowardly surrender; it is a sincere prayer. It is the moment when leadership stops leaning on the inertia of duty and leans, at last, on divine grace. The Lord’s answer does not come to rebuke, but to validate human limits and open a wiser path. God does not say to Moses “do more,” but “gather seventy”; He does not require him to carry more weight, but to share the load.

It is a creative, spiritual, and organizational solution at once: “I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them... and they shall bear the burden of the people with you.” It is important to underline it: taking of the spirit of Moses does not mean that the pastor is stripped of a piece of the anointing, as if the Spirit could be divided and spent. It is rather like a flame that lights other candles without losing its brightness.

Anointing is not divided; it is shared. Authority is not diluted; it is multiplied. Care is not impoverished; it is enlarged. God does not subtract from Moses: He multiplies His work in more people. What happens then redefines leadership for all time: the burden becomes light when it is shared under the Lord’s direction.

The passage teaches us, then, that confessing limits is holiness, that asking for help is obedience, and that God’s answer is often to raise a team around those who had grown accustomed to walking alone. Thus, the desert ceases to be the trek of a few exhausted heroes and becomes the road of a well-led people, where many shoulders carry the divinely entrusted mission and the Spirit rests on more than one. This is a glorious picture of the Church.

4. Jesus and the Church: the pattern of calling, forming, and sending

4.1. Jesus and the disciples

Jesus not only taught about the Kingdom; He formed a team and entrusted it with a mission. He appointed the Twelve (Mark 3:13–15), formed them, gave them authority, and sent them (Luke 9:1–6). Later, seventy others were sent two by two to the cities where Jesus was about to go (Luke



10:1). This detail is key: two by two expresses accompaniment, mutual evaluation, comfort in adversity, and accountability on the way. The Lord did not wait for His disciples to be “perfect”; He formed them while they served Him, giving them clear instructions, limits, and a mission framework. And He empowered them (v. 19).

4.2. The church in Acts

The early church followed that model. In Acts 6, faced with a real problem (neglected widows), the Apostles escape the trap of “doing it all” and call the church to choose seven men “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). These take on administration while the Twelve continue in prayer and the ministry of the Word. The fruit? “Then the word of God spread...” (Acts 6:7). Proper delegation unlocks growth, prevents division, and keeps everyone in their function.

4.3. The apostle Paul

The apostle Paul, in turn, built a network of collaborators: Silas, Timothy, Titus, Priscilla and Aquila, Epaphras, Phoebe, and several more. The Apostle trains, sends, receives reports, corrects, encourages. Thus, the apostolic pattern is not that of a lone hero, but of teams that share vision, gifts, and responsibilities. All this aligns with the theology of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27) and with the ministries given to the Church according to Ephesians 4:11–16. The ministries exist to equip the saints so that each one does his part and thus the Body grows in love and truth. In other words: teamwork and delegation are obedience to Jesus, not mere concessions to modernity.

5. What is delegation, biblically?

To delegate is to entrust faithful and competent people with a part of the mission, transferring authority along with responsibility and providing resources, limits, and evaluation so that the work is done better and in holiness. It is not about “getting rid of work,” but about multiplying obedience and forming disciples in the doing of the church. Three operational questions help us clarify decisions: What do you want? When do you want it? How do you want it?

- **WHAT:** defines the outcome. What do we expect to obtain?
- **WHEN:** sets key dates and necessary intermediate milestones.
- **HOW:** doctrinal parameters, standards of quality and excellence.



Giving responsibility without authority is unjust; giving authority without limits is imprudent. The balance is achieved by the leader who prays, listens, and communicates clearly. Moreover, in the Kingdom, character precedes capacity (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3). In the Apostolic Assembly we refer faithful, teachable, humble people before “talents” without the fruit of the Spirit. Delegation does not begin by “assigning tasks,” but by discerning hearts and then forming them in vision and mission.

6. Reorienting the church: from internal programs to external mission

6.1. A necessary reorientation

Many congregations have worked for decades with fellowships and departments —Men, Dorcas, Youth, Juniors, etc.— very useful in their time but too centered on the temple. The Great Commission (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19–20) requires reorienting the structure: mission is the axis, and every ministry —intercession, evangelism, cell groups, discipleship school, worship— must align with reaching, forming, and sending.

This does not deny the value of programs or ministries, but redefines and challenges them. Implementing such reorientation requires what we have been talking about: delegating where the Spirit has already delegated, giving opportunity to the gifts given to the church. Operational authority should be placed in the hands of those whom God has already equipped with talents and gifts to serve in specific areas, while pastoral leadership defines vision, intercedes, teaches the Word, guards doctrine, and handles major cases.

Thus, the body of Christ rises to its full potential, ceasing to be a religious club and becoming a true missionary organism.

6.2. Two scenarios for this reorientation

1. **URBAN SCENARIO:** In the city —with fast rhythms, rented spaces, and high mobility— the most effective strategy is constant lightness rather than occasional grand displays. Work with micro-teams of two to four people assigned to specific neighborhoods, with small, repeatable weekly goals and



flexible time slots (breakfast, lunch, evening) that fit work shifts and transit routes. Keep the impact agenda brief and frequent: a few minutes of prayer to focus the heart; short meetings in neutral places —plazas, cafés, markets— where conversation is natural; and a quick close to record data and agree on next steps. Follow-up should occur within the first 24 hours: a card or QR code to share contacts, a simple text message via WhatsApp or SMS, and an invitation to a nearby cell group, or in the same café where the connection was made. Everything is done in small groups, with shared location and cultural sensitivity toward the neighborhood. To avoid getting lost in the ethereal, measure few things and always the same: sustained conversations, prayers made, new contacts, and how many accept a next meeting. In the urban ecosystem, the key is this cadence: small steps, well done, repeated many times. What is often attempted with a mega-event, here is achieved with humble, close consistency.

2. RURAL SCENARIO: With long distances and broader time frames, progress is better sustained with pairs of servants assigned by sectors (hamlets, settlements, localities), who travel fixed routes and maintain a close relationship with the area's families. Here, hospitality in homes is the door of entry: prayer in the living room, Bible studies around the table, and practical accompaniment in day-to-day needs. It is advisable to rotate meeting points — a house, the school yard, the field, the community hall— to reach those who cannot travel easily. Rhythms must adapt to work seasons (sowing, harvesting, fairs), planning visits at useful times and without hurry. The priority is not to multiply activities inside the temple, but to empower the saints according to their gifts—whoever knows how to teach, teaches; whoever knows how to host, hosts; whoever knows how to coordinate, coordinates—and to measure missionary fruit (people reached, homes opened, disciples in formation, emerging leaders) rather than counting internal programs.



7. Know your team and create the environment for change

7.1. Building healthy teams

Knowing your team is not memorizing names; it is discerning gifts, motivations, rhythms, and limits. It is also understanding their story, the life stage they are in, and how much real “margin” they have to serve (family, studies, work, health). With that pastoral lens you will align each person where they can flourish and bless the local ministry.

The one who enjoys welcoming people may shine in hospitality; the one with patience and clarity can accompany processes; the creative person will contribute in communication; the methodical one, in logistics. When you place someone in the right spot, it shows: there is joy, excellence, and fruit. How to achieve it? Use brief interviews (10–15 minutes) with three key questions: What gives you life? What drains you? When can you serve? Add observation in service—for example, two Sundays “shadowing” a lead.

Use simple gift self-evaluations (3 to 5 strengths) and candid conversations about expectations, limits, and availability. Then document: create a simple map by area with leads and supports; open a servant’s file (contact, gifts, availability, level of delegation, agreed limits); and keep a learning log with brief feedback notes. Review everything quarterly or after a sixty-day trial, using a “load thermometer” (green/yellow/red) to care for the pace.

Thus you truly know your people and build healthy, sustainable, and fruitful teams.

7.2. Implementing the changes

To implement sustainable changes, you must attend to five enablers:

- **VISION:** without vision there is confusion. People cannot follow a north they cannot see. Define in one sentence what you are pursuing and why it matters for the Gospel.
- **SKILLS:** without skills there is anxiety. Train. Model in the field and repeat. Do not release someone “to see what happens.”
- **INCENTIVES:** without incentives there is resistance. Recognize, celebrate, show real impact on people.



- **RESOURCES:** without resources there is frustration. Sometimes a permit, a key, or a small budget unlocks weeks.
- **ACTION:** without action there is a false start. Avoid eternal plans; start small, iterate, and grow.

7.3. Enriching with ideas

We also recommend the brainstorming technique. Convene the pertinent team and name three simple roles: facilitator (cares for environment and rules), recorder (writes everything where all can see it), and timekeeper (keeps the time). Define a clear objective and a short time limit; then open a generation phase without criticism: first 3–5 minutes of silent ideas (each one writes), then a quick round to share and record everything as it appears, including repetitions. If the group gets stuck, take a short pause and resume.

At the close of generation, move to clarifying meanings, grouping similar ideas, and combining related proposals. Only then prioritize with agreed criteria (for example: impact, effort, biblical/mission alignment) using a simple method such as dot voting or an impact–effort matrix. Keep a “parking lot” for valuable ideas that do not fit today, and close with concrete agreements (who, what, when). Thus, creativity flows without breaking unity: all are heard, the process is orderly, and the best ideas move toward action.

8. Communication and collaboration

8.1. Conversation with the team

Healthy communication makes unity visible: it turns the intention to love and serve into concrete practices. Proverbs 11:14 reminds us that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety”; that implies creating safe spaces where all voices can contribute without fear of being ridiculed or ignored. It is not talking a lot, but talking well: with clarity, with purpose, assertively. Let kindness guide the tone; let prayer open and close conversations to submit them to the Lord.

Practically, it helps to agree on conversation rules: listen without interrupting, summarize what the other said before responding, attack problems and not people; and maintain rhythms: brief meetings with a clear agenda, defined times, and a close with agreements, responsible



parties, and dates. Documenting decisions in simple minutes avoids misunderstandings and stops rumor. It is also advisable to define official channels (for example, one chat per area and a weekly bulletin) so that information flows without noise.

8.2. Handling conflicts

When someone errs, correction is done in time and in private; if there is conflict, follow the path of Matthew 18, caring for the relationship. Thus, communication not only transmits data: it builds the body, aligns hearts, and sustains the mission. And something very important: handle feedback well —let it be simple (clear and brief), informative (with data and concrete examples), regular (with an agreed cadence), and timely (as close to the fact as possible, without letting it cool or explode).

The Bible calls us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Neither harshness that breaks, nor softness that fails to correct. A practical frame is situation–behavior–impact–next step: “Yesterday, at 9:50, at the sanctuary door (situation), you greeted while looking at the floor (behavior) and several passed without feeling welcomed (impact). Next Sunday let’s try eye contact and a ‘welcome’ as they arrive (concrete step).” Thus we avoid generalizations (“always,” “never”) and speak of observable facts with a clear path for improvement.

Seek two-way feedback: begin by asking “How did you see yourself? What would you do differently?” to activate healthy self-critique; balance encouragement and adjustment (a 3:1 ratio often helps); give correction in private and recognition in public; and end with a brief agreement (what changes, who does it, and by when), leaving a simple note to review it at the next meeting. Sometimes it is helpful to add feedforward (“next time try...”) to orient the future more than to stir up the past. Done this way, feedback not only informs: it forms, cares for the heart, and elevates the excellence of service.

8.3. Three key pieces

Celebrate, grow, and collaborate form a single pulse in the life of the team:

- CELEBRATE is to obey the call to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15), publicly recognizing advances —large and small— to set culture, affirm healthy behaviors, and remember that every good gift comes from the Lord.



- **GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES** means opening concrete paths for each servant to mature in character and competence —short courses, guided readings with questions, one-on-one mentoring, and supervised practice with feedback— so that learning does not remain theory but integrates into real service.
- **COLLABORATION** implies organizing work in pairs or triads when the task is sensitive (welcome, children, counseling, finances), and convening meetings that are not only to inform, but to discern and decide together, with clear agendas and verifiable agreements. When these three pieces move at the same rhythm, the team breathes: celebration gives courage, formation raises the level, and collaboration protects the mission.

9. Ethical delegation: motivation and care of the team

9.1. Motivating correctly

People are the most valuable resource of ministry because they are God’s image; therefore, motivating is not stirring emotions or pressuring, but connecting each task with the why of the Gospel and caring for the souls of those who serve —their time, family, rest, and growth. To motivate is to cultivate conditions where there is meaning, support, and joy in service.

PRACTICE THESE TEN THINGS:

1. Share the vision constantly; link each task to the purpose.
2. Communicate clearly and listen actively.
3. Make room for new ideas that are safe and biblical.
4. Give challenges with accompaniment.
5. Foster creativity aligned to doctrine and mission.
6. Truly empower —authority + resources.
7. Personalize direction: not everyone needs the same level of detail.
8. Avoid tedium: rotate functions, care for rhythms, alternate loads.
9. Celebrate every advance; give glory to the Lord.
10. Maintain a respectful and brotherly environment.



Add to this rest phases and, when necessary, brief sabbaticals for key leaders. The productivity of the Kingdom is born from the life of the Spirit, not from spurring volunteers. As we said in the chapter *Winning at Home*: Noah preached to the world, but in the end his family entered the ark with him. Prioritize your home while you serve the church; God’s order also protects your household.

9.2. Delegating responsibly

Delegating is not “letting go”; it is answering God with clean hands, with integrity and responsibility. Therefore, exercise the delegation of authority always requiring:

- **TRANSPARENCY IN FINANCES AND DECISIONS:** visible budgets, dual signature for payments, monthly reports, access to receipts, and clear minutes.
- **ZERO FAVORITISM:** public profiles and selection criteria, team interviews, and periodic rotation of responsibilities.
- **LIMITS WITH MINORS:** two-adult rule, visible spaces, written authorizations, basic volunteer screening, and child-protection training; zero tolerance for any risk.
- **SECURITY AND DATA:** safeguard contact information, use it only for ministry purposes and with consent; define who can access it and for how long.
- **WRITTEN REPORTS** in sensitive situations (counseling, incidents, handling funds) and timely escalation according to the level of responsibility. Acknowledge conflicts of interest and avoid all personal preference.
- **ESTABLISH A SAFE CHANNEL** for alerts or reports and remember that every leader gives account—including you (2 Corinthians 8:21): “Providing honorable things... not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”

Delegation is holy when it honors people and answers the Lord: when it recognizes in every collaborator the image of Christ, cares for his dignity, limits, and growth process; when it does not “use” people to fill gaps, but forms and protects those who serve. It is holy when it is decided in prayer, with transparency and accountability, seeking God’s will rather than the leader’s convenience. Thus, authority is not fragmented: it is shared to edify the church and glorify its Owner.



10. Possible obstacles and how to overcome them

Let us conclude this chapter by referring to eight challenges you might face when trying to delegate authority, and briefly explaining how to overcome them.

- **FEAR OF LOSING CONTROL:** set limits, reports, and standards; remember that delegating is not abdicating.
- **PERFECTIONISM:** prioritize what is essential, iterate and improve; accept that “very good” today is better than “perfect” never.
- **FAVORITISM:** use public profiles and criteria; involve more than one set of eyes in selection.
- **CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM:** teach the theology of the body of Christ and the gifts; share stories of shared fruit or achievements.
- **TEMPLE-CENTERED PROGRAMS:** rewrite agendas with an outward move to the neighborhood; every ministry contributes to evangelizing and discipling.
- **SILENCES AND ASSUMPTIONS:** do not fear over-communicating; put key agreements and processes in writing.
- **RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT AUTHORITY:** adjust permissions, access, and budgets.
- **MARGINAL PRAYER:** never allow it; breathe prayer in all phases: planning, executing, and evaluating.

11. Conclusion: a threefold cord

The Lord has shown us that the mission is shared: He called, formed, and sent, and thus taught us that the Kingdom advances when many obey together. The Pastor, therefore, was not called to carry the burden in solitude, but to teach the Word, protect doctrine, and equip the saints so that each one exercises his gift. When the Pastor releases rather than retains, the church breathes; when he forms and trusts, the work multiplies. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 portrays the strength of unity with concrete images: profitability (“they have a good reward”), protection (“if they fall, one will lift up the other”), comfort and encouragement (warmth), and resistance (“a threefold cord”). This is the portrait of a united church that cares and pushes in the same direction.



The Lord’s work prospers when we delegate in prayer, aligned to a clear vision, with simple processes that all can follow, and with humble hearts willing to correct and learn. It is not only reorganizing tasks: it is reorienting the structure toward the Great Commission, empowering the saints according to their gifts, and evaluating with love to improve without wounding. Delegating like this does not make us dispensable; it makes us fruitful. We move from I to we, from “everything through my hands” to “everything for His glory.”

Therefore, from now on, see every collaborator as a gift from God for your life and ministry: someone to honor, train, and with whom to share the load. In their hands, the Lord extended your reach; in your trust, He will strengthen their calling. And as each member does his part, Christ is seen more clearly and the Gospel runs.

COMMITMENT

“I affirm my commitment to seek wise delegation and effective teamwork,
serving others with humility and excellence, as unto the Lord.”

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SENDING PRAYER

“Lord Jesus, Lord of the harvest, open our eyes to see as You see. Give us humility to delegate and courage to answer the call. Take the little we offer and multiply it in the hands of many, so that Your Gospel may run, the weary may find rest, and the lost may hear Your voice. Make us one body, with many members, and be glorified in all. Amen.”

12. Self-evaluation questions

1. VISION AND MISSION: Are they written, biblical, and communicated clearly (Proverbs 29:18; Habakkuk 2:2)?
2. THEOCRACY VS. AUTOCRACY: What decisions or tasks am I still concentrating by habit and not by biblical conviction (Exodus 18; Numbers 11)?
3. ROLE MAP: Who does what, who decides what, and with what authority in each ministry?



