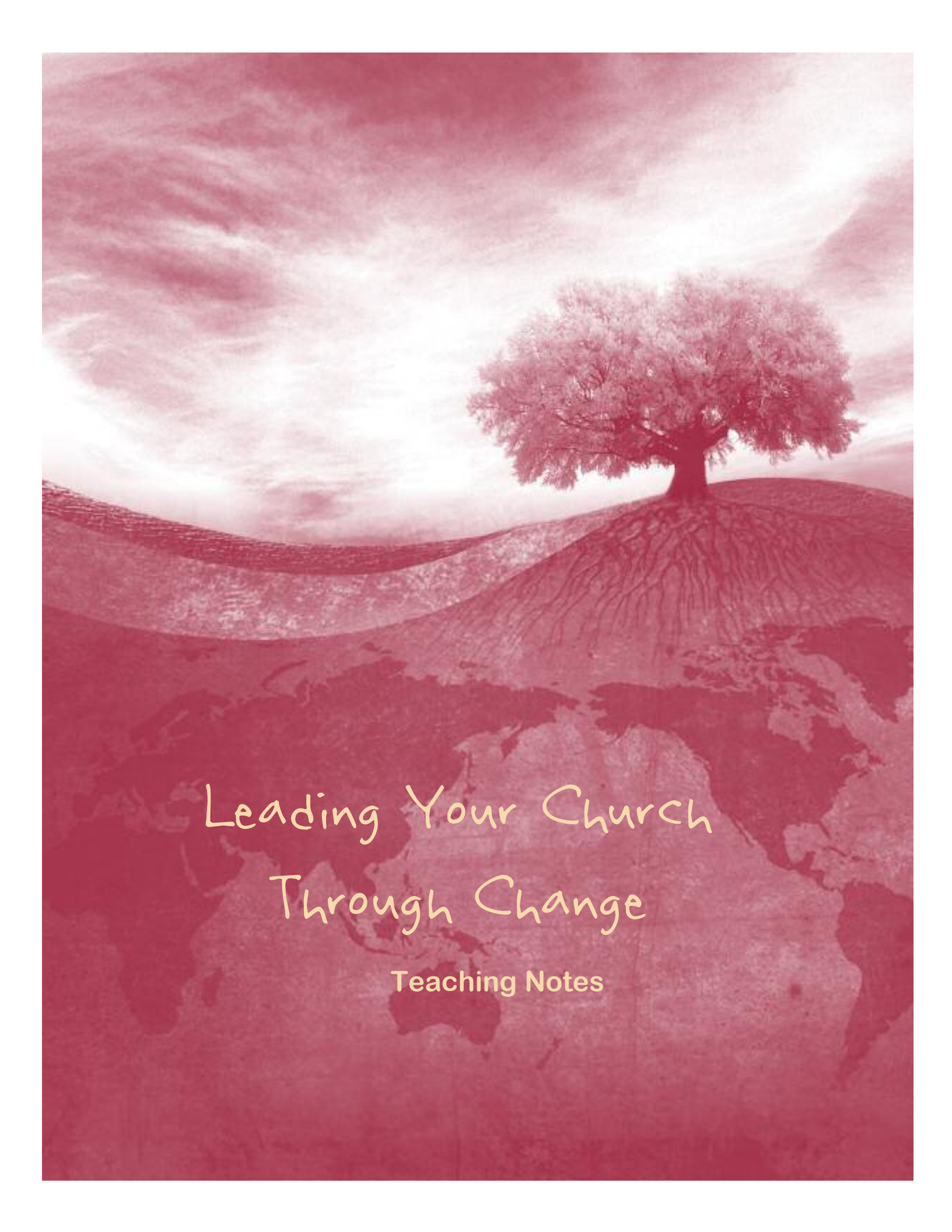


A surreal landscape with a tree growing from a globe. The globe is the base of the terrain, with continents visible. A large, leafy tree stands on a small hill that is part of the globe. The roots of the tree are exposed and spread out over the globe's surface. The sky is filled with dramatic, swirling clouds, and a bright light source, possibly the sun or moon, is visible behind the tree, creating a halo effect.

Leading Your Church Through Change

Teaching Notes

Leading Your Church through Change (Teaching Notes)
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Edition 1.0

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Notes to Teacher

1. Prior to teaching, it is a good idea to review the notes that follow. If you have never taught in the region before, you will want to do some research about that area, making notes about the culture, languages, religions, industry, political situations, etc. There are places within the teaching transcript where you can modify the points, humor, or comments to custom tailor them to meet the culture where you are teaching. If you have an in-country contact, you can work with them to accomplish these modifications.
2. These **Teaching Notes** contain both the **teaching script** and the Student Notes. The **Teaching Notes** are in **Arial Rounded Bold (11 pt with 15 pt leading)**. The Student Notes are in Arial (9 pt with 11 pt leading) and have been indented. The fill-ins for the Student Notes are underlined in **Arial Rounded Bold** font. This will show you what the students are reading in their notes as you teach this seminar. For example:

These are teaching notes. Use them to frame what you want to say. They surround the Students Notes so that you know where you are in relation to those whom you are teaching. Answers to the fill-ins will be inserted into these Teaching Notes as appropriate to the flow of teaching.

These are a replication of the Student Notes (typed in Arial 9 pt. with 11 pt leading). All of the Student Notes are indented. Everything in the Student Notes is replicated in the Teaching Notes.

The answers to the **FILL-INS** are also highlighted in **Arial Rounded bold** (12 pt) and underlined.

Scripture is represented by the use of Times New Roman Italic (11.5 pt with 15 pt leading).

SCRIPTURE ADDRESS (TRANSLATION)

3. There are numbers, as shown in the left margin, that gives the location and number of the corresponding PowerPoint slide and Student Notes page. Note that some of the PowerPoint slides may contain more than one student fill-in or Scripture. The slide and page icons will help guide you.
4. You'll see Teaching Tips throughout this material that will give suggestions to you as the teacher explaining options in the presentations of this material.
5. Teach these truths and principles with a sense of faith that God is going to use you to make a difference! We've seen these principles impact hundreds of thousands of people in many cultures globally.

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TEACHING TIP

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SESSION 1

LEADING YOUR CHURCH THROUGH CHANGE

Understanding the Components of Change

In all that we've talked to you about in previous sessions, if you went back and began instituting these things, there would be an awful lot of change going on in your church. So in this session, we want to talk about leading your church through change. You can subtitle this lecture: How do you lead your church through change without losing your job? I want to give you ten very practical keys to leading a church through change.

TEACHING TIP

Obviously, the majority of this material is directed to pastors. Even if you happen to be teaching this where there are a good number of lay people, keep the focus on the pastor. Who knows, maybe a layman or woman in a church will become a great encourager to the pastor in living out these truths.

As you teach through this section, do so with a spirit of "pastoring the pastor." The two words that best describe the spirit of this session are: compassionate conviction.

I. YOU MUST DEVELOP AN UNSHAKEABLE CONVICTION ABOUT GROWTH.

First of all, you need to settle the issue that God wants His church to grow. And He doesn't want His church to stop growing. You don't ever apologize for wanting your church to grow. It's not an ego trip or a personal issue. God wants His church to grow.

Growing a healthy Purpose Driven church is hard work. Unless you have an unshakable conviction that this is God's plan for your church, you're going to give up when the going gets tough. I can't tell you how many days I've been discouraged and wanted to quit the ministry just because it was so hard. You have to clarify your convictions so you don't give up.

Many of you are going to go home from this conference with a new vision of growth. When you do that, somebody is bound to ask you "Why do we need to grow? Isn't our church big enough? I like the way our church is. Why do we need to grow?" How are you going to answer those people? Let me give you three reasons why we must never stop growing, why a church must always be growing.

Why We Must Never Stop Growing

- Because God's Word **COMMANDS IT**

MATTHEW 28:18-20; MARK 16:15; LUKE 24:46-48; JOHN 20:21; ACTS 1:8

We talk about the Great Commission but honestly, Jesus gave five Great Commissions. There's one in every one of the gospels. Matthew 28:18-20 is the most famous one. Then there's one in Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:21, Acts 1:8. Jesus gave five different Great Commissions, all saying the same thing. He has commanded the church to reach out and grow.

1

- Because the needs of people DEMAND IT

5

The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9

"...The Lord is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

2 PETER 3:9

God wants everybody saved. That's what He wants. The Bible tells us that the love of Christ compels us.

"For Christ's love compels us."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14

Why do we grow a church? Why do we work so hard for health and growth? Because everybody needs Jesus. People need the Lord. We don't grow for our benefit; we grow because people need the Lord. People without Christ go into a Christ-less eternity. We don't do it just to have a bigger church.

The truth is, the bigger your church gets, the more headaches you have, the more pressures you have, the more problems you have to deal with. More people mean more problems. It's unselfish to grow a church. Because you're saying, "Yes, I'm willing to take on more stress. Yes, I'm willing to take on more problems. I'm willing to handle more issues."

Why do we do this? Because people without Jesus Christ go to hell. And Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross and said, "This is how much I love people." As long as there is one person within driving distance of your church that does not know Jesus Christ, you must keep growing. If you don't keep growing, you are being disobedient. The church that says, "We've got enough people. We don't care about anybody else" is basically saying to the rest of the world, "You can go to hell." Let's be honest. That's what they're saying. "We're just fine. Me, myself, my family –

we're all going to heaven. The rest of the world can go to hell."
The needs of people demand that we keep growing.

1

- Because church growth is GOD'S WILL

6

The Bible says in Colossians 2:19;

"Under Christ's control, the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and grows as God wants it to grow."

COLOSSIANS 2:19 (GN)

Circle that last phrase. God wants the church to grow.

When your church starts growing, the moment it starts growing, people are going to start criticizing you. Count on it. I've heard them all and I want to warn you about some of the common criticisms that people are going to say when your church starts growing.

Current Criticisms of Church Growth:

7

- "God isn't interested in numbers."

"God isn't interested in numbers. It's just a numbers game." I want to say, "Who says?" God is so interested in numbers He named a book of the Bible after it! It's called Numbers! God is very interested in numbers. Yesterday, we looked at all those numbers in the book of Acts – 120, 3,000, 5,000, more thousands, added daily. Why did God put that in the Bible? It was important. The Bible tells us that the good shepherd leaves the 99 sheep that are saved in the fold, to go after the one that was lost. How does he know one's lost? He counted. We say at Saddleback, "We count people because people count." Don't ever apologize for counting people. Every number represents a soul that Jesus died for.

When I was a youth pastor, I did something real foolish one time. I took 35 teenagers on a bus for ten days, on a mission trip! Every time that bus stopped, I counted them as they got off. And every time they got back on, from potty stop or lunch or anything, I counted them. Was I on an ego trip? I counted those people because I cared about

TEACHING TIP

As with all of these studies, we've left the personal stories in the teaching notes. Once again, this is to give you an opportunity to see how Rick taught this, and then find your own story that fits the point. The most personal way to say it is the most powerful way to say it.

those kids and every one of them mattered to me and to God. We count people because people count.

1

I had some guy one time say, “We don’t believe in counting attendance because that’s just a big ego trip.” I said, “Sir, do you count the offering?” He said, “Yes.” “Then what you’re saying is money is more important than people.” Got him! I can’t imagine a pastor not counting the offering. But people are more important than the money they give. God cares. Don’t let anybody fool you with that one. God is interested in numbers. And you’re one of those numbers. He’s interested in you.

- “The church should focus on quality, not quantity.”

7

My question is “Why can’t you have both?” When you go fishing, do you want quality or quantity? I want both. I want the biggest fish and I want to catch as many of them as I can. I am not satisfied with catching the one quality fish. I want quantity and I want quality. These are not contradictory things. How many of you people were not the first-born child in your family? What if your parents said after the first child, “Let’s focus on quality not quantity.” None of you would be here. Aren’t you glad they were interested in quantity? I’ve got three kids. Suppose I take them on a camping trip up to the mountains. Let’s say my three kids get lost in the wilderness. We send out a search party and we’re out seeking and finding the lost children. We come back to the campfire and my wife says to me, “Let’s call off the search. We’ve found the one quality kid.” The other two might say, “We’d like quantity to be involved here!”

Let me give you a little secret: Quality creates quantity. When a program is good, people want to go to it. When a service is great, it attracts people. If you have such quality in your church, how come nobody’s coming to it? The more you raise the quality, the more you’re going to get the quantity. I don’t believe that if a church has quality, nobody’s interested in it. People are starving for quality! When you give quality music, quality message, quality pastoral care, quality places of service, people want to be a part of that.

Another secret: Sometimes quantity produces quality. Would you rather sing with five people or 500? The bigger your church, the better the music gets. Why? You’ve got more musicians, more voices. I don’t want to sing with five people. I can hear myself when singing with five. But I love to sing with 500 or 5,000. That is thrilling. In that case quantity produces quality. A choir of 300 is going to have better quality than a choir of three. No doubt about it. Don’t let anybody mess you up on that one either.

A third common criticism:

- “Large churches are shallow and lack commitment.”

That’s just not true. “They water down the gospel to attract large crowds.” That’s just not true. At Saddleback Church, most Christians couldn’t join Saddleback because they wouldn’t be willing to sign the four different covenants we require: the Membership covenant, the Ministry covenant, the Maturity covenant and the Missions covenant. I would take any 500 members of Saddleback church and stand them up against any 500 members of any church in America and compare on commitment level. People in this church have sold homes and bought smaller homes and given the difference to pay for our land and buildings. People have canceled vacations, given their wedding rings, sold cars, taken on second jobs just to buy this 120-acre campus. I would stack up the commitment of these people to any church in the world. It’s just not true that because you’re big, you’re shallow.

If you want more help on these criticisms, there’s a tape called, “Why I Believe in Church Growth.” You can get that at Pastors.com.

Fact: There is no correlation between the SIZE and STRENGTH of a church.

The bottom line is there is no correlation between the size and the strength of a church. No correlation. You can be big and strong or big and flabby or small and strong or small and weak. Big isn’t necessarily better. Small isn’t necessarily better. Healthy is better.

For additional help:
Leadership Lifter Tape #L014
“Why I Believe in Church Growth”

II. DECIDE IF THE CHURCH SHOULD BE CHANGED

10

Really there are three issues you need to confront, look at, and evaluate before you start any kind of changes in your churches. The aspects to consider are location, leadership and longevity.

2

Aspects to consider:

11

❖ LOCATION

You want to ask questions like,

- Is this church in the right place for growth?
- Is this church worth changing?
- Does it need to die and be reborn somewhere else?
- Is there a more receptive area? (Matthew 10:14)
- Could I be more effective somewhere else?
- What is the realistic potential even if the church is renewed?

Then you want to ask questions about leadership before you start any change.

❖ LEADERSHIP

- Am I the right person to lead this change?

The church may need changing but you may not fit the target. You may not fit that particular situation. You may not be the right person to lead it.

- Is this the kind of church I should be pastoring?
- Do I match the congregation? Do I match the community?
- Is the existing leadership likely to support me in change?
- (If they stay, can the church grow?)

You need to be honest about these things.

2

❖ LONGEVITY

- Am I willing to give the rest of my life to this church?

If you are not willing to stay for the long haul in a church, don't mess up somebody else's church. I have seen too many preachers with visions of grandeur in their minds, kind of flame into a church or a community, come rushing in with all these great ideas, make all these changes, throw everything up in the air and a year later they go to another church. They leave those good, godly people in a mess. Everything's just left up in the air. He blew in, he blew up and he blew away. What happened?

Inevitably what happens in a church like that, when a pastor comes in, starts a whole bunch of changes and gets everything going, then gets called to some other church, he's not committed to staying the long haul. Inevitably in that church, the mindset swings from very open to change to a resistance, so when the next guy comes in, they say "We're not changing anything!" Pastors come and go and I have been in some churches with good, godly people who have been burned more than once by pastors who start something they didn't finish. You don't blame them, honestly, for being a little resistant – "We'll just see if you really mean business."

You need to ask yourself about the question of longevity. Am I willing to give the rest of my life for this church?

If you answer these questions and you still think the church is ready to be changed...

III. MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO STAY

12

I know of a church who said, "We're looking for a pastor who will stay," and the young guy said, "I'm just the guy. I've only pastored two churches and I stayed with both of them until they died." You don't want that guy.

The average pastor leaves a church because of seven people. I have discovered that when the pastor leaves, the problems stay. But when the pastor stays, the problems eventually leave. You just need to decide what's best for the church. That you stay or that the problems stay? You make that commitment – "I'm going to stay here."

One of the secrets of success is simply to outlast your critics. You just hang on. You know how you get to be an oak tree? An oak tree is just a little nut that refused to quit. Just hang in there.

2

Law of Leadership: Change takes T.I.M.E.

13

I can show you how to grow a healthy church. I cannot show you how to do it quickly. There is no way to do it quickly. It just takes time.

Churches are like oil tankers. It takes an oil tanker fourteen miles to turn around. In a church, minor change is major victory. Just tweak it a little bit. It may take you fourteen miles to turn that ship around. It's been going in one direction for some time; it's not just going to "turn on a dime."

I have a friend in this church who is a pilot of 747's. I said, "How fast can a 747 turn?" He said, "You can turn a 747 on a 90-degree angle, but the passengers don't like it. You can turn it on a 90-degree angle for about three or four seconds, then two things will happen. It's going to go in a tailspin and the people are going to go berserk. You can turn a 747 on a 45-degree angle for a very short time and it will be very uncomfortable but you can do it. But it's very uncomfortable. On the other hand, you can turn a 747 on a 30-degree angle and the people won't even notice it and you can do that all day."

There's wisdom in that. Don't try to just reinvent everything overnight. Take that 30-degree angle and make that public commitment to stay.

The longer a church has been plateaued,

14

the longer it will take to GET GROWING

If your church has been plateaued for a couple of months, you don't have a problem. If your church has been plateaued for a year or two, it's going to take a little bit more energy to get it going. If your church has been stagnant or declining or plateaued for twenty years, you have a major problem to get it going again.

The U.S. Space Agency tells us that in getting a rocket to take off from the launch pad, most of that energy, most of the fuel, is used in the first 1,000 yards. It's just getting that thing off the launch pad. Once the rocket is in space, it takes very little energy to keep it moving. That's why you have to put enormous energy up front in

getting a declining or plateaued church off the launch pad and growing again. But once it's in orbit, it will get easier. Trust me. It will get easier. It's like a snowball. As it goes downhill it picks up steam and it just gets bigger and bigger and the changes are not that significant anymore. You just do it.

2

There are really only three times in a ministry you can move quickly in a church.

The only times you can move quickly:

15

- IN THE HONEYMOON

When you first arrive as the pastor of a church, actually there is no such thing as a honeymoon. It's only suspended judgment. They're just watching you, just checking you out. But in a new pastorate, you need to seize the initiative. In fact, if you can get people to agree on changes before you even come to the church, that's even better. Strike while the iron is hot. Some people and some books say when you go into a church you shouldn't do anything for two or three years. You just get to know the people and then you start making changes. I couldn't disagree more. If they're calling you in as a new pastor, they expect some new initiatives. Now is the time. They're more open to change now than when they get comfortable with you.

Strike when the iron is hot. That's one time when you can change. Right when you first go in. Actually if I were going to a new church as a pastor I would say, "I'll come. But before I come, I want to spend a week in a Bible conference with you before we decide." And then you can decide. Because it's not just, "Are you a good preacher and do we like you," it's "Do you agree with the philosophy that I believe God's called me to do?" I'd go in and take five nights and on one of those nights, I'd say, "This is what I believe about worship," and I'd explain all that. This is what I would do if I were the pastor of this church. Then the next night, "This is what I believe about evangelism." And here's what we'd do if I were the pastor of this church. And the next night, "Here's what I believe about fellowship and this is what I'd do." And I'd cover all five purposes in five nights. Then I'd say, "Now if you want to vote, go ahead. But you're voting on the package because if you get me, this is what we're going to do. Up front, I'm not saying this is the only way to do it. It's not the only way. But this is what God's called me to do and if you get me, you get the package. If you don't like the package, let's break off the engagement. A broken engagement is better than a divorce. Let's decide up front I'm not your man." And you need to be willing to walk away from a church that doesn't want what God's called you to do.

If they said, “Yes, this is what we want,” I’d say, “Let’s get it on paper. Let’s sign a covenant together – ten things we’re going to agree on right up front before I come.” It’s almost like a prenuptial agreement. One of them would be “We will do whatever it takes to reach this community for Christ.” That would be non-negotiable with me. We will do whatever it takes to reach this community for Christ. And we would sign on it together. Why? Because later on we might say, “We need to knock this wall out and expand this building, pave the parking lot,” and the people say, “We can’t do that.” But we signed that we will do whatever it takes to reach this community for Christ. Or, “We’re going to add another service.” But they don’t want another service. ... “We will do whatever it takes to reach this community for Christ.”

You sign them up right at the beginning, during the honeymoon.

The other time you can move quickly in a Church is

- IN A CRISIS

When a church is in crisis it needs strong leadership. It was the Civil War that produced an Abraham Lincoln and World War II that produced a Winston Churchill. Strong leadership rises to the top, in times of crisis.

If you’re being called to a church that’s on its last leg and it’s dying and desperate: a desperate church is a good church to lead. A desperate church is saying, “We’ve either got to change or we’ve got to close our doors.” Don’t be afraid of a desperate church. A desperate church is far easier to lead than a complacent church. During a crisis, you might want to consider taking that church as a pastor.

Lastly, moving quickly in a Church is easier when:

- AFTER YOU’VE CREATED A CULTURE OF CHANGE

That’s what we have at Saddleback. Can you imagine all the changes? We still have 63 members from the first year of this church. Imagine the changes those people have been through in over 20 years. We have changed so many things. We used 79 different buildings in the first 15 years of this church, moving around from place to place. Our church is so used to change that we kill things, start new things all the time and don’t even tell anybody. We’ll add a service, take away a service, change the times, and change locations. Our people are used to lots of

change and that culture is incorporated into our style. So it's not a big deal. We can change stuff very easily here.

IV. BEGIN SHARING THE VISION

- Have a biblical basis for everything

You want to have a biblical basis for everything you do. Go back to the Bible and lead them in a biblical study. Study the biblical basis of the church and the purposes of the church.

- Condense your strategy into an acrostic

I would suggest that you condense your strategy into an acrostic. We have one built on the word – S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. – Services to reach unbelievers, Affinity groups, Driven by purpose, Defined targets, Life development process – those kind of things. We have taken the ten principles that we built Saddleback on and put them in a strategy and acrostic of our name.

I would suggest you do that with yours. Make an acrostic that says, “This is what we stand for.” Print it in your bulletin, print it in a brochure. Make it easy for people to see what your values and your vision are. It's a very helpful thing.

At Saddleback we have a Purpose Statement, a Vision Statement, and a Strategy acrostic. We put all three of these in our Membership Class so people can see exactly who and what we are.

- Create discontent with the status quo by showing the benefits of growth
- Appeal to the best in people
- Build morale – We CAN do this for God's glory

Begin building vision and create a sense of destiny. God has His hand on our church and we have chosen at this point in time to do this particular task in this particular community and we're going to do it. We're going to go with God, like Joshua going into the Promised Land.

- Create a sense of destiny

V. EXPOSE YOUR KEY LEADERS TO MODEL CHURCHES

17

3

Note: This is the fastest way to create change.

Help them see other churches, take them to churches that show growth and health and vitality. The fastest way to create change is to do this because we always learn best by example. It's far easier to see an example than it is to hear it or read it or have somebody talk about it.

How many of you are senior pastors who brought key lay leaders to this conference? These are the geniuses in our midst. Do you realize how far ahead they are of the curve? Light years ahead of some of the rest of you because they're going back not having to explain it all but having a team of Aaron's and Hur's on either side of them holding up their arms, being there, sharing the vision. It's so much easier to show it to somebody than it is to tell them about it. You lose something in the translation. Expose your leaders to model churches.

I love to be around model churches and I study them constantly. You can learn from anybody if you know the right questions. I learned from churches larger than Saddleback. I learn from churches smaller than Saddleback. I learn from churches I don't even agree with. I learn from critics. I learn from enemies. I learn from non-believers. Why? Because I'm more interested in learning than pretending I know it all. Success doesn't come from posturing. Success comes from learning. Learn from your critics. Learn from people who don't understand you. It's more important that you understand them than they understand you. There are people all the time who criticize Saddleback, build up straw men, and knock them over. They put us down for things that aren't even true about our church. I don't spend my time trying to convince them about us. I try to figure out what they're doing well that I ought to be doing too. You learn from everybody. Anytime I see anybody doing a good job, I say, "Amen, brother. Keep on doing it. Now show me how to do it too." Constantly learning. Remember, God has not called us to be unique. He's called us to be effective.

The amazing thing is, all these ideas I've been sharing with you, most of them I had twenty years ago when I was 25 years old. Almost every one of them. The only problem was nobody wanted to listen because I was a 25-year-old kid who'd never pastored a church. Now that we've built Saddleback, they're very interested in what I have to say. So what I do now is, I walk around saying, "Who are the Rick Warren's I ought to be listening to? ... Who's the 25-year-old kid out there who's caught the next wave, who knows how to minister in the 21st Century that I ought to be learning from, that I ought to be listening to?" If you'll just stay humble, teachable, God will put His hand on your ministry in ways

that you cannot imagine. It is more important to learn than it is to look good. Just be open and learn from people and don't feel like "I can't learn from them because it would hurt my pride." You can have your pride or you can have success. Which do you want? I learned a long time ago I don't have to originate everything for it to work. Why does God oppose the proud? Because they're unteachable.

"You became imitators of us...and so you became a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

1 THESSALONIANS 1:6-7

Circle "imitators" and "model." Paul says, "You watched our model and you imitated it and now you're a model." There's nothing wrong with imitating something that's working somewhere else. Paul says, "You watched us do it and you became successful. Now you're a model for other people." It's one of the ways that we grow. We learn fastest that way.

Now Saddleback is not a perfect model. I'm far more aware of that than you are because I know all of the weaknesses that we're covering up this week. The ones you can't see, I know what they are. So I'm very aware that Saddleback is no perfect model. There is no perfect model. If you ever find a perfect church, please don't join it because the moment you join it, it won't be perfect anymore.

Let me give you a warning: When you go back to your church and you start making a few changes, somebody is going to start criticizing you and saying, "You just got that from Saddleback!" You say, "So what! They stole it from somebody else!" Because we did. We learn from everybody. We just try to learn and put it all together. My prayer is this, that you will learn from our model and then you will become a model. Because honestly, Saddleback isn't that good of a model for thousands of churches. We're just too big. We're up there in the stratosphere and the average church looking at Saddleback, would say, "We could never be like that."

Well, the likelihood is you probably won't. But there's a whole lot of space between 50 and 15,000. And what we need are models of 100 and models of 300 and models of 500 and models of 700 and on and on. Models of different sizes and shapes; we get these calls all the time, "Can you give us an example of somebody who's running 250... 75 ... a healthy church that's built on the five purposes?" We would love for you to be a model that we could recommend to others. That's why we're now giving an annual Church Health award. Saddleback is now giving an annual Church Health award to the healthiest churches in the nation. All over, different places, different sizes, shapes, denominations. But

they're building on the circles and the diamond. They have health. They're balancing worship, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, and discipleship. The health is producing growth. It is my prayer that you can become a model like that because we need to help each other out.

At PurposeDriven.com we have a Network between all the Purpose Driven churches of many different denominations that can encourage each other, to share ideas because you have many good ideas that need to be shared with other people too. "Who's got the fifty best ideas on membership? Let's put them all together. Let's all use them." "Who's got the fifty best ideas on maturity? Let's put them all together and then let's use them." Things like that.

We're not interested in clones of Saddleback. We never have been. God doesn't need any clones. What you need to do is filter what I've shared with you all week through your personality, through your denomination, through your local church setting, through your community. And it will be far better filtered than to just take an exact duplication of it. Saddleback has started 30 daughter churches and none of them are doing it exactly like us. They are all purpose driven and they are all built on moving people into membership and to maturity and ministry and back out into missions to magnify God. But the way in which they do that, and the style in which they do that, and the programs in which they do that, vary appropriately according to the target they're trying to reach. Being a purpose driven church has nothing to do with the size of your church. It has nothing to do with the denomination of your church. There are all different kinds of denominations; there are all different kinds of sizes – big and little ones. It has nothing to do with your target. You may be targeting senior adults; you may be targeting middle agers. You may be targeting an ethnic language group. Being purpose driven has nothing to do with your worship style. You could be using traditional, contemporary, jazz, rock, or rap.

