

FALL 2021

DESTINY

M A G A Z I N E

**BACK TO
THE BASICS:**

*EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM
IN THE CHURCH TODAY*

**REACHING &
KEEPING
NEW PEOPLE**

***BUILDING
A GREAT CHURCH***

**CREATING
A LEGACY OF
AUTHENTIC
WORSHIP**

**DESTINY
LAUNCHES
2021 FALL
CONNECT
EVENTS**

**PREPARING
GOD'S HOUSE
FOR FINANCING**

A Word from Phil & Cathy



Welcome to this edition of the Destiny Magazine. We are so honored to have you. We understand the demands and the challenges that today's world is placing on you, and your attention. But, I encourage you to take just a moment and step away from the latest news of the pandemic and the roar of global turmoil and confusion, and be encouraged. You are not alone. We are in this together, and we are going to come out of these days stronger.

We pray that you find this edition of Destiny Magazine encouraging. There are great articles, encouraging testimonies and updates from your covenant family around the nation. As we move away from our Annual Destiny Gathering, we move away with great momentum. Encouraging things are happening, new people are connecting with the values and vision of Destiny. New programs are being launched, new opportunities to engage and new opportunities to grow. Together we are getting better, and you are right in the middle of the mix!

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THE MASTER KEY PETER DISCOVERED

DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD

One of my favorite personalities in the New Testament is the Apostle Peter, the fisherman from Galilee who was among the first of the disciples to be called by Jesus. One of the reasons I like him is because he is so relatable, so human. I see a lot of myself in Peter. And I'm not talking about his finer qualities. Peter was a run of the mill, everyday fellow. I can relate to that. He was a first century fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, a typically coarse lot - gruff, vulgar, strong-willed. To say that he was tempestuous is an understatement. It was Peter who corrected Jesus, even rebuked Him, on the road to Caesarea Philippi when Jesus told the disciples for the very first time that His destiny was the cross of Calvary, not the throne of Jerusalem. It was Peter who refused to let Jesus wash his feet along with the other disciples on the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas. It was Peter who drew a sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane. Peter was a man's man, full of himself, stubborn to a fault, and determined to have it his own way, always right. Sound like anybody you know?

But something happened to Peter, something dramatic, something out of the ordinary. Somewhere, somehow during the course of his being called to minister, to feed the flock of God, to preach the Gospel, and to suffer persecution, he became a different man. Somewhere, somehow during the many experiences he had, through all the things he saw and heard, he took off the garments of pride and self and clothed himself in humility, the garments of Christ. Without a doubt, in the process of trying to lead, he realized he was not called to lead at all, but to serve and to suffer. He embraced his calling and was transformed. This transformation placed him at odds with the popular Roman culture of his day, but he was not deterred at all. His allegiance was to the authority of God, period. As he was transformed, he discovered a master key in the kingdom of God, the master key of humility.

It's this Peter who writes to us as Senior Ministry Leaders, in 1 Peter 5, from his vast experience and wisdom. He speaks to us through the filter of his personal transformation and the things he had, no doubt, learned as a result of this process. His instructions and admonition have been a source of guidance and direction for Christian Leaders for 2,000 years. Let's examine several truths from this passage.

First read 1 Peter 5:1-7.

V1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: V2 Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

V3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; V4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. V5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to [your] elders. Yes, all of [you] be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." V6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, V7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

1. **Peter calls himself a fellow elder**, though he could have claimed superior authority and respect as an Apostle of the Lamb, a rock of the church, one of the three, along with James and John, who were in the inner circle of Jesus' personal ministry. Yet, he chose to classify himself as one of the group, a *fellow elder*. The elders he is speaking to are probably younger and less experienced, yet he respected them enough to say that I am speaking to you as one of you. He also affirms them as on par with him. He viewed them as today's leaders worthy of full respect, though they represented different generations, experiences, backgrounds and opinions. By this simple act of humility, he also suggests to them that they should guard their need for honor, for position and titles.