4. CHARACTER > CAPACITY: Am I prioritizing humility, loyalty, and teachability in selection?
5. PAIRS: Are all key fronts working two by two with objectives and brief reporting?
6. CHECKLISTS: Do we have at least two documented processes per ministry?
7. RESOURCES AND PERMISSIONS: Do people with responsibility have keys, access, and proportional budgets?
8. FEEDBACK: Is there a weekly/monthly cadence of feedback that is simple, informative, and timely?
9. CELEBRATION: How are we recognizing and celebrating advances without feeding vanity?
10. TRAINING: Have I modeled “on the field” at least once this month what I expect from others?
11. GREAT COMMISSION: Does each ministry have external goals (reach, discipleship, sending) and not only internal ones?
12. INDICATORS: Besides attendance and baptisms, do we measure active discipleship, multiplication of leaders, participation, and testimonies?
13. CARE OF THE TEAM: Do our schedules and loads allow for rest, prayer, and caring for family?
14. CONFLICTS: Do we practice “truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and Matthew 18 instead of silences that ferment?
15. LEARNINGS: Do we document lessons from failures/successes to improve processes and train others?
16. DEPENDENCE ON GOD: Does prayer guide delegation (Proverbs 3:5–6), disarm pride, and align us to the Spirit?
17. PERSONAL COMMITMENT: Am I willing to yield control to multiply obedience to the Gospel and fruit?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dever, Mark. *Nueve marcas de una iglesia saludable*. Barcelona, Spain: Poiema Publicaciones, 2014.
- Enns, Peter. *Éxodo. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2011.
- Fernando, Ajith. *Hechos. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2010.
- Gane, Roy. *Números. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2012.
- Lencioni, Patrick. *Las cinco disfunciones de un equipo*. Barcelona, Spain: Empresa Activa (Urano), 2002.
- MacArthur, John F. *1 Corintios. Comentario MacArthur del Nuevo Testamento*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2011.
- Marshall, Colin, and Tony Payne. *La vid y el enrejado*. Barcelona, Spain: Poiema Publicaciones, 2010.
- Maxwell, John C. *El trabajo en equipo hace que el sueño se realice*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2002.
- Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. *Conversaciones cruciales*. Mexico City, Mexico: McGraw-Hill, 2012.
- Rainer, Thom S., and Eric Geiger. *Iglesia simple*. Nashville, TN: B&H Español, 2007.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Liderazgo espiritual*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2007.
- Stone, Douglas, and Sheila Heen. *Gracias por el feedback*. Barcelona, Spain: Conecta, 2015.
- Stott, John. *Efesios. Comentario bíblico La Biblia Habla Hoy*. Barcelona, Spain: Andamio, 2003.
- Strauch, Alexander. *Ancianos bíblicos*. Barcelona, Spain: Poiema Publicaciones, 2014.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Sea libre (Éxodo)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2006.



Conclusion to Healthy Leadership

Evangelism sent us and Discipleship taught us to accompany. This section reminded us that there is no sustainable sending or accompanying without healthy leaders. The portrait drawn by these six chapters is simple and demanding at once: Christian leadership is a life before it is a technique, a path before it is an office.

In Chapter 10 (The Search for God) we laid the foundation: without divine presence there is no direction. The leader's agenda is recalibrated when prayer and worship cease to be an appendix and return to being the home from which everything is decided. In Chapter 11 (Relationship with the Word) we affirmed the authority that guards and guides: we do not lead from preconceived ideas nor from the thermometer of popularity, but from Scripture that confronts, corrects, and teaches.

Chapter 12 (Winning at Home) set a mirror before us: ministry loses legitimacy when it neglects the home. Healthy leadership honors family life, learns to say "no" to sustain a bigger "yes," and understands that pastoring the home does not compete with the church: it qualifies us to serve better. In Chapter 13 (Ministerial Ethics) we established protective borders: integrity, transparency, accountability, and dignified treatment. Ethics is not a brake on mission; it is the road on which mission advances without the wounded.

With Chapter 14 (Caring for the Congregation) we came down to the ground of daily shepherding: listening, visiting, accompanying, ordering ministries around real people. There, the Gospel comes close and Discipleship leaves a mark. Finally, Chapter 15 (Teamwork and Delegation) pulled us out of solitary heroics: sharing the load is not losing control; it is obeying the Lord who distributes gifts, raises ministries, and multiplies reach. Delegating in prayer, with a humble heart and clear processes, turns the work into a symphony and not a solo.

If we bring all these pieces together, a coherent movement appears: Presence (seek God), Word (hear and obey), home (order and testimony), ethics (boundaries that guard), shepherding (people before programs), and team (shared load). This movement anchors and powers what was learned in Evangelism and Discipleship. A leader who dwells in the Presence and loves the Word



evangelizes with compassion and disciples with patience. A leader who guards his home and ethics sustains the testimony when the winds come. A leader who cares for the flock and delegates wisely multiplies hands, voices, and hearts in the service of the Mission.

Our prayer, as we close this section, is simple: “Lord, make us healthy leaders, with servants’ souls, team-strengthened backs, and eyes fixed on You.”

And now we take the next step. If leadership is the heart that pumps, we have to examine the whole body. The next section —Healthy Churches— will look at the congregation as an organism, as a family: vital processes, structures that serve and do not hinder, practices that care, indicators that measure what really matters, and an apostolic culture that makes the Gospel its daily atmosphere. From the healthy leader to the healthy church: let’s go together.



Final self-evaluation questions

1. Where is it seen in my weekly agenda that God is first —fixed times of prayer/ Word, fasting, monthly retreat, accountability— and what concrete fruit has it produced in my character and decisions in the last thirty days?
2. What daily devotional reading plan and weekly exegetical Bible study am I following right now, and how do I ensure that I preach directly from the biblical text studied and not from others' sermons?
3. If my spouse/children were asked today, would they say that my leadership blesses the home? What limits protect meals, rest, and family commitments, and what adjustments will I make next to care better for my home?
4. What sensitive decisions or processes in my ministry—finances, data handling, conflicts of interest, protection of minors—still rest on my personal judgment instead of clear, transparent, and auditable procedures? (List two and commit to one verifiable measure you will implement in the next fourteen days—for example, dual signature, minutes, two-adult protocol, conflict-of-interest declaration.)
5. What shepherding system (map, visits, follow-up) do I have active and how do I measure that people are being cared for? Who are three people I visited this month and three I must prioritize next week?
6. Which three responsibilities must I stop doing in the next sixty days and who will assume them? What level of delegation, permissions, and budget will they have, and when will I review the result to adjust?





SECTION IV: HEALTHY CHURCHES

*How can we articulate
biblical practices to have
healthy churches?*



Introduction to Healthy Churches

The local church is the visible body of Christ on earth. In it, His character, His mission, and His transforming power are reflected. Therefore, the health of a church is measured not only by the number of members or activities, but by the quality of its spiritual life, its brotherly love, its doctrinal faithfulness, and its commitment to God's mission.

This section builds on what has already been developed about Evangelism and Discipleship: the Gospel sends us to people, and Discipleship forms those people to maturity in Christ. In turn, it links with Healthy Leadership: without leaders of proven character, biblical vision, and transparent processes, the life of the church suffers.

Here we take the next step: ordering the house so that what we proclaim in Evangelism and cultivate in Discipleship is sustainable, reproducible, and consistent with the testimony of Christ among the people.

A healthy church is one where spirituality is cultivated as a foundation, where worship is genuine and Christ-centered, and where the church is a family that loves and welcomes. It is a place where ministries function in harmony, systems operate with transparency and order, and stewardship reflects gratitude and responsibility before God. Thus, the mission does not depend on occasional impulses, but on a stable culture that breathes Gospel in everything.

This section invites us to look honestly at the condition of our congregations and to strengthen them in every dimension: spiritual, relational, structural, and missional. Because the purpose is not only to have large churches, but healthy churches; not only active ministries, but congregations transformed by the presence of God.

May each chapter help us discern, with humility and faith, how to build churches that glorify Christ, care for people, and reflect the life of the Kingdom—where Evangelism convenes, Discipleship forms, Healthy Leadership sustains, and the whole church grows for the glory of God.



Chapter 16 – Church Spirituality

The book of Acts as a pattern for a spiritual church

1. Introduction

In a time of accelerated secularization, moral depravity, and subjective truths, the modern apostolic church must maintain its doctrinal credibility through faithful doctrine, Christ-centered preaching, and missional urgency. This is only possible if the local church is healthy, vibrant, and rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit while demonstrating strong spiritual disciplines.

For examples of these disciplines, we need not look to secularism or to creeds or denominational traditions: our highest models are in the book of Acts. Acts is a powerful and practical model for building locally strong churches, for it provides a firsthand account of how the early church operated under the Holy Spirit's guidance; it captures the birth and growth of local churches, showing principles and practices that led to spiritual vitality and impact.

In this lesson, we will explore the unique characteristics of six early apostolic communities. In doing so, we will identify meaningful practices that inspire and foster a healthy, contextualized, spiritually rich apostolic cell church.

2. Fellowship and unity: the church in Jerusalem

2.1. Biblical–historical context

The events of Acts 2:42–47 take place shortly after Pentecost (A.D. 30–33), a time when the Spirit empowered believers to live in unity and with boldness. The early church was composed mostly of Jewish believers, familiar with Jewish customs, the Temple, and the Old Testament Scriptures.

- V. 42: They devoted themselves to four key practices: the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.
- V. 43: There was awe among the people because of the apostolic miracles, which made manifest the power of God.



- Vv. 44–45: They practiced radical generosity, supplying everyone’s needs. This reflected the brothers’ love and unity.
- V. 46: They met daily in the Temple courts and in homes, eating together with glad and sincere hearts.
- V. 47: They praised God, had favor with the people, and there was growth, since the Lord added new believers every day.

2.2. A great example

There is a growing phenomenon in Christianity suggesting that one can be saved without attending church or being in active fellowship with it. Although this belief is spreading, it is not new. For decades, people have maintained that they can serve the Lord from the privacy of home with little or no interaction with a local assembly.

In contrast, the biblical expectation is a faith lived in the body of Christ, with the brothers gathered and participating in congregational life: persevering in teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42–47); not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together but stirring one another up to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24–25); as one body with diverse gifts, growing in unity and maturity through the ministries (Ephesians 4:11–16).

The church in Jerusalem, as described to us in the opening chapters of Acts, serves as a precious example of what a spiritually healthy church in fellowship and unity should be.

2.3. Pastoral application

Again, the church in Jerusalem—with its prayer life, its fellowship, and its good works—becomes a precious example for us. As pastors and leaders of the flock, today we must strive to:

- FOSTER functional small groups that meet people’s social and spiritual needs.
- CELEBRATE special church services aimed at building unity, mutual acceptance, and service.
- INCLUDE in our pastoral lectionary sermons and lessons on unity.



2.4. Pastoral reflection

- Why do you think the idea of being saved without a local church is growing today? Identify three cultural factors and outline a pastoral response for each.
- How would you respond to the one who says, “I love Jesus, but I don’t need the church”?
- How does Hebrews 10:24–25 address the idea of a “private faith” that rejects congregational participation?

3. Commitment to the five ministries: the church in Antioch

3.1. Biblical–historical context

Acts 11:19–26 records the establishment of the church in Antioch, where the disciples were first called “Christians.” Now the Gospel expands beyond the Jewish community and includes Gentiles, positioning Antioch as a church inclusive from an ethnic and cultural standpoint, and as an important sending center: it was the starting point of Paul’s first missionary journey with Barnabas. Acts 13:2–3: “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

3.2. Ministries in collaboration

Acts 13:1: “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers...” The church of Antioch is a model of a healthy congregation because of its practical dedication to the ministerial principles later formulated in Ephesians 4:11–12, and which today we know as the “fivefold ministry”; that is: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. It is true that these five ministries are not mentioned explicitly in the Acts of the Apostles, but they can be inferred if one analyzes the different roles operating in collaboration in the church at Antioch:

- APOSTLES: sent and recognized from Jerusalem (Acts 11:22).
- PROPHETS: came from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 11:27).
- EVANGELISTS: Paul and Barnabas, commissioned by the Spirit (Acts 13:3).
- PASTORS: Barnabas exercised pastoral leadership (Acts 11:26).
- TEACHERS: Paul and Barnabas taught for a year (Acts 11:26).



3.3. Pastoral application

We thus see that Antioch was a multicultural church, led by the Holy Spirit, operating in the five ministries, and with a missionary heart. As pastors and leaders of the flock, today we must strive to:

- Establish trust, belonging, and unity among laypeople.
- Identify and develop leaders with a calling and abilities for one of the five ministries (Ephesians 4:11).
- Build up the church by equipping the saints and allowing them to join collaborative teams so they can serve alongside those who share similar gifts (v. 12).

3.4. Pastoral reflection

- How can we identify and cultivate these five roles or ministries today? Develop a plan for each role for good utilization.
- With which ministry do you most identify? Define two practices to grow in it.
- Antioch was a missionary, sending church. How do we equip and release laypeople into their calling to missions —local or global?

4. Faithfulness and generosity: the church in Philippi

4.1. Biblical–historical context

Philippi, a Roman colony in eastern Macedonia (modern-day Greece), is the first place in Europe where, according to the biblical record, the Gospel was preached. There the Lord opened Lydia’s heart and transformed the jailer, and from their households the church began to be consolidated. The church in Philippi, founded by Paul, stands out for its generous faithfulness and Christian hospitality. Its close bond with the Apostle is seen in missionary support and in testimonies such as Lydia’s, who opened her house to the work, or the jailer’s, whose conversion had eloquent fruits of repentance (Acts 16; Philippians 4).

4.2. Notable generosity

Though not wealthy, the church in Philippi was exceptionally generous, sending repeated offerings to support Paul even in his imprisonment (Philippians 4:15–18). Paul describes their gifts as “a sweet-smelling aroma... well pleasing to God” —a sign of a spiritually healthy church with great generosity despite scarcity.



4.3. Hospitality and obedience

In Philippi, the work began with hospitality and obedience that turned homes into bases of mission: Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, was baptized with her household and put her home at the church's service, receiving God's servants and welcoming the congregation (Acts 16:14–15, 40); and the jailer, transformed by the Gospel, washed Paul and Silas's wounds, was baptized at once with his household, and hosted them with joy (Acts 16:33–34). Thus, domestic life was integrated with discipleship, and those households became gathering and witness points for the people.

4.4. Pastoral application

Taking as an example the generosity and faithfulness of the brothers in Philippi, today we, as pastors and leaders, must strive to:

- Institute a “persevering missionary offering,” teaching stewardship and setting congregational goals to help sustain missions, with progress reports and field testimonies (Philippians 4:15–18).
- Raise networks of “homes at the service of the Lord,” identifying and training host families and defining evangelism and discipleship guidelines so that each home functions as a preaching and retention point (Acts 16:14–15, 33–34).
- Link conversion, baptism, and practical service by establishing a route; for example 2–4–6 months —proclamation of the Gospel, baptisms, and incorporation as a cell group; and accompany hospitality and pastoral care with mentoring (Acts 16:15, 33–34).

4.5. Pastoral reflection

- How does the church in Philippi challenge our perspectives on giving in times of scarcity?
- What concrete steps foster a culture of hospitality and obedience?
- In what ways can our homes become gathering and witness points, integrating daily life with discipleship?



5. Committed to God’s mission: the church in Thessalonica

5.1. Biblical–historical context

Thessalonica, a key port in Macedonia (northern Greece) and the district capital, was located on the Via Egnatia, a commercial artery connecting east and west. It had a Jewish synagogue (Acts 17:1) and a setting of strong idolatry (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul reasoned in the synagogue “for three Sabbaths” (Acts 17:2), some believed, and opposition soon arose: a riot against Jason and the brothers, which forced Paul’s nighttime departure to Berea (Acts 17:5–10).

The church in Thessalonica was one of the most mission-oriented in the New Testament. Despite its youth in the Gospel and persecution, the Thessalonians became an example to Macedonia and Achaia for their “work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope” (1 Thessalonians 1:3); also for their sacrificial love, constant evangelization, diligent work, holiness, and sober life in view of the hope of Christ’s coming (1 Thessalonians 4, 5).

5.2. They loved sacrificially

The faith of the brothers in Thessalonica “sounded forth” in the region (1 Thessalonians 1:8). That is, they did not keep the Gospel to themselves but lived as a missionary church; they lived with urgency, not out of anxiety but out of conviction regarding the truth of Christ’s return, which moved them to action, not apathy (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11). Their love was so eloquent and sacrificial that Paul said they needed no instruction (1 Thessalonians 4:9), although he exhorted them to abound more in it. And their future hope motivated them to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8), to serve with dedication (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12), and to be spiritually alert (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

5.3. Pastoral application

From the remarkable example of the church in Thessalonica, as pastors and leaders of the Lord’s church, today we must strive to:

- Prepare our people to love when it costs.
- Guide them to balance urgency with faithfulness in daily life.



- Help the brothers see themselves as missionaries in their daily lives.
- Teach the coming of Christ as a driver of mission; not only as doctrine.

5.4. Pastoral reflection

- What challenges do we face today as a church in a hostile secular context?
- Am I encouraging each member to see himself/herself as a daily missionary?
- What obstacles hinder the testimony and how do we address them?

6. Devotion to the Scriptures and teaching: the church in Berea

6.1. Biblical–historical context

After persecution in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas came to Berea, in Macedonia, and went to the local synagogue (Acts 17:10). There, the Berean believers were called “more noble” because they received the Word with all readiness and examined the Scriptures daily to verify Paul’s teaching (Acts 17:11).

The fruit was evident: many in Berea believed, including prominent Greek women and not a few men (Acts 17:12). And when opponents came from Thessalonica, the community protected Paul and brought him to the sea en route to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained there temporarily and afterward rejoined Paul (Acts 17:13–15).

The church in Berea models a spirituality that unites openness to the Word, diligent study, critical thinking, and resilience under pressure. We thus see that a healthy church receives the Word willingly, contrasts it daily, and adjusts its life to what God has said, thereby cultivating spiritual discernment and firmness in the face of opposition.

6.2. Hunger for the Word and discernment

Cultivating hunger for the Word implies listening with enthusiasm to preaching and teaching, studying the Scriptures together as a church, and promoting reading plans with devotionals and small groups —face-to-face or virtual— to integrate daily life with discipleship.



But it also requires a culture of discernment: it is not enough to say “because the preacher said so,” but to examine and confirm all teaching in the light of the Word, avoiding “idle babblings... and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 6:20), so that, as in Berea, the result is this: “many believed, including prominent Greek women and men” (Acts 17:12).