What being purpose driven is all about has to do with the strategy and structure that keep your church balanced. But it will still have its unique thumbprint that God made your church to be. Most of us start out as originals and end up as carbon copies. What we usually copy is the wrong thing – the style and personality. Instead what we need to be copying are principles, purposes and some programs that do work in particular situations. Use the ones that work and throw away the ones that don't. It's kind of like eating fish. When you eat fish, you eat the meat and throw away the bones. We don't ask you to agree with everything we've talked about all this week, I don't agree with everything we're doing at Saddleback. But there are some things I've said and you think, "That will work! We could use that in our church." Then there are

other things I've said and you think, "That guy is so far off, forget it! That would never work." Don't use it. Just use what works in your situation and make the best of it.

3

Rather than telling people in your church what needs to be changed, give them an example. This is the way I've trained you. I didn't tell you what to do, I've just told you that this is how we're doing it. I held up an example. Do you realize how many new ideas you've been hit with in the last couple of days? It could be a little bit overwhelming. You need to realize, education is alienation.

Realize "Education is Alienation."

18

What does that mean? It means once you know something that people you were with before don't know, you're a little bit different. When you go back to your church, you're not going to be the same person you were because you know more now. You know more about the church, you know more about God's operation of it. You know more about what's working at the end of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century. You'll never be the same again. So you're a little bit different than the people who haven't been through this conference. It would be a big mistake for you to go home and try to institute all these things in your church by just telling people, "This is the way we're going to do it." That won't work. I gave you a model and you said, "Oh, that's what you mean."

Big Mistake: To go home and try to institute new ideas by simply telling them.

19

Use tapes...books...Church visits.

That's what you need to do too. Go home, give people some books, give them some tapes. Say, "Listen to this guy. I don't know if he makes any sense or not but you listen to him." Let them come up with the idea. You see, my ideas are good ideas, your ideas are good ideas, our ideas that we come up with together are great ideas. The ideas that we come up with together are the ideas that people have ownership of and so you let people share in the joy of discovery. You insert these ideas slowly into your church by giving them tapes, giving them books, taking them to seminars.

Every summer I send our congregation out as missionaries around the world to get ideas for me. I say, "When you go on vacation, when you go to a town, pull out a phone book, find the church that's got the biggest ad and looks like it's the biggest church, go to that church and grab all the free stuff in the rack and bring it

back to me. They're like urban missionaries bringing the information from all over.

You never stop learning. Once a year, the pastors of the thirty largest Baptist churches in America get together. We kind of hold ourselves up in a hotel for two or three days and just talk about our churches. There's no agenda; it's invitation only; pastors of the largest Baptist churches. I've been going to this thing for about ten years. A number of years ago, I went to one of these conferences being held in Dallas. Saddleback was just a few years old. I was sitting in this room with Charles Stanley, Adrian Rodgers, Ed Young, and Jimmy Draper – pastors of very large – three, four, five thousand member churches. Adrian Rodgers said, “Rick, why don't you take a couple of hours and talk to us about what's happening at Saddleback.” I was kind of intimidated. All of these guys were my heroes growing up. I was obviously the youngest guy in the room. So, I started talking.

Sitting right across from me was Dr. W. A. Criswell, the renowned pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, which for many years was the largest church in America with 20,000 members. He pastored this church for fifty years. He wrote over fifty books. He was a genius, a Greek scholar. When he would read the Bible, he would read it directly from a Greek New Testament, as he would preach. Criswell has forgotten more than I will ever know. Just a towering giant of a man. The guy had nothing to prove, fifty years of ministry. Most of the things he had invented – like age-graded Sunday school – churches all over the world are using. We call it traditional today but it wasn't traditional when he started it fifty years ago. So the whole time I'm talking about Saddleback, this 82-year-old man is sitting with a yellow pad, taking notes. I was overwhelmed by that incident. As soon as we finished that session, I got up quickly out of my seat, walked outside and burst into tears. I thought, “God may I be that teachable when I'm 82 years old!” Then, I knew the secret of his greatness. He didn't have anything to prove. But he was sitting there learning from someone far younger, far less experienced than he. But he was learning, realizing that I did have something to say.

Everybody on your row has something to teach you. I said it in the first session: We're all ignorant, just on different subjects. We need to take advantage of the strength that is in our church and outside of our church, and from other pastors in our area and from conferences and books.

Expose your leaders to model churches.

VI. BUILD ON YOUR STRENGTHS

20

NOT YOUR WEAKNESSES .

When you play football, if the left side of your front line is the strongest, you don't run your plays to the right side. You run your plays to the side of the line that's the strongest.

In churches we do the exact opposite. We often pick the weakest thing that we've got and start working on that. You need to play to your strengths and not your weaknesses, because every church has weaknesses and every strategy has inherent weaknesses. It's just which you want to live with. The secret is to do better what you already do well.

The secret is to do better WHAT YOU DO BEST

21

Go back and look at your church and say, "What are we good at? Let's try to make that even better."

Be aware of what I call the Saul's Armor Syndrome. Remember when David went out to fight Goliath, Saul tried to put all his armor on him. It didn't fit. It was too heavy. David said, "This isn't me. This doesn't fit me." He took it all off and went out in a little loincloth and sling shot and kills the giant. You need to be careful about adapting things that just don't fit your culture or your church or your personality. Just try to do good what you're already doing.

Don't begin with your problems, begin with YOUR DREAMS

22

If you go back and say, "Let's solve all our problems first," you're never going to get anything done because your church will always have problems. The church that begins with where we've already been is a has-been church.

VII. BE STRATEGIC IN INTRODUCING CHANGE.

23

The Bible says:

"Be wise as serpents and be harmless as doves." Think through the changes you're going to make and choose your battles strategically.

4

- Choose your battles strategically

Don't fight any unnecessary battles. George Patton used to say, "Never fight a battle where you don't gain anything by winning." There are some battles in your church that are just not worth winning. Let somebody else win. Don't get caught up with issues. Change the things that are the most important.

- Focus on the most important and easiest things to change

The most difficult thing to change in your church is the music. The second most difficult thing to change in your church is the name of your church. It's easier to change your theology than it is to change those two things.

What's the easiest thing to change? Your preaching style. You might want to get the tapes on that seminar. Start with the three biggest changes that will make the biggest impact and work on those and don't worry about all the minor changes right now. In American football, only about two plays out of every ten plays really win the game. Just two major plays. The secret of good coaching is knowing what those two plays are and choosing them.

The quickest way to discourage your people is to give them a playbook with 150 things you're going to change. They'll get discouraged. It's too much. They can't handle that. Keep it simple and change what you can.

- Compromise on non-essentials
- Be a proponent of the new, not an opponent of the old!

You have not heard me criticizing old methods in this seminar. I don't do that. Be a proponent of what's new.

Down in New Orleans, down by the Mississippi River, they build these homes up on stilts because the Mississippi floods every year, so that the homes won't get flooded. About every three or four years those stilts get rotten with dry rot. They don't just come in and knock out all the stilts. What they do is come in and build new stilts up under the house and let the other ones just fall away when they fall away.

You will succeed in what you emphasize. So some things you don't have to kill. You just ignore them and they die. Those programs just die by your ignoring them.

Funny story that's honestly true: When I started Saddleback I didn't know any better than to start a Sunday evening service. After a while we were going to double services and I was starting to get tired and I knew we were eventually going to do three and then four and now we're doing six. I thought we don't need a Sunday evening service. I tell people I'm good for two messages a week. Do you need a double dose on Sunday or do you want something Sunday morning and a strong midweek? This was when the church had less than 100 people in it. We'd only been going less than nine months. I said, I think we need to just stop the Sunday evening service. And I was voted down. They said, "No, we want to keep it." Nobody was coming to it. There were maybe 10-15 people coming to it, but they wanted to keep it just in case we might need it! At that time we were still voting on everything.

So we had to keep the service going. I said, "We'll keep it going. I'm just not going to teach it anymore." Within six months it was dead. I said, "Just volunteer and take turns who leads it."

- Respect and enlist support from the "legitimizers" in your church

First you have to know who they are. Who are the legitimizers? They are the people in your church who, when they speak, everybody listens. Oftentimes they're not elected. They may not even be in leadership. They're simply the thought leaders of the church. They're the kind of people when you're sitting in a church congregational meeting deciding some business issues and some issue comes up, everybody turns around to see what "John" thinks. And if John agrees, everybody agrees. If John disagrees, everybody disagrees. They have earned that because of their credibility and their integrity and their longevity, so people value their opinion.

You need to know who those people are in your church. You need to get them involved in your vision. Hopefully, you brought them with you today. The most respected people in your church need to understand the vision.

Let's say I have a window here and I divide it into four windowpanes. In your church, there are people, pastor, that are older than you and younger than you. Then, there are people in your church who came before you and who came after you. Who are the easiest people to lead in the church? Those who are younger and those came after you. The people who will more likely reserve judgment on your leading are those who are older and were there before you.

There's nothing good or bad about that. It's just a fact of life. Then the other two groups are looking to those two groups to see who

they're going to follow. You need to have a legitimizer, a spokesman, an Aaron, in each of those four categories who can speak to that segment of your church who can say, "This is what Pastor's saying. This is what Pastor wants to do. This is where we need to go." You have a leader in each of these who has captured the vision of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and you understand that.

John Maxwell tells about his first little church in Hillham, Indiana. He said there was one guy in the church that everybody listened to. His name was Claude. Claude was a farmer. John said, "Every time I had something that needed to be done, I went to talk to Claude about it. I'd go out to Claude's farm, climb up on his tractor with him and say, 'You know, Claude, we really need to paint the church. It's looking pretty ratty and pretty bad. We need to get this thing painted.'" He said Claude would say, "Don't worry Pastor we'll get it taken care of." Another time he said, "Claude, we've got a lot of people coming. We need to pave some more parking." Claude said, "Don't worry, Pastor, we'll get it taken care of." Another time he said, "Claude, we need some more Sunday school class space. We need to bust out this wall and divide that room and add a little bit more here so we can have some more Sunday school space." Claude said, "Don't worry Pastor we'll get it taken care of." John said, "I built that church on God and Claude."

You better know who the Claude's are in your church. Hopefully you brought them here to this conference. Godly men, godly women who've walked with Jesus Christ for a long period of time and the stellar people of the kingdom who make the church work and get them enlisted in support.

- Call every change "an experiment"

Call everything, every change, an "experiment." This removes the fear of failure when you say it's an experiment. Many times we've wanted to change something here at Saddleback that I didn't know if it was going to work or not. I said, "Folks, we're just going to try an experiment." We were one of the first churches to ever start a Saturday evening service many, many years ago – back in the early 80's. I didn't know if it was going to work or not. I stood up and said, "We're going to start a Saturday evening service and we're just going to call it an experiment. We're going to try it for six months and if it doesn't work, I will be the first to admit it." I just removed all the fear of failure by saying it's an experiment. I didn't ask them to commit till the millennium. I just said we're going to try this out. I asked a group of people to sign up to come on Saturday night to help me build a nucleus. I said, "Will you come to Saturday night for six months so that we can have more space on Sunday

morning for Seekers and so we can build another service to bring Seekers to?"

4

- Know how many "CREDITS" a change will cost and how many "CREDITS" you have to spend!

In other words, don't go to war without first counting your troops. What is a credit?

Credit is the amount of TRUST people place in your leadership

24

Three Things That Build Trust:

1. **COMPASSION**

When you are showing that you really care about people, you're building credits – being there in their crisis. When you lay down your life for your people, when you're there at the funerals, when you're there at the bedside when they're sick, when you're there on that late night call, when you're there for the key moments of their life and you counsel them when they're discouraged or when their kids run off or just ended up in jail, when you show compassion to your people when they're hurting, you're building credits – Credits in your leadership.

2. **COMPETENCE**

Past successes prove that you know what you're doing, so people trust you more. The more successes you have under your belt, the more people trust you. Successes are money in the bank, failures are debts. When you have a success, people pay you credits. When you have a failure, you pay them back. Competence builds trust.

3. **CONSISTENCY**

You're building credits when you are reliable, when people know that you're not fickle and that you know the direction you're headed and they know you don't keep changing direction. When people know you're going one way, then they trust you. We've done a lot of changes here at Saddleback, but the things that never change are the strategy, the philosophy and the purposes. We

have never wavered from that one degree in nearly twenty years. And that gives me a lot of credits.

4

If you are a pastor, you go into a church with a certain number of credits in your pocket that you can spend on changes. If you've been a pastor for five or ten years and you've done a good job where you were previously, you go in with some good credits in your pocket. If you have been a pastor for 15 or 20 years and you haven't set the world on fire but you have had a solid ministry of caring for people and you haven't had any moral failure or any scandals in your life, you've had a good solid ministry in a good solid church, you go into your church with a good number of credits. If you are coming from a larger church to a smaller church you have proven that you have the capability to take a church to that level of responsibility, so you come in with a lot of credits in your pocket that you can spend on changes. If you are a seminary student and this is your very first church, you come into a church with no credits in your pocket. Once you are out of credits, you are no longer the pastor. You may still have the title but people don't trust you and you may as well leave. If they don't trust you, you don't have credibility, you don't have anything.

Here's the thing about integrity. If you live a life of integrity it builds credibility. When you have integrity, the longer you stay in the church the better it gets. If you don't have integrity, the longer you stay in a church the worse it gets.

VIII. DON'T TAKE CRITICISM PERSONALLY

25

Growth means restructuring and every time you restructure, you're going to disappoint people. The older you get, the more difficult that becomes. There is no growth without change. And there is no change without loss. And there is no loss without pain. So there is no growth without pain. The church that thinks it wants to grow without having change and loss and pain is like a woman who says, "I want to have a baby but I don't want to have labor pains and go through childbirth." It isn't going to happen. There is no growth without change and there is no change without loss and there is no loss without pain. So you will be criticized as your church grows. Count on it. But don't take it personally.

I've heard all the different kinds of criticisms. Three are very common.

4

There are three common criticisms:

26

1. The Care Issue.

The first is what I call the care issue. The care issue happens like this. As your church begins to grow some of the members will come to you and say, "Pastor, you don't care about me anymore." What they mean by that is "You are not available to me the way you used to be." And they're right. As your church grows, you cannot be available to people in the way you were when it was smaller. There are 63 people who are charter members that I still have here in our church. In the first year of the church, I was in everybody's home practically every week. I hung out with a lot of the members, kicking around, having fun. Today, I am lucky to see those people maybe once a month, much less shake hands with them on the patio or get to say a kind word. And I'm never in their home any more. Never. I miss that. One of the prices of growth is you have to stop doing some things you were doing that were fun when the church was smaller. But I happen to believe it's not what I miss that's important. It's the fact we've got a lost world around us that still needs Jesus. I'm not here to make me comfortable. I'm here to reach people for Jesus Christ who died for our sins.

Imagine all the changes that they've gone through. It takes unselfish people to grow a church. This care issue where they're saying, "You don't care about me anymore," means you're not available to me – they're right. What is the antidote to the care issue? The antidote is small groups. This is a legitimate issue they're bringing up. The answer is not to try harder to personally meet everybody's needs. The answer is you must teach everyone in your church to have their personal care needs met by a lay pastor or a lay shepherd in a small group. That's the solution.

2. The Control Issue.

Growth upsets the balance of power between old-timers and newcomers.

The control issue occurs when, as the church begins to grow, some of your older original members are going to come and say, "Pastor, I'm not in control anymore." Nobody's ever going to say it that bluntly. They won't ever be that blatant about it. What they will say is "I don't feel so involved anymore." What they mean is, "You're not coming to me with all the decisions any more. I'm not in the communication chain." Why? Because the communication chain got bigger. I used to be the big fish in the little pond but all of

a sudden the pond became a lake and I'm swimming around feeling a little lost. That's a normal feeling. But when you realize that life doesn't revolve around me anymore, it's threatening.

Growth upsets the balance of power in a church. In your church you have a scale and there are the needs of the old timer and the needs of the newcomer. (I'm not talking about old people; just people who have been in the church a long time.) There are the old timers and the newcomers. As the church begins to grow and you add more and more newcomers, all of a sudden the weight of responsibility begins to shift. Then you've got a problem. People say, "It's not my church anymore." No, it's not. It's not the pastor's church either. It's Jesus' church.

You just need to realize that everybody wants the church to grow... to a point. The first time your church starts growing people will say, "Look at all these young couples coming in! Isn't this wonderful? They can help pay the bills!" But then all of a sudden when somebody sits in my pew, "I've sat in that seat for twenty years! That's my chair. My name's not on it but everybody knows that's my pew. How come you don't know, you idiot?" You've got a control issue going on.

The antidote to the care issue is move people into small groups. The antidote to the control issue is "grow up!" You cannot give control back to small people. You're making a big mistake if you give in to their whining. Remember, for a church to grow the pastor must give up control and the people must give up control. You cannot surrender the agenda of your church to complaining people.

There are two ways people practice control in churches. One is by ritual – "We've always done it this way." And the other is by gossip. We're just north of a nuclear reactor center. The way you control nuclear energy is by control rods. The more control rods you stick into the reactor, the less the electrons bump into each other and the less power there is. The more you move the control rods, the more power there is.

That is the parable of the church. High control, minimum power. Low control, maximum power. You have to decide what you want.

3. The Comfort Issue.

We must be willing to minister outside our comfort zones.

The real issue: Selfishness

The comfort issue is you cannot grow without change. Change makes us uncomfortable. We all want the church to grow but not at the expense of personal comfort. That's why we must be willing to minister outside of our comfort zones. That's why it takes unselfish people to grow a church. We must be willing to put aside our discomfort for the greater good of people who need Jesus Christ.

IX. YOU MUST BE WILLING TO LET PEOPLE LEAVE THE CHURCH.

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The fact is, people are going to leave your church no matter what. But when you define the vision, you are choosing who is going to leave. You say, "But they are the pillars of the church!" Pillars are people who hold the church up. They can often hold up progress. How many Israelites had to die in the desert before God let them go into the Promised Land? All of them; All but Joshua and Caleb. You may have to have some blessed subtractions in your church before you start having some real additions to your church.

I'm saying this like it's no big deal. But you've got to realize this is the most painful part of ministry, watching people leave your church. Even in a church that I have started, I've seen people who came to Saddleback, I nursed them through a problem like a divorce, I led them to Christ, I baptized them, I did their weddings, and I did their baby dedications. I've nursed them through one crisis after another, then somewhere along the line they start listening to some radio preacher or they go to a conference. They decide Saddleback needs to start doing it "this" way. And you say, "No, we're not going to do it that way. God's given us the vision to go this other way." They say, "No, you've got to do it this way now, Pastor. If you don't we're leaving the church." There's a word for that – blackmail. You have to say to those people, "Bye!" That may be easy to say in a conference like this, but it's the most gut wrenching, heart breaking thing you do in ministry. People that you've given your heart for, who all of a sudden get upset with you and then all of a sudden want to go a different direction. And when they're walking away, every bone in my body wants to say, "Come back! We'll change the program if you'll just come back!" But if you do that, you have forfeited the leadership to whiners. And you will be accountable to God.

You need to realize that about 75% of all the people in your church are never going to change. They're good people, they love the Lord. They're just never going to change. So what do you do?

You love everybody, you pray for everybody, you minister to everybody, you care for everybody, and you don't treat anybody as

a second class citizen. You give equal opportunity to everybody. But move with those who are ready to move. In any group, there's always a group, a core, a nucleus – maybe it's one or two couples, three or four single adults, five people or fifteen people or twenty people. But it's a few people who really catch the vision that the church is on this earth to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and they catch the vision. You take those people, you love everybody, but you move with those who are ready to move.

This is what Jesus did. He invested the maximum amount of time with those who bore the maximum responsibility. He fed the 5,000. He loved everybody. He trained the 70. He disciplined 12. And even with the 12, He had an inner circle of three – Peter, James, and John. Only Peter, James and John got to go in the Garden of Gethsemane. Only Peter, James and John got to go up on the Mount of Transfiguration. Only Peter, James and John got to see Peter's mother-in-law being healed. Was Jesus playing favorites? Absolutely, He was. He was investing the maximum amount of time with those who would bear the maximum responsibility. Later in the book of Galatians, Paul says Peter, James and John are the pillars of the church. Obviously it worked. We're all here today. Jesus invested the maximum time with those who would bear the maximum responsibility.

5

X. AFFIRM AND APPRECIATE FOR THE CHANGES

28

THEY DO AGREE TO MAKE.

Be grateful for minor changes!

Focus on **PROGRESS**, not **PERFECTION** !

29

Let me conclude this session by talking to two different groups of you. Some of you right now are in what I call the Overwhelmed Group. For many people, if you give them 100 new ideas, they become paralyzed. They don't know what to start on first. Do you know why lion tamers go out with a three-legged or four-legged stool? Because lions can only focus on one thing at a time and when they see a four-legged stool it confuses them and paralyzes them and kind of makes them passive. Some people get real passive when they're just overwhelmed with 100 things to do. The secret is to just choose one thing and start working on that first. Go back later and read through this whole syllabus. Make a list of 25 things that you could do when you get home and then pick one thing to work on. Work on it one thing at a time.

Notice this verse:

5

“An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions.”

PROVERBS 17:24 (GN)

That’s a word for the wise. American President Calvin Coolidge said, “We can’t do everything at once but we can do something at once.”

Pick one thing and focus on it.

TEACHING TIP

This closing illustration is one that you will likely need to change, depending on your audience. If you are teaching in a country where baseball is not well known, you may want to use an illustration from a marathon instead. Talk about how many people start the race quickly, but it’s those who reach the finish line who have run the race well. You might want to use the following illustration of bamboo that closes the PDC book.

“Plant a bamboo sprout in the ground, and for four or five years (sometimes much longer) nothing happens! You water and fertilize, water and fertilize, water and fertilize – but you see no visible evidence that anything is happening. Nothing! But about the fifth year things change rather dramatically. In a six week, period the Chinese bamboo tree grows to be a staggering ninety feet tall! World Book Encyclopedia records that one bamboo plant can grow three feet in a single twenty-four-hour period. It seems incredible that a plant that lies dormant for years can suddenly explode with growth, but it happens without fail with bamboo trees.

As we conclude (this session) I want to offer you this final advice: Don’t worry about the growth of your church. Focus on fulfilling the purposes of your church. Keep watering and fertilizing and cultivating and weeding and pruning. God will grow his church to the size he wants it, at the rate that’s best for your situation.”

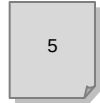
The other group that I want to talk with are those of you who are discouraged. I’ve taught this now to over 300,000 church leaders around the world. I’ve had many people tell me, “I wish I had known this twenty years ago.” It is not how you start the race that matters; it’s how you finish it. In the opening day of baseball season, 1954, the Cincinnati Reds played the Milwaukee Braves. Both teams had a rookie baseball player. For the Cincinnati Reds there was a guy named Jim Greengrass. Jim Greengrass got a hit and got on base all four times he came up. (Four doubles, if your audience understands baseball.) Pretty incredible start!

There was another rookie who played for the Milwaukee Braves. His first four at-bats, he struck out all four times. Not a very auspicious start for Hank Aaron. But who do we remember? Who’s the superstar? The hero?

I want to tell you, you need to forget your strike outs in ministry. We’ve all had a few strikeouts. Me, you, everybody else. But in the 21st Century it’s a whole new ballgame!

Prayer:

Father, help us to be wise. Help us to be loving. Help us to be patient. Help us to be kind. But help us to do the right thing in leading our churches through change. In Jesus name. Amen



SESSION 2

THE POWER OF CLASS

Moving People into God's Purposes

30

6

I hope and pray that this will be a very simple and practical session, that will give you some practical ideas of what works and what doesn't work when we talk about helping people to live the purpose driven life. We have to learn from each other not only what works but what doesn't work. We learn from others successes, but we also learn from other's failures and mistakes. I'd always rather learn from somebody else's failure than my own failure, wouldn't you? That's a lot better way to learn.

A guy named Bob in upstate New York had a museum (he's moved it now to Illinois, I think) of 80,000 product failures – things that did not work. People from all over the country would pay an entrance fee of \$1500 just to go in and see what didn't work so they didn't duplicate the same mistakes. Here's some that didn't work – Thirsty Cat and Thirsty Dog bottled water. That didn't work. That was an idea that somebody had but it didn't work. Aerosol spray catsup. That was an idea that didn't work. Teenagers loved it but for everybody else it didn't work. Gerber Singles – in 1974 Gerber, the baby food makers decided they had to use the jars for something else. So they reached out to adults with gourmet offerings in a baby food jar – beef burgundy and Mediterranean vegetables – and they called them Singles. They could have called it, I Live Alone and Eat My Meals From a Baby Food Jar. It didn't work. Bob wrote a book on all this and he called it *What Were They Thinking?*

Do you ever feel that way in church? You try something, you have an idea, it sounded great. But you get to the end of it and think, "What were we thinking?" We've had that experience often here at Saddleback. I hope I can bring some of that experience in this time together as we talk about how you can begin to move people in to God's purposes.

The beginning point is understanding what God says about how we as a church change and grow:

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

1 CORINTHIANS 3:6-7 (NIV)

31

It's God who makes things grow.

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“Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God wants it to grow.”

COLOSSIANS 2:19 (TEV)

We have the privilege as God's servants of being part of people's growth in faith.

There is a term that you'll see in a lot of books that talk about how we are to move people into the life of the church. They call it “assimilation.”

“Assimilation”

We talk about assimilating people into the church, into the membership of the church, being a part of the church. I want to give you a definition for assimilation because it means a lot of things to a lot of people. Assimilation is simply

“Helping people make commitments that will change their lives.”

In fact, if I could even during this session change the definition of the word we use from “assimilation” to “commitment” - that wouldn't be such a bad idea. Assimilating members is helping them make commitments that will change their lives. The goal is not more members. That is not the goal. The goal is changed lives. What's the use if you have more members in your church if their lives aren't being changed? You're just going to have more problems. You need more lives being changed. The goal of assimilation is not to make our church bigger. It's to advance the kingdom of God. Those are two every different things. It's not more people in the seats, it's more people in the kingdom.

The question we're going to be asking in this session is, “What can you and I do as God's servants to help people make those life-changing commitments?”

How about instead of “We want to assimilate you,” say, “We want you to be part of our family. We want to help you make commitments that will change your life for the rest of your life.”

So

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HOW DO WE HELP PEOPLE TO BEGIN TO MAKE THESE STEPS?

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I. CREATE THE RIGHT CLIMATE FOR ASSIMILATION.

As you do that, you have to realize a couple things. One,

We are not responsible for CREATING growth in people's lives.

34

That's not our responsibility. It's God that causes growth.

We are responsible for providing the right CLIMATE for growth.

35

We're not responsible for creating growth but we are responsible under God's grace and strength we are responsible for creating the right climate, providing the right climate for growth.

We should never take the credit for causing people to grow. That is blasphemy. Only God can make things grow. Paul says, "I planted, Apollo watered – we created the climate." When we take the credit for people's growth that's blasphemy. But when we shrink from our opportunity to obey God by creating a climate where people grow that's disobedience. The right climate is essential in the way that things grow.

In my backyard, the climate that's created there is essential for whether the plants grow or far too often they do not grow. The same thing is true of Christians. We have the opportunity to create a climate where people can grow. We can also create a climate sometimes where growth is negative, where growth is not happening.

Sometimes we create sort of a hot house condition. Because of that we have what I call hothouse Christians. It's a very protective climate. Very nice in there. Everything's as perfect as we can make it. It's as insulated from the world as we can cause it to be. We

have Christians in that seem to thrive but as soon as they get out in their workplace, as soon as they face family problems what happens? They wilt because the climate is wrong. It looks great at church but it's not working for people out in the world.

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Sometimes we create what I call bonsai Christians. We clip the roots. A lot of times legalism is the way we clip the roots in people's lives. They're perfect miniatures of the real thing. They look so great to you as a pastor. You can put them on your shelf and say, Look at that. Isn't wonderful? But it doesn't have any power in the world.

Oftentimes the climate is that of a neglected Christian. They aren't choosing to spend any time in the Word or in Prayer, and so there's just no real growth happening.

We all know what we want. We want the kind of climate Jesus talked about where people are growing. The seed is planted in good ground. There's thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold increase in people's lives. That's the dream God gives us for the kind of growth He can cause to happen in people's lives.

If you and I are going to be responsible before God of creating the right climate for assimilation there are some things we need to understand.

1. Understand your CULTURE of commitment.

36

What people and why people commit themselves to certain things in your church, in your area. Jesus talked about that culture of commitment in that parable I just referred to in Matthew 13.

"As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."

MATTHEW 13:4-9 (NIV)

What kind of climate is your church? As you think about that there are three questions I encourage you to ask.

7

Ask three questions:

37

Ask yourself in your area, in your church, with the people you work with,

- i. What does the word commitment mean to people?

That's important for us to ask. When we stand before people and say, "We want you to make a commitment to Jesus Christ. We want you to make a commitment with your life," there are many people out there who will think that spirituality it's a blend. It's a blend of crystals and angels and astrology and a few favorite lines from the last Indiana Jones movie. That's their idea of commitment. So when you say, "We want you to be spiritual," they think, "I already am. I'm as spiritual as I want to be." So we have to define for people what commitment really means.

You have to also ask yourself what people are really committing themselves to in your community.

- ii. What are people committing themselves to?

That is a real key of creating climate of commitment. Let me just ask: in your area as you look at the people that you work with what are the things that people – besides the church (I know your church is one of the great things people are committing themselves to) – what are some of the things that people are committing themselves to in your community?

((Their Responses))

Alcohol – bars. The bars are full. Computers, they're committing themselves to. Sometimes alcohol and computers at the same time – that's strange. Recreation is a huge commitment. Sports is a huge commitment. Children, career. Children are big. People are committed to their kids, aren't they? And because of that they're sitting at sports, soccer, baseball, football, whatever for hour after hour. Does anybody really enjoy the little kids little league games? They can get pretty long, can't they? Sorry for some of you out there who are the coaches but they get long. But the parents are there every inning of every game. That should say something to us about what is important in people's lives. If we can help people see

that we can help their children to grow in commitment to Christ
that's going to help them grow in commitment to Christ

7

You also have to ask yourself,

iii. What are people NOT committing themselves to?

Obviously in our culture today it's things like brand names.
They're not committing themselves to long term commitments.
You start from a short-term commitment and grow from there.

George Gallup did a survey a few years back asking Americans what they thought about church. This shocked me when I first saw this. I feel it's so untrue and yet it's how Americans think of church. He found that 70% of Americans believe that most churches and synagogues are not effective in helping people find meaning in life. That's a shocking statistic. Most people think church is not the place to find meaning in life.

The church is the place to find meaning in life and significance in life. In fact when he did this survey he discovered six specific needs that people talked about that they were looking for in a church

1. A church that helps me believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose.
2. A place where I can have a sense of community and deeper relationships.
3. A place where I can be appreciated, a place where I can be respected.
4. A place where I can be listened to, a place where I can be heard. See how these fit with the purpose we've been talking about the last few days?
5. A place where I can feel like I am growing in my faith.
6. A place where I can get practical help in developing a mature faith.

That's what people are looking for and that's what the church offers. It's a perfect match. The purposes of God and what people are looking for. Isn't it an amazing thing that the needs that we have and the way that God's designed the church happen to match each other. Does that surprise anyone here? God made it that way.

So you help people with these life changing commitments.

After you consider your culture of commitment in order to help people make a step that changes their life...

2. Give people a PICTURE of commitment.

38

If we don't have a picture of something we can talk about it all day long but people just don't get it. So you have to help them picture somehow what commitment means in their life.

7

The picture we use is a baseball diamond. There's a lot of pictures you can use. But whatever picture you use to help people step over the line in commitment the process of growth in their lives, a few things that are vital to have as a part of that picture.

A picture that moves people towards commitment is:

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First of all it has to be a dynamic picture.

- DYNAMIC – Creating a desire to move to the next step.

It has to create a desire to move to the next step. Every American, when they see a baseball diamond knows intuitively that they're not going to stop at first base. No one would think, "If I get to first base – that's far enough. That's all right." No, for every American there's something about the baseball diamond that causes them to think, "I've got to go on to second and third." It's a picture of dynamic movement to the next step.

Let me tell you a picture I used as a young pastor to help people make a commitment. I used a stream, a really pretty stream. I thought that would be great. I put 101 – Membership – at the top of the stream, 201 further on, 301 further on and 401 down at the bottom. It was a picture, but it wasn't dynamic. I thought, "I'd rather be at the top of the stream, up in the mountains." There is nothing in the picture that said, "I want to move on to the next step." So whatever pictures you use make it something that says, "I want to go to the next step."

It should be dynamic but it should also be specific

- SPECIFIC – Showing people exactly what to do next.

Create desire and then also show some direction. Jesus was great at this. He said, I want you to be a fisher of men. I want to change your life by helping you to change other people's lives."

We have 4 specific CLASSES that we ask people at Saddleback to take to begin their commitment to growth. So we can tell them specifically when and where and how to take each next step to encourage their growth.

7

It should be

- ENTHUSIASTIC – Giving people a challenge from God.

40

Have you discovered that people want big challenges?

We have a lot of different mission trips here at Saddleback. We advertised one trip, “Would you like to go on a 14 hours bus ride in dangerous terrain? Would you like to take a grueling hike through mountains that nobody from America has ever hiked through before?” More people signed up for that mission trip than any other up until that time. Why? People are looking for a big challenge.

CLASS 101 to 401 are fairly easy to attend – but once people get to the class we share with them the big challenges that Jesus gives us to change our lives.

101 – God challenges you to be a part of a family that will last for an eternity.

201 – God challenges you to develop habits that will see Him transform every corner of your life.

301 – God challenges you to use your gifts and talents to serve others rather than just for your own selfish gain.

401 – God challenges you to reach out to hurting people: starting in your neighborhood and reaching to the whole world.

Finally, it needs to be

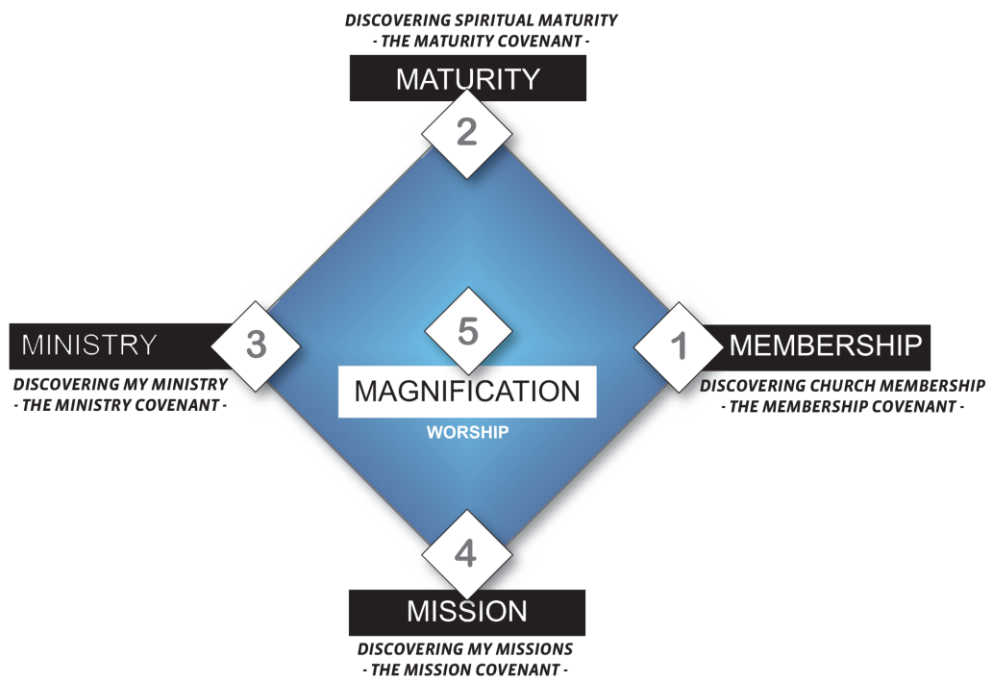
- REALISTIC – Helping people to grow one step at a time.

Dynamic, specific, enthusiastic and realistic. Part of being realistic is giving people clear markers for their growth - so they can celebrate the steps of growth they've made. Take Sunday School, for instance. You start Sunday school – it may be as a kindergartner – and you attend all of your life. Let me ask a question: When do you graduate from Sunday school?” Never! You never graduate. That can get depressing after a while, can't it? Realistically we have to be able to tell people, here is where you've come to a place in your life you've finished a commitment. You never finish growing, but you do finish certain steps of growth.

We need more finish lines at church. Places where people feel like “I’ve stepped over a line, I’ve made a commitment, now I can grow further in that area of my life.” I’ve stepped over another line, I’ve made a commitment, now I can grow in that. The Christian life is a marathon. But even in marathons they have those little water stations, don’t they? So every once in a while you get a little drink of water and feel a little refreshed and go on. You get a little encouragement. Build in some realistic places where you don’t say to people, “You’re doing great, now keep on growing.”

7

Our picture is a baseball diamond.



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Other people have made it into a diamond but taken out the word “baseball” because that doesn’t fit with them. That’s one good picture but there are a lot of other good pictures.

In Brazil, I’ve seen churches use a soccer field, and they move down the soccer field. That’s their picture. Baseball doesn’t make sense to them but soccer does. In Denver, I’ve seen churches use a mountain where you climb the mountain one step at a time. In Hong Kong it’s a banner down the street. In Oregon it’s a running track. Running’s always been big in Oregon. In Detroit it’s a gearshift – a car. First gear, second gear, third gear and fourth gear. Wherever you are picturing commitment make it a picture that fits your people. Help people picture the commitment.

Before I came to Saddleback I was at a church in Northern California, a traditional church, for ten years. One of the things I enjoy bringing to this conference is the fact that I was in a traditional church for ten years and now I’ve been at Saddleback

for ten years. So hopefully I can bring a bit of understanding of both of those words to these moments together. In that church, when we built a new building, before we moved into the building I took all the leaders of the church over to the buildings as we were finishing it. I got five pieces of the wood that we were using to build that building – the plywood. I got five pieces and lined them up against the wall and I wrote the five purposes on each of those pieces of plywood. We talked about God’s purposes for our church the first year we’d be in that new building and wrote it on that plywood. At the end of that I shared with them. “This building is a great thing. It’s wonderful to have a new tool. But the way we really build the church is what we’ve written on these pieces of plywood.” It gave us a picture of the church being built through God’s purposes as we moved into a new building. Whatever you use, use a picture to help people to get it in terms of growth in their lives.

To help people make commitments to change their lives,

3. Give people **MODELS** of commitment.

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The best model you can give them of a changed life is a story of a changed life.

When I think about commitment and what that means I think of my friend Mark who helps to teach our class 201 and has done so for many, many years. As a businessman, president of a large multi million dollar company, when he stands up and looks at people and talks about spiritual growth and says to them, “My daily quiet time – I never miss it... My small group is my most important meeting of my week,” do you think they listen? They hear me as a pastor talk about daily quiet time and think, “Sure, he has to have a daily quiet time. He gets paid to have a quiet time.” But when they hear Mark talk about it who’s in the business world, they know how busy he is, and they have a model that there’s something about his life that’s changed.

Sometimes when people hear you and I as Christian leaders talk about commitment and a changed life they see us as high and themselves lower and the leap just seems too far for growth. But If you can find some people in your church to tell the story of how their life has changed, people see how they can make the next step of growth in their life. Give people models of commitment of changed life.

When I think of models of commitment I think of Steve. In the midst of a struggle with brain cancer having seizures, he joined our choir and stood through twelve Christmas services singing. I can still

close my eyes and see his face – the joy that glowed from his face as he sang in each of those services.

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When I think of a model of commitment I think of Ray. He came and said, “I really believe in new believers. I want to leave my job and I want to come for a period of time and devote myself for free – volunteer – helping new believers grow at Saddleback. How long do you think it’ll take to get started?” I said, “Ray, I think it will take a year.” He said, “I’m going to do that.” I found out later he was only willing to come for two months, but when I said a year, he committed and gave his time for a year to the development of new believers.

Those are the kinds of models and pictures of commitment that help people grow to the next step in their life.

If you want to help people make commitments that change their lives then

4. Give people a PLACE to make commitments.

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If we don’t have a place where we regularly say to people, “Here. Let me help you to make a commitment to Christ’s body, to spiritual growth, to ministry.” - if you do not have that place then it often goes undone far longer than you would imagine. You look back and think, “It’s been months since I really challenged people to spiritual maturity. It’s been far too long.”

It is crucial that we make it clear to people **WHEN AND WHERE** they can make life changing commitments. Many times we talk about a place to make commitments but people don’t get it, because the words that we use don’t connect with the way that they think. Church words and real people words are very different words at times.

Let me give you a picture of what I’m talking about when I say that people don’t understand our words. Have you ever watched cricket? I’ve seen it on late night sports shows sometimes. I don’t understand this game. I watch what’s going on. A guy throws the ball and a guy hits it. Everybody looks depressed. Then a guy throws a ball again and a guy hits it and a little umpire waves this flag and the crowd goes wild. I have no idea what just happened. I feel lost. And they have these strange words that they use like “bowler” and “maiden over” and “sticky wicket” and yorker. Really strange words to me. I admit that for those of you who don’t know American football we have some strange words too – touchback, touchdown, neutral zone, end zone, tight end.

When we ask people to make commitments that will change their lives we often use strange words. “We want you to walk the aisle.” That sounds like some kind of pirate walking the plank thing? What does that mean? “We want you to come to our newcomer’s class.” You know what that means and I know what that means but they have no idea what that means. We have to make it very clear to people this is the place where you can make a commitment that will change your life. That’s why we want you to come.

There’s a story on our website this week of someone who has gone around the bases – class 101 through 401 here at Saddleback. She says in that story, “I came to class 101 and I had heard people talk every week at church about having a relationship with Jesus. I didn’t know what that meant. I didn’t understand that. But in 101 when I had the opportunity to hear somebody personally explain it to me, I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.” We think people are connecting with the words we’re saying but often they’re not. So in this place to make commitments you have to be very specific.

What’s so valuable about a specific place to make commitments?

What makes the difference when you have a place where people can make commitments that change their lives?

First

- i. It declares the IMPORTANCE of that commitment.

When you have a place where people can make commitments that change their lives - that says, “This is important to us as a church.” Here’s the time, here’s the place, this is important. When you get a wedding announcement. Does it just say Bob and Jane are getting married? No, it tells you what time, it tells you what place and that means it’s important.

When you say, We’re having Class 101, a place where you can make a commitment to this family, it’ll change your life for the rest of your life. We’re having it this afternoon at 3:00. We want you to be there, we’re saying it is important enough for us to have this on a regular basis to help you to grow. It declares the importance of that commitment.

Secondly,

8

- ii. It helps people to FOCUS their commitments.

You can call for a commitment every weekend in church, every Sunday you can say at the end of the service, “We want you to make a commitment to this church. We’d love to have you be a part of this church family.” But it often feels like it’s just tacked on at the end. When you have a place where people can step over the line in commitment it makes all the difference in the world. They can focus that commitment. It makes it memorable. It makes it powerful. It almost has the feel of a ceremony.

Thirdly,

- iii. People feel the support and encouragement of OTHERS making the same commitment.

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A triple braided cord is not easily broken. Whatever the place, make it clear. Oftentimes only the insiders know where this place is to make the commitment that changes people’s lives. We call the place where people make these commitments in our church Class 101, 201, 301 and 401. That’s our place.

CLASS 101, 201, 301 and 401 are places to make commitments.

Let me share with you some very practical things we have learned the hard way over years of experience on how to strengthen these classes as a place to make commitments, where people begin to live the purposes in their lives. The opportunity for commitment and that’s what these classes are all about, making a commitment that I’m going to grow in the rest of my life.

The opportunity for commitment is strengthened by:

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The opportunity for commitment in these classes is strengthened by doing several things.

- Having them at the **SAME TIME** if possible.

All of them at the same time. You may only have 201 twice a year. But if you only have it twice a year still has it at the same time you have 101. Why? Why does that strengthen it? There's something about doing something all at once, having them all together that gives a sense of excitement to it, a sense of anticipation. Often we will have people come to 101 and their wife is going to 201. But they can still come together to the CLASSES. Also, if you have them all at the same time, people don't try to skip classes – "I'll take this one first then go back and take the first one." It helps to go through it sequentially.

I know what some of you pastors are thinking when we say have them at the same time. "It's not going to work. I can't teach them all at the same time." That's why you need to have them all at the same time! So that you can't teach them all. Pastor, you're likely the best teacher in your church. The truth is if you had these classes at different times, people in your church are going to say, "Pastor, why don't you teach it? You've got a passion for this. You teach 201, teach 301." When you have them at the same time, you can more naturally get more people involved in teaching the classes. That's one of the keys of growing the church. You don't need to be the only teacher of the purposes of the church.

Having them at the same time, you might have them on a Sunday afternoon like we do and then not have a Sunday evening service. The church I used to be in we had them right after the morning worship service. We'd have a lunch for all the new people in the church then afterwards have the class during the afternoon and get I'd get somebody else to preach the Sunday night service. You might have 101 once month and 201 and 301 every quarter. There's a lot of different ways to do this. But I encourage you to have them at the same time if possible.

Secondly,

- Having them as **OFTEN** as possible.

As often as you can so that people don't have to wait a long time to make the next step of commitment. We do our classes eleven times a year because of the numbers of people that we have. You have to figure out a good time for you to have them, but when you have the classes as often as you possibly can you're getting more and more hooks in the water, more chances to grow.

Thirdly, I encourage you to

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- Doing them in ONE 4 HOUR seminar.

Teach the whole class at once. I can't stress the power this potentially has in helping people make commitments. A lot of people do a six-week membership class. I used to teach the membership class that way. I know why they do that. It fits into Sunday school real well. It's also a little bit easier for us to teach. But there's a problem that always bugged me as a pastor when we did this. I'd get 10-20 people in the first class and I'd see people and I knew they needed to come to a certain class out of the six weeks. The one I knew they needed to be at – maybe they needed to hear about baptism – that was the one they always missed. Have you noticed that happens? Doesn't that drive you crazy? But if you teach the class as a longer seminar all at one time, they can hear the whole truth, all at once and decide to make that commitment in their life. There's something about teaching the class in one longer seminar that helps people to make commitments.

If the goal were just information then you should have them in a six-week seminar. You could get more information out over six weeks. But that's not the goal. The goal of these classes is transformation. The goal of these classes is helping people make a commitment that will change their lives. That's where the difference is. You cannot give someone all the information they need to grow in Jesus in a four-hour class, or in a forty hour class for that matter. But you can help them step over the line to help them make the commitment in life.

I was in a church for years where we did our membership class - the 101 class - on Sunday morning during Sunday school. When we moved from teaching the class over six weeks to having it in one four-hour seminar the commitments in that class soared. They absolutely soared. Because everybody stayed for the whole class they heard the whole thing and were led to make a commitment at the end. When we did this in six classes people were confused, they thought, "I didn't come to all the classes, can I make a commitment? Should I make a commitment?"

I'd encourage you to try these classes as a seminar if you've never tried it. I think you'll see a real difference in the commitment that are made in the class.

I encourage you to

- Ask a lay person to teach all or part of the class.

We talked about this earlier. It helps them those attending to see how this commitment works in real people's lives. And to

- Closing the class with a time of PERSONAL COMMITMENT.

Where is the place in your church where people make personal commitments that change their lives? Whatever that place happens to be let me ask you a question: what is the one thing you can do to make that place where they make commitments a better place for them to make commitments. What is the one thing you can do to help your church begin to grow in making those commitments?

I talked a moment ago about giving people models, giving them pictures. In a minute I'm going to have a friend of mine come out and talk about what Class has meant in their church. Eight and a half-years ago Kerry came to a conference just like this. He heard about what it meant to be a Purpose Driven church. He went back to Houston and started a church called Fellowship of the Woodlands with eight people, eight years ago. That church now has about 8,000 people. He built it from the very beginning on these purposes, helping people making commitments to these purposes. He can understand what it means to be a small church – he was there. But he can also understand the challenges of some of you who are seeing explosive growth in your church because he's been there. Let's give a warm welcome to my friend.

Kerry:

Eight and a half years ago I came out here to Saddleback and I had a dream in my heart to plant a church. I had no idea how to do that. I was in a traditional church of about 300 in Houston and I wanted to plant a church that would reach unchurched. When I came out to Saddleback, and Rick talked about CLASS I really got it. I'm a sports fan and I liked the baseball diagram and it really came home to me the process of getting people around the bases and helping them to become all that God wants them to be and develop their life to its fullest potential in Jesus Christ. I thought, that's the kind of church I want to start.

We had already decided to plant this church but if I had gone back to my traditional church I know I could have made that church purpose driven. It wouldn't have grown probably like

this church I started but I know I could have started class 101, 201, 301 and 401. Definitely we could have been purpose driven. But I really felt called to plant a church. So we went out to Woodlands about thirty miles north of Houston and we told everybody we knew at Woodlands – both of them – and we got together and I was so pumped up after coming back from being with Rick and hearing about purpose driven and understanding what that was about. It was really fifteen people that we gathered in a home eight years ago. I shared with them all about what a purpose driven church would look like. Everything from how we wanted to do the music to reach unchurched people and all these different things we'd be doing with classes.

Those people got so excited that only eight of them came back the next week. I lost half my congregation in one week. I was really impressed with Rick Warren at that time. I knew that it was of the Lord and it was great to see these eight people come together all the purposes of the church. We sent out a mailer and invited the community. We followed the Saddleback model and how they started the church. We had 168 people came to the first service. Most of them were unchurched. The very next month we had our first Class 101. Fifty of those unchurched people came to class 101 the next month. Out of that fifty I would say half of them came to Christ right there. We had one gentleman who on his commitment sheet said he was seeking and open. He didn't come to Christ for three years. But he brought almost forty people to Christ during those three years. It was amazing. He was as lost as he could be but he was my best witness. It was unbelievable. He would go to his tennis club and say, "Guys, you need to be at church on Sunday. We're going to change this tennis club to Sunday night so you can. Your marriage is falling apart? You need desperately what this guy's saying. I want to get you there." He wasn't ready to commit his life to Christ. He did three years later.

But I love the power of class. It gives you a process that unchurched people can understand. It gives you a process that a mature believer can understand. This is track I need to take in my life to start to become all that God wants me to be. In that first class we had a guy named John. John began to grow in Christ, commit his life to Christ, he grew in Christ. I got his testimony. He'd come out of an alcoholic background and John was just a great guy. I said, "John, are you ready to share what God's done in your life?" He said, Sure. He wrote out this wonderful testimony. It was a great testimony. I said, "John, God's really going to use you." Then he said one more thing, "Kerry, at the end of my testimony could I do a palm reading?" I thought, "Oh, no. I guess he's got a long way to go." Life change is definitely messy. He's got a long way to go but I

wanted to break it to him in a nice way that he couldn't do a palm reading in church on Sunday. I said, "John, I don't know quite what you're talking about. Explain this to me." He said, "I just wanted to read the 23rd Psalm. It's my favorite. I love it. I said, "John, you can read as many "Psalms" as you want to read! Do what you feel you need to do."

That's the great thing about class. You draw in all these unchurched people and you really help them get on track, come to know Christ, learn what it means to start growing in Christ. They go to class 201. They learn the disciplines of the Christian faith. They go to class 301, they get involved in ministry. They go to class 401 and they develop their life mission. It's been a powerful thing to see. Our classes started with just one class, the Membership class 101. Then after about six months we started having class 201. Then the second year we started class 301. Then it took forever till Rick put together class 401 so we had to wait for that. We finally got class 401. It's been a powerful thing to see. We're so grateful to Saddleback and to Rick for casting that vision of what class could be about.

We did something real interesting in the year 2000. We did something called Home Run 2000. On a Sunday morning, the second Sunday of January, I preached a message on the classes. We were in a gym at the time. We made a little path, a baseball diagram by taking out chairs in the diagram and put bases out there. We had a big baseball backdrop. I preached a message on getting around the bases in the Christian life, becoming all God wants you to be. Then we took a couple in our church who had come to know Christ at our church. They'd never been to church in their life yet had come to Woodlands and begun a relationship with Jesus and then had gone around the bases. I walked them around the bases. I went to first base and said, "What was it like when you first came to church?" I interviewed them. "What was it like when you came to the membership class and trusted Christ?" then we went to second base and talked about, What was it like when you began to develop the disciplines to grow in Christ and have your daily quiet time? And learned all these things about growing in Christ? Then we went to third base and talked about the area of ministry that they'd gotten involved in. Then they went to home plate and talked about how they're bringing their friends to church. People got really excited about that. We gave out these Home Run 2000 cards – little credit cards – and said, We want everyone to get around the bases this year. People began to get around the bases. In five months we had 1,700 people who went through the classes. It was a powerful thing. They'd take their little baseball sticker and put it on first base when they got through then went on to second base. It's amazing what happens when you give someone a track to go on.

We do the classes all together on a Sunday right after the last service at 1:30. Sometimes we have a big fish fry or Texas BBQ or something like that. We'll have all the classes meet at one time. The classes last about 3 ½ hours - usually ends up being about four. We have a great time. In January we had 500 people in those classes. It doesn't matter if your church is large or small. This has worked for us in a church of 200. This has worked for us now in a church where we have almost 8,000. We've had 4,600 people go through Class 101 and join our church. Most of them have been baptized in Fellowship of the Woodlands. It's a powerful thing when you see people get around the bases and become all that God wants them to be.

Tom:

Cary talked about some simple steps like a little card for people with some stickers on it to

II. HELP PEOPLE TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP .

Help people take the next steps of commitment. I want to talk to you very intensely for a few minutes about the practical section of this in helping people take the next step and how important that is.

2 Corinthians 8:10, the Message translation, Paul wrote

So here's what I think: The best thing you can do right now is to finish what you started last year and not let those good intentions grow stale. Your heart's been in the right place all along. You've got what it takes to finish it up, so go to it. Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:10 (MSG)

He was encouraging them to finish an offering. Many times in our lives we need to help people, encourage people to take the next step of commitment.

Commitment in my life didn't happen in one giant leap. It's been a series of small steps. It doesn't happen overnight. It happens over months and over years. In fact,

8

Growth and change happen when: Personal Conviction meets Practical Encouragement

"An object at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted upon by external forces."

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Newton's third law

When personal conviction meets practical encouragement, then I take the next step for growth. Sometimes I have the conviction. I know I need to change. I may even come to church for months or years but no one is encouraging me in a practical way to take that step. There are practical actions to be aware of in making your next step.

In baseball for instance, a practical action. If you want to move somebody from first base to second base what are some of the practical ways to do that? How does a person move from first base to second base? A hit, a walk, a ball, a steal. We once had a guy say, "I think I was hit by a pitch. Pastor Rick hit me with a pitch and there I was at second base."

How is it people move into life changing commitments? I want to tell you an embarrassing thing about me. Some of the most dramatically, life changing commitments I've made - I'm embarrassed to tell you the tiny little things that got me to that place. I'm embarrassed to tell you the times when my wife has said, "You need to be there." I didn't want to be there but I did not want to have the argument. So I showed up at the meeting and God changed my life. It's amazing how God will use small things to get us to the right place so major life change can happen. I'm not talking about gimmicks. But I do believe in practical encouragement. Sometimes in my desire not to ever use a gimmick - I have a hatred for gimmicks - in my desire not to do that, I have failed to give the simple practical encouragement to help somebody to grow.

We are going to talk in this session about

9

20 practical ideas for encouraging the next step:

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As I go through these, I encourage you to circle three or four that you can begin to do right now in your church.

The first and most powerful thing I think you can do to encourage people to take the next step of commitment is

1. Use letters and e-mails.

Can you use letters to encourage people in personal growth?

What does the New Testament have to say about using letters?

Using letters to encourage personal growth in peoples' lives?

It is the New Testament!

That's what the New Testament is! If you're not using letters to encourage growth in the lives of your people, you're ignoring the advice of the New Testament. Follow up letters. Just to be practical I've given you some of our letters. You can take these and use them if you like. Use them as a way to begin to write up some letters of your own.

1ST TIME VISITOR LETTER

Dear «Nick_Name»,

It was great to have you be a part of our service last weekend. I hope you enjoyed it and felt welcomed. I only wish I had been able to personally spend time with you, and get to know you.

We want to help you in any way we can. We believe every person is important. As you looked around, you probably noticed that our church family is made up of people just like yourself. I hope you sensed the warmth and acceptance of those around you. We're glad you chose to attend Saddleback.

Thanks again for attending our church. I hope you'll continue to join us each week. We want you to feel like a part of our family. I'm looking forward to seeing you again this weekend.