6.3. Pastoral application

Following the example of devotion and adherence to biblical doctrine of the brothers in Berea, let us work by employing:

- EXPOSITORY PREACHING THAT FEEDS BIBLICAL COMMITMENT. Plan series through full passages, using the steps context–theology–application and teaching the observation–interpretation–application process.
- SERMON OUTLINES WITH PARTICIPATION. Provide outlines with the text, the central idea, spaces to fill in, and 1–2 application questions for the week.
- SMALL-GROUP TEACHING BASED ON THE OUTLINE. Use the same observation–interpretation–application framework, questions for discussion, prayer that applies what was taught, and concrete commitments, with trained hosts to follow up on new believers.

6.4. Pastoral reflection

- Do I practice and teach humble, non-naive openness that contrasts all teaching with Scripture, as in the church in Berea?
- Am I fostering a culture that tests teachings biblically without falling into skepticism or division, establishing healthy processes of evaluation and correction in love to preserve unity?
- Am I cultivating and promoting a daily commitment to Scripture (reading, meditation, and obedience) with accountability mechanisms?



7. Leadership development through mentoring: the church in Ephesus

7.1. Biblical–historical context

Paul came to Ephesus after leaving Antioch (Acts 18:22–23), Apollos having passed through there beforehand (Acts 18:24–26). The Apostle found disciples who knew only John’s baptism and led them to the full apostolic message, receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2–6). This group of about twelve men knew repentance, but not yet the power of Pentecost.

From this background, the church Paul raised in Ephesus offers a model of relational discipleship, intentional training, and multiplication that reminds us that a church’s health is measured not only by size or programs, but by its capacity to raise up and send godly leaders. Therefore, as pastors, it is fitting to ask ourselves: am I multiplying leaders or merely managing ministries? Am I preparing the next generation or only building my platform?

7.2. Paul’s practice and its results

Paul remained more than three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31), teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9–10). He not only preached; he lived among them, forging solid apostolic leadership. His farewell address to the elders (Acts 20) distills spiritual fatherhood: effective mentoring is transmitted through time, transparency, and, yes, tears.

These were leaders developed under Paul’s mentoring in Ephesus:

- **TIMOTHY:** joined Paul on the second journey. He served and was trained in Ephesus.
- **PRISCILLA AND AQUILA:** hosted the church at home, corrected Apollos, and risked their lives for Paul.
- **EPHESIAN ELDERS:** appointed by the Holy Spirit and exhorted to shepherd (Acts 20:28).

7.3. Pastoral application

Considering the great mentoring work done by Paul in Ephesus, let us ask ourselves:

- Are we raising up “Timothys” who will mentor others (2 Timothy 2:2)?



- Are we equipping “Priscillas” and “Aquilas” to disciple others?
- Are we investing in a sustained way in the key teams that uphold the church’s pastoral care?

7.4. Pastoral reflection

- Why are authentic teacher–disciple relationships crucial for leadership development?
- What obstacles keep you from investing more in deep mentoring, and how could you overcome them?
- If Ephesus is the standard, what should you change in your approach to leadership development?

8. Biblical model for a spiritually healthy church

Church	Reference	Practical Application	Reflection
JERUSALEM FELLOWSHIP AND UNITY	Acts 2:42–47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster functional small groups • Teach on unity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice prayer, teaching, and fellowship • Radical generosity • Daily meetings, in the temple and in homes
ANTIOCH COMMITMENT TO THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY	Acts 11:19–26; 13:1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust, belonging, and unity among laypeople • Leadership development in the five ministries • Collaborative teams by similar gifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate ministries for good utilization • Define practices to grow in them • Form a sending church with a missionary heart
PHILIPPI GENEROSITY, HOSPITALITY, AND FAITHFULNESS	Acts 16; Philippians 4:15–18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice missionary stewardship • Networks of “homes at the service of the Lord” • Roadmap with mentoring to multiply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generosity despite poverty • Culture of hospitality and obedience • Daily life integrated into discipleship



Church	Reference	Practical Application	Reflection
THESSALONICA MISSIONAL URGENCY AND SACRIFICIAL LOVE	1 Thess. 1:6– 8; 4:9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance urgency with faithfulness • Love despite the cost • The coming of Christ as a driver of mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelism amid persecution • Love in action • Urgency based on Christ’s return.
BEREA DEVOTION TO SCRIPTURE AND DISCERNMENT	Acts 17:10– 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expository preaching with outline • Connect preaching with small-group Bible study • Teach discernment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical yet enthusiastic commitment to the Scriptures • Daily study • Resilience in the face of opposition.
EPHESUS LEADERSHIP MULTIPLICATION	Acts 19–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize and promote mentoring • Develop “Timothys,” “Priscillas,” “Aquilas” • Invest in pastoral care teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge authentic relationships • Overcome obstacles that hinder deep mentoring • Focus on leadership development.

9. Conclusion

Through the six churches studied in this chapter, the book of Acts offers us the Holy Spirit’s blueprint for a healthy church: faithful doctrine, a life of prayer, real fellowship, expository preaching, constant mission, and leadership formation. Let us not merely admire it: let us practice it with urgency, perseverance, and dependence on the Lord, so that our congregational life may be biblical, Christ-centered, and committed to the Great Commission.

10. Self-evaluation questions

1. Am I cultivating a congregational life of prayer, fellowship, and mutual help that is noticeable in the day-to-day of the church?
2. Am I identifying and developing brothers and sisters in the five ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) and making them collaborate in unity?



3. Am I teaching and practicing generous stewardship and visible hospitality, even when there is scarcity?
4. Am I forming the church to live on mission with sober urgency, sacrificial love, and daily witness outside the temple?
5. Am I modeling hunger for Scripture and a culture of discernment that examines everything in the light of the Bible and obeys what it understands?
6. Am I investing time and heart in relational mentoring that multiplies faithful leaders, beyond my programs and platform?
7. Am I measuring with simplicity and honesty concrete fruits —prayer, fellowship, mission, generosity, biblical formation, and multiplication of leaders— and adjusting course when needed?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017.
- Green, Gene L. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Keener, Craig S. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2015.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Early Christian Mission*. 2 vols. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Stott, John. *The Message of Acts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.



Chapter 17 – Worship Liturgy

Uniting in worship that is holy and acceptable to God

1. Introduction

Worship is the heart of the service in an apostolic church. It is not an add-on, but a foundation of our congregational life. Gathering and uniting to worship the Lord is an act of obedience and identity. Scripture summons us: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” (Psalm 95:6)

All creation —visible and invisible— renders worship to God. From the vastness of the heavens to the leaf that falls to the earth, its very existence proclaims His glory. That worship is not deliberate, but the purpose for which it was created.

The heavenly host worships as part of its being. The seraphim were created to lead worship in Heaven, without ceasing. We, bearers of His image, are the only ones with the capacity to choose to worship. God granted us free will so that our worship springs from a relational covenant: we worship God for who He is and for all that He is. When, being sinners, we are redeemed, our worship becomes fully oriented to Jesus Christ and becomes the deep commitment of souls atoned by His blood.

Worship is expressed in two complementary ways: personal and congregational. Personally, we enter the secret place to worship in intimacy, sustained by our relationship with God. Congregationally, that devotion is integrated into the people of God who draw near to His throne with reverence through singing, prayer, the proclamation of the Word, and offerings.

Since it is for God, evidently worship in our services requires excellence. And to attain such excellence it is necessary to have a liturgy —an intentional order that unifies the church to offer God worship that is worthy, holy, and acceptable.

This chapter will show how that order, rooted in Scripture and sensitive to the Spirit’s work, should guide our encounter with the Lord and serve the mission of the Gospel. We will proceed as follows:



- **FIRST**, we will understand the biblical foundations of the worship liturgy, its main elements and their meanings.
- **THEN**, we will address the roles linked to that liturgy in our church.
- **FINALLY**, we will look at cultural models—traditional and contemporary—of the worship liturgy practiced in our congregations.

2. Biblical foundations of the worship liturgy

2.1. Some Scriptures on the subject

- **COLOSSIANS 3:16**: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
- **PSALM 95:6**: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”
- **JOHN 4:24**: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
- **PSALM 29:2**: “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”
- **HEBREWS 12:28**: “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve [worship] God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”
- **PSALM 66:4**: “All the earth shall worship You And sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name.”
- **1 CORINTHIANS 14:40**: “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

These Scriptures frame worship as a reverent response to the character of God, expressed with gratitude, truth, and order —both personal and congregational— and they legitimize the use of a liturgy that guides the church toward a service “decently and in order.”



2.2. From Israel to the Church: order, reverence, and symbol

From the tabernacle to the temple, the Old Testament shows worship marked by order, reverence, and symbolism. These patterns prepared the ground for Christian practice: the worship of the people is articulated in times, spaces, and actions that declare the holiness of God.

The Psalms are not only private devotions; they are poetry and theology intended for congregational gatherings, where the Lord's faithfulness and majesty are publicly proclaimed. In the New Testament, apostolic teaching—for example, 1 Corinthians 14:40 and Colossians 3:16—insists that everything be done for edification and with good order, underscoring that the form of worship must serve the purpose of exalting Christ and edifying His church.

3. What worship liturgy is and what it is for

Worship liturgy is the ordered framework of the service that orients the congregation toward an encounter with God. It integrates prayer, singing, reading and proclamation of the Word, offerings, and other holy acts —thanksgiving, altar ministry— into a sequence with theological and pastoral meaning.

It is not mere ritualism: it is a pedagogy of the Gospel that leads us from praise to worship and from worship to commitment, aligning heart and mind with the holiness of God and His purpose in us.

Its value lies in unifying the church in a coherent voice of praise, creating an environment conducive to the work of the Holy Spirit, and forming new and long-time believers in holy habits. In sum, worship liturgy is not only a technique for presenting the service; it is the intentional order with which the people of God present themselves before the Lord to offer worship that is worthy, holy, and acceptable.

4. Elements of the worship liturgy

4.1. The congregation

Psalm 149:1: “Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints.”



Congregational participation is essential in worship: a church that sings together, worships together. This element occupies the center when structuring worship in our services. A key factor in the gathering of the saints is the unification of the service: when the people raise a single voice, the heart of the church is readied to receive the Word and for the Spirit of God to work with freedom. God responds to the worship of His people with direction that unites, edifies, and reveals His will.

4.2. The songs

The selection of songs for congregational worship must prioritize the participation of the whole church and, in addition, lead it toward true worship. There may be pleasant or positive songs, but if they do not direct praise to God they are not appropriate for congregational worship. Ignoring this principle results in a superficial liturgy, centered on ourselves rather than on God.

Paul guides the church regarding singing: Colossians 3:16. The Apostle gives singing a formative weight comparable to that of teaching and preaching. Therefore, the biblical precision and reverence required of the proclamation of the Word must also be applied when choosing the songs of the service.

4.3. The Spirit of God

Acts 2:2: “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”

Congregational services have a holy purpose and, therefore, a singular experience. As the church unites in prayer and song, the Spirit of God inhabits the place where He is worshiped. The end of the worship liturgy is to lead us to the feet of Jesus. His response is the outpouring of His Spirit. As believers filled with the Holy Spirit, we long for His presence and His power in every service.

The Spirit of God is like the rain, and our worship is the dew that evaporates and rises to the throne. We pray for His presence to fill the temple from the first prayer, through the singing, to the preaching of the Word and the response at the altar. Without the manifestation of His presence and power, services are reduced to mere religious practices. As apostolic worshipers, we aspire to live and minister ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit in our midst.



5. Music at the service of worship

5.1. What is the function of praise in worship?

Psalm 150:4–5: “Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!”

Music, including the use of instruments, plays a central role in the expression of worship during services. Through what we sing and how we perform it, music links the heart of the church with the presence of God. It is an emotional and expressive means that, rightly directed, leads the congregation to a response of faith and obedience.

God has granted musical gifts and talents to the body of Christ so that the church may express itself collectively in praise. Psalm 150 establishes that instruments serve the act of praising. When music is offered to the Lord with gratitude and reverence, it becomes a catalyst for freedom, joy, and comfort.

5.2. The spirit of the praise minister

A musician or singer filled with the Spirit is not a mere performer: he is a minister. Just as the preacher proclaims the Gospel with the Word, the musician serves the Gospel with his instrument and his song. The one who leads has the responsibility to unite and focus the others so that, as one body, they may be the channel through which the work of the Holy Spirit flows.

The motivation of the spiritual musician must not be to entertain the people, but to minister to the Lord. 1 Chronicles 13:8: “Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.” David models the psalmist who pleases God with his playing. We long to offer music that draws God’s heart; He inhabits the praises of His people. If worship is the painting, the church’s musicians and singers are the brushes that help render that devotion before the Lord.

5.3. Choosing musicians and singers for worship

Ephesians 4:1: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” Along with preaching, few ministries influence the congregation as much as worship teams. Therefore, the first decision—who will serve as



musicians and singers— is deeply spiritual. It must not be based only on skill, pitch, or platform presence, but on maturity, character, and calling. This choice, made with prayer and discernment, can bless or limit the life of worship.

Those who aspire to serve in music must be as passionate about God as about the talents He entrusted to them. Living according to the principles of worship will allow them to reach their maximum potential to edify. If there is spiritual maturity, the music ministry will reflect it; if it is lacking, tensions will appear in the very dynamic of congregational worship.

6. The role of worship leaders in the liturgy

6.1. What distinguishes a worship leader from other singers?

Singers and musicians support the congregation in worship; the worship leader, by contrast, leads. Like a conductor who unifies entrances and dynamics, he guides the flow and direction of worship toward the Lord, helping the church raise a single voice.

The choice of a worship leader must be valued with the same care as that of a preacher or teacher. His testimony, character, and spiritual maturity are reflected in the exercise of the ministry. A worship leader represents the church spiritually and must assume that responsibility with reverence. It is common for congregants and visitors to form an impression of the church, in part, from what they see and perceive of the worship leader.

6.2. The spirit of the worship leader

Hebrews 13:15: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

Imagine the congregational moment of worship as an inner court that leads into the presence of God. In that setting, the worship leader tends and channels the “sacrifices of praise” that the church presents. We bring before the Lord a holy and acceptable sacrifice; the worship leader helps that offering be whole, without distractions or protagonism, and worthy to be placed upon the altar. Perfection is not demanded of the leader, the singers, nor the musicians; what is demanded is a surrendered heart and a leadership that unites the entire congregation —worship team and members— in an act of worship that is orderly, reverent, and Christ-centered.



7. Traditional vs. contemporary liturgy

John 4:24: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

7.1. Do styles and methods matter?

There is not a single valid method or style for the worship liturgy. The priority is the content: Christ-centered message, reverence, and biblical foundations. The church does not take its cues from the world; the act of worship is holy. Pastors and leaders must watch over why something is presented and how it is presented, in order to lead the congregation to true worship.

7.2. How does culture influence the expression of the liturgy?

Demography and culture influence expression —exuberant or sober— not the essence of worship. Some churches sing with greater effusiveness; others, with recollection. Some prefer energetic music; others, slower tempos. We must know that God does not value styles as we do. He looks at the spirit with which worship is offered, as well as its faithfulness to the truth.

7.3. Traditional worship liturgy

The traditional liturgy organizes the service with a clear and stable order: opening prayer, Scripture reading, songs with biblically solid lyrics, communications/announcements, offering, preaching, and altar call. Each element has its moment and purpose within the service. The traditional liturgy is often found in churches with a long trajectory, where form and structure have been transmitted for generations. Its strength is to maintain a sacrificial and holy attitude toward worship, underscoring the centrality of the Word and reverence. Its challenge may be to welcome people little familiar with traditional practices, which is why it requires hospitality and some orientations that facilitate participation.

7.4. Contemporary worship liturgy

The contemporary liturgy emphasizes accessibility and participation, seeking to flow with fewer formal interruptions. The songs often highlight the believer’s experience and his response to God, seeking connection and clarity for those joining for the first time. This liturgy is common in urban, young, or multicultural churches. Its strength is breadth: it can integrate diverse styles and contexts, welcoming different profiles in the same service. Its risk is to neglect theological depth or reverence if expressiveness and motivation outweigh biblical clarity and the holy sense of the act. Therefore, it is advisable to balance accessibility with doctrinal solidity and order.



8. Practical application and implementation questions

8.1. Structure and strength of the worship liturgy

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS:

1. Is there a defined liturgical structure and is it followed consistently in the services?
2. How would you assess the order of the service: is there a clear and coherent flow between the elements?
3. Does the liturgy anticipate moments of change or pauses for the Spirit's guidance? How are they managed when they occur?
4. Does the sequence integrate singing, prayer, preaching, and the altar call into a meaningful unity?

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Draft a standard order of service (template) with responsible parties and indicative times.
- Include explicit “flex points” —brief margins for silence, prayer, testimonies, or spontaneous songs.
- Rehearse transitions between elements —who gives the cue, signals, bridge phrases.
- Review the order quarterly with the pastoral team to correct bottlenecks and other issues.

8.2. Spirit-focused liturgy

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS:

1. What concrete adjustments would favor greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's guidance during the service?
2. Are the songs God-centered and rooted in Scripture, or do they focus primarily on human experience?



3. How does each participant (musicians, worship leader, ushers, preacher) prepare spiritually before the service?

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Establish a brief time of prior consecration (prayer and Bible reading) for the whole team.
- Audit the song list: classify lyrics by biblical anchoring, Christ-centeredness, and function—inspiration, praise, communion, commitment, mission, doxology.
- Introduce guided response moments—intercession, biblical texts, reverent silence—with set duration.
- Train worship leaders in discernment: when to sustain, when to yield, when to conclude.

8.3. Styles, cultures, and the centrality of Christ

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS:

1. Is the congregation's demography well known and how different musical/liturgical styles favor its participation?
2. Does any style or culture dominate in such a way that it hinders the inclusion of others?
3. Does the liturgy keep Christ at the center, avoiding turning the experience into an end in itself?

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Map the demography—ages, cultural/linguistic backgrounds—and schedule stylistic rotations without losing theological coherence.
- Establish common criteria for every style: biblical lyrics, reverence, clarity in transitions, call to obedience.
- Offer brief orientations from the platform to facilitate newcomers' participation—explain when to stand, how to respond, what the altar call means.
- Evaluate monthly with a simple tool—three to five indicators: Christ-centeredness, order, participation, clarity, pastoral fruit—and adjust.