Warmly,
Pastor Rick

P.S. Would you do me a favor? We're always trying to improve our worship services. I'd like your candid first impressions (good and bad) of our church. Just mail back the enclosed response card with your views. You don't need to sign your name. The card is postpaid so you don't need to put a stamp on it. Just drop it in the mail. Thanks!

2ND TIME VISITOR LETTER

Dear «Nick_Name»,

It was great to see you again in the service last weekend. We are always happy to see new friends return after their first visit.

If you have any questions, or if one of our pastors can assist you in any way, feel free to call our church office. We're excited about your interest in our church family.

Thanks again for coming back! We want you to feel welcome anytime. I hope you can be with us again this weekend.

Warmly,
Pastor

Rick

P.S. Did you know we have a number of information tables on the patio after each service where you can learn about the many programs and events our church offers?

3RD TIME VISITOR LETTER

Dear «Nick_Name»,

Just a note to let you know how pleased we are that you are continuing to worship with us. I hope by now you are feeling comfortable and at home with us, and will consider yourself as a part of our church family. We want you to belong.

I'm writing to let you know about our Class 101: Introduction to Our Church Family. Since we have people attending our church from every type of church background, we have established an on-going class which provides basic information about our church.

You don't have to become a member to attend this class - it's just for your information. In part of the class we will explain all about what we believe, how we operate, and a little of the background on our church. In the other half of the class we will answer any questions you may have, and share information on our church's future plans and how you may become a member. Please watch the bulletin for the date, time and location of the next membership class. Check our web site (www.saddleback.com) or call the church office (949 609-8000) to make reservations if you plan to attend.

Again, we want you to know that you are welcome at Saddleback. If any of our pastors can help you in any way, just let us know.

Warmly,
Pastor Rick

INVITATION TO 201 LETTER

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Dear Member of the Saddleback Family,

I want to give you a special invitation to attend CLASS 201 on Sunday, May 19th (3pm-7pm), in Room Tent 3. It's not too late to sign up! Just let us know on your registration card this Sunday that you'll be coming... or you can call the church office at 949-609-8000 and let us know if that would be easier.

Since you've just completed CLASS 101 with Pastor Rick, now is the perfect time to move ahead. I know that you'll really enjoy the teaching about how to grow closer to God that you'll get in this class. The objective of 201 is to help you to develop the basic habits of maturity in the Christian life.

How do you know if you're ready to attend this class? Class 201 is for those who have made a commitment to join the Saddleback family and who want to grow as a believer. A few comments from those who have taken the class recently might help you to see what this seminar can mean for your personal growth...

"The reward of taking this class is a closer commitment to God."

"I have grown up in the church, and have never been taught these important, foundational things."

"Every Christian needs this info to grow..."

"Good, basic materials in an easy to follow and understand format."

We'll be looking at the Bible truths you need for everyday living; how to talk to God in a refreshing, conversational way; how to develop relationships with other believers for support and encouragement - and much more. I don't want this to sound like a "sales" letter - I simply want to give you the best encouragement that I can from myself and others to join us for 201! As with CLASS 101, we'll provide the meal and childcare for your children. Please bring a sack dinner for your kids. Hope to see you there!

In His Joy,
Pastor Lance

The third time visitor letter is really the most important one. Studies have shown that in growing churches two of ten first-time visitor's return, but six of ten third times come back. When somebody's come the third time they're pretty solid. More often than not they're going to stick in the church.

You can also use letters to invite people to make the next step of commitment.

INVITATION TO 201 LETTER

As you look at these letters you might notice a couple of things. They're short and they're personal. Keep your letters as short as you can. If you write a real long letter, then people are going to know it's a form letter. They are. But if you keep it short they have a sense of "He wrote that just to me! He took the time to write that just to me." Use letters to help people.

2. Put a place to commit to the next class on your WELCOME CARD.

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or your response card that you use on the weekend. Just a place where you can check a box and say, I want to come to the next 101 or 201 or the next membership class or the next discovering my church class, whatever you happen to call it.

3. Make a commitment to the next class a part of your SERMON.

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Make it one of the steps that people take as a result of hearing one of your messages. By far this is the most effective way to encourage people to make life-changing commitments. You can't do it every week. But those opportunities that you have to encourage people through the message – the right message, the right time to encourage people to make that commitment, there is nothing more effective.

4. Make the classes a part of every testimony.

A couple weeks ago as part of the message we had a couple do a testimony. They essentially just walked people around the bases. "Here's what happened when we took 101 and here's how our life has changed." They happened to have a life changing moment with each of the classes. We were having class 101-401 that night. So obviously after they gave that testimony there were many, many

people who signed up to come to the class that night. They had heard somebody talk about how it worked in their life.

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5. Ask people to TELL YOU what classes they've taken.

- In conversations

When you're talking with people in your church say, "Have you taken Class 101?" There's something about that that plants a seed in people's mind that says "I should take Class 101."

- On sign-up forms for small groups.

If you're talking to people to sign-up for small groups say, "Have you taken 101, 201, 301, and 401?" It plants a seed in people's mind.

- Through a show of hands in larger groups.

Sometimes in larger group you can say, "How many of you have taken 101?" How many of you have a 101 or membership class in your church? How many of you have a 201 or maturity class in your church? How many of you have a 301 or ministry class? How many of you have been a part of 401?

Even raising your hands like that, if you raised your hand for 101 and not 201 at least you're thinking, "Maybe we should do that..." There's something about that that plants a seed.

6. Develop a brochure series on the VALUES AND BENEFITS of each class.

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Don't just tell people when the class meets. Don't just tell people who the teacher of the class is. Talk about the values and benefits. By taking class 101 you understand what it means to be a part of a church family. You make a commitment to the church that will change not only your life but you'll be a part of changing this world. All those values and benefits should be on this brochure for the class.

7. Have a “Pastor’s Chat” in a pastors home.

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When Saddleback was a new church, we’d have a sign up sheet at the back for people to come to the pastor’s home to hear more about the church. We’d usually take the first 20 people or so.

Here’s something we learned about new people. They really don’t want you to come to their home to visit them – then they might have to clean up their home and that might be inconvenient. But people LOVE to come to YOUR home to visit. “Let’s go see how this pastor and his family live!”

At that chat we would just have some punch and cookies, very simple, and get to know people as they arrived. Then we would get in a circle and ask two questions. First, Why did you come to church the first time? Then we would ask, Why did you come back? As people went around the group answering that second question they were actually encouraging each other about why this new church they were in was a good place for them to be.

8. Provide a Welcome Center at the church.

If you do that by the way, you want to make sure that people can see in to this welcome center. I know a church that took out a wall and made a whole glass wall so as people walked by they could see it’s safe in there. If it’s a dark room where the door opens and closes behind you, that can be a little scary for people. You want them to see in and see it’s a safe place. One of my pastor friends in Africa has coffee in their welcome center. They want to have time to talk to people so what they do in their welcome center is they make sure their coffee is really hot. So when people get the coffee they can’t drink it right away. They have to sit there a few minutes, let it cool down and so they get to meet some people. That’s the way they do it in Africa. I don’t know if we should do it here but it’s worth thinking bout.

9. Use every event to encourage people into
SMALL GROUPS.

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Never have a larger event without encouraging people into something that will keep them growing. Otherwise it’s just a flash in the pan, a one-time thing. You have a wonderful maturity conference, a great Bible teacher comes, people’s lives are changed, yet the change doesn’t last because there’s not a process built into in. So every time we have a women’s retreat or men’s retreat we have a way to get involved in a small group. Studies show that a church staff tends to see the church in terms

of how it's organized while the people in the church tend to see the church in terms of relationships. People in our churches don't care about our organizational charts. They don't even care about 101, 201, 301 and 401 as far as the numbers like we do in evaluating how people are growing. They just want to know if they're growing. They want to know if they're relating to other people. And by having an event where, even if a lot of people come, people are encouraged with small groups; you're seeing that life change continues to happen. Many times there's a huge effort, wonderful things happen but a year later there's not much left of it. What if a year later you could look back and say 20, 30, 10, 5 small groups started and they're still going. Then you'd know that lives are being changed.

10. Offer a "101 – 401 Update" for those already in your church.

What do you do with those who are already members in a church where you are starting a new 101 class? You certainly don't tell your long time members that they have to go through a new class to become members again. You grandfather in those who are already in your church. And then you say to them, "Wouldn't it be great if all of the NEW members went through this CLASS?"

They might want to know what you're teaching them, so you can offer to do a 101 update for the whole church – maybe on a Sunday morning or a Sunday night. Then you can say to them, "Now you're invited to go on to 201, 301 and 401 also."

Let me encourage you, if you're going to start class 301 let me encourage you to teach it first to all the people in your church who are already in ministry. Say, "We're going to have a seminar for all of you in ministry. I want to encourage you in ministry." One of my most exciting days in ministry in the traditional church I was a part of before I came to Saddleback was when I brought them all together and said I'm going to teach you class 301. Everybody that was ministering in that church came that day and I taught them the principles of SHAPE and ministry. At the end of that class I said to people, "Now how are you shaped for ministry? What does God want you to do?" I saw people stand up and decide that what they'd been doing for maybe four or five years they weren't really happy with in the first place. They were just doing it out of faithfulness. They were just doing it because they loved the Lord and there wasn't anything else they thought they could do. They began to talk to each other. Someone said, "I hate bringing flowers to the church every week." Another said, "I would love to do that? Would you like to teach junior highers?" That's not a bad trade, by the way – flowers for junior highers! But the person said, "I've always wanted to teach junior highers." The incredibly amazing thing was when we left that room every job in the church was

covered by people saying, “This is what I’m gifted to do.” All of a sudden the ministry of that church was not happening based on an organizational structure or nominating committee list. It was happening based on what people were shaped to do and every job was done. I encourage you. If you’re starting class 301 teach it to the people who are ministering already and then begin to teach it to new people in your church.

11. Take advantage of motivating opportunities.

A “motivating opportunity” is something that motivates people to say, “OK it’s time to take the next step.” We all have in our lives this little problem with procrastination. That’s a struggle. We say we’re going to do it someday and it’s important - but life gets so busy we never get to doing what’s really important in our lives. So you help people to be motivated.

Motivating opportunities include:

- Special days in the life of the church (anniversaries, moving into a new building).

“Before we move into the new building why don’t you take the membership class? Be a member of the church before we move into the new building. When we moved onto this land Pastor Rick got up and said, “When we move onto this new land, we’re going to have a time capsule that we’re going to bury with the names of all of the current members of the church. So if you want your name to be in that time capsule you need to come to the next Class 101.” Five hundred people showed up at the next Class 101. To get their names in one point type in this time capsule. And their lives were changed. Because something motivated them to take the next step. You can’t force motivating opportunities but you can take advantage of them.

Another motivating opportunity is

- Significant calendar dates (a new millennium, a new decade).

Do this before the end of the century or the end of the decade. That’s always a good motivator.

One motivating opportunity that you can create is

- A Yearly Emphasis (Fall or Spring Focus).

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that we talked about a few times. We called it the 40 Days of Love and Faith. Next year we're going to do 40 Days of Purpose. That is a motivating opportunity. "This fall we're going to do this together, get on board. Now is the time." Take advantage of those opportunities in your church.

12. RECOGNIZE each step of commitment.

At Saddleback you become a member after first base. You don't have to wait until the end, taking all four of the classes to become a member. Each step of commitment we give people a card that says you've made the next step of commitment.

13. Give an opportunity at the end of each class to sign-up for the next class.

Just a small thing but if you're not doing this at the end of class 101 say. "201 is coming up in a month and a half, if you want to sign up now." Then people are ready to come.

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14. Encourage those who have just made a commitment to call those who need to make the same commitment.

55

That's something we did for a few years. We'd have everyone in 101 write their name on a card and their phone number. We said, "Would you mind getting an encouragement call from somebody in the church? If not would you write your name and phone number on the card." We'd take those cards down to 201 that was being taught at the same time and hand out one or two or three to each person. And those people would call during the week and say, "Glad you're a member of our church now. Welcome. By the way, I took 201. I hope you take it next month. That might be a little scary for you because it's supposed to be about spiritual maturity but you're ready for it. It's something we all need."

A couple years ago we were handing out these cards. We happened to have a group from our deaf ministry, somebody doing the signing and five or six people from our deaf ministry taking the class. I saw a guy who was deaf and could not speak take five cards. I went over to the person who was signing and said, "Do you understand this is to make phone calls?" She said, "He

understands. But through California Deaf services he can make phone calls to these people to encourage them.” I thought here was this guy, he can’t hear, he can’t speak, he’s going to contact five people and welcome them to our church. No excuses! He’s going to find a way to say, Welcome to our church. That changed my heart to see somebody willing to take that kind of step. What about those five people who got that call? Who knew somebody cared that much about them? That’s what makes life-changing differences.

Take 5 minutes sometime during the next two weeks to give the person listed below a call. They are someone who just finished taking 101 tonight and have been told to expect your call. Your call will do three things: Welcome them into the church, remind them that although we are a large church we care about each person, and encourage them to join us for 201 this next month.

Here is a suggested script for you to use in your phone call...

“Hi, my name is _____, I’m also a member at Saddleback Church. I was in Class 201 while you were in Class 101 this last month. You remember writing your name and phone number down on a 3 x 5 card... I was given your name to call at the end of my class.

I want to welcome you into our church family! I hope that you enjoyed Class 101 and that the class answered some of your questions and gave you a vision for where the church is headed.

I also want to encourage you to come to Class 201 this next month. You don’t have to get to a certain level of spiritual maturity before coming to 201. All you really need is a desire to grow in Christ. In the class we talk about the steps that any believer can take to begin a life of growth in Jesus. (Please say a word or two about what the class meant to you at this point.)

15. Have a **YEARLY RENEWAL** of commitments... with an encouragement to move on.

Just have people sign up again, “Here we are at the beginning of a new year. Let’s go again. Let’s renew our commitment to membership and maturity and the ministry and missions.”

16. Allow “ **BACK DOOR** Commitments” – encourage those involved in ministry to finish the steps.

12

Allow what I would call back door commitments, sneaking in the back door kind of commitments. Encourage those who are involved in ministry to finish the steps. Let me tell you what I mean by this. If somebody comes and says “I’ve been a member of a church for ten years. I want to take all the classes here at Saddleback. But could I go ahead and do this ministry first and then come and take 201? Is that ok? Or I haven’t taken 201 or 301 yet. I’ve only taken 101. Can I start doing ministry now?” What do you think I’m going to say to them? They want to do ministry and they’re already qualified for ministry. The great thing is you say to them, “You can go ahead and do that.” They feel like they’re sneaking into ministry! The truth is they’re just making life-changing commitments. I’d encourage you, don’t get so uptight about this that you can’t look at who somebody really is and say, “You need to take 101 before you become a small group leader of our church because you need to be on board, but then go ahead and become a small group leader of our church. Then take 201. Maybe take your whole small group with you through 201, 301 and 401. Do it all together.” I’d encourage you to allow some back door commitments. Be flexible.

One crucial factor in any church to help people to grow is to

17. Provide lots of “entry level ministries.”

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Sometimes in order for people to begin ministering in a church - say a new believer - we ask people to leap the Grand Canyon to be a minister in church. We tell them, “Now that you’re a Christian, you need to serve,” but the only options are a small group leader, a Bible study leader, a teacher in Sunday school. “I can’t reach that high” they think. “I’m a brand new believer.”

The older your church gets the wider the ministry gap gets. A young church will always have lots of entry level ministries, because you’re all young believers. But as a church gets older people intuitively know, “All these people serving here, they’re a lot more spiritually mature than I am. I can’t fit with this.” So as your church grows the opportunity for involvement sometimes decreases. New people feel like they just can’t fit.

The answer is to find in every ministry something that somebody can do. In your women’s Bible study ministry maybe everyone can’t teach the Bible but maybe they can lead a small group. If they can’t lead a small group maybe they can assist in leading a small group. If they can’t assist in leading a small group maybe they can

get a refreshment table ready each meeting. Find something they can do. You can trust even unbelievers to do some things. I trust unbelievers to serve doughnuts. They're not going to poison people just because they're an unbeliever. I would trust them to serve the doughnuts. There're some people who won't get involved in your church unless they feel like there's something they can do in the church. So you need to have some entry-level ministries for unbelievers, a place where they can begin to connect.

18. Have people complete their shape interview during the 301 class.

In CLASS 301 we have people fill out an interview form on their Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences. Have them complete that as a part of class 301, not after class 301. Why? Because for most people that small sheet of paper becomes a mountain of paperwork. It just sets on their desk for month after month sometimes. If instead you make the class itself an opportunity to work through this together, people will get it done. I think one of the reasons for that is a lot of us don't like to write things down about ourselves. It makes us feel uncomfortable, like we're being prideful. But if in a class someone will lead them through that then at the end of the class they turn in their interview, they make their commitment and go to the next class. When we started doing that our opportunity to get people involved through discussing their SHAPE interview with somebody in the church just soared.

19. Have people come to CLASS together as a small group.

Let the relationships carry them through the commitment.

In all your classes,

20. Provide childcare and a meal.

A four-hour class they're going to get hungry. They need a snack or a meal. We provide childcare for every one of our classes every time.

The question is which one of these steps can you begin to implement next month? The idea obviously is to have lots of times, lots of tools to help people to grow. By the way, we have a specialized 101 and 301 class for children and youth.

As you work through these classes, these opportunities to help people make commitments to change their lives and their church there are

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Four Questions About Assimilation You Will Need to Address

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1. How do you know when people are ready to move onto the next commitment?

Some people are fast base runners, some are slow base runners. How do you know when they're stealing a base?

Basic principle: When they have begun to fulfill the previous commitment.

- *Commitment to church membership before 201.*

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Not just people who attended 101 but people who've made a commitment to church membership. You make the commitment and then you can move on.

- ***Start*** giving, a quiet time and involvement in a small group before 301.

People who are committed to the habits to be involved in ministry. How am I going to have a foundation for ministry without those habits of maturity in my life?

- *Have a ministry interview before getting involved in a ministry and 401.*

2. How do we hold people accountable to these commitments?

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They're committing to a membership covenant, they're committing to tithe and to minister. How do you hold people accountable? Do we for instance, monitor people's individual commitments to tithe and if they fail for a month they get a little letter from Saddleback church? Do we do that? No. There is a more powerful kind of accountability than a letter from the church.

Three types of accountability:

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The first kind of accountability is

- ORGANIZATIONAL accountability

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That's where the big organization, the big brother, is watching you and tells you that you are accountable and whether you're doing well or not. I can explain organizational accountability in three letters – IRS. That's organizational accountability. That is one kind of accountability. But how do you feel about organizational accountability? You don't feel good about it. And when the church, the organization, is trying to help you feel accountable people will usually resist that kind of accountability.

The second kind of accountability is

- PERSONAL accountability

I am personally responsible before God for these commitments. The truth is we do allow people to choose their level of commitment here at Saddleback. They are choosing whether to go to 101 or 201. They are choosing whether to live out these commitments in their lives. They're the ones who signed this growth covenant card or this ministry involvement card. So it's their responsibility before God, not our responsibility before God whether they're going to fulfill those commitments. Our responsibility is to train them in those commitments, encourage them in those commitments, grow them in those commitments. But they have a responsibility before God also. A personal responsibility.

But that's not enough.

There's a third level of accountability that's vital for you to incorporate into your process to help people grow. That is

- RELATIONAL accountability

Relational accountability is when you get close to somebody who can ask you the important questions in life. That's the kind of accountability that happens in small groups. So instead of the church writing a letter that says, "Are you having a quiet time?" In a small group you have a friend who says to you, "How are you doing in your quiet time?" Then it becomes relational. Then it

becomes powerful. You're still a little uncomfortable even then. But then is when it becomes powerful. I strongly encourage relational accountability in each of these habits we're talking about.

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Third question you're going to have to address.

3. How many events and meetings do people have to attend to be spiritually healthy?

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You can build on a piece of paper a perfect pattern for spiritual growth and maturity that says people have to be out six nights a week in order to grow. It'll look great on paper but it's never going to happen. It's just never going to happen. So how many meetings do I have to go to be spiritually healthy? How many does it take? Am I going to build a process that says people have to be out five nights a week in order to be spiritually healthy at the church? If somebody's out five nights of the week at the church I believe that will make them spiritually unhealthy. I understand that because I'm a pastor. I have to be out, you have to be out, sometimes as pastors five nights a week. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? It's a bad thing. You're separated from the world. You don't have a chance to witness to your neighbors. You're not connected with your family. There's something bad about that.

The truth is we could build all the great processes that we want but we can't get people to come back on Sunday night. So how do we help people to grow so that they don't have to be out five nights a week? I know that the closer we can get teaching and disciplining to the lives of people, where they actually live, the better disciplining and growing we'll do in people's lives.

We decided to take the teaching, we're using video to do that, into the small groups. By doing that we immediately tripled the number of people who are studying the Bible each week. By doing that we moved it closer to where people are actually living. They can hear a Bible study. They can talk about it, the reality of it and how it works in their lives.

I'm a pastor. When I teach I love to teach like this. I love to see faces. When I tell a joke I like to hear laughter. You love to see the response. It's fulfilling to me. But that's not the point. The point is people growing in Christ. We want to get people to believe and act in a Christ like way in their homes. In order to do that we have to take the teaching into their homes. We want to get people to believe and act in a Christ like way at work. In order to do that we have to take it to their work, or take it to their school. That's a hard thing to do. It's not as easy as doing it in the church. I know that. I know how hard and difficult it was for me to say, "Let's stop doing

midweek”, to agree to do things a different way. It involves changing your life. That’s not comfortable. But my comfort, your comfort, is not the point. The point is helping people make life-changing commitments.

13

People spend 2-4 hours a day in their car on average. How do we disciple them in their car? How do we disciple them in their homes? How do we disciple them at school?

4. How do we make sure people are becoming disciples and not just taking classes?

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I took Class 101, 201, 301, and 401. Is that all? Is that enough? No.

- Make the classes a place to make

COMMITMENTS and not just receive

INFORMATION

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It’s the commitment that makes the difference. Make sure it’s a strong place to make commitments and not just receive information. Then you

- Give people a place to develop and grow in the commitments they have made.

That’s our responsibility.

I want to take a moment to touch on this as we close. If we talk about assimilation people into commitment it's also vital to

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III. BALANCE YOUR ASSIMILATION PROCESS AND YOUR DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

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Let's talk about the difference between assimilation making the commitment and development, growing in that commitment. Let me give you pictures of that.

Assimilation: Helping people move to the next step of commitment

Development: Growth at each level of commitment

Assimilation: 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost

Development: They met day after day to study the Apostles' teachings

Assimilation:

In Ephesus:

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

ACTS 19:8 (NIV)

Development:

In Ephesus:

(Paul) took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

ACTS 19:9-10 (NIV)

Assimilation: Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Development: If anyone would come after me, He must take up His cross daily

Just some quick lessons:

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Lessons on balancing assimilation and development:

- Assimilation can happen QUICKLY, development takes TIME !

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You can help people make a commitment that will change their lives in a four-hour class or one sermon, to step over a line to make a commitment. That can happen quickly. But it takes time to develop in that commitment. Don't confuse the two. Make sure you have both.

- Assimilation works well in LARGER groups,
development in SMALLER groups.

It can happen in both but assimilation tends to work better in larger groups, there's a power of a group commitment. Development in smaller groups. A couple of obvious things:

- Assimilation comes before development.

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First I've got to make the commitment before I can develop in that commitment. You cannot grow in a commitment that you haven't made. That's deep. Sometimes we forget the simple things of life. We expect people we're talking to people, we're preaching to people with all of our hearts asking them to grow but they haven't made the commitment yet. They haven't decided to step over the line. So first comes the commitment.

Remember also that

- Assimilation is lost without development.

Making a commitment does not guarantee that you will grow in that commitment. All you have to do is look at the divorce rate of our country to realize that. You can make a commitment to marriage but it doesn't mean you'll have a growing marriage. You can step over the line and say, I want to be committed to you the rest of my life but that doesn't mean that that's a developing marriage. Or you can make a commitment to growing in Christ but unless you develop that commitment it's just something that happened in the past.

- Our natural drift is towards DEVELOPMENT.

Developing the people that we see rather than bringing new people in. You know why that is. We see the people that we have. We talk to them all the time. They tell us their needs. We don't see the people who aren't in church that need to make the commitment. We do see the people who are in church who've already made many of these commitments. Because of that we get fooled. We're blinded to the fact that the truth is there are many, many more people outside the church who need to make these commitments than are already inside. Because the natural drift is toward just developing what's already there you almost have to force yourself as a church to think about who's not there. Who needs to make life-changing commitments?

- The balance is MESSY!

The balance between assimilation and development is messy. It's just messy. I see all the time people will take a chart like our baseball diamond and they will try to integrate a beautiful assimilation development process. They'll have 27 steps along the first base line. If you'll just take these 27 steps then you're ready for second base. People don't work that way. You don't work that way. That's not the way life works. The truth is you grow a little here and you're struggling there. You do a little better here, then you struggle there. That's just the way people are. So don't try to develop a perfect system. Remember church growth, growing people, is not engineering. You can't plot it out. It's more like being a doctor. When you operate on a heart, it's pretty messy. There's no other way of saying it. There's even some blood that's split. But there's healing also that happens. So just realize it can be a messy thing.

Our process is to use class 101-401 for assimilation. That's where the purposes are explained and we make the commitments. Then we use our small groups for development.

Our process is to use class 101-401 for assimilation. That's where the purposes are explained and we make the commitments. Then we use our small groups for development.

CLASS 101-401 for assimilation		SMALL GROUPS for development	
Commit to join the church in CLASS 101	Encourage people to 101 with: • <i>101 Update</i> • <i>Visitor Letters</i> • <i>Weekend Announcements</i> • <i>Pastor's Chat</i> • <i>Welcome Center</i>	At 1 st base... Developing those in the congregation	Build relationships in my small group Care for one another in our small group
Commit to grow in Christ in CLASS 201	Encourage people to 201 with: • <i>Sign-up at end of 101</i> • <i>Letters</i> • <i>Phone Calls</i> • <i>201 Update</i>	At 2 nd Base... Developing those in the committed	Study the Bible in my small group Be accountable to habits of growth in my group
Commit to ministry in CLASS 301	Encourage people to 301 with: • <i>Sign-up at end of 201</i> • <i>Letters</i> • <i>301 Update</i> • <i>"Backdoor" Commitments</i> • <i>Entry Level Ministries</i>	At 3 rd base... Developing those in the core	Take a ministry role in my small group or in the church Meet a ministry need in the church together as a group
Commit to my life mission in CLASS 401	Encourage people to 401 with: • <i>Sign-up at end of 301</i> • <i>Letters</i> • <i>Part of mission trip training</i>	At 4 th base... Developing those going out in mission	Train to share my faith in or with my group Do a mission project or trip with my small group

I would call what we've presented and talked about in this session is "A Holy Spirit inspired strategy for life change."

Acts 19:8-10 the Bible tells us Paul entered the synagogue, he spoke there for three months. Then he left and went to the lecture hall and taught people for two years. That was his strategy everywhere he went. He'd go to a big city, go to the synagogue, preach until he got kicked out. You could think that would be a part of Paul's strategy, wouldn't you? He'd preach until he got kicked out and teach the people who followed. Paul had a strategy.

St. Patrick had a strategy. His strategy was to preach the 100 or tribal kings of Ireland so the rest of the country would come to Christ. John Wesley had a strategy. Billy Graham had a Holy Spirit inspired strategy, I believe.

What is your Holy Spirit inspired strategy for helping people to grow in Jesus Christ? Is their growth something that happens just by accident? Or have you said, "God what is the strategy in our church for helping people make these life-changing commitments."

Father, we're just human beings. We look at ourselves and realize how much we need to grow. We're not all we should be as members of Your church. We don't have a quiet time as often as we'd like to. We're not involved in ministry, not selflessly like we'd like to be. We see the faults in our lives of sharing our faith with others. Yet, Lord, we are growing. You are changing us. We are changing little by little. Lord, I pray as we see what You're doing in our lives that it would encourage us not just to hold on to it for ourselves. But to see how other people in our church can be brought into commitments that will change their lives. Jesus, as we end this day we take a moment before You to recognize and realize that You cause the growth. You privilege us to be involved in it. You give us opportunity to teach so that it happens. God, we want to end this day with praise. Whatever leadership happens in our lives, whatever is happening in our morning worship service, whatever growth is cause through these classes, God, You do it. Use simple tools and simple people like we are, Holy Spirit, Father God. You work in people's lives. Thank You for letting us be a part of that. You didn't have to. Thank You for the privilege of being Your servants. Help us to leave this day with a few thoughts in our mind how we can serve You better. But also joy in our hearts that we do get to serve You. We pray this together in Your name. Amen.