9. Conclusion

Congregational worship is a holy act whose end is to lead believers to an altar of praise and reverence before the Lord. People perform worship, but it does not belong to them: it belongs to God, for who He is and for the relationship we have with Him as His church.

As we participate in worship, it is fitting to maintain an order and structure that lift the congregation spiritually to give God what is due and, at the same time, ready us to receive from Him what He wants to give us. Abraham worshiped through obedience and willingness to sacrifice; and God provided the ram instead of Isaac.

The worship liturgy is the part the church offers: to prepare, unify, and present the best before the Lord. Organization and processes must not stifle the Spirit's movement, but serve as an altar upon which the Holy Spirit consumes our offering. Thus, God dwells in His holy temple and works in the hearts of His people.

10. Self-evaluation questions

1. Does my order of service clearly lead the congregation from praise to the response at the altar, leaving real spaces for the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
2. Is the song list we use biblically solid and Christ-centered, and is its weekly selection made with theological criteria —not only musical or of taste?
3. Do the leaders and musicians who serve show maturity, character, and a life of prayer in keeping with the ministry they exercise, or am I prioritizing ability over spirituality?
4. Does the cultural/stylistic expression of our liturgy include the whole church without diluting reverence, and keep Christ at the center of each element of the service?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carson, D. A., ed. *Worship by the Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Cherry, Constance M. *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
- Frame, John M. *Worship in Spirit and Truth*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996.
- Peterson, David G. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Ruth, Lester, and Swee Hong Lim. *Lovin' On Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017.
- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.



Chapter 18 – Culture of Love and Acceptance

Forming a church that loves, accepts, and welcomes

1. Introduction

Building an apostolic church with a culture of love and acceptance begins by creating an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome. Both members and those who visit us sincerely want to feel valued and respected. Every apostolic church must be a place where, with “open arms,” each person is received and welcomed, regardless of background or life situation.

The New Testament calls us to show this love and acceptance to everyone. Hebrews 13:2 says: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.” By practicing a culture of love and acceptance, the church reflects the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

A solid apostolic church, with love and acceptance as its foundation—open to believers and nonbelievers—will create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to experience the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter we will consider the following topics:

- Biblical foundation: a culture of love and acceptance
- What’s love got to do with it? The culture of love
- Importance of a strong culture of love and acceptance in the church
- Practical considerations: factors to take into account
- Reaching contemporary culture
- A faithful church in a diverse society

2. Biblical foundation for a culture of love and acceptance

2.1. In the Gospel and in the early church

The biblical foundation for a church to live a culture of love and acceptance is in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Let us look closely at His words in John 13:34–35:



“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” This supreme commandment establishes the greatest distinctive of His Church: a people marked by love.

From the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus invited people to follow Him, establishing the biblical principle of living in brotherly fellowship. When Jesus called those men, they were not yet formed disciples; nevertheless, He welcomed them and transformed them. Today, pastors and leaders must follow Christ’s example to cultivate a culture of love and acceptance toward the people the Lord sends.

The early church embodied this culture of love and acceptance not only on Sundays, but “every day.” Acts 2:42–47 describes how the first believers lived: they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. They shared with those in need and manifested unity and mutual love. “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.” (Acts 2:44)

2.2. Under the ministry of the apostle Paul

The apostle Paul expressed the same to the church in Thessalonica: “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). God desires that we work together in ministry, recognizing that each one is part of the Body of Christ. No person can carry out alone all the work ministry requires.

By developing within the church a culture of love and acceptance among faithful believers, the congregation becomes stronger. We are much more fruitful together than any individual alone. We need our brothers and sisters in the faith. We also need those who do not yet believe—yet one day will be believers! —to uphold and encourage the work of God.

The key question then arises: why is it so important to build a culture of love and acceptance in your church? God’s Word reminds us of the two most important commandments: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37–39).



3. What's love got to do with it?

After loving God —first— the Bible clearly declares the importance of the second: loving our neighbor. Fostering a strong culture of love and acceptance within the church is absolutely necessary. Jesus Himself sets the example and shows the seriousness of living and demonstrating our faith. In building a church based on love, all believers must follow Christ's example with every person around us.

In an article by Barry Voss (FaithLife Ministries) four main reasons are mentioned why a church should cultivate brotherly bonds:

- FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE of Jesus. He gathered twelve disciples (Luke 6:12–16) and consistently taught, mentored, and developed fellowship with them, making this an essential part of His ministry.
- EVERY PERSON wants to feel valued and needed. Christian love recognizes that dignity and gives it a real place in the life of the church.
- FOSTER FELLOWSHIP among believers and with those who are not yet formally part of the congregation. Building relationships inside and outside membership is key. We all need a brother or sister in Christ to turn to in times of need to receive love and support.
- REMAIN CONNECTED to the Body of Christ. Raising a culture of love and acceptance in our apostolic churches helps each person stay united to the life of the church.

See the following table, taken from the book *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore* by Thom and Joani Schultz (2013). The authors explain: “These four acts of love — radical hospitality, fearless conversation, genuine humility, and divine anticipation— will make your church irresistible, because Jesus is irresistible. These four acts of love really work, and we can honestly say we have seen water flow in the desert countless times, week after week, over the past years.”



FOUR ACTS OF LOVE		
What many think	What Jesus would say	What we should practice
“I feel judged.”	“You are welcome just as you are.”	RADICAL HOSPITALITY
“I don’t want a sermon. They don’t care what I think.”	“Your thoughts are welcome; your doubts, too.”	FEARLESS CONVERSATION
“Church people are a bunch of hypocrites.”	“We are all in this together.”	GENUINE HUMILITY
“Your God is irrelevant to my life.”	“God is here, ready to connect with you in a new way.”	DIVINE ANTICIPATION

4. Strong culture of love and acceptance in the church

4.1. The importance of this culture

The apostolic church is a place where many find love, joy, and peace; a refuge and a setting of miracles. It is where so many people feel welcome—“Welcome home!”—and perceive it as “home away from home.” The church is the space where people from different backgrounds connect spiritually with God and, at the same time, are linked to one another. In short, there we not only learn about God but also learn to become integrated into the Body of Christ, the People of God.

The next question is then very important: how do we begin to forge in the church a healthy culture of love and acceptance? Here are five steps to help your church cultivate that culture:



Steps		How to build a healthy church community
1	FOCUS ON CHRIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on Jesus’ teachings of love and acceptance • Jesus must be at the center of everything
2	FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be leaders who build relationships and set the example • Help people connect and build relationships with each other • Follow up on members’ connections, call them, send messages, and pray for them
3	FOSTER TEAMWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize teams to meet goals • Bring people together according to their natural and spiritual gifts • Create projects that require people to work as a team
4	USE THE STRATEGY OF JESUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups are evangelism and discipleship ministry • Small groups help build stronger and deeper relationships • Small groups provide accountability and pastoral care
5	DESIGN FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a spiritual environment that keeps people connected to each other • Follow Jesus’ example of breaking bread during fellowship • Follow Jesus’ example of ministering during fellowship

According to Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, in *Transformational Church* (2010): “Leaders and members in transformational churches know that it is crucial to move new believers toward meaningful relationships with church members. No matter how simple your church’s structure or process may be, your leaders will have to sacrifice to make room in their lives and live in fellowship through small groups. Transformational churches have made that sacrifice willingly.”

4.2. Congregational life

It is worth repeating: Jesus must be at the center of everything! Hebrews 3:1 says: “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.”

Strengthening, within our apostolic churches, brotherly bonds and relationships that build up the faith fortifies all ministries and helps members remain connected to the Body of Christ. Without these relationships, a church can easily crumble or see some disconnect. The desired result of cultivating a culture based on love and the acceptance of all people is a network of relationships that upholds the unity of the Body of Christ.

A healthy church—together with its leadership—will pray and work purposefully to build a solid apostolic congregational life. The goal is to keep the family of faith—the family of God—strategically connected to one another. Doing so allows us to involve members, preventing them from drifting or growing cold. As is often said in pastoral terms: it is always easier to care for a sheep than to have to go and rescue it.

5. Practical considerations

5.1. Factors to take into account

Church life implies active participation both in congregational activities and in the church’s witness to society. Church members are called to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of all (see 1 Corinthians 12). Every believer is expected to contribute to a culture where love and acceptance are the main focus.

This congregational life marked by love and acceptance is for all nations. The apostle Paul puts it this way: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28). This unity transcends cultural, social, and economic barriers, and manifests the inclusive nature of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45). Therefore, putting others first translates into actively



listening to people and showing genuine interest in their qualities and story. It means truly attending to their questions, concerns, and even their doubts. The following statement holds true: “People usually seek relationships with those who show genuine interest in them.”

5.2. The five “be’s” for creating close relationships

Topic		Details
1	BE THE EXAMPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strongest salt in the world has no effect unless it comes into contact with something
2	DRAW NEAR TO ALL PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inside and outside the Community of Faith • Jesus spent most of His time with those outside the religious establishment... with sinners!
3	BE AWARE OF YOUR SPIRITUAL POSITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your identity in Christ • It is not friendship with the world’s system, but friendship with people • Enter the relationship with the goal of saving souls
4	BE THE INFLUENCER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to revisit our former environments without remaining there permanently
5	BE A BARRIER BREAKER!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a barbecue; just that simple! • Involve others in your daily activities • Most important: be a healthy church yourself!

6. Reaching contemporary culture

The transformational leader par excellence, Jesus Christ, emphasized the importance of serving and giving, as already mentioned in Mark 10:45. All believers are encouraged to look outward, to their surroundings, in search of ways to love and serve others. The Bible presents human life in terms of relationships. Lesslie Newbigin (1989) writes: “The Bible does not speak of ‘humanity’ but of ‘all the families of the earth’ or ‘all nations.’”



In today's society, the institution of the family evokes very diverse realities; for many, pain and fractures as well. The apostolic church is the ideal place to manifest the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. Our culture has not yet fully experienced what the loving family of God —the Church— means. She offers a renewed perspective on the importance of all families and how each one is valuable before God.

Such a vision drives a paradigm shift: God uses His Church as an instrument to save the world. Let us not forget the environment Jesus created during His public ministry: “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” (Luke 15:1–2)

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Luke 4:18)

The Word declares that Christ, through His Spirit, gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to edify the church. If we join this truth with the essential marks of the early church —Acts 2— we behold an organism God uses every day to reach and save the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. The role of the apostolic church is immense: to offer a network of small groups through the Strategy of Jesus that provides support in any circumstance.

Offering the best to each soul is not easy, but it must be natural in the church. Today's apostolic church must be attentive to each person's needs and understand who they are, what they do best, and where they come from. To implement Jesus Christ's transformative model, leadership —including laypeople— must be actively involved with people in the life of the church, creating bridges that bring everyone closer to the Body of Christ.



7. A faithful church in a diverse society

The Apostolic Church must move from an inward focus to an outward focus. This implies that leadership ceases to be merely administrative and becomes formative and equipping of the people. The challenges are enormous: Can the Church—as a visible body—be transformed so that our Christianity and discipleship are proactive in generating change in today’s culture? Can we reach with the Gospel those who live in deep crises because of social evils?

Today we face real tensions, for many social norms have changed and certain realities once rejected are now considered acceptable. The pastoral question is not whether we open the doors, but how we love and accompany each person toward Christ. Can we receive in the church people in same-sex relationships and love them like Jesus, treating them with dignity, grace, and truth? Can we reach those historically considered “undesirable” and walk with them through a process of repentance, faith, and restoration?

The challenge falls on leadership and the spiritual health of the church: to equip every believer to love all with the love of Christ, upholding grace and truth without confusing acceptance with approval. Jesus is our only hope and the model of a welcome that invites, confronts with love, and transforms.

8. Conclusion

Time has passed quickly. We need to rethink the traditional way of looking at culture in order to understand the dynamic role of the Apostolic Assembly and thus better help the people of today’s world to believe in Jesus, receive Jesus, and live for Jesus.

Every apostolic church and its leadership must prioritize forming a culture of love and acceptance. By praying and building genuine relationships, we will be able to create an environment where people feel important, heard, strengthened, and valued. In that way, and through fervent prayer and Spirit-filled leadership, both members and new believers receive support in their emotional and spiritual well-being.

Building a loving church requires intentional effort and constant commitment: training leaders in pastoral care, facing challenges, and preserving spiritual health and unity. By applying



these principles, our church reflects the love of Christ and offers a place where all are accompanied in their walk of faith.

Let us take action and work together to forge a church that loves and accepts, changing hearts and transforming lives. This testimony of love will have a positive impact on the world. Let us strive so that everyone can come just as they are to the House of the Lord. No one can clean themselves up enough to deserve to come to Jesus: He is the One who saves and transforms lives (Romans 5:8). Our part is to love and accept.

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:15–17)

9. Self-evaluation questions

1. What concrete evidence is there that a culture of love and acceptance is being lived out in my church (testimonies, reconciliations, integration of newcomers, practical helps)?
2. How am I balancing grace and truth when accompanying people in public sin: what biblical steps do we apply (Matthew 18; Galatians 6:1) and what restorative measures are underway?
3. Do we have a clear process for welcome and follow-up (first contact within 24–48 hours, initial pastoral meeting, discipleship plan, pew host) and is it fulfilled every week?
4. Are there protection protocols for children and vulnerable persons, and has the team been trained and audited to apply them? When was the last update?
5. In what way do the pulpit and platform model pastoral language (without sarcasm or labels) that dignifies every person? What phrases should I correct starting this Sunday?



6. What visible works of love are we sustaining now (benevolence, accompaniment, mentoring, small groups) and which will we implement in the next sixty days with responsible parties and dates?
7. Whom am I personally discipling outside my habitual circle as an expression of acceptance that breaks barriers? What next step will I take this week to care for that relationship?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brueggemann, Walter. *Mandate to Difference: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.
- Schultz, Thom, and Joani Schultz. *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2013.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Voss, Barry. *Building Community in the Church*. Cumming, GA: FaithLife Ministries, May 7, 2019.



Chapter 19 – A Welcoming Church

Biblical hospitality that connects visitors with the Gospel

1. Introduction

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Ten minutes. Researchers have suggested that that is all it takes for first-time visitors to decide whether or not they will return to a church. Although ten minutes may seem like an exaggeration, this clearly indicates that the first minutes from the moment a person arrives will have a great impact on their decision to return.

As leaders, members, and followers of Christ, it is imperative to know that, before the moments of worship or the preaching of the Word of God, many have already decided whether our church will be their new place of worship.

A welcoming church goes far beyond the cosmetics of a building. By focusing simply on the superficial, people lose sight of the true reason why their church is dying. The problem, unfortunately, is much deeper than just leadership style; we have discovered there is a cultural problem.

As our churches continue implementing the Strategy of Jesus and more friends and prodigals return to Christ, leaders must consider which elements are necessary so that these friends feel motivated to return and regularly attend our weekly celebration services.

The Strategy of Jesus helps people cross our doors, but the next question that must naturally arise is: what will motivate them to return and call our church their home? This work is designed to create moments of reflection and evaluation around the following questions:

Are our churches, first, presenting an offering of excellence to the Lord? Secondly, are we providing a welcoming place so that people outside the congregation visit us and call it home? To try to answer these questions and to form a welcoming local church, in this chapter we will analyze the following essential elements:



- The need to create welcoming churches as a response to the Great Commission
- Specific elements in our churches that are keeping us from being welcoming and that discourage visitors from returning
- Useful and practical elements that foster welcoming spaces in the church

2. Biblical foundation

Here are some Scriptures that provide a theological framework for this important matter:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19–20.

“Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” Romans 15:7.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.” Romans 12:10–13.

“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” 1 Peter 4:9.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35.

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them —those who are mistreated— since you yourselves are in the body also.” Hebrews 13:2–3.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42–47.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4–5.



3. Why don't our guests return?

TEN REASONS WHY VISITORS DO NOT RETURN	
1. Awkward “stand and greet” moment	6. Poor signage
2. Unfriendly church members	7. Insider church language
3. Unsafe or dirty children’s areas	8. Boring or poorly executed services
4. No place to get information about the church	9. Members telling visitors they’re sitting in the wrong spot
5. Poor church website	10. Dirty facilities

Thom S. Rainer offers a detailed assessment of ten main reasons why visitors did not return to church. These were his conclusions:

3.1. The “stand and greet” moment

This moment in the service was awkward and unfriendly. The main reason this point is among the ten most common is that, if members did not greet the visitors before this moment but then did so only because they were instructed to do so, this can seem forced and insincere. Especially when there are still guests whom no one approaches even after the cue; an awkward, unwelcoming environment is created.

3.2. Unfriendly members

The so-called “holy huddles” or “closed circles.” Rainer observed that many churches form subgroups of members who naturally relate to one another even when there are visitors present. As a result, visitors often sit alone before the service begins or leave quickly at the end without



having spoken to anyone. Imagine being invited to a birthday party where you only know the host: upon arriving, everyone is in closed groups of friends and no one comes up to you. This frequently happens in churches. No matter how nicely decorated the sanctuary is or how good the musicians are: someone can come in and leave without being seen or noticed.

3.3. Unsafe or dirty children’s areas

Every parent wants to ensure that their child is in a safe, clean environment. Young families look for a place of worship where they can have the confidence that their children are well cared for —physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The safety and cleanliness of the children’s area directly reflect the church’s love and care for everyone’s children, whether members or visitors.

3.4. No place to get information about the church

Many visitors expressed frustration when attending churches that had no clear information center: how to connect to a small group, whom to contact for specific needs, or how to get more involved in church life.

3.5. Poor website

Although some think websites are outdated, Rainer found that the vast majority of visitors check the site (if it exists) before attending. They look for basic information such as service times, address, and what to expect. Seven out of ten guests visit a church website as a determining factor in deciding which to attend. An outdated site or one with incorrect information can make someone arrive at the wrong time or the wrong place. Just as we look up a restaurant on Google Maps to verify hours or whether a reservation is needed, potential attendees look for key details to plan their visit. We cannot assume everyone uses social media or checks it constantly. A well-designed site makes information easily available.

3.6. Poor signage

It’s simple: guests can be frustrated by not knowing basic information. Restrooms, parking, entrances, rooms, etc. Regardless of the size of the property or building, don’t assume they will easily find where they should go. Hospitality removes spaces of confusion or disorientation.