SESSION 3

STRUCTURING ON PURPOSE

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In this session we want to talk about Structuring Your Church On Purpose.

Every building has a structure. If it's the right kind of structure the building will be solid and steady and stand for a long time. But if it's the wrong kind of structure, the building will collapse. The same is true for animals. All living organisms must have the right structure to grow. Do you know that you cannot grow an animal above nine inches without a skeleton? It has to have some kind of structure to it. Your body has a structure. You have a skeleton to hold the body together.

For the church to grow – the body of Christ – you must have a Biblical statement, a Biblical strategy and a Biblical structure. We've already talked about the first two. A Biblical statement – we talked about how to build a purpose statement then communicate it and apply it to every area of your church. Then for the last couple of days we've been talking about strategy and how to move people around the baseball diamond. Or how to move people from membership to maturity to ministry to mission then back out in the world.

In this session I want us to look at the underlying structure that holds the whole thing together.

In Luke 5:37 Jesus said

"You can't pour new wine in old wineskins."

LUKE 5:37

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The point is that nothing can expand without a flexible structure. The truth is structure is what keeps most churches from growing beyond 300 people. If I were to say, Why is it that 95% of all churches in the world never grow past 300? It's because structure keeps them from growing beyond that. If you're going to build a pyramid, the pyramid can only be as big as the base. You start pouring sand on it, it will form a pyramid, but once the sand is larger than the base, you're not going any higher. The structure will prevent that.

In Hebrews 8:13 in the Phillips paraphrase

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“When a thing grows weak and out of date it is obviously soon going to disappear.”

HEBREWS 8:13

That’s true of churches too. If a church cannot change it will eventually die. So there is no structure that you set up for your church and then it stays that way for the rest of its life. The structure must be continually changing.

How do you know when you have an inadequate structure in your church? There are

THREE SYMPTOMS OF INADEQUATE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

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1. **PLATEAUED GROWTH** (going nowhere)

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You’re not growing any more. You’re just staying the same or may even be declining. You just stay the same year after year after year. You’re going nowhere. That is an indication that you have the wrong structure in your church.

Structure doesn’t CAUSE growth,

but it does control the RATE and SIZE of growth.

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The rate and the size of growth in your church are caused by the way it is structured. Plateaued growth says something’s wrong with the organization.

2. **INTERNAL CONFLICT** (fighting over decisions)

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Internal conflict in your church is almost always a symptom that you’re fighting over decisions. And fighting over decisions means you’ve got the wrong kind of structure in your organization right now.

3. DISCOURAGED LEADERSHIP (low morale)

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Or low morale. I have talked with literally thousands and thousands of pastors and church leaders. Without a doubt, the number one heartache that pastors have is dealing with the power structure. Dealing with an inadequate organization. I got this in the mail: "Is your church becoming deacon possessed?" Many pastors become very tired of fighting a bureaucracy and struggling with the power structure. Little cliques and little organizations and the wrong structure will drain your enthusiasm and kill your vision quicker than almost anything. I believe what we're talking about this morning is the number one heartache of pastors – fighting a structure that won't let them do what they know God has called them to do.

What has to happen is there must come renewal to your church in order to change the structure. There are four kinds of renewal and they must occur in this order. If they do not occur in this order, you may lose your job trying to bring renewal.

FOUR PHASES OF RENEWAL

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1. PERSONAL – God becomes real to you

Personal renewal comes when my heart warms up to Jesus Christ, when my life becomes more aware of the presence of Christ and the filling of the Holy Spirit in my life. That's called many things – the deeper life, the Spirit filled life, consecration, rededication. I don't care what you call it. When your life experiences personal renewal you begin to practice the presence of Jesus Christ on a moment by moment basis in your life. It always has to start in your heart – in the leader's heart and then in the hearts of other leaders and then in the hearts of the people. Personal renewal always has to happen first. If you try to change your church without personal renewal in the hearts of the people, it isn't going to last. It always has to start with personal revival.

2. CORPORATE – The fellowship warms up (sense of the body)

Corporate renewal comes after personal renewal and that's when the body of Christ begins to warm up itself. People begin to love each other and people begin to make things right with each other and restitution is made and sin is confessed and barriers are

broken down and there's warm fellowship in a church that's been corporately renewed. How do you know when your church is experiencing corporate renewal? Simple. The singing gets better. People sing better when their church is alive, when their church is on fire, when you sense the presence of God in a service. After personal renewal comes then there is corporate renewal.

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The third kind of renewal is what I call

3. **MISSION** – Capture a vision of the purposes of the church

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That is when the church begins to realize we're here more than just to have a good time and feel good. We have a mission, an objective, a purpose. This conference, the Purpose Driven book and all the things about the Purpose Driven Church are built to bring about this third kind of renewal in churches. Purpose driven. It's when people say, "We're not just here to feel good. We're not just here to have a little Bless Me group. But we're here on mission. We're here for a reason." There are five reasons that God has established the church and when people understand that, then comes purpose renewal.

The first two kinds of renewal – personal and corporate – occur quite often in many churches but nothing ever comes as a result of it because they don't get to the third and fourth level. In my background, being a Baptist, the way historically we saw personal and corporate renewal was through an annual revival. You would bring in a guest speaker or preacher or teacher, conference leader, and they would come speak for a week or two weeks and everybody recommits their life to Christ, gets right with each other and you have personal and corporate renewal. But then a few weeks later it kind of dies down and it never makes a long-term emphasis in the church. I have seen many churches that grow up to 200 or 250 and then bump back down. Then a few years later they grow up to 200, 250 then they go back down. If you study the history of many churches, you'll see that the church will go up so far then maybe the pastor leaves and it goes back down. It looks like there's some kind of glass ceiling that it never can get above 300. The reason why is they never get to this fourth kind of renewal.

4. **STRUCTURAL** – Organizational change

When you have personal renewal and corporate renewal and purpose renewal inevitably the church starts growing. It's going to grow if you have those first three kinds of renewal. But when it starts growing you're going to eventually make some kind of

changes because you can't put new wine into old wineskins and if you keep the old wineskin it's going to stifle the growth. It hits the glass ceiling and the church falls back down to a more stable position. This is what happens in literally thousands and thousands of churches. You must have this structural renewal, and organizational change. There is no lasting change without changing the organization.

Many years ago there were two very famous evangelists, George Whitfield and John Wesley.

John Wesley versus George Whitfield

They both came to America. God used both of them in a very great way. They were different in doctrine. One was a Calvinist and one was an Armenian. But God used them both. A couple hundred years later, almost nobody knows who George Whitfield is except Bible scholars or church historians and some pastors. But everybody knows John Wesley. Why? Both Whitfield and Wesley were very great evangelists. Both had the exact same size crowd. They were contemporaries of each other. But one of them, his work lasted and the other's work didn't. Why?

Wesley left a structure. It's called the Methodist church. Even that structure now needs to be renewed again in itself because no structure is meant to last forever. But without a structure there will be no lasting change.

Here's the catch. You can't start with the fourth kind of renewal. If you go back into your church and you start trying to change all your structure without having personal, corporate and mission renewal, you may get your head chopped off. The people don't like to change unless their hearts have been warmed and prepared for change.

For your church to keep growing... the structure must

KEEP CHANGING !

There is no single structure that will work for your church for the rest of its life. We learned this at Saddleback that what worked when we had 50 people stopped working when we had 150 people. And what worked when we had 150 people didn't work when we had 250 people. And the organization, the way decisions were made when we had 250 people didn't work when we had 450 people. The way decisions were made and the organization that worked with 450 didn't work with 600 or 1,000. And what worked at 1,000 didn't work at 2,000. And what worked at 5,000 didn't

work at 7,000 and what worked at 10,000 didn't work at 12,000. And when we were running 14,000 we had to reorganize again.

I once asked Peter Drucker, the management consultant, father of modern management, how often does a growing organization have to restructure. He said, about every 45% growth. I since have heard him use two other numbers so I think he was just making that up. But the point was you do have to restructure ever so often. And in the first ten years of Saddleback's history we grew on an average of 47% a year which meant every year we had to restructure. We had to reorganize and regroup and try it in a different way.

Why do you have to do this? Why do you have to restructure at every new stage of growth?

The ONLY purpose of restructuring is to **BREAK THROUGH BARRIERS !**

That's the only reason you do it. You don't do it because it's fun, because it's not fun. Every time you restructure, there's some loss that causes pain. But the only purpose of restructuring is to break through barriers. The reality is that 95% of all churches stop growing before they reach 300 and they get stopped in their tracks by common barriers that they don't restructure to take care of.

Let me give you what I believe are the ten most common barriers to growing your church.

THE TEN MOST COMMON BARRIERS TO GROWTH

These are areas that can keep your church from growing and

(Areas that will most likely require restructuring)

Remember when I started this conference I said that the wrong question is "What will make our church grow?" The right question is

"What is keeping our church from growing?"

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The task of leadership is to figure out the barriers that are keeping the church from growing, remove those barriers and when you do growth is natural and growth is automatic.

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Before I started Saddleback, I looked at churches and read every book in print on church growth. There were 72 books at the time. I wrote to the 100 largest churches in the United States and asked them a series of questions. I had been involved in full time evangelism, traveling around and done 120 revival type crusades in churches. And in every church that I went into I had a little notebook and I made notes on what was working and what was not working. I began to see these ten barriers coming up over and over and over. When we started this church we designed the strategy that was built around the exact opposite of these ten barriers. I'd say what are the barriers and what's the antidote and we'll build the church on the antidote so we won't have to be stopped by any of these barriers. What are they?

The first barrier to growth is real simple

1. MEMBERS WON'T BRING FRIENDS TO CHURCH.

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We pray and we ask and we cajole and we pressure and we motivate and we have campaigns but they still won't bring friends to church. The fact is you have to have visitors in order to grow a church and if the members aren't bringing anybody you're not going to grow. Yet even though we try to have all these motivational programs, most Christians never bring anybody to church. Why? The truth is they're embarrassed. They instinctively know that the services are not designed for unbelievers, for seekers, for the people they work with. It meets my needs but it doesn't meet my neighbor's needs and so they don't bring them. Of course the antidote to that is to start a seeker sensitive service that people are proud to bring their friends to. They want to bring friends; they can't wait to bring their friends to. We've spent an entire session on that already, building "SEEKER SENSITIVE SERVICES." That's the antidote. Create a service that members want to bring their friends to.

The second barrier is that

2. PEOPLE FEAR GROWTH WILL RUIN THE FELLOWSHIP.

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Even though they may not say this, they will subtly fight you on growth because they don't want the church to grow because if it gets bigger they may not know anybody anymore, or may not know everybody anymore. So they say, "I like the way it is, I know everybody. I'm afraid I'll just become a number." When you

suggest starting a second service or third service they'll say, "But if we start another service, I won't know everybody." The very reason they resist it is the very reason you need to start it. If you feel like you have to know everybody in the church, the church is never going to grow beyond 100 or a couple hundred. You don't have to know everybody in a church to feel like it's your church but you do have to know somebody. The average person knows 67 people. If you know a group of people you can be comfortable in a church as it continues to grow.

What is the antidote to people's fear that growth will ruin a fellowship? – AFFINITY GROUPS.

We talked about that yesterday, Purpose Driven Small Groups that we must grow larger and smaller at the same time.

The third barrier is

3. BEING DRIVEN BY TRADITION.

I've noticed that many churches are driven by tradition. Tradition isn't bad, not automatically bad. Something becomes a tradition because it works in the first place. And because it works we repeat it and repeat it. So you don't automatically just throw something out because it's tradition. You just don't automatically accept it either.

There are two dangers with traditionalism. The first danger is when we make the methods sacred. That's a danger. We begin to assume that there is only one right way to do things. Never confuse the method with the message. Those are two different things. The message of Christ must never, ever change. The Bible tells us in the book of Jude, *"It is the faith once delivered for the saints."* It must never change. We don't have a right to change the message. But the methods have to change with every new generation. They have to. Because you cannot put new wine in old wineskins. Don't make the methods sacred. Only the message is sacred.

The second mistake we make with tradition is we forget why we do things. Like the woman who used to always cut off the end of her roast when she cooked it so her daughter, as she grew up, always cut off the end of her roast when she cooked it. She never could figure out why. One day she asked her mom. Her mom said, "Because it didn't fit my pan." And here this woman was still cutting off the end of a roast even though she had a different pan. We often forget why we do what we do. We lose the sense of purpose. And again, a major reason why churches die is they refuse to change.

Let me give you a very important principle of church growth in dealing with programs. When the horse is dead, dismount! Let dead programs die. Give them a decent burial. My guess is that in your church there are probably four or five programs that died years ago but you're still trying to prop them up. Peter Drucker once told me the most expensive and hopeless thing is trying to keep a corpse from stinking. You just need to say, "That was a great program when we had it!" Give it a decent burial, praise God for it and get on with something else. We need to honestly face the truth, folks, in most churches "business as usual" is not working. The Southern Baptist convention last year baptized about 400,000 new believers in America and about the same amount overseas. They're one of the most evangelistic denominations. Yet the world produces more babies in one day than the denomination won in one year. Let's put things into focus. We're getting behind if we don't change the business as usual techniques. Traditionalism will kill your church.

Moses lost his right to leadership because he refused to change, when he hung on to tradition. Remember when Moses was leading the children of Israel across the wilderness. The first time they needed water God told him to strike the rock, so he struck the rock and water came out. Then the second time they ran out of water, God said, "Speak to the rock," and Moses said, "Oh no, we've never done it that way! I want to do it the old way. I like the old way of doing it! I want to strike the rock again." God said, "No, I want you to do it in a different way now." Moses said no. He struck the rock again and it was Moses' traditionalism, his refusal to change, his refusal to do something different that kept him out of the Promised Land. He lost his right to leadership. He forfeited his right to leadership when he refused to change.

Jesus always confronted the barriers of traditionalism. *"The Pharisees asked, 'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders?' Jesus replied, 'Why do you break the commands of God for the sake of your tradition?'"* That's a good verse! Why don't you preach on that one this Sunday? You need to understand that I am not anti-traditional. I am a fourth generation Southern Baptist. My hope is built on nothing less than Lottie Moon and Broadman Press. You cut me and I bleed cooperative program. I'm fourth generation. You don't just throw something out because it's traditional. Instead you should always evaluate it. You ask, "Is this still fulfilling its purpose? Is it still effective? Is this program still working?"

I suggest that you periodically review, maybe at least once a year, all your programs and you choose one of three options. You either reaffirm it, or you refine it or you replace it. Reaffirm it – yes, it's still working. Refine it – we need to tweak it a little, change it a little so it will be more effective this next year. Or replace it.

At Saddleback church we have no sacred cows. Anything can be changed except the gospel. In fact we say sacred cows make great hamburger. The hardest thing to change in your church is what works but you often need to change what works before it stops working. If you wait until it's on the backside of the bell curve it's too late. You've wasted precious time. When you see a program doing good but it's not still growing, you need to start thinking, "What's next?" before it plateaus and declines. You can't change your purposes; those are eternal. The purposes remain unchanged. But the programs to fulfill the purposes change all the time.

I grow roses. We have quite a garden and I have a lot of roses at the side of my house. Last January they were still all blooming. But I knew that if I didn't cut them back and prune them that was going to be it. There wasn't going to be any roses in the new season. So I went out to my rose garden and I whacked every one of them off on January 15, even with rosebushes that still had buds waiting to bloom. It about killed me! In less than sixty days, those rosebushes were blooming again. I didn't wait until those things had died and those suckers were buried before I started pruning them. When you prune you often have to prune live branches.

In your ministry there will be things that are going good that you have to cut off in order to go to the next stage of growth. They're still working, they're still good but cut them off before they die in order to go to the next stage of growth. The hardest thing to change is what was working before or what's still working. But you can't use yesterday's tool in today's ministry to meet tomorrow's challenge. The antidote is to be **DRIVEN BY PURPOSE**. That's what doesn't change and everything else does.

The fourth barrier is

4. TRYING TO APPEAL TO EVERYBODY.

You can't do that. We've talked about the antidote being a **DEFINED TARGET** knowing who you best can reach.

The fifth barrier is

5. PROGRAMS – ORIENTED RATHER THAN PROCESS – ORIENTED.

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We talked about the antidote to that is a life development process. Having a process like the diamonds and the circles that move people around the bases, that move them from first base membership to second base maturity to third base ministry to home plate mission and around again taking other people. You need a process. A LIFE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

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6. FOCUSING ON MEETINGS RATHER THAN MINISTRY.

83

How do you know when you're making this mistake? You know it when your number one measurement for health is attendance. If that's the only thing you ever talk about is how many people you had then you are a meeting focused church. Attendance is one denominator that you need to look at but it's certainly not the only one. If the only thing you measure is attendance then you have a meeting focused church and focusing on meetings tends to produce passive spectators, leaves no time for ministry. We don't need more meetings; we need to meet more needs. How do you do that? By turning EVERY MEMBER A MINISTER, the seventh barrier we're not covering in this conference. That's a whole other seminar on Purpose Driven Preaching.

*Will Rogers: The government taxes people to build roads...
and Christians wear them out going to meetings!*

7. TEACHING WITHOUT APPLICATION.

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Preaching that lacks application merely informs rather than transforms. The antidote to that is what I call BEHAVIORAL PREACHING. That means preaching that focuses on obedience. The Bible tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. In every message and in every Bible study and in every Sunday school and in every small group that should be the bottom line – what are we going to do as a result of what we heard. In Acts 2 when they spoke the people said, first, what does this mean? Then at the end of the message they said, what shall we do? That's a perfect message. What does this mean? and What shall we do?

8. PEOPLE DON'T TRUST THEIR LEADERS.

85

If people don't trust you then you can't accomplish much at all. In the last session today, probably the most important session, we'll talk about AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP.

17

You have to build credibility and you have to earn the right to lead. The antidote is that authentic leadership is humble and vulnerable and persistent and willing to risk failure and willing to believe God for great things.

The barrier of

9. LEGALISM – another common barrier to growth in churches.

86

Legalism strangles the growth and the health out of a lot of churches. Many churches are more interested in keeping rules than they are at winning people to Christ. That will stave off any growth you've got. The antidote is a CLIMATE OF ACCEPTANCE where you start, where people are and not where you want them to be.

The tenth barrier is when you're

10. STRUCTURED FOR CONTROL RATHER THAN GROWTH.

87

We are over programmed, over structured and structure is strangling a lot of churches to death. The antidote is to KEEP THE STRUCTURE SIMPLE.

Keeping these ten barriers in mind, I want to give you

NINE ESSENTIALS FOR STRUCTURING ON PURPOSE

For organizing it in a way that allows the spontaneous expansion and growth and health of the church. How do you have a church that just keeps on growing? It doesn't get stopped at barriers. It doesn't plateau. How do you have a church that keeps on perpetually growing?

1. You must change the primary role of the pastor from MINISTER to LEADER.

*You grow a church to 300 with PASTORAL / MINISTRY skills,
BUT
You grow a church beyond 300 with LEADERSHIP skills*

And both the pastor and other people in the church must develop these leadership skills.

Some Essential Leadership Skills You Must Develop

You learn ministry skills in seminary but you learn leadership skills from seminars. You can only learn leadership from leaders. You can learn how to pastor from other pastors but you learn leadership from leaders.

Essential Leadership Skills You Must Develop

1. If you're going to grow a church beyond 300 first you must learn

- The ability to COMMUNICATE YOUR VISION IN PERSONAL / PRACTICAL WAYS

Through symbols, slogans and stories and scriptures and statistics. How to communicate vision.

Some Suggested Ways To Communicate And Reinforce Your Vision

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- i. When speaking, use presentation tools that will make it easy for your people to remember what you have said. Encourage them to take notes. Use memory tools such as acrostics or thematic words that are easy to recall. Pastor Rick's messages are filled with examples. Example in Worship: "You were planned for God's pleasure."
- ii. Develop slogans that are catchy and easy to remember. These can rhyme or have a rhythm to them that would translate them easily into simple songs. Slogans are less than a sentence in length; – 3-7 words are best. Example: "It's not about you."
- iii. Print your slogans and themes on your bulletins. Then, every time someone picks up your church's literature they are learning and remembering the vision that you are developing.
- iv. Use a logo or a picture to illustrate your vision. EXAMPLE: The Five Circles and the Diamond are all you need to remember and reinforce the Purposes of God and how they operate in the local church.
- v. Banners can be made to bring beauty to your sanctuary that includes the Vision you are promoting. In our church, we have also utilized window art to remind our people each time they look out the windows. Posters can be made and placed in busy areas of the church that have a lot of foot traffic. EXAMPLE: doorways, hallways, bathrooms and exits.
- vi. If there is someone in your church who can write a song that the congregation can sing together that can become a powerful memory tool and a group exercise in celebrating the congregational vision together.
- vii. Videos, dramatic presentations and the use of the multimedia presentations on the computer can also help us to develop and keep the vision out in front of people all the time.

2. You must learn

- The ability to **MOTIVATE THROUGH MESSAGES**

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Most leaders know that it's easier to motivate a group than it is to motivate individuals. There's a group dynamic that comes into focus. It's far easier to motivate a group. You need to commit yourself to becoming a master communicator. That you will do the hard work that you will be better at preparing and delivering messages. I have made this commitment. I am not a master communicator but I hope to be one day. I am constantly studying, constantly reading, constantly listening to tapes trying to improve my communication ability. I have over 500 books on the subject of preaching in my library. Just on the subject of preaching. Why? Because I want to know everything there is to know about communication. So I'm constantly reading, constantly studying, trying to sharpen my axe so that it will be more effective, a workman that needs not to be ashamed.

3. You need to learn

- The ability to **EQUIP OTHERS FOR MINISTRY**

If you don't learn this, you'll burn out and you'll never grow a very large church.

4. You need to learn

- The ability to **RAISE MONEY**

That's one that nobody really likes. But those who write the agenda must underwrite the agenda. Let me recommend a tape to you, those of you who are church leaders and pastors, called "Raising Money for Ministry." It's an hour session on learning that skill.

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Understanding Why People Give

- i. People give when they trust their leaders

People give to the persons that they trust first, and then they will give to purposes and finally they will give to programs. People give when they trust the leadership.

“The sheep listen to the shepherd’s voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. He goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice but they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run from him. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd.”

JOHN 10: 1-11

- ii. People give to vision and not to need.

The Bible says,

“Where there is no vision the people perish.”

PROVERBS 29:18 (KJV)

A major mistake that many churches make is to talk about their needs and to conduct a big pity-party of fund appeals. There are

Four essential components that you must communicate when developing a vision:

- The purpose: What are we doing this for?
- The need: Why now?
- The possibility: How is it possible? What are we capable of?
- The benefits: What will be the result of doing what we do?

- iii. People give when they catch the vision.

Focus all of your attention on the people who get excited for your vision. There are people who will leave your church the moment you begin talking about money. You have to let them go. The vision will set a standard for who is going to stay at your church.

- iv. People give because it feels good to give.

The happiest people in the word are the most giving people. There are always rewards for those people who give generously. Those people are becoming like God who is a generous giver. Lead your people to discover the joy of giving.

- v. People give when they are inspired by models.

The book of Hebrews tells us,

“Remember your leaders and imitate their faith.”

HEBREWS 13:7

Paul even says,

“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1

A testimony about giving is far more effective in inspiring people to give than any message. Allow testimonies and stories to be told in your church that will lead people to ask the questions, “What could I do?” and “How much could I really give?”

- vi. People give when they are involved.

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Paul told the Philippians,

“I thank God because of your partnership in the Gospel.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:5

This is a fact: Those who are the most involved in the development and execution of the campaign to give will be those people who give the most. The more people that you have who are involved in the campaign, the more people that you will have who are doing the actual giving.

- vii. People give when you ask them to give.

James says,

“You have not because you ask not.”

JAMES 4:2

We are actually doing people a favor when we ask them to give. They will grow in faith, they will grow in love, they grow in their ability to sacrifice, they grow in commitment, and they will grow in character when you teach people to give.

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- viii. People give when you make it possible for them to give.

Make it possible for people to give in as many ways as you can. Not everybody can give the same amount or even in the same way. Your program must include different ways to give to encourage your people to participate. People can learn to decrease their expenses and increase their income. People can give by REASON or REVELATION. When I give by reason, I simply calculate what I can afford based upon my circumstances. When I give by revelation, I go to the Lord and I ask him to give me the figure that he wants me to give and I act on his request by faith.

- ix. People give when their gifts are appreciated.

Be sure to show gratitude and thanks to each person who participates in giving. You may choose to hold a “Thank You Banquet” or simply write a personal note. Either way, don’t allow any gift to go unnoticed.

For more on this topic get a copy of the campaign material entitled “Time to Build” by Pastor Rick

You must learn

- The ability to MANAGE YOUR TIME .

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Effective pastors and church leaders know where their time goes.

Fact

- All leaders are LEARNERS .
- The moment you stop learning you stop LEADING
- Growing churches require GROWING LEADERS

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God can never grow the church bigger than He grows you. People say to me, “Are you excited about the growth of Saddleback in these last nineteen years?” Of course I am. But I'm more excited

about the growth He's done in me. I'm not the same man I was nineteen years ago when I started this church. God has forced me to learn things – most of them learned through pain. Not an easy way. Most of what I've learned to help me be effective has been learned through painful situations. We have a policy here with our staff at Saddleback,

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Staff policy:

The more you LEARN the more you EARN

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How?

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Always reading Books and going to Seminars and listening to tapes, things like that.

- Books and Seminars
- Leadership Lifter Tapes from S.A.L.T.

You can find these resources from www.saddlebackresources.com

The Encouraging Word

P.O. Box 6080-388
Mission Viejo, CA. 92690
(949) 829-0300 Fax: (949) 829-0400
<http://www.pastors.com>

2. You must organize around THE GIFTS OF YOUR PEOPLE

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It is amazing that when you read the New Testament, that there is no explicit New Testament pattern of organization. If you try to find instructions in the New Testament of how you are to organize your church, you're going to be sadly disappointed. There's nothing specific there that tells you how you are to organize. The Bible tells us *what* the church is to do, but it doesn't tell us *how* we are to organize it. For instance, the Bible tells us that Christians are to meet regularly for worship and edification. But it doesn't tell us or command us the place or the time or how often, things like that. It doesn't say only on Sundays. It just says you're to meet together for worship. The Bible tells us that we're to take an offering. That's clear. But it doesn't say to vote on how it's spent. It doesn't tell us how to create a budget. The Bible tells us to teach the Bible, but it says nothing about departments or classes or structuring in order to teach the Bible.

I think God did that intentionally. I think He kept it vague for a couple of reasons: One, so that the church should not be tied to any one culture. If He had a structure in Jerusalem 2000 years ago it wouldn't fit in every culture around the world 2000 years later. But more important than that I think He kept it vague because you must build your structure around the talent that you have in your particular church. You build your structure not on some ideal structure you get from some seminar. You build your structure on the talent you have in that particular church. The team that God has given you will show you how you're to structure it. You build it around what you've got, not around what you don't have. There is no one perfect structure. There is only what's best for right now given the team we've got. Don't get all anxious about some perfect structure. You'll never find one. It's going to be changing all the time anyway. God wants His church to be organized around the giftedness of its members. That's clear in the Bible.

What are the

Advantages of a simple gift based or "shape" – based structure

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- i. It focuses the church on MINISTRY, NOT MAINTENANCE.

When organization is emphasized, maintenance becomes the focus but when shape is emphasized ministry becomes the focus. I once heard about a grease factory that produced grease for everybody else. As it began to grow, they had to add machinery.

And as they added machinery they started having to use grease on the machinery. As the organization grew they added more and more machines. The more machinery they added in their own factory, the more of their grease they had to use on their own machines. Soon they were using all their grease on their own machines and they closed the sales department. Sounds like a parable of the church.

Keep it simple. Keep it smooth. Streamline your structure to maximize ministry and minimize maintenance. I had a friend tell me one time that he asked each elder in his church to have a personal ministry. Four of them answered back, “I don’t have time for ministry. I’m an elder.”

Focus on ministry not maintenance.