3.7. Insider church language

Guests often expressed that they felt out of place due to the use of church-specific language. They noticed members using phrases or references that, for them as new visitors, were unfamiliar, which produced exclusion and confusion. Phrases common to members or leaders can function as a factor that discourages visitors from returning.

3.8. Boring or poorly executed services

The days of disorganization and lack of structure are gone. Nine out of ten first-time guests did not return because they had difficulties with sound or lighting during the service. Regardless of a church's resources, Rainer notes this is no excuse for not offering quality. There are many accessible resources today, and, in any case, investment should always be made in this area.

3.9. Members telling visitors they're sitting in the wrong spot

Or members telling visitors they shouldn't dress a certain way. We could also include: members who are friendly only inside the church, but not outside. We never know who will walk through the doors. Visitors arrive with the expectation of being received with genuine, sincere kindness that goes beyond the four walls.

3.10. Dirty facilities

A common complaint is lack of cleanliness or tidiness: trash, disorganization, lack of supplies, dirty chairs or carpets, neglected signage, etc. Maintenance directly reflects the church's vision and its respect for Christ's mission. Size should not condition excellence. There are three key areas that must be visible: cleanliness, safety, and order. They seem basic, but are often overlooked. This communicates that the church was not prepared to receive or, worse, that it doesn't care. If a church truly cares, it will always seek to be clean and safe. It's not a budget issue, but one of commitment and execution. And if your church is neither clean nor safe, that reflects—at minimum—lack of attention, and in the worst case, a lazy, indifferent attitude.



These ten observations have proven to be true regardless of the size of the church. When these areas fail, both visitors and members may feel unmotivated to return or to continue congregating. So, what do we do as a church? How can we cultivate a welcoming culture so that those who arrive —members, guests, or prodigals— will desire to congregate with us?

4. What we do so our guests return

According to the same studies, the following were the ten main conditions that made a church welcoming:

4.1. Someone offered to sit with them

We should not assume everyone comes accompanied. Sitting alone can be discouraging for many people. Although some prefer to be alone, it's important that we give them the option. This includes altar time, ensuring that those who came alone or do not have children do not feel excluded. Let's create welcome moments and invite other members to do the same.

4.2. Brothers and sisters introduced themselves to the guests

Sincere introductions have great impact. Friends want to feel welcome not only at the door, but throughout the experience: upon arrival, when entering, while being seated, and when leaving. This will require greeters positioned in at least four places:

- Parking
- Entrance
- Mobile greeters
- Worship center

The responsibility to greet is not exclusive to the welcome team: hospitality must be the culture of the whole church. The way we receive reflects whether the church is ready, willing, and glad to see its friends.

4.3. There was clear signage

An exaggerated number of signs is not needed; but the ones present must be clear, legible, and useful, guiding to essential places. Let's think like a first-time visitor.



4.4. A clearly identified welcome center

The welcome center should fulfill multiple functions: simple, with a person prepared to answer questions, offer gifts, and provide information on how to connect with small groups or upcoming events. When a guest takes a gift home, there is a higher likelihood that they will return to church. Gifts are very important.

4.5. The children loved the kids' area

Children directly influence their parents' decision to return. They will ask to go back where they felt safe, loved, and welcomed. Parents will be encouraged to take them where they learn about Jesus, make friendships, and are protected. This is reflected in the area's décor, organization, and equipment.

4.6. The kids' area was safe and clean

That children's ministry appears in two determining factors for family return shows its importance. Friends and members entrust their children to the church; let's do everything possible to offer a safe, reliable experience —from approved volunteers to cleanliness of the space.

4.7. Guest parking was clearly visible

Friends knew where to park upon arrival. No confusion. The parking ministry is essential to offer clear direction and help. Fewer than 10% of churches surveyed by Rainer had a parking ministry or had even considered it.

4.8. The church did not have a “stand and greet” moment

Surprisingly, six out of ten members don't enjoy this moment and, more strikingly, nine out of ten guests don't either. This is a significant percentage to reconsider continuing it. Many visitors perceive it as awkward or forced, especially if no one greeted them beforehand, but now does so “because it's time.” This gesture is only effective if there is genuine kindness before and after the service.



4.9. Members were not overly pushy

There is also such a thing as being too friendly. It is unpleasant to visit a church where members or volunteers seem desperate to make you a member. Greeters should act kindly and sincerely, offering a warm welcome but without pressure to “sell” the church aggressively.

4.10. The guest card was easy to fill out

Every church should have a card for new visitors (physical or digital). There should be a clear way to submit and receive it. The content should be simple and quick to complete; if it’s complicated, they won’t fill it out. Also, follow-up is key: if someone shares their information, they expect to be contacted afterward.

5. Hospitality is spiritual

The welcome team does not consist only of a group that greets at the door. It is people who embody the love of Christ, making people feel cared for, valued, and accepted just as they are. The team’s spiritual foundation impacts the atmosphere of the entire church, contributing to a space where the Holy Spirit can move freely. This ministry cannot bear fruit without prayer and fasting. Through prayer and fasting, the team offers not only a physical welcome, but also a spiritual welcome, inviting God to work in the lives of those who come through the doors. It is a way of saying: “You matter to us deeply, and we trust that God will meet you where you are and work powerfully in your life.”

5.1. Inviting God’s presence and guidance

Prayer and fasting invite the Holy Spirit’s guidance, helping the team be sensitive to each visitor’s spiritual needs. We ask God to open hearts to the Gospel and to foster a sense of belonging, going beyond superficial hospitality.

5.2. Spiritual preparation for the team

Praying and fasting prepare the team spiritually, aligning them with God’s will and fostering humility, compassion, and joy. It helps to set aside distractions and focus on the spiritual importance of each interaction as an expression of God’s love.



Prayer and fasting prepare the team to approach visitors with sensitivity, kindness, and a genuine welcome guided by the Spirit that transcends discomforts or doubts.

5.3. Presenting visitors’ needs

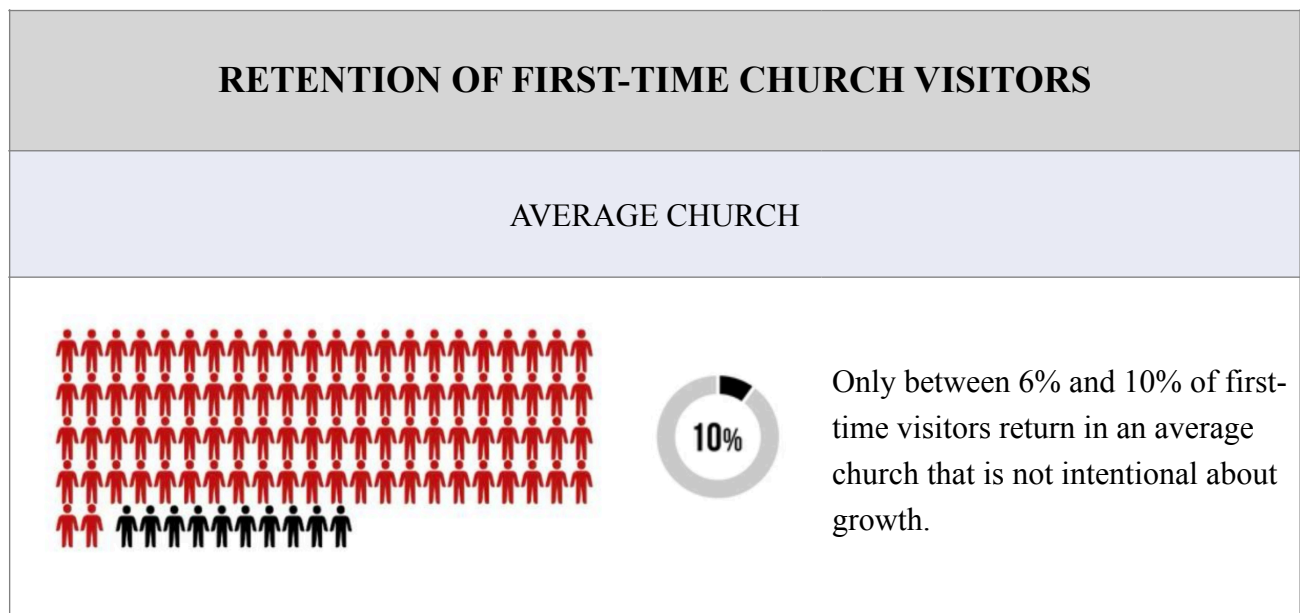
Praying for visitors brings their emotional, spiritual, and physical needs before God, providing spiritual covering. We ask God to protect, heal, and guide, creating an environment of support, care, and compassion.

5.4. Inviting God to work in visitors’ lives

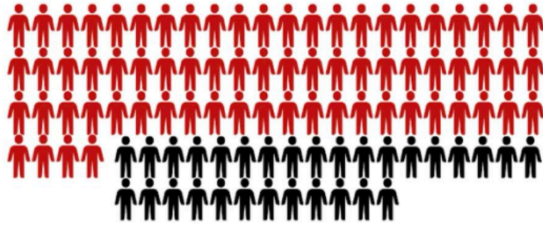
By praying for visitors, the team teaches by example that the church’s mission is sustained by prayer. In this way, it demonstrates the importance of God’s presence and intervention, inspires other members of the congregation to pray for visitors, and multiplies spiritual commitment.

5.5. Interceding

Prayer and fasting enable intercession so that God’s power is manifested in visitors’ lives: for new believers, for those seeking a deeper relationship with God, and for those in pain or crisis to find comfort and healing. Prayer and fasting are essential!



GROWING CHURCH



Between 21% and 30% of first-time visitors return to a healthy, growing church that is intentional about welcoming visitors and connecting them with small groups.

6. Practical implementation

1. Honestly evaluate what is working and what is not

- a. Use an evaluation form
- b. Use a mystery guest to evaluate

2. Meet with current ministry leaders

- c. Ask those who visited the church for the first time and stayed what worked
- d. Ask those who invited someone and whose friend never returned what didn't work

3. Develop a plan to improve or launch new ministries

- a. Create a list of goals/improvements
- b. Schedule a ministry fair
- c. Set a launch date

4. Train the directors and volunteers of the welcome team

- a. Provide one-on-one training to the directors
- b. Have the directors schedule training for team members before the launch or relaunch date



5. Create teams to execute the following impact areas:

GRAPHICS & MARKETING

- Signage
- Welcome cards
- Flyers
- QR codes pointing to the website
- Design name tags and T-shirts for those who serve

MEDIA TEAM

- Website—easy to follow, bilingual if needed
- Social media—to reach different generations (not only Facebook)
- Photographers and videographers in the services

RECEPTION MINISTRY

- New visitors (provide welcome gifts, contact cards, and follow-up)
- Information desk
- Tours for new visitors
- Meet & greet with the Pastor and the Pastor's wife

PARKING MINISTRY

- Place the necessary welcome signs outside
- Greet and assist everyone arriving—the welcome experience starts here
- Designate necessary parking spots—disabled, new guests, etc.

SECURITY MINISTRY

- Be prepared for any emergency—fire, medical, etc.
- Ensure monitoring of all church areas at all times

USHER MINISTRY

- Prepare the sanctuary for special seating, special guests, etc.
- Escort guests to their seats with love and kindness
- Guide anyone with special needs or accommodations



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Provide a check-in table
- Offer tours of the children's area
- Allow opportunities for parents to meet the teachers

6. Set expectations, communicate, follow up, and be consistent

- a. Continue meeting with these ministry leaders
- b. Review after six months by reflecting on what works and what doesn't

7. Use Scripture

- a. Teach each goal and objective with biblical emphasis and importance
- b. Repeat the biblical need to improve these areas in the church
- c. Keep everyone's vision on the mission—volunteers and members—using Scripture

8. Cover this process with prayer and fasting

- a. This is both a spiritual and a logistical process
- b. Prepare for spiritual warfare
- c. Encourage leaders and volunteers to be spiritually prepared to discern the needs of those who enter—from the parking lot to the altar
- d. Rebuke every attempt at division or confusion

7. Conclusion

Being a welcoming church begins with its leadership. Leaders must understand and believe how significant this is for the Gospel. If they are not convinced or willing to implement the necessary changes, they will not invest in or lead the required adjustments.

When non-Christians feel welcome, they return. When they return, they have more opportunities to hear the Gospel preached and to develop relationships with believers in the church. Those relationships then are instruments to bring people to Christ.



As leaders, we are responsible for guiding the church to obey the Great Commission: “Go and make disciples.” A welcoming church is a church that “goes.” The Great Commission lies at the heart of the desire to be a welcoming church. It is a passion for the Gospel that moves members, volunteers, and leaders to be welcoming, loving, and kind—not only within the four walls, but in small groups, workplaces, and wherever they go.

We cannot always have many material resources, but with what we have we must honor God as best we can. This not only honors the Lord; it shows that we love the people who sacrifice their time to experience our church. And when we do not have many material resources, we have still been given much by God to steward. We have been given the only message that will save and change humanity. We have been given the commission to go out to teach, baptize, and make disciples of the people in our neighborhoods.

As we continue striving to be a church committed to Christ’s mission, let us work on building welcoming facilities and cultures. May we all be challenged to cultivate welcoming churches that reflect the love and hospitality Jesus Christ showed to the broken, the lost, the weary, and even the strong.

8. Self-evaluation questions

1. What does an average guest experience in their first ten minutes—going from the parking lot to the entrance, from there to the sanctuary, and then to the exit?
2. Which potential visible obstacles will we eliminate this week—for example, signage, cleanliness, order?
3. How do we ensure follow-up within 24 to 48 hours for every physical or digital card?
4. Which three improvements to the children’s area —safety, cleanliness, experience — will we execute in the next thirty days?
5. Where do we use insider language and how will we translate it for the newcomer?
6. Which habits of prayer and fasting will sustain the welcome team this quarter?
7. Which simple metric will leadership review monthly —for example, contacts, return rate, or feedback?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oshman, Jen. *Welcome: Loving Your Church By Making Space for Everyone*. The Good Book Company, UK, 2023.

Rainer, Thom S. *Becoming a Welcoming Church*. B&H Publishing Group, Brentwood, TN, 2018.

Trimble, Corey. *An Authentic Experience: Creating an Inviting Culture with Biblical Integrity*. Holman Bible Publishers, USA, 2020.



Chapter 20 – Healthy Ministries

Cultivating a ministry culture of unity, excellence and love

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

1. Introduction

Every truly healthy church understands that ministries are not human programs, but living expressions of the Spirit of God working in the midst of His people. A ministry is the practical extension of the heart of Christ: where service is rendered, He continues healing, teaching, restoring, and saving.

The word ministry comes from the Latin ministerium, which means service. Therefore, to be a minister is not merely to occupy a position, but fundamentally to assume a function of service. Jesus Himself made this clear when He said: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45.

In a healthy church, every ministry is defined by that spirit of service. Every area—from worship to teaching, from hospitality to evangelism—has a holy purpose: to glorify God, to edify the body of Christ, and to reach the lost.

The book of Acts describes a church that, filled with the Holy Spirit, served with power, unity, and purpose. The same Spirit who gave the Apostles authority to heal and preach is the One who today gives life to our ministries. When the Holy Spirit guides the church, it flourishes: leadership multiplies, discipleship deepens, and the mission extends to the ends of the earth.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a biblical and pastoral framework for how to develop and sustain healthy ministries that reflect the heart of God and produce lasting fruit.

2. The spiritual foundation of ministry

Every ministry must be born of the will of God and remain under His direction. A ministry that does not have its root in communion with Christ will, sooner or later, become a burden or a lifeless system.



Paul affirms in Ephesians 2:19–20: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” The church is not a human organization; it is a spiritual family built on Christ. He is the cornerstone who upholds every ministry. No project, however noble it may seem, can replace the centrality of Jesus.

Moreover, Ephesians 4:11–12 teaches that the Lord Himself “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry”. That is, ministries are the means by which God equips His people to fulfill His mission. A healthy church does not create ministries out of custom or tradition, but out of purpose. Before opening a new area in your church, Pastor, ask: What does God desire to do through us? Only then does each ministry become a channel of the divine plan and not an administrative burden.

3. The role of the Holy Spirit in ministries

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be our Helper, Teacher, and Guide. In John 14:26 He said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” A ministry without the Spirit’s guidance becomes religious routine. But when the Spirit leads, every action gains power and purpose.

3.1. He teaches and reveals the truth

The Spirit illuminates the Scriptures and guides leaders in sound teaching. He reveals timings, strategies, and fitting words. Without His direction, ministry relies on human wisdom; with Him, it becomes an instrument of transformation.

3.2. He gives spiritual understanding

1 Corinthians 2:12 declares: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” Leaders filled with the Spirit can discern people’s hidden needs, their congregation’s dynamics, and the direction God desires to take.



3.3. He empowers for service

The Spirit distributes gifts as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). Each believer receives a particular grace to edify the body. The secret of a living, healthy church is not having many volunteers, but having believers filled with the Holy Spirit.

3.4. He intercedes and sustains

Romans 8:26 teaches that the Spirit “makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”. He strengthens weary leaders, gives comfort to those who serve in silence, and renews the passion of those who have been in the same place for years. This is why a healthy church prays continually—not for God to bless its plans, but to receive His.

4. Characteristics of healthy ministries

The ministries of a healthy church have distinctive marks that reflect the Spirit’s work. Among them:

4.1. Centrality of the Word

The Bible is the source—every ministry must arise from the Word of God; and the filter—everything must be evaluated in its light. No ministry can substitute for faithful preaching or contradict revealed truth, for the church’s supreme authority is the inspired Scripture.

4.2. Focus on discipleship

The purpose of ministry is not merely to attract people, but to form mature disciples in character and mission. Every activity must lead to knowing Christ more, obeying His Word, and becoming like Him: learning, integrating, serving, evangelizing, and multiplying. Without discipleship, ministry entertains; with discipleship, it transforms.

4.3. Unity and collaboration

Ephesians 4:3 exhorts us to keep the unity of the Spirit. Ministries do not compete; they complement one another. One’s success is everyone’s advance. Unity is practiced through coordination, accountability, joint prayer, and mutual celebration; it is guarded by avoiding comparisons, jealousy, and personal agendas that break the bond of peace.



4.4. Passion and excellence

Service must be done “as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). Excellence honors God, inspires confidence, and opens doors for testimony. It is not perfectionism, but offering our best with love, responsibility, and care, knowing that every detail reflects the One we serve.

4.5. Missional orientation

Every ministry exists to reach the world with the Gospel. If it does not evangelize, it stalls and becomes an internal club. The church in Acts grew because each believer assumed his/her role as a witness (Acts 1:8): sharing Christ, accompanying new believers, and multiplying disciples in their sphere.

4.6. Genuine worship

Every ministry is born at the altar; when worship ceases, service is reduced to tasks. When we worship the Lord in spirit and truth (John 4:24), the work becomes an offering. Therefore, before planning, we worship: the altar ignites vision, purifies motives, and renews the weary.

4.7. Faithful stewardship

A healthy ministry manages its resources with transparency, respects spiritual authority, and gives account with integrity. It recognizes that everything belongs to the Lord, sets clear budgets, controls and dual signatures, reports regularly, and accepts audits. In this way it honors God, protects people, and strengthens trust. Faithfulness is required of stewards.

4.8. Multiplication of leaders

A healthy ministry reproduces, forming new servants who share the same passion and purpose. Its goal is not to retain power, but to transfer vision. It invests in others, equips them, and sends them, as Jesus did with His disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). True ministerial maturity is measured in succession, not in control.

5. The principal ministries in the local church

Each congregation, according to its context, develops ministries that respond to the needs of its setting. Below are some essential ministries for the life of a healthy church:



5.1. Small groups ministry

The model of home groups or cells facilitates personal discipleship and brotherly fellowship. In an intimate, close environment, believers share the Word, pray together, and accompany one another in burdens and joys. Their spiritual and emotional bonds are strengthened; new leaders are formed, and the church becomes a living family where each member finds support, care, and growth in Christ.

5.2. Discipleship ministry

The discipleship school is the formative heart of the church. There believers learn to know, love, and serve Christ with conviction. Through Bible study, prayer, and the practice of service, spiritual character and doctrinal maturity are forged. This ministry not only teaches knowledge; it transforms lives, preparing firm, obedient, multiplying disciples who reflect the Gospel in every sphere of society.

5.3. Children’s ministry

Jesus embraced and blessed children, affirming that of such is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14). Children’s ministry sows the Gospel in tender hearts, protects their innocence, and accompanies families. It teaches the Word with clarity, play, and worship, forming early spiritual habits. A church that invests in its children cultivates future disciples, sustains faith at home, and ensures generational continuity.

5.4. Youth ministry

Young people are energy, creativity, and future. They require clear spiritual direction. This ministry channels their passion toward holiness, character, and service, forming disciples who lead with humility. It prioritizes mentors, prayer, Word, mission, and healthy community. It inspires by example, not spectacle: “Let no one despise your youth” (1 Timothy 4:12); “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Leadership today, legacy tomorrow.

5.5. Couples and families ministry

A strong church is born of firm families. This ministry teaches communication, forgiveness, and biblical principles of marriage; it equips in roles, discipleship parenting, finances, holy



sexuality, and conflict resolution. It accompanies dating and marriages in crisis, supports single parents, integrates intergenerational mentoring, and promotes home devotions, family prayer, and service. Its goal: Christ-centered homes raising disciple children and blessing the congregation.

5.6. Seniors ministry

The wisdom of the elderly is a spiritual treasure for the church. This ministry gives them space, honor, and purpose: intercessory prayer, mentoring couples and youth, and a testimony of faithfulness amid trials. It promotes support groups, visits, and health accompaniment, as well as service opportunities according to their gifts. Their experience lights decisions, builds intergenerational bridges, and affirms hope, strengthening the faith of the whole congregation.

5.7. Worship and music ministry

Its goal is not spectacle, but God's presence. Worship ministers must live what they sing, serving with holiness, humility, and spiritual preparation (prayer, fasting, Word). Musical excellence accompanies but does not replace the fire of the altar. Lyrics saturated with Scripture, congregational participation, and sensitivity to the Spirit turn song into prayer. Thus, worship heals the soul and propels mission and unity.

5.8. Prayer and intercession ministry

Every healthy church keeps the altar burning through constant prayer and intercession. This ministry sustains the others, discerns times, pulls down strongholds, and opens doors for the Gospel. It practices vigils, fasts, and prayer chains; guards confidentiality, records requests, and celebrates answers. It walks in agreement with pastors, equips intercessors, and covers meetings, homes, and missions. Where there is an altar, there is life, direction, and revival.

5.9. Missions and community outreach ministry

The church cannot limit its love to the temple walls. The outreach and missions ministry takes the light of Christ to hospitals, prisons, shelters, schools, and streets, joining compassion and proclamation. It forms teams, prays for direction, collaborates with authorities, and secures follow-up for discipleship. Thus, service becomes public testimony: "Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:16), to God's glory.



5.10. Counseling and spiritual care ministry

This ministry provides pastoral and emotional accompaniment to those going through pain, confusion, or crisis. Many need to be heard before being corrected or taught. Mature counselors, full of grace and truth, offer guidance based on the Word, prayer, empathy, and spiritual discernment. Their labor restores hearts, strengthens faith, and reflects the healing love of Christ, who came “to heal the brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1). Each ministry fulfills a specific function, but all share the same goal: to reflect the love of Christ in concrete actions. In unity, they edify and transform lives, reach the lost, and glorify God inside and outside the church.

6. How to develop and implement a ministry

Founding a ministry requires prayer, planning, and perseverance. Pastor, begin by discerning the need and confirming the vision in the Word. Then define purpose, mission, and measurable goals. Next, form a team with clear roles and proven character. After that, provide training and establish simple processes, resources, and budget. Launch small, evaluate with spiritual and practical indicators, adjust with humility, and give account. Maintain pastoral covering, continual prayer, and a culture of service.

6.1. Pray and discern the need

Vision is not born in a meeting but in God’s presence: prayer, fasting, worship, and the Word. There we ask: Which need does God desire us to address? Whom? With what fruit does He expect? We then confirm it in Scripture, in pastoral counsel, and in leadership unity. We wait for the right time, lay down personal agendas, and obey. First the altar; then the plan.

6.2. Define mission, vision, and purpose

A ministry without direction scatters. As seen in the opening pages of this book, the mission answers why we exist and what we do —namely, the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:44–49)— unalterable and primary. Vision answers where we are going and how we measure progress; it must be practical, with strategy and clear goals (Proverbs 29:18). Purpose points to the for what: the spiritual result sought in people and community.



When mission, vision, and purpose align with the Word and the Spirit, efforts are ordered, resources prioritized, sound indicators set, and course corrected with humility. Thus the ministry grows with faithfulness, fruit, and continuity.

6.3. Form a work team

No ministry can depend on a single person: that generates exhaustion, bias, and lack of continuity. A team balanced in gifts and character brings perspective, accountability, and distribution of burdens. Pastor, define profiles and roles, include generational diversity, pray together, make collegial decisions, practice honest feedback, and prepare successors. Plural leadership protects the work and honors Christ as head of the church.

6.4. Train and accompany

Formation must be continual. A ministry that learns grows; one that stalls goes out. Therefore set an annual plan of biblical, theological, and practical training; mentors for leaders; guided readings; evaluations and feedback. Integrate prayer retreats and skill workshops. Measure progress with concrete goals and accompany processes. Learning, unlearning, and relearning keeps spiritual freshness, service excellence, and fidelity to the mission.

6.5. Organize resources and logistics

Planning avoids improvisation and reflects order. God is a God of design, not disorder (1 Corinthians 14:33). Thus each ministry should set clear goals, realistic timelines, and defined responsible parties. Organization does not quench the Spirit; it honors Him by stewarding time and resources well. Planning with prayer allows us to act with wisdom, anticipate needs, and advance with peace, excellence, and purpose.

6.6. Begin with faith and celebration

Dedicate the ministry's start with prayer and joy, recognizing that every good work comes from the Lord (Philippians 1:6). Begin with gratitude, worship, and consecration of the team and resources. Celebration communicates faith, hope, and unity; it shows that the purpose is holy and shared. Invite the congregation to pray, commit, and participate. A beginning at the altar anticipates fruit and blessing.



6.7. Evaluate, adjust, and improve

No ministry is perfect; all need continual evaluation. Periodic reviews allow course correction, renewal of strength, and maintenance of spiritual freshness. Evaluate goals, relationships, impact, and motivations; celebrate achievements and recognize areas needing change. Involve the team in prayer, dialogue, and continual improvement. A healthy ministry does not fear adjustments, because it understands that growth involves learning, surrendering to God, and advancing with humility.

7. Assessing ministry health

A healthy church evaluates its ministries holistically: spiritually, relationally, and functionally. This process does not seek to criticize, but to strengthen. Key indicators include growth in spiritual maturity, unity among teams, quality of teaching, faithfulness to vision, community impact, commitment to mission, and good stewardship of resources. Motivation is also measured: serving out of love for Christ, not routine. Evaluating with prayer allows correction, affirmation, and maintenance of spiritual vitality.

- **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:** Members serve out of conviction, not obligation.
- **SPIRITUAL FRUIT:** There are testimonies, conversions, and growth in holiness.
- **INTERNAL UNITY:** Ministries work in harmony and communicate well with one another.
- **TRANSPARENCY AND ORDER:** Finances and resources are handled with integrity.
- **CONSTANT RENEWAL:** Formation of new leaders is promoted.
- **EXTERNAL IMPACT:** The church is recognized for its love and service to the community.

In addition, metrics such as attendance, baptisms, active groups, participation in discipleship, and faithfulness in offerings can be observed, as they reflect commitment and visible growth. However, the most important measure remains the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Statistics help, but true ministerial success is measured by transformed lives and the spiritual maturity of the people.



8. Challenges and the ministry leader's response

Challenges are inevitable: lack of resources, fatigue, discouragement, or conflicts. Every obstacle is an opportunity to depend more on God. Respond with prayer, fasting, pastoral counsel, and unity; simplify priorities; care for servants' souls; resolve differences with humility and just processes; celebrate small victories; remember promises. Weakness makes us available to His grace—that dimension where the Lord perfects strength, renews vision, and keeps the motive pure. Thus the healthy leader:

- PRAYS more than he plans
- SERVES more than he speaks
- CELEBRATES others' achievements
- SEEKS counsel
- CORRECTS with love and allows himself to be corrected

A ministry without prayer wears out; one with prayer is renewed. Prayer is not an additional task, but the oxygen of service. Keeping the altar burning, even amid an intense rhythm, preserves joy and spiritual sensitivity. Praying before deciding, during the work, and after the effort keeps communion with God, refreshes the soul, and aligns the work with His perfect will.

9. Culture of healthy ministries

Beyond structures or programs, a healthy church cultivates a ministry culture based on four values:

9.1. Serving with humility

Jesus washed His disciples' feet, showing that true leadership is exercised by serving (John 13:14–15). No task is small if done out of love; every action—from receiving a visitor to teaching or cleaning—has eternal value when it proceeds from a humble heart. Serving with joy reflects Christ's character and demonstrates that greatness in the Kingdom is measured by surrender, not position.

9.2. Walking in unity

Psalm 133 declares that God's blessing descends where there is harmony among brothers. Unity does not demand thinking or acting the same, but sharing the same purpose: to exalt Christ,



edify the Church, and evangelize the world. When hearts walk in agreement, the Spirit moves freely. Unity attracts presence, multiplies strength, dissolves strife, and makes God's love visible to the world.

9.3. Pursuing spiritual excellence

Excellence is not perfection, but offering our best to the Lord with love and responsibility. It implies caring for personal testimony, spiritual preparation, and attitude in service. It is reflected in punctuality, order, respect, and commitment. Every well-done detail communicates honor to God and edifies others. Serving with excellence inspires confidence, opens doors to the Gospel, and shows that Christ deserves our best.

9.4. Multiplying in love

The true measure of ministry is love. Without love, every effort loses value and purpose (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). Love gives meaning to sacrifice, sweetness to service, and power to testimony. It serves with patience, forgives, believes, and hopes for the best. Love sustains when strength wanes, heals wounds, and reflects Christ's heart. Only love turns labor into worship and duty into joy.

10. Conclusion

The book of Acts begins with a promise —“You shall receive power...”— and ends with a Church on the move, carrying the message to the ends of the earth. That same power of the Holy Spirit remains available today to every local church that decides to serve in obedience. Ministries are the hands and feet of the church. Through them, Christ touches, heals, teaches, and comforts. When each ministry understands its purpose and acts in harmony with the others, the body grows “for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

It is not about doing more things, but doing the right things with the right heart. Ministry is not measured by the number of activities but by the spiritual quality of the service. True ministerial health is reflected in faithfulness to the Word, purity of motives, and lasting fruit. Serving with integrity and love pleases God and leaves an eternal mark on those who receive His grace. May this chapter inspire us to examine our motivations, renew our commitment, and cultivate a culture of service guided by the Holy Spirit. May every ministry, however small it may seem, be a living testimony of the Kingdom of God among men.



11. Self-evaluation questions

1. Do the ministries in my church depend on the Holy Spirit's direction or on custom?
2. Are the local ministries aligned with the overarching mission to reach, disciple, and send?
3. Am I forming leaders who will continue the work, or centralizing service in a few people?
4. How is the fruit of the Spirit reflected in my church's service culture?
5. Do we evaluate and renew our ministries periodically, always seeking improvement?
6. What can I personally do to foster unity, excellence, and love in service?

CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blackaby, Henry & Claude King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2008.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. Salamanca, Spain: Sígueme, 2004.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Mandate to Difference: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.

Stetzer, Ed, & Thom Rainer. *Transformational Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.

Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Miami, FL: Vida, 1999.



Chapter 21 – Effective Systems

Establishing processes that drive the church

“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Romans 12:4–5.

1. Introduction

One of the biblical metaphors the apostle Paul used to describe the church is the human body. To the brothers in Rome and Corinth, Paul says that the church is the body of Christ (Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinthians 12:27). By employing this metaphor, Paul sustains a holistic and systemic approach to the health of the church.⁸⁶

Our body is composed of various systems that must work together to preserve health. Thanks to the circulatory system, the heart pumps blood to the whole body. The digestive system processes the food we eat. The respiratory system allows us to inhale oxygen and expel carbon dioxide. God Himself designed these systems in the human body; He also designed the universe with systems.

In his vision statement, Presiding Bishop Felipe Salazar affirmed: “The Apostolic Assembly is an apostolic, cell-based, healthy, growing, and Spirit-filled church.”⁸⁷ For the Apostolic Assembly to function in a healthy way, we must recognize that our churches need to have certain well-established systems.

In this chapter, we will learn about:

- The power of systems
- Systems in the church
- How to create effective systems
- The relationship factor

⁸⁶ Dan Abatiello, Eight Essential Church Systems. (September 1, 2023); accessed March 26, 2025. <https://churchconsulting.org/eight-essential-church-systems>.

⁸⁷ Salazar, Felipe A., Mensaje Presidencial (Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2025), 4.



2. The power of systems

We all use systems to achieve goals. A system is a set of interconnected elements that function as a whole to reach a specific end.⁸⁸ The pastor Nelson Searcy defines a system as “a process that saves stress, time, energy, and money, and that keeps producing results.”⁸⁹ Sometimes we are not aware when a system is working well, but we immediately notice when something stops working. Does the same thing happen in the church? The church is a body; therefore, its systems must operate correctly, even when they are not visible. Even if we do not know how to identify them or maintain them, we must recognize that they are there. Some are simple and others more complex, but all exist to help us fulfill God’s purposes in our church.

3. Systems in the church

There is a wide variety of systems in our churches, and, generally speaking, it is believed there are at least eight systems that must be functioning in the church for the church to be healthy. Nevertheless, systems in the church are interwoven. Although some may be more developed than others, none of the systems can stand alone.

If we are uninterested in growing or maintaining our systems, the systems will not be able to achieve the results we desire. When we live this way, we (as a church) fail to live to the full potential God has given us. We need to do our part so that each one is functioning correctly and so that our church is healthy and thriving.

Let us analyze the most common local systems, in no particular order.

3.1. The weekly celebration system

This system includes how we plan, implement, and evaluate the service each week in our church. Sunday arrives with great regularity. On that day we must be at our best. On that day we must be totally dependent on God. If we do not prepare, the lack of planning will be obvious. Let us take notes on how to improve Sunday ministry. Let us pay attention to areas where we have been negligent. To strengthen the weekly celebration system, it is fitting to

⁸⁸ *How to Create Systems and Processes in Your Small Church*, Ministry Pass, 2024. <https://ministrypass.com/how-to-create-systems-and-processes-in-your-small-church>.

⁸⁹ Nelson Searcy, *The Power of Systems to Grow Your Church*, July 17, 2019. Accessed March 26, 2025. <https://medium.com/@nelsonsearcy/the-power-of-systems-to-grow-your-church-fa8819b41566>.



consider the facilities (bathrooms, parking, signage), music, order of service, ushers, welcome team, technology, and everything that contributes to worship services being orderly, welcoming, and full of the power of God.

3.2. The evangelism system

This system answers the question: how do we draw people to our church? We know that God is the One who gives the growth, but have you ever wondered why some churches grow and others stagnate? How does God decide which church to send people to?

The evangelism system has two parts. The first is outward evangelism: sharing Christ outside the temple (at the store, on the street, at work, with neighbors, etc.). The second is inward evangelism: how we receive and attend to people when they arrive at the church. If visitors feel welcomed and perceive respectful, warm treatment, they will return. Sometimes they come back mainly because of how they were received, more than because of the music or even the message.

Each church of the Apostolic Assembly must work this system through the Strategy of Jesus. Before Friend Day, we invite our friends (outward evangelism). When Friend Day arrives and they attend, we do everything possible so that they feel good and wish to return (inward evangelism).

3.3. The assimilation system

The Assimilation System guides people from their first visit to becoming mature members of our church. What do we do so that they return after Friend Day and connect at a deeper level? We cannot assume they will return if we do not take intentional actions to make their return easier. It is imperative to create an environment where visitors feel welcomed and comfortable.

If we take the pulse of this system, we will see a great difference. We must be aware that, when God sends us visitors, it is up to us to do our part so that they come to repentance and become faithful and mature members of the body of Jesus Christ.

By connecting visitors with the processes of the Strategy of Jesus (Be Born, Grow, Mature, and Multiply), we can, to a great extent, ensure the growth and maturity of each soul that is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.