- ii. It makes better use of TALENT.

when you organize around the gifts of your people. When I stood at the very first service of our church and said, “One day we’re going to get land but we’re going to wait at least five years. We’re going to put our money into people and into programs and not into buildings.” On the fifth anniversary of the church, I stood up and said, “If you want to help and you have background in land development show up at my office tomorrow night.” The next night thirteen people showed up in my office. Half of them I didn’t even know. I said, “Let’s go around the room and you tell me why you think you ought to be on this land acquisition team, to find land for the church.”

The first guy said, “I’m Tom. I buy all the sites for K-Mart.”

The next guy, “I’m Dick. I’m vice president of First Interstate Bank.”

The third guy, “I’m Lyle. Last year I closed 91 million in land acquisitions for a home company.”

I went around the room. I had the most high-powered group of horses you could imagine. I could have never found these people myself that had that kind of interest. I turned around and wrote on the board “50 acres.” I said, “I believe God wants us to get at least 50 acres. This is your assignment. Meeting is dismissed.” This is called releasing the laity for ministry. I won’t tell you the rest of the story but the bottom line is you let gifted people do what they’re good at and you don’t get in their way.

If I had been a typical pastor in a typical church what we would have done is formed a land search committee. We would have got

a cross section – somebody who was a man, somebody who was a woman, somebody who was young, somebody who was old, somebody who was smart, somebody who was dumb. We would have had this nice mix of people and pulled our ignorance and a year later we still wouldn't have land. Let the people who are good at things in your church do the things that they're good at. It makes better use of talent.

iii. It builds MORALE.

Fulfillment comes from ministry not maintenance. Gifts based ministry encourages teamwork. I've got a half dozen guys in the church who were former chairmen of the boards in other churches. We don't have any board here. All these guys are lay pastors now, small group leaders. I took a couple, three, of them aside a few years ago and said, "Do you guys miss the old days. Board meetings?" They said, "You've got to be kidding! We used to argue until midnight what color we were going to paint the church kitchen. Now we're involved in making hospital visits, winning people to Christ, leading small groups. Fulfillment comes from ministry not maintenance." It builds morale.

iv. It allows for SPONTANEOUS GROWTH.

If somebody has a burden for ministry, they can start it instantly. We don't have to wait for some group to vote on it. Ministries are allowed to bubble up from the people. If God's in it, it will fly. If He's not, don't worry about it. Allow spontaneous growth.

v. It promotes CREATIVITY.

People will be as creative as the structure allows. If you have a lot of bureaucracy, creative people are just going to say it's not worth it.

vi. It allows more efficient DECISIONMAKING.

Have you ever watched a church waste time over trivial issues? Have you noticed that the more trivial the issue, the longer the debate is on it? A guy sent me his bulletin and I got these reports of his business meeting: "Believing that an informed member is a happier, more involved productive one I'm going to use my column space in this week's bulletin to share with you what took place during the May business meeting. The following important actions

were taken. 1) We tabled [That's great. That meant they did nothing on it.] to the June meeting relating to the continued reuse of plastic utensils. 2) We defeated a motion to no longer provide paper goods and plastic utensils for funeral meals at individual homes. 3) We passed a motion permitting the kitchen committee to request help from each Sunday school department in cleaning up after church-wide activities. [They had to pass a motion to let the committee ask for help.] 4) We passed a motion authorizing the kitchen committee to purchase paper goods. 5) We elected people to a three-year term on the nominating committee. Do you realize that every major decision is determined by the church in its business sessions? That's why it's important for you to be here."

I laughed so hard at that I couldn't wait for the next month's bulleting. Here is the summary of the actions taken during the June business meeting: 1) Tabled again a motion from the kitchen committee regarding the cleaning and reuse of plastic utensils. [That is a pretty significant decision, you know. It takes a lot of time to decide whether you're going to reuse plastic utensils or not.] 2) We passed a motion that our Sunday school attendance will be at least 200 on Sunday mornings during the summer months. [What good is passing a motion? How many vote that we have 1,000 next Sunday?] 3) We agreed to participate at Christian night at Dodger's stadium.... 9) We passed a motion that the education building be spayed for roaches.

That is a church in action! The reason you're laughing is that we've all been in churches just like that!

Having a shape based organization, where it's built around gifts, you let the people who are gifted do it. It makes far more efficient decision making. If Moses had had a committee with him, he might never have come down from the mountain. I grew up in small churches. There are two weaknesses you have in small churches. One of them is in congregational meetings of the small church; decisions are often made based on the popularity of the speaker. It doesn't necessarily have to be the best idea, it's "John" promoting the idea. And the most popular person.

The other problem is in a smaller church, the smaller a church is the more power the most negative person has. Many churches operate on management by objection. And the most negative person in the church is allowed to kill any idea. All they have to do is just get up and start talking against it. You have a public business meeting and any carnal person is given a forum to create doubt and dissention and destroy harmony in three minutes. I know this. I'm the son of a preacher. I grew up watching it happen in little churches. I heard one guy tell me, "In our denomination we have no pope but there's a pope in every church." They're often the most negative person.

A simple structure is more stable.

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vii. A simple structure is more STABLE.

The simplest things are the strongest. The simplest toys are the strongest. The simplest sermons are the strongest. The simplest structures are the strongest.

How can you simplify the structure? You can reduce the number of congregational or board meetings you have. You could reduce the number of items you vote on. You could release ministries to make their own decision. You could prepare a realistic budget. These are ways to simplify your structure. Have fewer meetings. I saw this cartoon the other day. Two pastors are out playing golf together. One turns around and says, "We went from twelve board meetings to six and we solved half our problems." Organize around the gifts of your people.

Why You Shouldn't Vote On or Elect Ministry Positions

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i. Some people will never GET INVOLVED IF YOU DO.

They can't handle the thought of rejection.

ii. New ministries often need TO DEVELOP SLOWLY.

without the bright lights or public scrutiny on them.

iii. New members can get involved MORE QUICKLY.

New members join in a typical church and it's often years before they get into the inner circle and then they have to get elected to do something. You may join a church but you're not part of the in-crowd and you can't really get elected unless someone knows you well. But in a church where you don't elect anybody, new members can get involved instantly.

iv. You avoid attracting people who are ONLY INTERESTED IN PRESTIGE.

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You avoid having the personality contest. You attract only people who are genuinely interested in serving. The sad fact is that some

people seek church leadership for the wrong reasons. Maybe they want to throw their weight around or be a big fish in a little pond. They're unwilling to work unless they're the chief. That's nothing new. 3 John tells us about Diotrephes who *"loved to be preeminent."* If you turn ministry positions into popularity contests, you're going to attract some of those people. On the other hand, if you never vote on people, if you don't turn it into a contest, then the people who get involved are genuinely interested in serving. They're not looking for a title or prestige. They just want to help.

v. If they fail, it makes removal EASIER.

If you publicly elect your workers, you've got a political hot potato if you're forced to remove them. If they have a moral failure or they're incompetent and they're elected, you have to de-elect them. But if you didn't elect them in the first place, you don't have that problem. If you do elect them, they may ask for a vote of confidence and start politicking and line up personal support, create division in the church.

vi. You can respond more quickly to THE HOLY SPIRIT'S LEADING.

Sometimes we start a new ministry at Saddleback immediately after a service in response to a message.

People say, "If you don't elect leaders, how do you know who the leaders are?" Real simple. If you want to know if you're a leader, look over your shoulder. If nobody's following you, guess what? You are not a leader. He that thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk. The moment I have to stand up and say, "I am the leader here." Guess what? I'm not. If you have to tell people you're a leader, you aren't one. The gift of leadership is affirmed by people affirming it.

3. You must BUDGET according to your purposes and priorities.

Obviously the budget of the church shows the priorities and the direction of the church. I can remember in a smaller church when I was a pastor in Northern California before coming here to Saddleback, beginning to think about purposes and budgeting according to purposes and going back and looking at our church budget. It was the most confusing thing you've ever seen. It had numbers that I didn't understand. They were long kinds of things. And they had a .569342... They were only five items in the whole

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budget but they had incredibly long numbers that somebody had brought in. They had no representation to the purposes. Just taking the budget items and saying, “Which purposes do these fit under in your church can have very significant impact in helping people visualize what you’re trying to do, what you’re doing with God’s money.”

Sample Budget Plan

(An example based on the five circles and the needs of the people who inhabit those circles)

Community:

- How much do we need to spend on “good works” to capture the attention of our community and entice them to come to church?
- What activities and projects will we seek to accomplish and how much will they cost?
- Is there a need for brochures and other forms of publicity? What will this cost?

Crowd:

- How much money will we need to invest to make people feel welcomed and happy to be in our church?
- What do we need to spend on upkeep and improvements to the building? What about snacks and treats?
- How much do we need to spend in printing and mailings of brochures that explain the church family?

Congregation:

- What will we spend on special holiday celebrations and get-togethers this year?
- How about the costs that surround worship, baptisms and even the Lord’s Table?
- Is there any event that must take place that needs money?

Committed:

- What investments do we need to make in the lives of our spiritual maturing members?
- How can we provide tools for Bible study?
- What expenses are associated with our Bible study events: food, coffee, paper, notes, overheads, recordings, and media? Can we provide these items at cost or should they be given free?

Core:

- What will it cost to recruit and encourage people to join ministry?
- How much will I need to invest in training and ongoing education for those in ministry?
- What will I need to provide to my people in terms of tools and resources to help them succeed? What is the right amount to spend on thanking our ministers and awarding them for their services?

Commissioned:

- How much money will we need to reach out into our community?
- What evangelistic tools will we need to be successful?
- If we send a missionary overseas, what will it take? What would a missionary family need to stay out in the field?

Here are some ideas about

How a purpose driven budget is developed.

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This question is asked again and again. You see that laid out for you. You may be able to take this and make it work in your church.

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We have

- i. Each Lay Ministry submits their budget requests to the Purpose Team that oversees that particular ministry.

So it begins with the people and the ministry and as close to the ministry as possible. You want to give your people freedom to minister. You want to make the decisions about the budget as close to the ministry as possible. That doesn't mean there's not accountability on other levels.

- ii. Each Team Pastor prepares a proposed Team Budget with help from accounting and operations.

We all need help from those who know more than we do.

- iii. The Pastor of Operations prepares a rough draft budget combining all the team budgets.

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and then the pastor's management team (PMT – those of you from Australia are laughing right now because in Australia, I know that means the same as PMS does in the United States). Our pastor's management team gets together and revises it.

- iv. The Pastor's Management Team (PMT) reviews and revises the first draft budget in light of priorities, expected growth, and income.

That's the time to think about what are the priorities for the year and the direction that we're going to take. Obviously we don't vote on our own salaries. That's one of the jobs our trustees do, set the salaries of the people who are finalizing the budget.

- v. Elected Trustees set PMT salaries.

- vi. Recommended budget is printed and distributed to anyone who wants a copy (members and non-members) ten days in advance of approval.
- vii. The budget is presented after a midweek service and voted on only by members using a ballot.

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We usually have maybe 150 people of a church with a membership of 10,000 show up at these budget meetings to vote on a 8 million, 10 million, 12 million dollar budget. To me that's not a sign of apathy. It's a sign of trust. Year after year after year. In fact, this year, there was a couple who had come from another church and joined, got involved in our ministry. We had a business meeting. They didn't know we were going to have it. The man came up to me and said, "What's this business meeting thing? I know what it's like in other churches. How long is it going to take? Do I need to stay?" I explained it to him and he walked away. About three minutes later he came up and took my hand and said, "I trust you guys. I don't need to stay for this meeting." And he walked out the door. In six months he had learned that. That's the value of what can happen, the value of the kind of trust that Rick has built year after year, moment after moment, by listening to people, by responding to people.

- 4. You must add **STAFF ON PURPOSE**

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What? Generalists, then specialists.

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Do you want to add,

When? As soon as you can!

Do you want to add,

Which first? Depends on your philosophy and gifts.

Which ones are first? They are all great questions. What do you want to add when you're adding staff?

First you add generalists and then specialists. First you want to obviously add people who can do a lot of things because you're

only going to have one. Then as you go down the road, you want to add more and more specialists.

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When do you want to add staff? As soon as you can. Immediately. As quickly as you can. You want to build as many volunteers as quickly as you can and add staff as quickly as you can. Anytime you add a staff member, that's a faith step and allows the church to grow to the next level.

To get very practical, which first? Obviously it depends on you as a leader. It depends on your particular gift mix. But some suggestions:

First, you want to add a part-time music leader. There are many pastors who think that they're good music leaders. There are few pastors who are. Even if you are a great music leader, to try to do music and preaching at the same time is incredibly draining. So you add a part-time music leader to begin with.

Second, add a general administrator, someone who can help with all the organization of what's happening.

Third, a lot of times the third person is the youth leader who is obviously very important to a church. But I would consider instead adding a children's leader. There's a lot more grades in 1-6 or even preschool through 6th grade. Reaching those young families is a key to any church.

The value of staffing by purpose:

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- i. Purpose-based teams can work together to get the job done.

When you staff around the purposes, rather than staffing by program, one of the values of that is it forces you to work together. I work at second base to help people to grow in maturity. I can't get my job done without working with Brett at first base and working with John at third base. We have to work together to get the job done. No one can get in their own little silo and just work by themselves. We have to work together.

- ii. It lowers competition as a motivation.

The success is everyone's success. It's happening for everyone.

- iii. It gives visibility to each purpose of the church.

as you see each purpose being magnified in what God is doing.

23

- iv. Keeps the focus on unchanging purposes rather than ever-changing programs.

If my job were to run the family ministry program on Thursday nights at Saddleback and all of a sudden in the back of my mind I start thinking, “I don’t think this is working.” If that’s my job, it’s going to be very difficult for me to say, “We should can this program and begin another one.” You just don’t tend to think that way. But if you give someone a job of a purpose, it gives them more creativity. It helps them begin to think in a different way. That allows the purposes and the changes to happen that might need to happen.

- 5. You must offer **MULTIPLE SERVICES**

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Obviously to expand the structure you have to begin to multiply. You have to offer multiple services.

Why?

Because more hooks in the water mean you can catch more fish. Why? Because it can allow for having more than one worship style. Some of you are thinking, “We need to have hymns in our church but I would like to start some things to reach a new generation, some people that we’re not reaching.” A second worship service might be one where you can do a little more of a mixed style of worship. It’s also great stewardship of your building. Our buildings sit empty a lot of the time. That allows you to have more people in the same building with the same mortgage.

When?

do you want to add a new service? That’s a very important question. When do you want to add a new service, particularly one that reaches out to new people that you haven’t been reaching before? I would say when you can have at least 75-100 people in that service. At least 75-100. The reason is if you’re trying to reach new people you have to have a large enough crowd so that when they walk in they don’t feel like everybody’s looking at them, the new person. There’s a certain size where, when you get to that size, people feel a little bit more comfortable. But when you can reach that size by asking people to attend that service for six

months, to commit to it, to help you get started, however you need to do it, that's the time to start a new second service.

6. You must create **AFFINITY GROUPS** for assimilation.

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Let's remind ourselves again of how important that is as you structure to grow. The more affinity groups you have, the more abilities you have to connect with people. You want to avoid single cell anemia. We can have a habit that becomes one big group that doesn't reach out to other people.

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Seminar and Workshop tapes on Small Groups available.

7. You must intentionally break through attendance barriers with **BIG DAYS**.

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The truth is

- Crowds attract crowds!

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People like to be around crowds. When you can have big days – maybe Easter, maybe a Friend Day in the fall – where all of a sudden the church has 100 more people or 1,000 more people than usual, there's something about that that expands people's vision. They see what the church can be. They see what it can look like. How do you break through the 200-300 attendance barrier? Some of you are struggling with that – one of the most difficult barriers to break through in a church. How do you help the church to see itself as bigger and what it can do?

- The best way to break through the 200-300 barrier is **QUICKLY!**

***For additional Help:** Pyramiding growth through Big Days*

8. You must provide **SURPLUS SPACE, SEATING** and **PARKING**.

115

Circle "surplus." You have to have more than enough. In our church, we have families that have five people in the families and they bring five cars to church. Then they go five different directions after church. On Easter they all come together. But all the other times they're going so many different directions. If you

do a study of the car/seat ratio in your church, you'll find it's about one to two and probably even less in many churches. If you think everybody's coming as a family of five or six together, that's just not happening anymore. Discovering that helps you realize how much parking we have to have to reach all of these people.

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- Discover the car to seat ratio in each of your services.

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You also have to have enough seating for these people. And by the way, you not only have to have enough seating for people but as people are growing older you have to have bigger seats for people. It's just one of those little things to think through. I actually heard of a church that when they built their church they had three different sized seats – the narrow seat, a medium seat and a wide seat. A baby bear, a mama bear and a papa bear seat. They had all those kinds of options.

**AN EXAMPLE ON UNDERSTANDING THE RATIOS
NECESSARY TO PREDICT MAXIMIZING CHURCH SIZE**

A = Access (parking, walkways, bus access, roads, etc.)

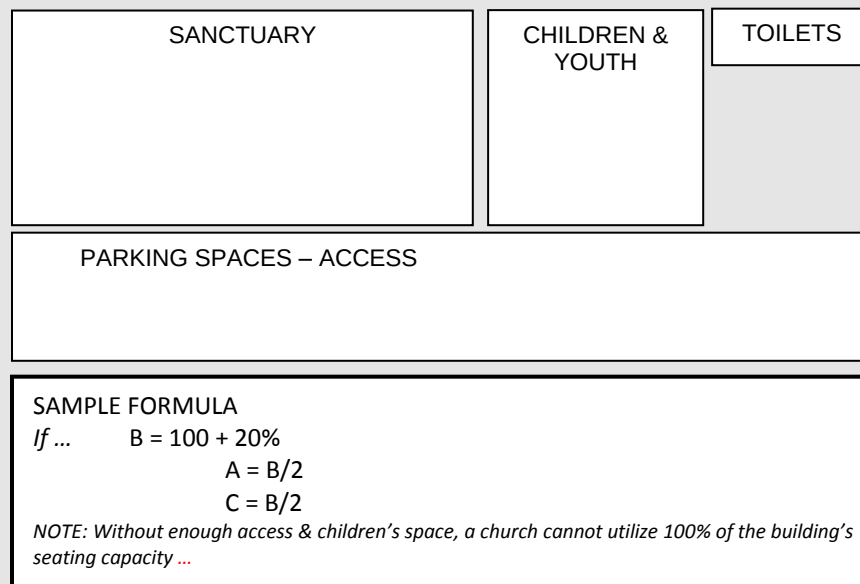
B = Building (sanctuary or worship center)

C = Children's facilities (nursery, toddler, primary grades,
junior high, high school, etc.)

D = toilets (men, women's and children's restrooms)

Formula: *seats in sanctuary + people access +
ministry to children (when in balance) =
maximum utilization of seating capacity*

Example: *If the building seats 200, you will need 100 spots for
kids, and 100 parking spaces, with bathrooms that can
accommodate 2 men or 4 women at a time. The women's
restrooms should be 5 times as luxurious as the men.*



When it comes to building

- Most churches build TOO LITTLE and TOO SOON

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So

The shoe must never begin to tell the foot how big it can get.

That's why we at Saddleback met for twelve years in high schools and 2½ years in the tent, waiting to be able to build the building and still now we'd like to have bigger buildings. Still we need more parking. Obviously you never have enough. You want to build as big as you can. And sometimes that means we have to wait to do that.

9. YOU MUST CONTINUALLY EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS.

117

If the goal is church health: we need a tool that not only measures church growth, but diagnoses church health.

This is incredibly important. We have to evaluate for what we want.

When I go to the doctor and I feel like I need to be more healthy he checks me out. He's got some real simple intuitive checkups. He puts a thermometer in my mouth and, when he takes it out, he's looking for a number – 98.6. That's a number that we know. He puts a little blood pressure cup on me and pumps it up. He's looking for a number, about 120. It can be a little up, a little down, but that's about the area. He puts me on a scale and weighs me. What's the number he's looking for? – Twenty pounds less than what I am. That's what it always is!

There's always a number. He doesn't put me in for a CAT scan at the very beginning. It's just these simple tests. He doesn't get too complicated, too quickly. It's simple and it's intuitive.

We need some numbers like that to evaluate church health. If I have to be an expert in trigonometry to understand if my church is growing or not, something's wrong. It's about health. It's about the body of Christ. How do you evaluate to understand if the church is healthy or not?

Reports and numbers need to track not only what people are attending but how people are moving into commitment. That's the difference that comes with numbers.

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When you talk about numbers there is a difference between evaluation of what's happening in the church and vision of what needs to happen next in the church. If you want to create vision you use things like stories. Stories create vision. Stories of the one person who came at Easter whose family was changed. But if you want to have good evaluation then you use numbers, some statistics. The reverse doesn't work. You cannot use statistics to give people a vision. You use stories. But you can use statistics for great evaluation. If the goal is church health what's a tool that measures not only church growth but church health? Here's

Three Questions To Ask Yourself

118

- i. What are THREE OR FOUR MOST IMPORTANT things we need to know?

You can't know everything. What are the three or four things we need to know?

At Saddleback we want to know about:

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- The number of first time guests in our weekend service.

That's a very important number to us. If people aren't inviting their friends, how are people going to come to know Christ? We want to know about the commitments that are happening at each of our base classes, 101, 201, 301.

- Commitments at our three Base classes.

Membership, Maturity, Ministry as people are moving around the bases. We want to know about

- Leadership recruitment and development.

and

- The size and strength of our small groups.

We want to know about people's giving.

25

- Giving to the Lord.

is a sign of the health of the church.

- ii. To what do we COMPARE a number to make it meaningful?

120

To just say we had 500 people in worship this last week, what does that mean if you don't compare it to something? If you compare it to the fact that you had 400 in worship

Last year at this time?

That tells you something. What if you compare it to:

Last year's total?

Last year we averaged 400 in worship. That tells you a little bit more. What if you compare it to

A pattern over several years?

Every year we've gone down but this year we seem to be going up. That tells you a little bit more. What if you compare it to

A percentage of some other number?

If you see what's happening in involving new members as well as having people come to the worship service. What are you comparing it to? As you think through those different comparisons, that helps you understand whether the church is growing or not.

The dangers. When we talk about comparing numbers, the place we don't want to compare numbers but we always do compare numbers is to other churches. We compare our attendance to the numbers at other churches. The place of comparison is within your own church, seeing how healthy your church is.

Some examples are things like what percentage of those who took the membership class went on to the maturity class. How many first time visitors did we have compared to this time last year. What do we think is healthy?

iii. What is our definition of HEALTH?

121

We all want to reach everyone but what would be our definition of a healthy church that's growing?

- How many in our community would we like to see in our crowd?
- How many in our crowd are making commitments to Christ?

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What's healthy? What's not healthy?

- How many of our members are involved in some type of small group?

For us to feel like this thing is getting healthy?

- How many of those who've made a commitment to maturity are involved in a group that will encourage their growth?

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What is healthy?

Examples:

- What percentage of those taking 101 are taking 201?
- How many first time visitors have we had this year as compared to last year?
- What percentage of our members would we like to see in small groups?

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We do Saddleback snapshots that expresses what's healthy for us. It's not necessarily what's healthy for you. We live in an area and we're in a church that's reaching out to unchurched people. Because of that, it drives our health numbers. We think it's healthy to have no more than 50% of the community in the crowd. We don't want to have a community – those people that come just three or four times – and have our crowd be just about the same size. We want to have a big pool of people to draw from. That's part of a growing church. We want to have no more than 60% of the crowd in the congregation. If all of a sudden our membership number and our attendance number on the weekend approach the same, for us that would be a sign that the church was very unhealthy. There wouldn't be the opportunity to reach new people. This is a church for the unchurched. We want at least 75% of the members in the committed and at least 50% of the members in the core. That's what is healthy.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

The Type of Leader God Uses

*“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”*

HEBREWS 13:7

For the past 25 years, I have been studying what is it that makes churches grow. Why is it that some churches kind of explode with growth and keep right on growing? And other churches, whose people are just as sincere and just as dedicated and just as godly, only have minor growth which is considered a major victory? Why is it while in some churches where the folks are just as committed to Jesus Christ and they love the Lord and they're faithful to His word that the church is struggling, plateaued or it's declining?

I'm often asked, “Is there any single common denominator that you find in every growing church?” I have studied churches for many years, read about them, visited them and really, God uses all kinds of churches, in all kinds of different ways, all different methods and styles. But there is one common denominator that you can find in every growing church regardless of denomination, regardless of nationality, regardless of size.

That common denominator is leadership that is not afraid to believe God.

TEACHING TIP

The sessions on purpose and on ministry are the two most significant for church transformation, and this session is the most significant for personal transformation.

As you read through this session, you'll see that there are a great number of personal illustrations. This is a personal message about faith, so it must include life stories. You'll need to take the time to put YOUR stories into this message before preaching it. The power of this message is in how God has worked in your life to teach you these principles.

The common denominator of all growing churches:

Leadership That Is NOT AFRAID TO FOLLOW GOD.

I call it the faith factor. Leadership that is not afraid to believe God. Everything rises or falls on leadership.

In this session I want us to look at four ways that faith is demonstrated, four ways where leaders can demonstrate faith in their personal lives and in the lives of those around them.

FOUR WAYS THE “FAITH FACTOR” IS SEEN IN LEADERSHIP

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I. GOD USES THE PERSON WHO HAS A DREAM

A vision, a dream, a goal.

Nothing happens until someone: STARTS DREAMING.

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Every accomplishment started first as an idea in somebody's mind. It started off as a dream. It started off as a vision, a goal. If you don't have a goal for your church, your goal is a goal by default and it is the goal to remain the same. If you aim at nothing, you're going to hit it.

A church without a vision is never going to grow. A church's vision will never be larger than the vision of its pastor. So you as a leader and as a pastor must have God's vision for your church. It is the very first task of leadership – set the vision for the organization. If you don't set the vision, you're not the leader. Whoever is establishing the vision in your church is the leader of that particular church.

A church never outgrows: ITS VISION.

A church will never outgrow its vision and the vision of a church will never outgrow the vision of the pastor.

If I'm smart, I can always compensate for my weaknesses. And I have many of them; just ask my wife, my children, and my staff. I've got a lot of weaknesses. If I'm smart, I can always hire people to do things or delegate to lay people things that I can't do. If I'm not good at counseling, I can find people who are good at counseling. If I'm not good at administration and details, I can find people to do administration and details.

But there is one thing I cannot delegate. I cannot ask other people to believe God for me. I have to set the pace in terms of vision, in terms of dreams, in terms of faith, in terms of what God wants to do in our lives and in our congregation.

You cannot delegate: FAITH IN GOD.

Goals Are: STATEMENTS OF FAITH.

When you set a goal, you're saying, "I believe God wants to accomplish 'this' thing by 'this' time." A statement of faith. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 11:27 (Good News translation)

"If your goals are good, you will be respected."

PROVERBS 11:27 (GN); ISAIAH 54:2-3

Ask: What would I attempt for God if: I KNEW I COULD NOT FAIL?

So I want to challenge you to dream great dreams for God. One nice thing about dreaming is it doesn't cost anything. You can have great dreams and think through and pray through and it doesn't cost you anything at all. The Bible says:

"God... is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes!"

EPHESIANS 3:20 (LB)

That's an amazing verse. It says God is able to do beyond what you can dream of. I don't know about you, but I'm a pretty big dreamer. I can think up some pretty big things and some pretty big dreams. I can set some pretty big goals. God comes along and says, "Think up the biggest thing you think I can do in your life, in your ministry, in your church, and I can top that. I can beat it."

So you need to ask yourself this question, "What would I attempt for God if I knew I couldn't fail?" Let that expand your horizons. Let it expand your dreams. Expand your vision. It starts with a dream.

Two common mistakes we make in goal setting:

- We set them: TOO LOW.
- We try to reach them: TOO QUICKLY.

Overestimate – 1 year

Underestimate - 10 years

We overestimate what we can do in a year. We underestimate what we can do in ten years or fifteen years or twenty years. I told

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you in a previous session that when I began Saddleback Church, I prayed to the Lord and I got out a big map of the world and said, “I’ll go any place in the world if you’ll just give me the privilege of spending my entire life in one location.” I thought, what could happen if I were to invest my life – maybe forty years – in one place. When you commit yourself to a place for forty years, you can dream pretty big. If you’re just going to stay around for a little while, you can’t have very big dreams. But if you say, “Lord, I’m going to give the rest of my life to this place,” you can think bigger than you’ve ever dreamed before. You take it a little bit at a time. It’s like the cliché, “How do you eat an elephant?” One bite at a time. Inch by inch anything is a cinch. If you’re willing to stay, you can do some great things.