3.4. The small groups system — Friendship Groups

Churches grow by becoming smaller. This happens through small groups and, in the context of the Apostolic Assembly, through Friendship Groups. With a strong small-groups system, it is possible to reach 100% participation of the brothers and sisters. The essential question of this system is: how do we fill and reproduce the small groups in our church?

If this system is weak, challenges will arise in the other systems. By contrast, a robust small-groups system addresses areas such as leadership, pastoral care, volunteering, and more.

If you have struggled to establish Friendship Groups through the Strategy of Jesus, delegate this task to someone who can help you or seek a mentor who will work closely with you to make the transition. The results will be notable, and experience teaches us that members are motivated to continue working and serving in the work of God.

3.5. The ministries system

The ministries (or volunteers) system determines how to mobilize people for ministry. This system establishes clear onboarding routes (discover gifts, train, place, and accompany), defines roles and expectations, provides mentors and supervision, and fosters a culture of honor and care. It also contemplates simple metrics (participation, retention, healthy rotation), spaces for ongoing formation, and times of rest, so that each brother or sister serves with joy and the church is edified in unity and effectiveness.

God created people to serve; serving is part of growth as disciples of Christ. Regardless of the size of the church, there are never too many volunteers. When people serve, they develop a sense of belonging. If we are leading some ministry, it is fitting to make a list of everything that ministry entails; then make another list with the tasks others can help us with. Finally, it is important to invite people personally to collaborate.

Moreover, if a Ministry Fair is planned effectively, you will be surprised to see how many members want to serve in some ministry.



3.6. The leadership system

As the church grows, we must develop a pastoral/administrative team, lay leaders, and volunteers for the work of God. This system facilitates staff management, organizational efficiency, and people development.

To structure it correctly, it is fitting to define the expectations and responsibilities of each leadership position, establish requirements and competencies for each role, and verify that candidates meet them. In addition, it is useful to foresee onboarding and training processes, periodic evaluation, and accompaniment (mentoring/supervision), in order to sustain the quality of service.

The ministries system functions as a quarry (or pipeline) for the leadership system: those who assume leadership are, normally, people who have served consistently and faithfully in some ministry and have demonstrated character, maturity, and a good testimony.

3.7. The stewardship (finances) system

As church leaders, at times we are afraid to ask members for accountability in the financial area. Many assume that giving is not a spiritual discipline; however, financial stewardship is essential for the growth of the Kingdom and touches deep matters of the heart. We will not form strong disciples without forming faithful givers. This is where the stewardship system comes in.

Most people do not begin tithing right away. There must be a pathway by which we can guide them as they mature in their understanding of stewardship. Growth does not happen in a disordered way. A good stewardship system helps us train, equip, and nurture everyone, so that they give in faith.

The stewardship system in our church also makes us responsible to manage with transparency. We must strive to work with a budget and include what is planned to be invested, for example, in evangelism—Friend Day, Friends’ Retreat, Harvest Festival, etc. Likewise in any other area.

The topic of stewardship will be treated more fully in the next chapter.



4. How to create effective systems

Pastor Andy Stanley said: “Your system is perfectly designed to produce the results you’re getting; if you want better results, you have to improve the system.”⁹⁰ I remember that, when we planted the church in Olympia, Washington, we did not have many systems because we were a new work. Nevertheless, as we grew, things became complicated and we had to establish systems to obtain better results. This is normal: they are growing pains.

One of the reasons several churches stop growing is, quite simply, that their systems are deficient. Those churches need to redesign them. Let us look at the four steps to establish good systems:

1. **START WITH THE END IN MIND.** What results do you want to see?
2. **GATHER A TEAM.** As a leader, you cannot do it all alone; call together those who will be impacted and involve them.
3. **DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS.** Expectations improve when they are put in writing.
4. **USE A TEMPLATE.** Reflection questions will help you evaluate and adjust your church’s systems.

5. The relationship factor

Relationships are the channels through which systems succeed. If we look at the diagram that follows, we will notice that the best results are obtained when the right people operate within a good system.

Those who make up a good system must be motivated to work together around the same vision: that people love Christ, learn to love their neighbor, and learn to serve. If we achieve this, there is no doubt that every church of the Apostolic Assembly will form spiritually mature followers of Jesus.

⁹⁰ Four Steps to Create Effective Church Systems, The Rocket Company. <https://www.therocketcompany.com/four-steps-create-effective-church-systems>.



6. Conclusion

As leaders, we are responsible for having effective, functional systems in the church God has entrusted us to pastor. After answering the reflection questions, make the adjustments or changes according to the context of your local church. Avoid comparing it with others, whether within your district or outside it. Do everything possible to offer excellence to the Lord and also to the congregation and the people we serve.

God wants to work in His church. He desires more for His Body than we can imagine. He has given us examples not only of His systems, but also of the systems He has placed in us to fulfill His will. Let us do our part to optimize them, so that God may work powerfully in our church.

7. Self-evaluation questions

1. THE WEEKLY CELEBRATION SYSTEM

Every ministry that works on Sundays should ask the following questions:

- What did we lack?
- Was anything wrong or confusing?
- How can we do things better

2. THE EVANGELISM SYSTEM

Every member should ask the following questions:

- Have I invested time in outward evangelism?
- When was the last time I invited someone to church?
- How do I receive the friends who visit us on Sundays?

3. THE ASSIMILATION SYSTEM

We can measure this system by asking the following questions:

- How many of our visitors become members? Are we happy with this number? If the answer is no, where is the problem?
- When was the last time we saw our church through the eyes of a visitor?



- What is heard being said about the first impression of our church?

4. THE SMALL GROUPS SYSTEM

To take the pulse of this system, we can ask the following questions:

- How many of the visitors and members are faithfully attending a Friendship Group?
- Are we competing with ourselves by offering too many activities?
- How many passionate leaders do we have?
- Am I involved in a small group? Are all the leaders in a small group?

5. THE MINISTRIES SYSTEM

We can never have too many volunteers. We can improve this system with the following questions:

- How many volunteers do we have?
- How many volunteers would we like to have?
- What are we doing so that people will want to serve?

6. THE STEWARDSHIP (FINANCES) SYSTEM

We can see whether we are proactive with this system by asking the following questions:

- Am I being faithful with my tithes and offerings?
- When was the last time we taught the discipline of giving?
- Can we do a “tithe challenge” this year?
- What do we do with people who are faithful in tithes and offerings?

7. THE LEADERSHIP SYSTEM

To verify how this system is functioning, let us ask the following questions:

- When was the last time we invested in developing new leaders?
- How are we helping current leaders to grow personally and spiritually?
- Am I setting an example for other leaders to follow?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leaders Around You*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 1995.

Searcy, Nelson. *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007.

Stanley, Andy. *Seven Practices of Effective Ministry*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2004.

Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.



Chapter 22 – Call to Stewardship

Developing a culture of faithfulness and multiplication

1. Introduction

Stewardship is a divine call to fruitfulness, productivity, and service. It is a call for the trustworthy: to serve with integrity, humility, love, and sacrifice. It is an assignment of utmost importance to carry out the commissions of the Lord and Owner of all things. This call is to work alongside God, reflecting Him and representing Him in everything you do. You are responsible to care for and make prosper what He has entrusted to you, aligning your life with His purposes.

The call to stewardship is not only a practical duty, but a spiritual mandate that orders and orients the relationship between God, humanity, and His Church. In the times in which we live, stewardship is an essential component for the health, productivity, and multiplication of the church. Welcome to the highest calling given to men and women: the Call to Stewardship. Below, we present the points we will address in this chapter:

Principles of stewardship	Expectations	Practice
LORDSHIP	Accepting God's sovereignty in our lives	Responsibility and accountability
FAITHFULNESS	Our relationship with God	Stewardship of the resources given by God
TRUSTWORTHINESS	Caring for what belongs to God	Good works
DISCIPLINES	Collaborating with God	Spiritual gifts, time, and finances



2. The principle of Lordship

2.1. Surrendered to the Lord

God's supreme plan and purpose is to save all humanity. That plan has not changed and is realized as the Kingdom of God advances to reach every nation with the apostolic message. God has never asked anyone to advance His Kingdom without first providing the necessary resources. 1 Peter 4:10: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Grace is virtue, power, mercy: an indescribable gift of God. It is the enabling presence of the Lord that allows us to be who He created us to be and to do what He has called us to do. His grace is sufficient in all things (see 2 Corinthians 12:9), and it is power to witness, disciple, and evangelize (see 1 Corinthians 15:10). Stewardship is submission to the Lordship! We will never be good stewards of the grace of God if we do not surrender to His Lordship.

2.2. Let us glorify God

To know Him is to recognize His sovereignty. Sovereignty means that God, as Ruler of the universe, has the right to do whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3). He has absolute control over everything that happens; nothing is outside His influence and authority. God is above all things and before all things; He created all things and upholds them, both in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible (Colossians 1:16). Stewardship is allowing God to work in us and through us. There is no room for selfishness. We must not put our self ahead of God's purpose for our lives. All the glory belongs to God, and to God alone.

2.3. What is Lordship?

- It is to accept God's sovereignty in life
- It is to put God first in everything
- It is to assume responsibility for what He entrusts to us
- It is to live under accountability
- It is to obey God personally even when it is uncomfortable or costly



3. The principle of faithfulness

Biblical stewardship is based on a spiritual relationship with God and on His Lordship over every area of life: faithfulness, time, family, health, resources, talents, and spiritual gifts. When we think of stewardship we often focus on money or possessions; however, stewardship is, above all, about faithfulness: “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2.

Stewardship is the way we manage what God has entrusted to us. The management of the resources He gives us must be for His glory, for the good of others, and for the church. In that sense, stewardship is a visible reflection of our relationship with God: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” Matthew 25:2. God requires faithfulness of His stewards!

4. The principle of trustworthiness

Can we be people who are trustworthy? Trustworthiness is neither demanded nor automatic; it is earned through practice and evidence. It begins when we seek to care for God’s resources as if they were our own, knowing that in reality they belong to Him. Godly stewards reflect the character of Christ. Godliness is a sign of the Spirit working in us. A biblical figure who understood and practiced stewardship at a high level was Eliezer, Abraham’s most faithful servant.

4.1. The decisive role of the steward

Eliezer’s stewardship depended on his closeness to his lord; only thus does a steward know his master’s heart. “But Abram said, ‘Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’” (Genesis 15:2).

The Hebrew name Eliezer means “God is my help.” The first and most notable thing is that Eliezer was Abraham’s most trustworthy servant. If Isaac had not been born, Eliezer of Damascus would have inherited the goods of Abraham’s house. In short, God helped Abraham through Eliezer’s life and service.



Not many people know Eliezer of Damascus. He is not a prominent character in the Bible; he was neither a giant-slayer nor a famous warrior. Nevertheless, he played a decisive role in Abraham's life. A steward manages his lord's or others' goods and affairs. In Eliezer's case, he bore great responsibility in managing Abraham's affairs and household, who was very rich in his time (Genesis 13:2). Eliezer recognized his lord's wealth and its source (Genesis 24:34–35).

4.2. Honoring the interests of our Lord

Over the years, Abraham found in Eliezer a faithful, trustworthy servant, to the point of choosing him for one of the most important tasks of his life. According to Genesis 24, Abraham sent him to a distant land to find a spiritually suitable wife for his son Isaac. This also speaks to us today.

Christ is forming His Church as a Bride, and the local church evangelizes and disciples to call and prepare that Bride for the Lord by His grace. God has entrusted His grace to us: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8.

God has sufficient grace for every need, enabling us for the good works He desires and for the life to which He calls us. Eliezer fulfilled his mission, with God's help, by finding Rebekah for Isaac. Whatever Abraham placed in his hands, Eliezer carried out faithfully, always promoting his lord's best interests.

Eliezer is a worthy example to imitate in stewardship. We are stewards of what God gives us. “As good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” everything granted to us has the purpose of honoring God's interests, “that in all things God may be glorified” (1 Peter 4:10–11).

5. The principle of the disciplines

The discipline of stewardship is central to all other spiritual disciplines. If we do not develop a God-centered use of time, resources, spiritual gifts, and talents, we will miss entrusted opportunities for the glory of God. Stewardship is intentional; it is neither automatic nor does it occur by accident. It is necessary and essential for the advance of the Gospel message and the church's maturity. Stewardship is collaborating with God in a preordained mission.



In the New Testament, the word steward comes from the Greek *oikonomos*, which means house manager or administrator. Administrators are not owners. To be a steward of resources implies using, investing, and employing them according to the Owner’s direction.

Jesus taught the parable of the talents to illustrate the importance of responsible stewardship in wisely managing His treasures. God wants those treasures invested and multiplied, not buried (Matthew 25:14–30).

There are many talents and gifts in the Church of God, and countless components in the work of the Kingdom; but, for the purposes of this topic, we will focus on three areas that can promote stewardship, for godly principles operate in all:

Talents and gifts in the Church of God		
(1) DIVINE GIFTS	(2) TIME	(3) FINANCES

5.1. Gifts and abilities given by God

One of the vital areas where we must demonstrate good stewardship is in the use of the gifts and abilities God has granted us. In Scripture, the idea of divine gifts includes spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12), functional or service gifts (Romans 12), ministerial gifts given to edify the universal Church (Ephesians 4), and also natural talents which, when surrendered to God, become instruments for His glory.

The apostle Peter said: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10. Here Peter declares that to each believer a gift of grace has been given. These gifts and abilities enable us to serve one another in the local church, meet real needs, and contribute to the maturity of the body of Christ. Each gift represents a ministry responsibility within the church.

Only when we actively use what we have received are we good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Paul exhorts us to exercise faithfully the gifts given to us: Romans 12:6–8: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

We all have different gifts given by God, and each one is necessary. None is more important than another. Only when each member puts his or her gift and talent into action can the congregation grow in number and maturity as God desires. 1 Corinthians 12:14: “For in fact the body is not one member but many.” 1 Corinthians 12:27: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

Are we using what God entrusted to us? Are we fulfilling the ministry for which we were enabled? God will judge each one for the faithfulness with which he or she stewarded what was received. Many fear failing when exercising their gifts, but the Lord’s criterion is not perfect ability, but diligence and faithfulness. God’s gift in your life is His investment in you with a greater purpose: to edify the church and advance the Gospel message.

Gifts function like an organism: they attract, complement, and cooperate with one another. There is no gift that works in isolation. The church is a body, and the gifts work together in harmony. God, as Giver of all gifts, grants them not for building a personal résumé, but so that we may serve collectively alongside others, forming a functional body that speaks as the oracles of God and serves as with the ability which God supplies (1 Peter 4:11).

We must understand the nature of the gifts to value their importance and undertake the process of discovering them, developing them, and deploying them. The potential of a local church lies in what the Lord grants to it. Therefore, we must seek the church’s potential as a whole and not only that of individuals. Paul exhorted Timothy: “Do not neglect the gift that is in you.” 1 Timothy 4:14. And also: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you.” 2 Timothy 1:6. More than ever, we need to be good stewards of the gifts and abilities God has given for the good of a healthy church.



5.2. The use of time

People live by the clock because time is important to everyone. Many, frustrated, seem to wrestle with the clock as a way of life. Observing the life of Christ, we see that He was never late nor in a hurry: time was His friend.

The Bible teaches how time can be our ally and not our enemy: “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12. This teaches us there is enough time in each day, in each month, and in each year to fulfill God’s purpose in our life and in the work of the Kingdom.

Time is a nonrenewable and nontransferable resource: you cannot store it, slow it down, stop it, divide it, or hand it off. You cannot accumulate it or save it for “a rainy day”; when it is lost, it is irrecoverable. A. W. Tozer warned: “When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection.” “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Every passing minute is gone forever. We use expressions about time that, in reality, are not possible: you cannot buy more time or find more time; we speak of “making time,” but that does not occur. If you do not use it, you lose it. Where you invest your time reveals what you consider most important. There is no such thing as “quality time” versus “common time”: every minute is worth the same as the next. Every moment is a gift from God that must be stewarded with wisdom. We are stewards of the time God entrusts to us.

There is an entire field of study called time management. Numerous companies hire consultants to teach busy executives to manage their schedules better. Stephen R. Covey noted in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: “Time management is a misleading concept; the real challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves, because time moves at the same pace no matter what we do.”

And the Bible speaks of redeeming the time: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15–16. To “walk circumspectly” implies actively seeking opportunities with wisdom, awareness, prudence, and discernment.



Being good stewards includes managing well the time God grants us. Many people regret missed opportunities. The unreflective pursuit of opportunities, mixed with risk, is a calamity waiting to happen. Therefore, every opportunity should be accompanied by prayer and aligned with God's will to avoid unnecessary harm: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Galatians 6:10.

When Paul exhorts us to redeem the time, he calls for an extremely careful and proactive attitude: to use time appropriately and intentionally, as one who seeks to recover what was lost. We must not let time simply pass; our actions should carry a healthy sense of urgency.

We can learn to redeem the time by being aware that we may not have another day. "Redeem" translates the Greek verb *exagorazō*, which refers to "buying up, making the most of." Redeeming the time is thus to manage our schedule in a way that glorifies God; it is to walk intentionally in wisdom and submission, seeking His will.

A great enemy of redeeming the time is procrastination—a form of indecision that consumes life and opportunities. James describes it as double-mindedness: instability that hesitates in everything (James 1:8; 4:8). Combating procrastination requires clear decisions, ordered priorities, and prompt obedience.

Let us be good stewards of the time that has been given to us!

5.3. Our handling of finances

As good stewards, we will give account for how we handle the finances God has entrusted to our care. Becoming a steward of finances begins by understanding who the Owner is. If one lives under the myth "it's my money, because I earned it," it will be difficult to relinquish control. Jesus spoke frequently about how to see and handle money and possessions.

When we are good stewards of the finances entrusted to us, we put God and the church first. We do not hesitate to give generously and cheerfully when we know the money is God's (2 Corinthians 9:7). He entrusts His riches to our care to provide for the work of His Kingdom. If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, "all these things"—including material needs—will be added (Matthew 6:33).



The work of the kingdom of God often requires monetary contributions: pastoral support, missions, and the needs of the local church. For this, God will hold us responsible. Faithfulness in tithes and offerings helps to advance the church's mission and vision.