This is the age of church growth. The largest and the strongest churches that have ever existed in the history of the world are in existence right now. They happen to not be in America. They’re in Korea, South America, and Africa. There’s a church in Nigeria that runs 80,000. There’s a church in Chile that runs 250,000. There’s a church in Seoul, Korea that has 750,000 members. There are four or five or six churches in Seoul, Korea that run more than 30,000. This is the age of church growth.

But I believe that the greatest churches have yet to be built. It may just be that God will choose one of you or a group of you in the auditorium here today to say, “You’re the next wave. You are the person that I’m going to lay My hands on and I’m going to use to show the world My might and My power and My greatness.” But I guarantee you; it won’t be you unless you get a dream. Unless you get a vision from God and you start and you say, “God, what do You want to do with my life?”

What to consider when setting growth goals:

How big should your goal be when you’re growing a church, planning a church? There are a couple of questions you need to ask yourself.

1. How LONG do I intend to STAY?

The first and most important question you need to ask is, “How long do I intend to stay here?” I had a kid come to me one time who was going to start a new church. He asked me, “What should my goal be?” I said, “How long are you going to stay?” He said, “I’m committed for at least the next six months.” I told him, “Don’t even go. You’re not going to accomplish anything in six months.” You

must ask yourself, “Am I willing to stay put?” And then you ask, “How many people live in the area?”

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2. How many people LIVE IN OUR AREA?

You need to ask how many people live in this ministry area when you’re considering your growth goals. How many people live in the area? Obviously if you’re in a town of 1,000 you’re not going to set a goal of 10,000.

3. What are MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The third question you ask is, “What are my spiritual gifts?” You need to have a frank evaluation of how God has shaped you. Am I shaped to minister directly to people? Or am I shaped to minister through other people to people? It’s like the difference between being a shepherd (hands on directly with sheep) or a rancher (where you direct shepherds to lead sheep). If your church is going to grow above 300, you have to move from the shepherd mentality to the rancher mentality.

God loves people with a shepherd’s heart. He made so many of us with it, to deal personally one-on-one with people. But you have to look at your own spiritual gifts. Then you go out and get alone with God and you get God’s vision for your ministry.

Three Parts to Getting God’s Vision:

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1. First, God shows you WHAT

The first thing God shows you is He shows you the “What?” He shows you *What* He’s going to do. The big mistake is once God has shown you *What* He’s going to do in our lives and our ministries, we immediately run out and figure we can accomplish it in any particular way we wish. So we go out and try to accomplish it on our own power, our own way, in our own efforts. And inevitably we fall flat on our faces. We come crawling back to God. “Oh God. I’m so sorry. What did I do? Did I miss the vision? You told me what You were going to do and I went out and tried to accomplish it and fell flat on my face. Did I miss the vision?”

And God will say to you, “No, you didn’t. You just didn’t wait for Part Two. I told you *What* I was going to do but you didn’t wait to find out *How* I was going to do it.”

2. Next, God shows you HOW

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When God shows you *How* it's always in the exact opposite way that you thought. It's not in the way you expected. You say, "I'll grow the church this way." And God will say, "No, let's do it this way." Because He wants the glory. And once you see the "*What*" and the "*How*" you're still not finished. There's a third part of the vision.

3. Then, God shows you WHEN

The longer that I'm alive and the longer I walk with the Lord and the longer I'm in ministry, the more I'm convinced that God's timing is perfect. He is never a minute early, He is never a minute late, and He is always right on time. These are the three parts to getting God's vision – What, How and When. And you must wait for all three parts for God to work in your life.

Now, I'm not a very visual thinker. Some people can see it. They're like artists, and they can visualize the church buildings when they're all finished, and they can see exactly what it's going to look like in their mind. I've never been that kind of person. I have what I call Polaroid vision. Have you ever taken a Polaroid picture? You take the picture and the longer you look at it the clearer it gets. That's true in my life. When I first came to start this church, I didn't know what it was going to end up like. All I knew was that God had called me to this spot and I had a bunch of ideas in a bag and I wanted to build the church on the five purposes of God. That's all I knew. As I have walked with the Lord and worked with the Lord over the years, the vision has gotten clearer and clearer.

Kind of like a scroll. When you unroll a scroll, you don't see the whole thing from beginning to end. You just see what's right in front of you. Then you roll it up a little bit and unroll a little bit more. That's the way God's will is in our lives. He doesn't lay out a full plan for your life, so you know what's going to happen. If you knew what's going to happen the rest of your life, you'd probably want to give up right now. There's some tough points coming up and some turning points and rough edges and some difficulties and some crises that you think right now you couldn't handle. And the truth is you can't. But God's grace is sufficient for each day and when you get there the grace will be there. So don't borrow trouble. That's why Jesus said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

So you get God's vision by saying "*What* do You want me to do? *How* do You want me to do it? And *When* do You want me to do it."

You need to stop praying, “God, bless what I’m doing.” And instead start praying, “God, help me to do what You’re blessing.” I get up in the morning and I pray a very similar prayer every day. “God, I know You’re going to do some very exciting things in the world today. Would You give me the privilege of just being in on some of them? I just want to be in on what You’re doing. I want to do what You’re blessing.” God uses the person who has a dream.

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Stop praying: Lord bless WHAT I AM DOING

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Instead pray: Help me to do WHAT YOU ARE BLESSING

II. GOD USES THE PERSON WHO IS WILLING TO RISK FAILURE.

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That’s the second evidence of faith in the life of a leader. Saddleback has a history of risk taking. When I moved here to Southern California from Texas, I had no money, no members, no building. I didn’t know a single person in the Saddleback Valley. But we had just literally moved on faith because God said “Go.” I gathered a little group of people that I met in shopping centers and next door and down the street and we got about fifteen people eventually meeting in a little Bible study. We went out and used our credit cards and went five or six thousand dollars in debt to buy the equipment and to rent the building and do the mailers and advertising to start the first service. It was an enormous risk. We had no guarantee that we were going to succeed. But God uses the person who is willing to risk failure.

I once wondered why God used Paul and Barnabus in such a great way and then I came across this verse in Acts 15:26.

“They risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
ACTS 15:26 (NIV)

Circle “risked their lives.” Has your ministry required that? Have you ever had to risk your life? Have you ever had to move against your fears? Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is when you move ahead in spite of your fears. Courage is when you do the thing that you fear the most. I have not been a necessarily confident person in each of the major steps that we’ve made here at Saddleback Church. In fact, in many of our major moves and major risks, my life has been filled with fear. But I happen to believe that I base my life not on the fears that I have but what God

said to do. So I do what God says to do even if it scares me to death. Do it anyway, whether you fear it or not. That is courage. Moving ahead in spite of your fear.

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If you came to my office you'd see a sign in my office, a poster that says, "Leadership is the ability to hide your panic." So you are willing to risk failure.

I've had many people say, "Yes, but God has called us to be faithful, not successful." When I hear that I say, "You're only half right." Because God has called us to be faithful. God has also called us to be fruitful. And all through the New Testament, the theme of fruitfulness is seen.

One day, Jesus walking into Jerusalem sees a barren fruit tree and he curses that fruit tree and later, the next day, they come back and they see that the thing is withered. Why in the world did He do that? Was He just showing off? No, He was doing it to make a point. God expects fruitfulness. The Bible says, "You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you that you should go and bear forth fruit." God expects fruit in our lives. Not just faithfulness but also fruit.

I know that God expects us to be faithful, but I want you to define faithfulness for me. We often define it in a way very differently from the way Jesus would define it. We often think faithfulness means being faithful to the word of God, being contenders for the faith, being true to the faith, keeping the faith. We think faithful means believing the right thing. But to Jesus, faithfulness meant far more than just believing the right thing. In Matthew 25 He tells the story of the parable of the talents. The one guy takes his five talents out and doubles it. The other guy takes his ten talents out and doubles it. The risk is that they could lose it. The third guy takes his one talent and says, "I'm afraid! I'm afraid to take any risks. I'm afraid of failure. I'm going to bury my talent in the ground. Better safe than sorry. Better to not take any risks." When the master returns, he says to that servant, "You wicked, lazy, unfaithful servant!" Why did he call him unfaithful? Because he hadn't taken any risks.

Matthew 25 – "Unfaithful" means UNWILLING TO RISK.

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If you're not taking any risks, you don't need any faith. And if you don't need any faith, you are being unfaithful. Unfaithful means knowing what you ought to be doing and not being willing to take the risk to do it. That is unfaithfulness. Being unwilling to risk.

Three Approaches to Ministry:

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You can be a risk taker, you can be a caretaker, or you can be an undertaker.

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1. Risktaker
2. Caretaker
3. Undertaker

You can be a risk taker in your church and go out and risk great things for God. I always say, “Don’t be afraid to go out on a limb because that’s where the fruit is. Don’t be afraid to rock the boat if Jesus Christ is your captain.” We’ve done more things at Saddleback that didn’t work than did. We’re not afraid to fail. We try something and it doesn’t work, we try something else... finally about number 99 we find something that works. We celebrate it, we use it, we go out and teach a seminar on it and pretend like we planned it in advance. The issue is being willing to risk. You can be a risk taker – like the old phrase, “Behold the turtle. He only makes progress when he sticks his neck out.” It’s true for you too. If you’re not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much space.

You can be a caretaker. A caretaker just maintains the status quo. You just rumble along. People say, “We have a sound church.” Sound asleep! George Patton used to complain of field Marshall Montgomery – “He seems to be more interested in not losing battle than he is in winning battles.” He’s always got this protective edge.

You can be an undertaker. You oversee the slow death and burial of your congregation.

Satan’s greatest tool against pastors: FEAR OF FAILURE

PROVERBS 29:25

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That’s the reason why we don’t set goals. It’s the reason why we don’t attempt things – that we’ll set a goal and then not reach it, we’ll fail. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man is a snare.” It’s a trap. That means that the moment I start worrying about what other people are thinking, I’m dead in the water. When I start worrying about how I look to you, or how I look to other people, then I take my eyes off of God and place them on you and

I'm bound to fail. The fear of man, the fear of the opinion of man, the fear of what other people think is a deadly trap for ministers. It's a snare. And it will mess your life up.

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You need to learn to live your life for an audience of one. As best as I know how, I am trying to do this. As I stand before the Lord today, I try to live my life in such a way that one day I will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and hear Him say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. You were faithful in a few things now you'll be faithful in many. Come you blessed of My Father and inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world." That will be worth it all. It really doesn't matter what anybody else thinks about your ministry. All that matters is what God thinks. And if God is all you're concerned with, you don't have to worry about failure. Just work on focusing on pleasing Him.

How do you get rid of the fear of failure? You're never going to grow a great church without doing this. There are two ways to eliminate the fear of failure.

Two Ways to Eliminate It

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1. REDEFINE FAILURE

Failure is not failing to reach your goal. Failure is failing to set a goal. Failing is not falling down. Everybody falls down. Failure is refusing to get back up. Failure is not "trying and not making it." Failure is refusing to try.

I'll never forget learning this lesson the very first year of the church. When Saddleback was eight months old, I said let's have an eight-month old anniversary service. We celebrated everything that first year – the first diaper change, the first ice cream social... I said, "Let's celebrate our eight-month anniversary and let's set a high attendance goal." I had a group of people meeting with me and I had a blackboard behind me and I said, "Everyone bow your head. I'm going to say a number and when you think that is the number we should set for our eight-month anniversary of our church you raise your hand. At that time I think we were running about 125-150 people in attendance. I started: "150?" Nobody raised their hand. "200?" Nobody raised their hand. "250?" Nobody raised their hand. "300?" Maybe one hand. I'm starting to get a little nervous now. "350?" Nobody. "400?" Nobody. "450?" I can feel the beads of perspiration forming on my face. "500?" Almost every hand in the room went up.

I wrote on the board 500. I said, “Everybody raise their heads. You have just said that you believe it’s God’s will that we have 500 people in attendance. That’s our goal for our eight-month anniversary as a church.”

I went home from that meeting scared to death! I was mad at God!! I was preaching to Him. “God, let me tell You what You’ve got me into! There’s no way this is going to happen. Let me tell you what’s going to happen, God. Our people are going to work real hard, pray real hard, sacrifice, support and invite their friends and we’re going to have people show up. But no way are we going to have 500 on the eighth-month anniversary of a brand new church. We’re all going to be disappointed. And everybody will feel like God let us down. And then we’re going to feel let down. The morale will be worse than it was before and we’ll feel like a bunch of failures. What do You think about that, God!! I can just hear God saying back to me, “Rick, you need to go read your own sermons! What is it about how to get rid of the fear of failure? Redefine failure. Failure is not failing to reach a goal. Failure is failing to set a goal. It’s not about not making your dream. It’s not even trying to have a dream.”

All of a sudden I realized that my people were already a success. It didn’t matter whether we reached 500 or not. It’s the very fact that they were willing to go for it, to try for it. At least they were willing to try for something that to our knowledge, we didn’t know if anybody else had tried that in the first year of a church. At least they were going to make the effort. So I went back to them and explained that to them. I said, “You guys are already a success. You’re willing to try to have 500 people when 95% of the churches in America don’t even have 300. So God bless you. I’m proud of you. I’m proud of your faith.”

The fact is on that day, we didn’t have 500. We had 380. But that’s not bad for eight months old as a church. And do you think we would have had 380 if we’d set a goal of 200? Not a chance. As my dad used to tell me, “Son, aim for the moon and hit the fence post.” And watch God raise the sights of the people.

The baseball player Babe Ruth once said, “Never let the fear of striking out keep you from taking a swing.” We all know that Babe Ruth hit the most home runs of any player in his day. But he also had the most strikeouts of any player in his day. He wasn’t afraid of striking out because he was going for the long ball every time he came up to bat. Redefine failure.

Another way you eliminate the fear of failure is to refuse to compare yourself.

2. DO NOT COMPARE YOURSELVES TO OTHERS

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The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:12 “It is foolish to compare yourself to other people.” There are two reasons why you should never compare yourself to any other ministry or minister. One, you’re going to always find somebody who’s doing a better job than you and you’re going to get discouraged. Two, you’re always going to find somebody you’re doing a better job than and you get full of pride. Either way you’re dead in the water. Two things you do not need in your ministry are pride and discouragement. But if you compare yourself to other churches or other ministries, you’re going to get one or both. Don’t do it. Don’t ever compare yourself to anybody else.

Too often today we become comfortable with comparisons. We say, “We did better than so and so...” The truth is they didn’t do any good either.

I stopped reading my denomination’s annual report probably seventeen-eighteen years ago. I haven’t picked one up since. Why? Because I would read those annual reports. I remember reading them the first year or two and seeing the number of people that we had baptized and comparing it to the baptisms of churches three, four, five times our size and had been around twenty, thirty, forty years. I remember reading that and thinking, “We’re doing pretty good!” And I felt a little bit of pride coming up inside of me, comparing myself to other churches. I would say, “We’re doing ok for a brand new church.”

And all of a sudden God smote me. He said, “Rick, I never called you to compare yourself to anybody else. If you do, you’ll be comfortable with comparisons. You won’t set your sights for the level that I have intended for your life. You’ll just say, ‘We did better than so and so.’ But maybe I wanted to do a lot better than that. Or something totally different.” On top of that we’re all shaped differently. We all have different ministries. And comparing an urban church and a rural church or a suburban church is like comparing tangerines and submarines. They’re not even in the same genre. We don’t do it.

I do believe in church growth but one thing I do not like about the church growth movement is this incessant comparing of churches. It always leads to depression or discouragement or pride.

When you get to heaven, God is not going to say to you, “Why weren’t you more like Bill Hybels? ... Why weren’t you more like Billy Graham? Why weren’t you more like Jerry Falwell? Why weren’t you more like...” name your hero. When you get to heaven God is going to say, “Why weren’t you more like you? I made you

to be you. You're unique. You're not one in a million. You're one in six billion. There's nobody like you. I made you to be you. If you don't be you, who's going to be you?" I've discovered God has not called me to be the best pastor in the world. He has called me to be the best pastor that He made me to be. The best pastor that I could possibly be, given the gifts, talents, abilities, opportunities that are unique to my situation. That takes away all the competition. And when you take away the competition, the fear of failure is reduced. Again: There is no correlation between the size and the strength of a church. No correlation at all. You can be big and strong or big and weak or small and strong or small and weak. It's not that big is better. It's not that small is better. But healthy, purpose driven is better.

I know some of you are thinking that because you minister in relative obscurity, that your ministry must not be that important. You serve in a small church, maybe in a small town. The truth is, you're never going to get your picture on the cover of a Christian magazine. You're not going to be invited to preach to your denomination's pastors' conference. In fact, many people even in your own denomination aren't even going to know who you are. You think because your ministry is relatively obscure, that it is unimportant.

You are 100% wrong! Your ministry matters to God. God made you. He made you to be you. He knows everything about you. He has every hair on your head numbered. (For some of you that isn't too difficult.) He knows you and He put you in that spot. You better stay there until God tells you to move.

Prominence is not the same thing as significance. That is something that our culture does not understand. Prominence and significance are two different issues. Today, in a world of celebrities and superstars we just assume that the most famous people are the most important people. Or the best known people are the smartest people. Or the most visible churches are the most important churches. Wrong! Prominence and significance are two different issues.

My nose is a very prominent part of my body. It just kind of hangs out there. You can't look at my face without seeing my nose. I have a very prominent nose. It may be prominent but it isn't significant. There are other parts of my body inside that I couldn't live without. I could live without a nose. But I couldn't live without my heart or kidneys or liver or whatever. Significance and prominence are two different issues. Don't worry about whether anybody knows what you're doing. God knows what you're doing. Live for that audience of one.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:4,

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“Each man should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to someone else.”

GALATIANS 6:4

There is a place of legitimate pride in your ministry. There is a place for legitimate satisfaction. I'm proud of what God is doing at Saddleback Church. I am humbled but I am also proud of the fact that God is using people in this church in ways that I have never seen before. I am satisfied and deeply humbled but also deeply fulfilled in watching what He does through people in this church and what He's done through my teaching and through the ministry of my wife and I since we started the church. There is legitimate satisfaction. I say, “God, thank You for letting me be a part of Saddleback. Thank You for letting me be in on a church like this.” That's fine. But the moment I start comparing myself to somebody else, I've sinned. “Let each man test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to others.”

I believe that goals should be based not on what other people are doing – we've got to set that goal because they did – and goals should not even be based on what we think we can do ourselves.

Goals should be based on what we believe GOD CAN DO.

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not what we think we can do.

What we think God can do. You let the size of your God determine the size of your goal. God is looking for people who will let Him be God.

Let God set the size of your goal. Let the size of your God determine the size of your goal.

If I told you some of the dreams, some of the goals that we have for Saddleback church in the future, if I just laid them out to you right now, some of you would be thinking, “Who do you think you are?” I would say to you, “That's the wrong question. The question is not who do I think I am? The question is who do I think God is?” The size of your God determines the size of your goal.

I'll never forget when the word got out in this community that Saddleback Church was going after initially 79 acres of land and we later added 41 more. When it got out in this community that a church was trying to buy 79 acres of land in Orange County,

people thought it was ludicrous. Just a couple of months before 100 acres in a business park in Mission Viejo sold for 40 million dollars. It was \$400,000 an acre. “Those people over there at that church, who do they think they are, going after 79 acres of prime land?” And again, it’s not who we are that matters. In our own power we can’t accomplish anything. But “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

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You really haven’t believed God until you’ve LIVED IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU ARE BOUND TO FAIL WITHOUT HIM.

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You have not believed God until you’ve attempted something that can’t be done in the power of the flesh. Fred Smith’s definition of Hell: “Hell would be if God were to show me all I could have accomplished if I believed Him a little bit more. That would be hell.” I want to live my life in such a way that I am absolutely bound to fail unless God bails me out. God uses the person who is willing to risk failure. I’ve told my people that when I die, I want four words written on my tombstone, “At least he tried.”

We have already accomplished a lot. But it’s nothing compared to what I think God wants to do. And we may not reach all the goals that I think God has given to me but I’m going to die trying. Because I don’t know anything more important than that. Never fear failure if what you are attempting for God would ultimately bring glory to Him. Never fear failure if you’re doing it in love. Because if your heart is filled with love, the Bible says, “Love never fails.” So even if you don’t reach your goal, if you’re doing it out of love you’re not a failure. Because love never fails. You haven’t believed God until you’ve attempted the impossible.

God uses the person who not only has a dream, who is not only willing to risk failure but ...

III. GOD USES THE PERSON WHO EXPECTS TO BE USED.

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You must be both realistic and you have to be optimistic. You must have a high expectation. That is an evidence of faith.

The difference between success and failure: ATTITUDE

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The person, who says “I can,” and the person who says “I can’t,” are both right. If you think you can’t, believe me, you can’t. Enthusiasm is essential for growth. Without enthusiasm your church will never grow. Where do you get enthusiasm? Enthusiasm comes from two Greek words “en” and “theos” which is the word for “God.” “Theology is the study of God. “En theos” means to be in God. When you get in God you will be naturally enthusiastic. That is not some kind of “pick yourself up by your own psychological bootstraps” and “hip-hip-hip.” It’s a wonderful day. I feel healthy. I feel happy. I feel great. Positive mental attitude. This isn’t, “Psych myself into thinking what I know isn’t true.” It’s getting in God and getting in harmony with God and having a vibrant, real, alive relationship with the Creator of the Universe on a moment by moment basis and talking to Him.

One of my favorite verses is Matthew 9:29,

“According to your faith it will be done to you.”

MATTHEW 9:2

I love that verse. God says, “You get to choose. According to your faith it will be done unto you. You get to choose how much I bless your life. According to your faith it will be done unto you. You get to choose how much I bless your family. According to your faith it will be done unto you. You get to choose how much I use you. You get to choose how much I grow your church. According to your faith it will be done unto you.” What a wonderful privilege. God has said, “It’s in your hands.”

I’ll never forget, as I told you in the last session, about getting up in front of the church and saying, “It’s time to start finding land. If you have background in real estate or finances, show up and we’ll form a little task force.” The next night thirteen men showed up. They were of all different backgrounds – real estate brokers, banker, and guys really talented and willing to do this work. I said, “We’re going to find at least fifty acres of land. Now go for it! Meeting is dismissed!” That’s all we did. I let them loose.

TEACHING TIP

Following is a lengthy story of the faith steps that occurred when Saddleback Church sacrificed to purchase the land our church is on. Obviously you would not tell our story in this message, but your story. We’ve left this in, however, both to inspire you and to serve as an example of how you can tell a part of the “faith story” of your church.

They came back a week later and they’d found one of the few remaining pieces of property in the Saddleback Valley owned by a private developer. Most of the land in this Valley is owned by one of four or five major landowners. We went to the Mission Viejo Company and they said they’d sell us a quarter of an acre for \$300,000. I said “A quarter of an acre? We couldn’t put our big toe on that!” They came back and found a piece of property back

against the mountain, 72 acres for 7.2 million dollars. Our church was running about 500 people at the time and 7.2 million dollars for raw land for a church of 500 people. The men said to me, “Pastor, you want to go for it?” I said, “Why not?” You never say no just because something’s impossible.

We went out and put \$10,000 down on a 7.2 million-dollar piece of property. During the next year and a half we got the zoning changed, the water rights changed, the use permit changed. Everything like that. But we couldn’t find anybody who would loan us the money. Anybody! After a year and a half of time, the owners of that property came and said, “We want you to start putting up \$20,000 a month, non-refundable, to keep the escrow open.” I said, “I’m sorry, I can’t do that. I can’t gamble our people’s funds we’ll just have to drop out of escrow. Once we get the funds we’ll come back and we will buy the property.” We dropped out of escrow and the very next day that piece of property was bought by a shopping center. We lost a year and a half of time and \$100,000 invested.

I was depressed. I said, “God, what’s going on here? We’re working, we’re praying. It’s just not working.” It took us a year and a half of time until we found a second piece of property. Three hundred acres out in the canyon. Two hundred of it is totally worthless, straight up a mountain. We went to the guy and said we’d buy the front 100 acres for six million dollars. He said if we would buy the front 100 acres for six million he’d give us the back 200 as a tax write off for free.

Fine. That was great. We went out, did a big building campaign called “Possess Our Land.” In one day, our people gave a half million in cash and three million in commitments. We were real excited. I went back to the owner and said, “We’re ready to close the deal. We’ve got a half million in cash and three million in commitments over the next couple of years. Let’s close the deal.” He said, “I’ve changed my mind. I’m raising the price to eight million.”

And my heart sank! We had just had thirty days of prayer and fasting and a sixty-day building campaign; we had people actually sell their homes and buy smaller homes and gave the equity. People gave retirement programs. People canceled vacations. People took second jobs. Everybody on staff was clearing out our bank accounts and giving everything we had. We’d just sacrificed! I didn’t know what to do. After we had that big offering on Sunday and on Monday this guy tells me, “I’m raising the price two million dollars,” my heart sank. Now it had gone from faith to presumption. And there was no way we were going to be able to afford eight million dollars.

I looked at God and said, “God, You’ve got a problem. It’s not my problem because it’s not my church. You’ve got a problem. What are you going to tell the people next Sunday when they show up? They’ve sacrificed and suffered and prayed and given, and now we’ve lost this piece of property. What are you going to do?”

In God’s timing – two days after that deal fell through, a third and final piece of property came up on the market. It was 113 acres here in the canyon and it was on the market for 3.5 million dollars. Half the price of what we were going to pay before. It was the cheapest piece of property I’d seen ever in Orange County. It was such a good deal that seven other developers made a bid on it and four of them offered cash. So I met with the owner of the property, a retired military general. He owned an airline company. I said, “We don’t have the cash and I know you could be bought out by these other guys. We have a half million in cash. What would it take for you to sell it to the church?” He said, “I’ll tell you what. If you can close the deal before the end of the year, I’ll sell it to the church.”

It’s October. So I go back to the people and say, “Folks, what do you want to do? We’ve either got to raise more money in the next sixty days or we lose this deal. But I know we’ve just given nearly everything we’ve got.” Our people, because they were people of faith said, “Pastor, let’s go for it.” They went back to their pocketbooks, took on more jobs. They found other sources of income, emptied out piggy banks and in the last sixty days of that year 1987, they gave over and above their normal offerings 1.2 million dollars in sixty days.

We got up to the very last business day of 1987. We still didn’t have enough money to close the deal. I had remembered a man who I had met who owned a bank. When we’d tried to find loans we’d gone to about 80 different institutions. I had met this guy, gone up to the top story of his building, sat in his penthouse, and presented our case. He was a Christian, a great guy, a wonderful man. In fact, we started talking about growing tomatoes – we both had gardens. Then he said, “I’m sorry, but we don’t loan money to churches. It’s the policy of our bank. But I don’t want you to be discouraged but to be encouraged.” But I didn’t need encouragement, I needed money!

That had been a couple years before. Two months later, that man sent a little note in the mail (He’d never visited our church). It said, “I believe in the vision of Saddleback Church,” and there were 1000 shares of his stock in his bank valued at \$30,000. I sent him a thank you note! A year later that man sent 2,000 shares of stock and a note that said, “I believe in the vision of Saddleback Church.” This time the value was \$60,000. On the basis of one fifteen minute conversation. He didn’t even live in this area. He lived up in LA.

Here's a man who had given ninety thousand to a church he'd never even visited. When we were doing this "Possess Our Land" campaign I said, "God, I need somebody who can give an offering so big it will challenge everybody else and we'll know God is in this." But I don't have anybody like that in our church. No rich people, but a bunch of young people. I said, "I do know one guy who could give it," and I was thinking of this guy. I said, "But he's not even a member. He's never even been to this church." If he were a member I would have had no problem going to him and saying would you consider giving the lead off gift, a challenge gift. I said, "God, I'm not a fundraiser, a flashy high pressure salesman. I'll ask him but if You want him to give that money, work it out in such a way that people go, 'Only God did it.'"

I remember it was in August of that year and we were in Trabuco Hills High School and it was about one hundred degrees and there was no air conditioning in that gym and we were all sweating like pigs, smelly. It was terrible. I got up to kick off our building campaign. "Investing for Eternity" was the message. You can't out give God.

As I got up to speak, to deliver that message, who should decide to come to church for the very first time? That man and his wife and his kids and his grandkids. They had driven about an hour to come to church on the Sunday we're kicking off the building campaign. I hadn't invited him. Nobody had invited him. When I stood up to speak and looked over and saw him walk in, I burst into tears. Only God can do that kind of thing.