Scripture encourages generosity and warns against stinginess: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty." Proverbs 11:24. When we give generously, we are enriched in ways that transcend the material; when we withhold what we could or should give, we grow impoverished.

We not only find favor before God by being charitable; we also cultivate goodwill, benevolence, and compassion. God's church will not ultimately depend on human scarcity or abundance, for it is His Church; nevertheless, He established the principle of giving to include our participation and obedience in His work.

Giving is an act of stewardship: we recognize that the resources we possess have been entrusted to us to share for others' good. Giving and gratitude are intertwined. By giving selflessly, we cultivate gratitude for the abundance received and recognize the capacity to influence for good:

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

6. Conclusion

Although we could develop this topic much further, for the purpose of this chapter what has been shared is sufficient. Our basic aim here is for local churches to move toward health and productivity by means of good stewardship.

As we have said, stewardship is necessary and is strongly encouraged by Scripture for the good of the work of the Kingdom of God and the edification of the Church. Just as in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), the Lord will evaluate at the end how we managed, invested, and multiplied what He placed in our care. Let us not bury our talent.



Pastor, minister, remember these things: the principle of God's Lordship is over all; the centrality of faithfulness is the steward's measure; and the practice of disciplines orders life and ministry. Also remember that stewardship encompasses gifts and abilities, the wise use of time, and the management of finances.

By discovering, developing, and deploying what has been received, with integrity and purpose, we serve the Master, Owner of all things, and contribute to the advance of the Gospel, to the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

7. Self-evaluation questions

1. Do I practically recognize God's Lordship over everything I steward?
2. What concrete evidences of faithfulness are there in my stewardship of time, gifts, and finances?
3. Am I using my gifts and abilities where they produce the greatest edification for the local church?
4. Do I have a clear plan to discover, develop, and deploy gifts in others?
5. How do I demonstrate financial integrity? Are there dual signatures, records, and periodic reports?
6. Does my budget reflect priority for the Gospel, the mission, and mercy?
7. What habits are stealing time and how will I correct them this week?
8. When and how do we give account for the use of resources before the local church?
9. What concrete project will I finance or drive in the next 90 days to advance the work of the Kingdom?
10. If the Lord asked for an account today, which talents would I present multiplied and which do I need to reorient immediately?



CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcorn, Randy. *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel (Portavoz), 2003.
- Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Barcelona, Spain: Paidós, 2014.
- DeSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Greear, J. D. *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Keller, Timothy. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York, NY: Dutton, 2010.
- Platt, David. *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010.
- Stott, John R. W. *Issues Facing Christians Today (El cristiano contemporáneo)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Editorial Caribe, 1993.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1961.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Prayer of Jabez*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2000.



Conclusion to Healthy Churches

The health of a church does not depend solely on its size, its visibility, or its programs, but on the spiritual life that flows from within. A healthy church is one in which Christ occupies the center, and the Spirit and the Word define every decision, every movement. A healthy church is the body of Christ functioning in harmony, where each member fulfills his or her purpose and each area reflects the character of the Lord.

This section has shown us that the building up of a strong church begins in the invisible: in spirituality. No structure can stand if the spiritual foundation is weakened. Life with God—prayer, obedience, holiness—constitutes the root of all lasting growth. A church that prays and depends on the Holy Spirit stands firm in the midst of trials, because its foundations are on the Rock.

The liturgy of worship reminds us that the church exists not only to do, but to worship. In every service, song, and act of reverence, the identity of God's people is forged. Congregational worship is not a spectacle, but a divine appointment that forms the heart of believers, unites the church, and glorifies the Lord. When worship remains pure and centered on Christ, the church breathes life.

The family of God is the environment where faith becomes tangible. It is the spiritual climate where healthy relationships, brotherly love, and genuine acceptance allow people to grow, be restored, and serve together. A healthy church is a family where no one feels invisible and everyone finds a place to serve and to be loved.

A welcoming church is the friendly face of the Gospel. Hospitality is not a public-relations strategy, but an expression of the love of Christ. Opening the doors to the visitor, accompanying the new believer, and caring for the one returning from failure are acts that make the Kingdom of God visible. Every gesture of welcome communicates that grace remains open to all.

Healthy ministries organize the mission, connect gifts with needs, and turn passion into service. Ministry is not about filling calendars, but about raising up mature disciples. Where there are leaders who serve with humility and teams that work in unity, the church grows in purpose and fruit.



Effective systems are the backbone of organization. They do not replace the work of the Spirit, but they channel it with order. Clear processes, constant communication, and transparent accountability prevent weariness and promote trust. Excellence honors God when it is done with integrity.

Finally, stewardship is the seal of a church's maturity. Managing with faithfulness the resources, time, and gifts that God entrusts is also an act of worship. Generosity opens the way to divine provision and reflects deep gratitude toward the Giver of every good thing.

A healthy church is, in essence, a Christ-centered church, where every element — spirituality, worship, relationships, service, structure, and resources— is aligned with the will of God. We are not seeking perfect churches, but living churches that grow, correct themselves, serve, and love under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

May this call resound in every pastor, leader, and believer: let us build churches where the presence of God is evident, where the Word is the standard, and where every ministry, system, and action breathes Gospel. Only then will we see a truly healthy and apostolic church: a family of faith that glorifies God and transforms lives with love and truth.



Final self-evaluation questions

1. SPIRITUALITY: Does the spiritual life of the church depend on the program or does it flow from a living relationship with God?
2. WORSHIP LITURGY: Do our times of worship truly lead to an encounter with Christ, or have they become routine?
3. APOSTOLIC FAMILY: Does the church reflect a culture of love, acceptance, and restoration for all?
4. WELCOMING CHURCH: How are we receiving, caring for, and accompanying new believers and visitors?
5. HEALTHY MINISTRIES: Are the church's ministries discipling, serving, and intentionally multiplying leaders?
6. EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS: Do we have clear processes and accountability that strengthen the mission and prevent weariness?
7. STEWARDSHIP: Do we faithfully manage the resources, gifts, and time that God has entrusted to His church?



Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus

GLOBAL GROWTH VISION

EPILOGUE

The vision we have shared throughout these pages is not a distant theory, but an urgent and present call. Evangelism, discipleship, healthy leadership, and healthy local churches are not four isolated topics, but the pillars of one and the same mission: to fulfill with faithfulness the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each section of this book reminds us that the work does not depend on our strength, but on the power of the Holy Spirit; and that the fruit we seek is not statistics, but lives transformed for the glory of God.

We evangelize because we believe in the power of the Gospel; we disciple because we desire to form generations that are firm in the faith; we strengthen leadership because we know the church multiplies through upright servants; and we build healthy churches because only thus can the Kingdom of God expand solidly.

May this joint effort inspire every pastor, leader, and member of our congregations to lift up their eyes to the harvest and respond with obedience and passion. The task is great, but the Lord of the work walks with us. The future of the Apostolic Church depends on how much we embrace this vision and turn it into action.

Let us keep working together, with faith and unity, until we see Christ glorified in every neighborhood, in every city, in every state, and in every nation, for the glory of His name.



GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcorn, Randy. *Dinero, posesiones y eternidad*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2003.
- Anderson, Neil T. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000 (rev.).
- Anderson, Ray S. *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Barna, George. *El poder de la visión*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2003.
- Barker, Joel A. *The Power of Vision*. St. Paul, MN: Star Thrower Distribution, 1991.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Blackaby, Henry, y Richard Blackaby. *Espiritualidad y liderazgo: Moviéndose a los propósitos de Dios*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001.
- Blackaby, Henry, y Claude King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2008.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Vida en comunidad*. Salamanca, España: Sígueme, 2004.
- Boren, M. Scott. *Missional Small Groups: Becoming a Community That Makes a Difference in the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Bounds, E. M. *Power Through Prayer*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009.
- Bounds, E. M. *The Weapon of Prayer*. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1993.
- Branson, Mark Lau. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004.
- Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martínez. *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.
- Briscoe, Stuart, y Jill Briscoe. *Married for Ministry: The Husband and Wife Team in Christian Service*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1986.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Mandato a la diferencia: una invitación a la iglesia contemporánea*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.



- Carson, D. A., ed. *Worship by the Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Chapman, Gary. *Los cinco lenguajes del amor*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 1995.
- Cherry, Constance M. *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. 2.^a ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
- Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- Cirillo, Francesco. *The Pomodoro Technique: The Acclaimed Time-Management System That Has Transformed How We Work*. New York, NY: Crown Currency, 2018.
- Clinton, J. Robert, y Paul Leavenworth. *El desarrollo del líder cristiano*. Miami, FL: Editorial Unilit, 2008.
- Cole, Neil. *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church: New Testament Insights for the 21st Century Church*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2012.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Cell Church Solutions: Transforming the Church in North America*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2005.
- Comiskey, Joel. *De doce a tres: Cómo aplicar los principios G12 a tu iglesia*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2002.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Elim: Cómo los grupos celulares penetraron una ciudad entera para Jesús*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2005.
- Comiskey, Joel. *How to Be a Great Cell Group Coach: Practical Insight for Supporting and Mentoring Cell Group Leaders*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2022 (rev.).
- Comiskey, Joel. *Making Disciples in the 21st Century Church*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2013.
- Comiskey, Joel. *The Church That Multiplies: Growing a Healthy Cell Church in North America*. Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2007.
- Covey, Stephen R. *Los siete hábitos de la gente altamente efectiva*. Barcelona, España: Paidós, 2014.



- Danker, Frederick William, ed. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- DeSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Dever, Mark. *Nueve marcas de una iglesia saludable*. Barcelona, España: Poiema Publicaciones, 2014.
- Dodd, Pamela, y Doug Sundheim. *The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done Without Driving Yourself Crazy*. Peak Performance Press, 2005.
- Dobson, James. *Enfoque en la familia: Lo que importa más*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2003.
- Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. 3.^a ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Engel, James F., y Wilbert Norton. *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975.
- Enns, Peter. *Éxodo. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2011.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 1: Nacer*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 2: Crecer*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 3: Madurar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Discipulado Nivel 4: Multiplicar*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Estrategia de Jesús. *Simplificada: Etapa 1*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2019.
- Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Fernando, Ajith. *Hechos. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2010.



- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Fortino, John. *Presentación del Obispo Presidente a Pastores de la Asamblea Apostólica en la Convención General de 2011*.
- Frame, John M. *Worship in Spirit and Truth*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996.
- Gane, Roy. *Números. Comentario bíblico con aplicación NVI*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2012.
- Geiger, Eric, y Kevin Peck. *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2016.
- George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1992.
- Gorman, Julie A. *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002 (rev.).
- Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters. 2nd ed.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017.
- Green, Gene L. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Greear, J. D. *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.
- Hyatt, Michael. *Tu mejor año*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House en Español, 2023.
- Hybels, Bill. *Liderazgo audaz*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 2002.
- Hybels, Bill, y Mark Mittelberg. *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Keener, Craig S. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary. 4 vols.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2015.
- Keller, Timothy. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York, NY: Dutton, 2010.
- Lencioni, Patrick. *Las cinco disfunciones de un equipo*. Barcelona, España: Empresa Activa (Urano), 2002.



- MacArthur, John F. *1 Corintios. Comentario MacArthur del Nuevo Testamento*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2011.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004 (rev.).
- Marshall, Colin, y Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*. Kingsford, NSW, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009.
- Marshall, Colin, y Tony Payne. *La vid y el enrejado*. Barcelona, España: Poiema Publicaciones, 2010.
- Martín Del Campo, Ismael. *Manual de Retiros Evangelísticos*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2011.
- Martín Del Campo, Ismael. *Vayan y hagan discípulos*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2012.
- Maxwell, John C. *Desarrolle los líderes que están alrededor de usted*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 1995.
- Maxwell, John C. *El trabajo en equipo hace que el sueño se realice*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2002.
- Maxwell, John C. *Las 21 leyes irrefutables del liderazgo. Ed. revisada*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2007.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You. Rev. y act. 10th Anniversary ed.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- McIntosh, Gary L., y Samuel D. Rima. *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles. Word Biblical Commentary 46*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- Murray, Andrew. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1981.
- Myers, Joseph R. *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990.



- Newbigin, Lesslie. *El Evangelio en una sociedad pluralista*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.
- Newport, Cal. *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016 (rev.).
- Ortberg, John. *El alma: Cuida de ti mismo para tener una vida plena*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Oshman, Jen. *Welcome: Loving Your Church By Making Space for Everyone*. United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2023.
- Páez de la Cerda, Elías. *Escuela Sígame Nivel 3: Madurar*. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, México: Ministerios La Misión, 2017.
- Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan y Al Switzler. *Conversaciones cruciales*. Ciudad de México, México: McGraw-Hill, 2012.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *52 lecciones para grupos celulares*. Fontana, CA: Estrategia de Jesús, 2019.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *En el templo y por las casas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2014.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Grupos que transforman vidas*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2015.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares que transforman naciones*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Growth Internacional, 2016.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Hogares salvando vidas*. Fontana, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2021.
- Pereira das Neves, Gabriel. *Yo y mi casa serviremos al Señor*. Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Secretaría de Educación Cristiana, 2013.
- Peterson, David G. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *The Pastor: A Memoir*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011.



- Platt, David. *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.
- Rainer, Thom S., y Eric Geiger. *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006.
- Rainer, Thom S., y Eric Geiger. *Iglesia simple*. Nashville, TN: B&H Español, 2007.
- Rainer, Thom S., y Ed Stetzer. *Iglesia transformacional*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Ravenhill, Leonard. *Why Revival Tarries*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1959.
- Ravenhill, Leonard. *Por qué no llega el avivamiento*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Peniel, 2013.
- Ruth, Lester, y Swee Hong Lim. *Lovin' On Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2023.
- Salazar, Felipe A. *Mensaje Presidencial*. Fontana, CA: Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, 2024.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Liderazgo espiritual*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2007.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017 (updated ed.).
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Early Christian Mission. 2 vols.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Searcy, Nelson. *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007.
- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Stanley, Andy. *Seven Practices of Effective Ministry*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2004.
- Stetzer, Ed. *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003.



- Stetzer, Ed, y David Putman. *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006.
- Stone, Douglas, y Sheila Heen. *Gracias por el feedback*. Barcelona, España: Conecta, 2015.
- Stott, John. Efesios. *Comentario bíblico La Biblia Habla Hoy*. Barcelona, España: Andamio, 2003.
- Stott, John. *The Message of Acts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.
- Stott, John R. W. *El cristiano contemporáneo: un reto para la Iglesia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Editorial Caribe, 1993.
- Strauch, Alexander. *Ancianos bíblicos*. Barcelona, España: Poima Publicaciones, 2014.
- Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995.
- Sutherland, Jeff. *Scrum: El arte de hacer el doble de trabajo en la mitad de tiempo*. Ciudad de México, México: Océano, 2016.
- Tenney, Tommy. *The God Chasers: My Soul Follows Hard After Thee*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1998.
- Tozer, A. W. *El conocimiento del Dios Santo*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1961.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982.
- Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus. NICNT*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Trull, Joe E., y James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders. 2ª ed.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Towns, Elmer. *Getting a Church Started*. Lynchburg, VA: Church Growth Institute, 1982.
- Trimble, Corey. *An Authentic Experience: Creating an Inviting Culture with Biblical Integrity*. USA: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020.
- Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996.
- Wagner, Peter. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Warren, Rick. *Una Iglesia con Propósito*. Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 1998.
- Warren, Rick. *Una vida con propósito*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.



- Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.
- Welch, Jack, y Suzy Welch. *Ganar (Winning)*. Barcelona, España: Vergara, 2005.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life. Updated ed.* Colorado Springs, CL: NavPress, 2014.
- Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.
- Wilkins, Michael J. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship. Rev. ed.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Wilkinson, Bruce. *La oración de Jabes*. Nashville, TN: Grupo Nelson, 2000.
- Wimber, John, con Kevin Springer. *Power Healing*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Sea libre (Éxodo)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Portavoz, 2006.



ADDITIONAL PASTORAL RESOURCES (ON-LINE)

- Andy Spurlin Ministries. “God’s Words of Logos and Rhema.” s. f. [<https://andyspurlinministries.org/rhema>].
- Irving, Justin A. “Healthy Christian Leaders Prioritize Their Relationship with God.” Church Executive, 29 de noviembre de 2022. [<https://churchexecutive.com/archives/healthy-christian-leaders-prioritize-their-relationship-with-god/>].
- Koch, Aaron. “God Has Manifested His Word Through Preaching.” Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, 1 de diciembre de 2021. [<https://www.mountziongreenfield.org/posts/sermon/god-has-manifested-his-word-through-preaching/>].
- Murrell, Steve. “Church Leadership: What Is a Healthy Church?” s. f. [<https://stevemurrell.com/church-leadership-what-is-a-healthy-church/>].
- O’Toole, Garson. “Art, Like Morality, Consists in Drawing the Line Somewhere.” Quote Investigator, 20 de julio de 2014.
- Pastors.com. “Enjoy Leadership by Keeping Your Relationship With God Fresh.” s. f. [<https://www.pastors.com/free-resources/enjoy-leadership-by-keeping-your-relationship-with-god-fresh/>].
- Roberts, Mark D. “Leaders and the Word of God.” De Pree Center – Life for Leaders, 6 de noviembre de 2018. [<https://depree.org/life-for-leaders/leaders-and-the-word-of-god/>]
- Voss, Barry. “Construyendo comunidad en la iglesia.” FaithLife Ministries, 7 de mayo de 2019.
- Willimon, William H. “Preaching to the Disinclined.” Christianity Today, 1 de mayo de 2004. [<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/may/7.42.html>].



The Apostolic Assembly is living a decisive moment. The Lord has given us a clear vision: to be a healthy, growing, Spirit-filled apostolic cell church. This vision takes shape in the mission of winning the lost, making disciples, forming healthy leaders, and building healthy local churches.

Global Growth Vision integrates these four axes in a single volume, offering biblical principles, practical steps, and simple tools for the local pastor. Evangelism, discipleship, healthy leadership, and healthy local churches are not isolated topics, but inseparable dimensions of the mission Christ entrusted to us.

Our desire is to see apostolic churches that grow steadily —not only in number, but in spiritual maturity, unity, and the power of the Spirit. This book is an invitation to renew passion for souls, strengthen apostolic culture, and move forward together toward the harvest the Lord has prepared for the final hour of His Church.



AAOFJC.COM