After the message was over I walked out on the patio and he said, "Rick, I'd be willing to help in the building campaign." I said, "No kidding? What a great idea! Wish I had thought of that!"

When we came up to that closing date and we still didn't have money that December 21, that man on the final day not only changed the policy of the bank and loaned the church the money we needed but he personally gave a quarter of a million dollars. And we closed the deal. That was the last business day of 1987.

The first business day of 1988, the board of trustees of his bank called him in. They said, "We had record profits last year. We had a banner year. We're going to give you a onetime bonus as president." They did not know that ten days earlier he had given a quarter of a million dollars to a church he'd been to one time. Ten days later, they gave him a bonus of \$750,000. He called me on the phone and said, "Rick! You can't out give God!"

I've seen that happen hundreds of times in people's lives. I've seen it happen dozens of times in my own life. You cannot out give God.

We bought the land. We're all excited. We got the Promised Land. We started reading the book of Joshua and found out there were giants in the land! In this case it wasn't a giant; it was a little gnat catcher bird and a bunch of environmentalists. For the next three and a half years we did battle with the County of Orange who was charging us taxes on the property but would not let us build on it. They said, "Of that 113 acres that you bought, you must give 104 acres back to the county to be open space as a park and we will let you build on nine acres. You must move 50 (or more) big oak trees from the back of the property to the front of the property to hide the church. You must build a 20-foot high burn (mountain) so that nobody could see the church behind it. You can't build a 7000 seat auditorium. You can build a 1000 seat auditorium and have seven services. You must put in a charcoal filtration water system so when the water comes off your parking lot and goes into the gutter, it's pure. They wanted about seven or more in environmental mitigations before we could even start building."

We went to war. During the next three and a half years we petitioned and we protested and wrote letters to the county and sent hundreds of our people to the courthouse. I took each of the county supervisors out to lunch. It was in the papers and everything. The Orange County Register and the LA Times came out with editorials supporting us. One of the articles was "A Church Under Siege." It said, "The audacity of what the government is trying to do to this church. If a church that size can't get a building, do you think anybody else is going to get a building?" I remember walking into the county offices in a public meeting and saying, "I realize that in the people's republic of Orange County that there are a few laws, but this is ridiculous." Finally after three and a half years of battle – we just kept going on and on and the church was growing to two services, three services, and four services. Finally, I took our church directory in, which at that time had 19,000 names in it. It was about two inches thick. I set it on the desk of the county supervisor for this district and I said, "There are 19,000 names on this church role. They are all voters and they're all in your district. You have a problem. You either let us build on that land or you help us get us another piece of land so we can do what we need to do."

As it worked out, we found the developer who owned this piece of property which was far better located, far better suited, and we were able to swap even-steven, that piece of property for this piece of property. In that three and a half year period, that piece of property had gone from 3.5 million dollars in value up to 6 million dollars and we traded it for this one which was worth nine million dollars which allowed us to walk into this one with six million dollars equity. That's so like God!

That happened because we were expecting God to work. Never in all the years did I ever doubt that we would eventually get land. We went fifteen years before we built this building. Many people got discouraged but I did not get discouraged. Why? Because I knew if God kept bringing more and more people to this place, He somehow had a plan for where He was going to put them. God didn't have fifty acres in mind. He had 120 acres in mind. God is able to do much more than you think or ask or imagine. But we weren't ready for it. And God was more interested in building disciples than building buildings.

Never let an impossible situation intimidate you.

Let it: **MOTIVATE YOU**.

Satan's favorite words: **YOU CAN'T DO IT.**

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I want my church to be an embarrassment to the devil. Never let an impossible situation intimidate you. Let it motivate you. Let it motivate you to pray more, to think more, to work more, to believe more, to fast more, to be more dedicated. Don't let impossible situations intimidate you. Let them drive you to your knees. Today's impossible situation is tomorrow's miracle.

Today's impossible problem is: **TOMORROW'S MIRACLE.**

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Hudson Taylor says there are three phases to God's work – impossible, possible, and done. Faith works in the realm of the impossible. If ever you use the word impossible again, listen for snickers from heaven. Cause God's going to be laughing.

If you were to go to my office and look behind my chair and pull out my Webster's dictionary and look up the word "impossible" you would find something. It's not there. Because I cut it out! The Bible says "All things are possible with God." If "impossible" is not in God's dictionary, it's not in mine.

You not only expect the church to grow but you expect people to help you.

Expect people to help you!

Big thinking: **ATTRACTS BIG THINKERS.**

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You expect people to help you. I've kept this little card in my desk since the very first day of this church. It says this,

“Great people are ready to help me at the right time in the right way, people I don’t even know yet. I promise I will never give up because I don’t have the help. But I will trust God to provide.” The Bible says in Psalm 37:5, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust Him to help you do it and He will.” On the back of my card, it says this, “God has the resources to help you that you have not even considered. There are multiplied thousands of persons with all sorts of talents and skills and concerns and contacts that God can bring into your life in order to fulfill His plans. So open your eyes and see the faces of people around you. Open your ears to hear what they’re saying. Today, tomorrow, next week, you’ll meet someone – someone who’s just the right person and that right person that you need, will come along at just the right time to fill just the right place and you will marvel knowing that God arranged it so wonderfully.”

I could tell you stories ‘til midnight how God’s proven that one in my life.

God uses people who expect the church to grow and expect people to help. I had been here a couple of weeks. I didn’t have any money. One day I get a call from a guy, “My name is Bill Grady. You don’t know me but I’m a pastor of a little church up in Fullerton. What’s your source of income? [I didn’t have any.] I feel led to pay your rent for the next two months.” I didn’t know him. God provided.

We were getting ready to do advertisements for the first service. I didn’t know what to do. A guy shows up at the trial run service. He was an artist for Disney. He became the guy who did our first advertisements.

I remember we were buying nursery equipment for the very first service. We went to garage sales, collecting nursery equipment – toddler things, swings, bassinets, stuff. We found the stuff we needed. It was \$32.50. The only money we had was about \$50 in our checking account. That was money we were supposed to use for food. Kay wrote out the check, \$32.50, knowing that was what we were going to eat on. We walked back home. I opened up the mail box and took out a letter from a woman I had met one time, a little old lady, retired, from a church in Texas. I had preached at this church two times. She had just heard me twice. She said, “I heard that you were going to California to start a church. I thought you might need some money.” The check was for \$32.50.

I could tell you story after story. If you will just trust God, if you will be willing to lay it all on the line – your reputation, your image, your money, your energy, your time – God will bail you out and you will marvel that He has brought the right people at the right time to help you out.

IV. GOD USES THE PERSON WHO NEVER GIVES UP.

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God uses the person who is persistent, who is diligent, and who doesn't know how to quit. The Bible says in Luke 9:62:

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"No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

LUKE 9:62 (KJV)

The secret of success is just to "keep on keeping on." Outlast your critics. Stay put. Be that oak tree – just a little nut that refused to give its ground and you grow into an oak tree. Great people are simply ordinary people who don't know how to quit. They don't know how to give up.

Great people are just ordinary people who:

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REFUSE TO GIVE UP

Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not grow weary in doing well. For we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." In a previous session, I told you that a pastor leaves a church because of eight critics. What does it take to discourage you? One little word of criticism and you're ready to throw in the towel? You want to give up? Call it quits?

I'll never forget when I first learned how to handle discouragement. I was a teenager, preaching a revival crusade in a little tiny church in Northern California. I had been there Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I preached every night of the week and Sunday morning. Nobody had come to Christ and nobody had recommitted their life to Christ. It was a dead, dead church and I was so discouraged. It was my first real taste of discouragement in ministry. I'd poured my heart out. I remember going into the pastor's study, getting down on my knees praying, "God, I'm so discouraged and I don't know what to do. I don't know if I should accept this or reject it. I don't know if I should go with the flow and be discouraged or if I should fight this, resist it. Please tell me what to do with this discouragement." I finished that prayer and I began to look around the pastor's study. I'm an avid book reader. I read a lot of books. I was looking through his library. The pastor came in and I began talking to him. I happened to pull out a record (remember records?). It was a sermon by Jerry Falwell, "How to Double Your Sunday School Attendance in One Year." I thought I might be a pastor someday. I

didn't have any plans at that time to be one. I said, "Would you mind if I listened to this?" He said, "Sure, I'll put it on for you." He put the record on. But he put it on the opposite side by accident. On the backside there was a message by Jerry Falwell, on discouragement. Falwell said something that I've never forgotten, "You do not determine a man's greatness by his talent, wealth or his education. You determine a man's greatness by what it takes to discourage him."

What does it take to discourage you? Some deacon looks at you cross-eyed and you want to give up? Things don't turn out the way you thought? You have 50 people less than you thought you were going to have in the service?

At the height of World War II, right in the middle of it, Winston Churchill went to speak at Harrow's Men's School and they notified the students, "Be prepared, the Prime Minister is coming to deliver a major wartime address." The address was in fact very brief, but it contained these unforgettable words,

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in.

I have no doubt that God brought some of you here this week, in the middle of the summertime to Southern California so that God could say to you, "Don't you do it. Don't you give up. Don't. Never give up. I'm not through with you. I'm not through with you where you are. Don't you give up."

You want to know how many times I've wanted to resign from Saddleback Church? Just every Monday morning. When you do five services, you don't believe in God until 11:00 a.m. on Monday. Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. You are never a failure until you quit. It is always too soon to quit.

- You are never a failure until: **YOU GIVE UP**.
- It's always too soon to: **GIVE UP**

One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 24:16

"Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again!"

PROVERBS 24:16

Even good guys stumble. Even righteous people make mistakes. You may be God's man, God's woman, you may have God's anointing on your heart, but you're still a human being. And

righteous people do stumble. But the righteous person rises again. Failure is never final unless you let it be. You get back up and you go again. You keep on and you keep on and you keep on.

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The fact is God uses problems to keep us dependent on Him. He gives us problems in ministry intentionally.

Question: How do you have big dreams without having a big ego?

How Do Humility and Big Goals Go Together?

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If you've ever thought about that, I honor you because that's a valid question. There is no sin that God judges faster than pride. Pride is what caused Nebuchadnezzar to go crazy. Pride is what caused Herod to be eaten alive with worms. Pride is what caused Satan to get kicked out of heaven. God hates pride. In "sin," the middle letter is "I." God resists the proud, the Bible says.

So how do you have big dreams without getting a big head?

I've discovered when success goes to your head it usually pays a short visit. It doesn't stay, if you let it go there. How do you have humility and big dreams at the same time?

I believe this is so important because the two most important factors for the power of God in your life are integrity and humility. If you don't have those, you will not have the power of God in your life. Some ways God will keep you humble:

1. You'll be CRITICIZED UNJUSTLY

Your motives will be questioned. You will be called an Empire Builder. The moment you hang out your shingle, somebody's going to start throwing rocks at it. It is not by accident that the most blessed ministries in the world are also the most criticized ministries. It goes with the course. All the pioneers take the arrows in the back. If you're leading the way, you're going to get shot at from behind. The fact is, the world and much of the church does not understand how much lost people really do matter to God. They have no conception of it. So they will attribute your growth to some other motive.

2. You will have problems that are solvable only through

PRAYER

They will force you to your knees.

3. You'll make **MISTAKES**.

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You may be anointed but you're still human. Humility is not denying your strengths. It is being honest about your weaknesses. We're all a bundle of strengths and weaknesses. I have some enormous strengths. I also have some enormous weaknesses. So do you. You have some great strengths, but you also have some great weaknesses. We're all a bundle of strengths and weaknesses. Humility is not going around saying, "Oh, I'm not good at anything. I'm no good. I don't have any strengths." That's pride actually. It's a form of pride – false humility. Humility is not denying your strengths, it's being honest about your weaknesses and admitting them. You will make stupid mistakes.

4. The dream will be so big, you're bound to fail unless

GOD DOES A MIRACLE.

Humility is in essence a total dependence upon God. I want to challenge you to make a declaration of dependence upon God.

5. Others will take credit for your work.

They will. God can do great things through the person who doesn't care who gets the credit. I feel a lot of times like Paul did, "Whatever the motive, as long as the message gets out. God be praised." I honestly don't want to be a celebrity. That's why I've said we're never going on TV or the radio. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3:7 "Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow." God gets the glory. God gets the credit. Remember the lesson of the whale: when you get to the top and you're ready to blow, that's when you get harpooned. Be very careful.

Here's the point: It's easy for God to humble you. It's no big deal for Him to humble you. God has a million different ways to humble us. Are you married? Do you have children? Humility is not an issue that God has a hard time with. He could pull the rug out from under you a thousand different ways.

What God does have a hard time with is getting you to believe bigger than you've ever believed before. And dream bigger and expect more and pray more and serve more and share more.

Let me talk with you a bit about this issue of confidence. This is a deeper issue. The fact is we come to conferences like this, we get all excited, we get real motivated, our vision expanded about thinking our church will grow and develop and reach out in the community and have impact. We get this vision about what we believe God can do in our church. We go back home with such a big vision. But the truth is, if our churches grow at the rate we dream about them to grow, we'd be embarrassed to death. I know this because it happened to me.

At the end of the first year of the church, we had been working 18 hours a day all year and I was loving every minute of it. We had the office in our home. The church had grown from 0 to about 150-175 people. It was a lot of fun. But I felt like the director of an orphanage – all these baby Christians, caring for everybody's needs. I was wearing down because I hadn't taken a vacation and we were just tired. On the last Sunday of the year, I stood up to speak and collapsed. I fainted. It scared me to death. I took the entire next month off, the first month of the second year of this church. I was so depressed because I was actually afraid to get back up in the pulpit. I was afraid it would happen again, that I'd faint.

I took my wife and my kids out to Phoenix where her parents live and I had my desert experience with the Lord. While I was out there, during that period of emotional burnout, there were two haunting fears going through my mind.

One was, "God, I don't deserve this. You're blessing my life too much. You've taken this church from 0 to 150-175 in one year. This is the only church I've ever been the senior pastor of. I'm a freshly graduated seminary student. I don't deserve this kind of blessing. I'm not the man of God I ought to be." I have a difficult time being consistent with a quiet time, much less being a pastor. I am not by nature a disciplined person at all. I was thinking, "I'm just not the man of God I ought to be! I don't deserve this and it's haunting me."

The other thing was, "God, I can't handle it. The church is growing too fast." I was smart enough to figure out that at this rate of growth from 0 to 150-175 the first year, within a few years we'd be running several thousand (little did I know). I was down! Depressed, discouraged!

Out there in that desert experience, God said three things to me that changed my life. He said, one, "You're right, Rick, you don't deserve it. But you never will. It's all by grace." I don't deserve to be a Christian. I don't deserve to be saved, much less in the

ministry. Everything that God does in me and for me and through me and to me and in you and through you and for you and to you, He does by grace through faith. We're all trophies of grace. You never will deserve God's blessing in your life.

The next thing God said is, "Rick, who's church is it?" I said, "It's Your church, Jesus." And Jesus said, "I will build My church. You focus on building people and I'll build the church." I said, "Jesus, You've got a deal." I remember imagining myself getting up out of my chair in my study and saying, "Ok, Jesus Christ, You are now the pastor of Saddleback Church. You call the shots. It's Your church. Ultimately it's not up to my ingenuity, my creativity, my talent, my giftedness, or my whatever to make this thing happen because it's Your church." And a mountain of weight just flew off my back.

When I got those two things settled – that God uses me by grace through faith and ultimately it was His church and His responsibility to make it grow – out of that came the third conviction: I am God's man with God's message for Saddleback Church at this point in time. Nothing can shake that from my life. Nothing! No critic, no health problem, no crisis, no conflict, no lack of a building for fifteen years. Nothing can shake that. I am God's man for this church at this moment in time.

What some of you need to do is go off and sit under a tree and get an assurance of God's call on your life again. Don't move until you are sure of it. Remember that everything God does for and through you He does by grace. Jesus said, "You haven't chosen Me, I have chosen you." The truth is many of you feel guilt about being in ministry. You think, I had these parents, this background, this major problem in my life, those secret sins, those things that Satan tries to keep reminding me of. When he reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future! You are a trophy of grace. And God gave you His calling and He will use even your hurts, even your mistakes, even your mixed motives, even the stupid things in your life to bring good out of them if you'll lay them all on the table and say, "Here, God. Here it is."

*Everything God does in us, for us, and through us, He does **by grace through faith**.*

SEE EPHESIANS 2:8-9; COLOSSIANS 2:6

I am convinced that authentic leadership always grows out of a crisis. And authentic leadership is always based on faith in God's grace. What is grace? Grace is the fact that God knows every mistake I'm going to make in ministry and He still chose me.

Grace: GOD KNOWS EVERY MISTAKE THAT I WILL
MAKE IN MINISTRY BUT HE CHOSE ME .

The success of Saddleback Church is a testimony to the grace of God. The testimony of man's faith in God's grace. The fact is, God uses ordinary people. If God used only supernatural or perfect people, what would get done in this world? Nothing! God uses imperfect people. He uses ordinary people to get extraordinary results. God works in your life according to your faith.

FAITH: What are you expecting God to do in your ministry?

I cannot overestimate the importance of faith in your life. The Bible says "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Without faith it is impossible to please God" How many times have you sinned today? How much did you please God today? Whatever is not of faith is sin. What is God doing in your life? I can tell you what He's doing. Without even knowing you, I can tell you exactly what God's doing in your life. He's doing exactly what you expect Him to do. No more, no less. If you study scripture you find that whenever God moved out of Heaven and moved on earth and did a miracle it was because somebody believed.

How much are you believing God? Are you paddling around in the shallows of life, slapping the top of the water and thinking you're making a big wave? Or are you willing to risk failure, be persistent, give it all you've got, and totally dedicate yourself to the ministry of Jesus Christ?

We limit God so much by our unbelief. There are many factors in your life and in my life that we don't have control over. I call these the sovereignty factors of church growth. For instance, I didn't choose who my parents would be. You didn't either. I didn't choose the natural gifts that God gave me and you didn't either. I didn't choose to be born in America. I didn't choose when I was born, where I was born, who I was born to. I didn't choose who the people are that God has brought to this church. There are lots of things that I don't have control over that do affect the growth of this church. And it's true with you, too.

But there is one thing that I do have control over

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The one thing we do have control over:

HOW MUCH I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE GOD

That's my choice. And that's your choice too.

I believe that God is building a great world class church in Saddleback Valley Community Church. Why? Because the people here are extra special? No, they're not. Because the staff and pastors are extra special? No, we're not. But because God has found a group of people in this church who have decided to believe God just a little bit more than other churches have believed Him for, and that's our choice.

I used to think that God is kind of arbitrary in who He chose to use. That He looked out on the world and said, "I'm going to use you but, not you. All the rest of you - sorry, tough luck, you're left out." But that's not what the Bible says in 2 Chronicles 16:9:

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him."

2 CHRONICLES 16:9

God is looking for people to use. If you get usable, God will wear you out.

My father died a couple of months ago. My father was a pastor for fifty years. He was an average preacher but he specialized in building church buildings. He built a building everywhere he pastored and built them for many other people. He built over a hundred church buildings around the world in his lifetime. He got cancer a couple of years ago. The final months of his life he was living in our home and my sister's home. And in the final week, my father's cancer got to him and he got weak and delusional. He was awake in bed about 23 out of 24 hours a day the last week of his life, dreaming out loud. Delusional. You can learn a lot about a guy by listening to his dreams.

In the last week of my father's life he didn't talk about his hobbies. He didn't talk about being in the South Pacific in World War II. He didn't talk about movies he had seen or books he had read. But he talked about the things that mattered to him. In his dreams he talked about building churches and taking teams of volunteers to

places like Israel and Russia and Alaska and Guatemala and Asia and Australia and building churches. He'd talk, "Take that team over there and put that joist together and nail it that way. Be sure that socket's fixed and watch those stairs as you build them up and make sure that team gets over there for the meal..." He talked about that.

On Thursday night, a couple of days before he died, I was sitting in the room by his bedside with my wife and my niece Alyssa. All of a sudden my dad became very agitated. He started trying to get out of bed in this delusional state. My wife Kay gently pushed him back down, "No, Jimmy. You've got to stay in bed. You're very weak. What do you need?" He said, "Got to save one more for Jesus." He began to repeat it over and over. "Got to save one more for Jesus. Save one more for Jesus!" In the next hour, he may have said it one hundred times, Alyssa and my wife estimated. I remember sitting by the side of his bed and bowing my head, I was crying. He lifted his hand up and put it on my head. Like it was a blessing, he said, "Save one more for Jesus. Save one more for Jesus."

I intend that to be the theme for the rest of my life. I invite you to make it the theme of the rest of your life. There is nothing that matters more. Nothing matters more than getting people that God loves out of hell and into heaven, that their past is forgiven, they have a purpose for living and that they have a home in heaven. There is no better deal than that. That's what is worth giving your life for. That's what we've been doing this conference for.

One of my life verses is Acts 13:36. It's an odd verse to many people. It says

"For after David had served God's purpose in his generation, he died."

ACTS 13:36

That's an odd one for a life verse. But think about it. David served God's purpose in his generation. He served the eternal (God's purpose) in his generation (he did it in a contemporary way) He served God's purpose – that is timeless. In his generation – in a timely way. He was eternal and relevant at the same time. God's purpose, unchanging. In his generation, always changing. He served God's purpose in his generation, and then he died.

Once you're through serving God's purpose in your generation, who wants to be around here anyway? Why not go on to heaven? When God's through with me, I'm checking out. I'm going to a better place!

It is my prayer that people will be able to say that about me when I die. That Rick Warren served God's purpose in his generation and then he died. That is my prayer for you. That people will be able to say that about you. That you served God's purpose in your generation and then you died. What an epitaph. There is nothing better to have on a tombstone.

I know that some of you came here very discouraged. I have no doubt about it. Some of you may have thought, "I'm going to give it one more try before I quit." We live here near the beach and I like to go to the beach. I've noticed that when the tide goes out the beach is pretty ugly. There's driftwood and there's ugliness and it doesn't look too good. Some of you, the tide is out in your life right now. You may be going through a tough time in your marriage. You may be going through a tough time with one of your kids. You may be going through a tough time with somebody in your church or a health issue. You may be dealing with an emotional issue, panic attacks, depression, and uncontrollable anger. You're dealing with some kind of secret sin, lust. There are pastors and church leaders in this room right now who are addicted to pornography; I have no doubt about it. It's the number one addiction in church leadership. And the Internet has made it easy. There are things that you are ashamed of and there are things that discourage you and there are people who are trying to kick you out of your church and all kind of things and you're discouraged. The tide's out in your life.

But I've learned something. The tide goes out, but it always comes back in. So hang on. Hang on! Get some help. Talk it out. Share it with a counselor friend. Talk to your husband, your wife, and some other friends. Get an accountability group. But don't give up.

I've never read the book but I like the title *Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do*. I like this poem.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.
There are battles to fight by day and by night.
For God and the right and I'll never let go.

I want to let go but I won't let go.
I'm sick, 'tis true and worried and blue
And worn through and through but I won't let go.

I want to let go but I won't let go.
I will never yield. What? Lie down in the field
And surrender my shield? No! I will never let go.

I want to let go but I won't let go.
May this be my song, 'mid legions of wrong,

Oh, God, keep me strong, that I never let go!

Your ministry matters to God. Your life matters to God. You matter to God. And you are not here by accident. A thousand years before you were born, God brought you here and knew that this summer at Saddleback Church you'd be sitting in your chair so He could get you to sit still long enough so He could say to you, "You matter to Me. And I have seen every moment of your life. I saw you formed in your mother's womb. I saw you with your first heartbeat. I watched you take your first breath. I saw you go through every pain you went through in adolescence. I've seen every good, bad and ugly thought you've ever had and I still love you. You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you to go forth and bear fruit. I want to use you. I am looking for people to use."

I want to close this conference by praying for you. As we end this day I want to end it on our knees. We're going to pray together

TEACHING TIP

Ask people to come forward and to get on their knees with you and pray. Ask them, "If you are willing to commit your life to God's purpose – as one who takes risks and believes God and who is choosing to never give up – would you come forward right now and join me on my knees as we pray together." If the front fills up quickly, invite people to get on their knees in the aisle or right where they are. Invite them to follow you in this prayer (or a prayer like it) OUT LOUD. (You pray a phrase, and then let them pray that phrase)

Father,

I want to be used by You. Use me for your purposes, God. Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere. Give me the faith to trust you, and the courage to act on that faith. By your grace, I am choosing to never give up. Use me to bring people into your family, to build people up to maturity, to train your people for ministry and to send your people out for their life mission. All to your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*After praying this prayer, take a few moments to personally pray for them.
If you have a music team, sing together and worship as you close the conference.*

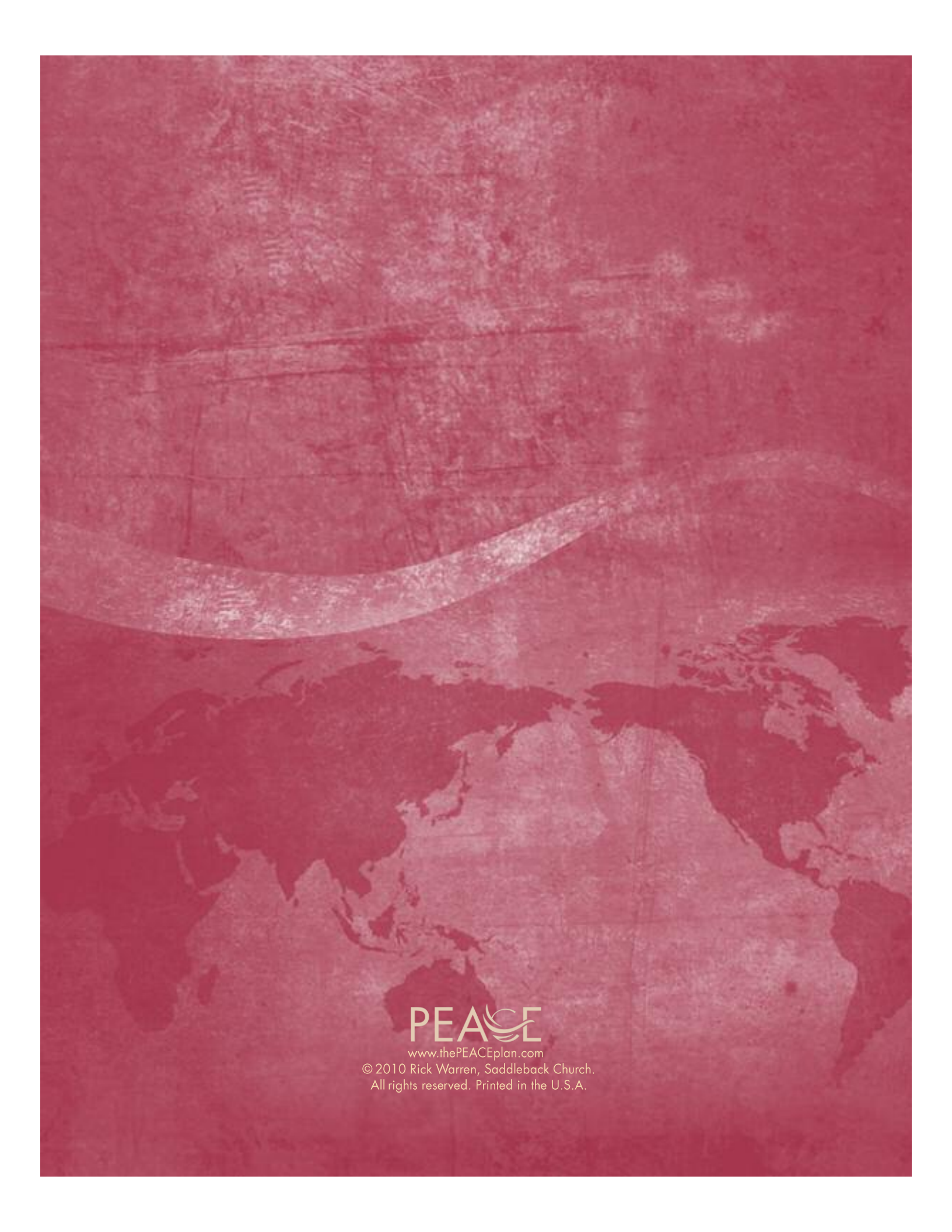
and then we're going to close.

PERSONAL APPLICATION WORK SHEET

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1. What would you attempt for God if you had the resources and you knew you couldn't fail?

2. What would be the first steps you would take to reach that goal?



PEACE

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