2. **Peter reminds us that we are Shepherds of God's flock.** He affirms our role as shepherds, indeed, but of a flock that is not our own. The flock belongs to God. This is underscored by his mention of the *Chief Shepherd* who will eventually appear and reward faithful shepherds. In this context, shepherds are stewards, not owners. This communicates a sense of duty and responsibilities. It says, "The owner has rights; stewards have only responsibilities." He uses a functional term to reinforce this idea that describes the discharge of our responsibility, "Overseers." This word suggests accountability to a higher authority. It suggests that we should never become an authority unto ourselves, seek our own personal gain, or benefit through manipulative actions. Consequently, we are to always subject our motives to the examination of the Holy Spirit. Manipulation is exceptionally corrosive to lasting relationships.

3. **Peter teaches us that submission is the solution.** Having a heart (posture) of deference and submission is the key to disarming selfish agendas and motives. It is the disrobing of the glory of self, the uncovering of the flesh with its self-centered desires and tendencies.

Peter had learned that leaders develop and mature best under submission. When we learn through submission, we develop confidence, security and strength. Therefore, we learn to always be looking for a higher authority to which we should submit. Wise lawyers look for legal precedent, successful young leaders listen to the wisdom of the experienced, and students seek the knowledge of the professor. Great leaders refuse to sit on the throne of personal authority and reign through their personal preferences. They are beholding to a greater authority, God.

4. Peter teaches us that we should be clothed with humility. Once we have surrendered to the idea of submission to authority and we have disrobed ourselves of the glory of the flesh through the process of submission, we should be *clothed with humility*. This almost certainly is a personal reflection of a memory Peter had from the night Jesus was betrayed. According to John, Jesus laid aside His garments and wrapped Himself with a towel (the apparel of a slave), and He began to wash His disciples' feet. *Wrapping Himself with a towel* is almost certainly where the phrase, "clothed with humility," comes from. The word *humility* means "humbleness of mind." In other words, it means to have a "humble opinion of oneself." This is not having low self-esteem, which is almost always pride in disguise, but rather to esteem oneself as little. Being clothed with humility is to intentionally make yourself low. This happens as a result of surrender, a submission to godly authority, and choosing to prefer others above yourself and the interest of the whole before the demands of your personal interest.

5. Peter teaches us that God resists the proud. Imagine that - God actually assumes a resistant posture toward those who have a haughty attitude and a self-centered perspective. Peter had learned this from experience. He got into trouble when he acted for selfish gain or tried to ensure things were going to be done his way regardless of God's will. He found himself in hot water with God. He says it this way, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

6. Peter suggests that we surrender to God's ultimate authority. He calls this ultimate authority the "Mighty hand of God." What is the hand of God? It's the power, moral right, and scope of God's Kingdom rule. To discern its boundaries, ask yourself these questions: Where is God not God? What is beyond God's influence and control? Who has greater power than God? The answers listed in order are: nowhere, nothing, and no one. Therefore, the hand of God is the authority of God. To humble yourself under the mighty hand of God is to surrender and submit to God as the ultimate authority in every area of life and mission.

7. Finally, Peter tells us that we should divest ourselves of mental division caused by worry, our anxieties. When he said, "casting all your care on him, for He cares for you," he is suggesting that we accept the fact that we cannot solve our problems through our own abilities alone. We aren't sufficient in and of ourselves. We don't know enough; we don't have enough. Pride will cause us to wrestle in our minds with the worst possible pressures and potential scenarios, dividing our focus and rendering us paralyzed with fear. Some call it *awfulizing* (imagining the worst possible situation).

In summary, what do we learn as leaders through this passage written by Peter, the renegade turned apostle? We learn that destructive attitudes driven by pride and self-reliance will always let us down in the end. That self-reliance is an illusion and a deception designed to de-construct the legitimate authority of God. We learn that submission is the solution. It is the disrobing of the glory of the flesh and critical in the process of being clothed with humility. Peter helps us to understand that humility without submission won't work. Humility is the attitude, but submission is the resulting action. We learn that humility will position us to receive the grace of God, the help of God and the strength of God.

Humility and submission are the master keys that open the doors of greatness in the Kingdom. As Christian leaders, we must always turn to God as our ultimate authority to find His protection, provision, and blessing. Our humility will unlock great doors of Kingdom power in our lives.





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INTERNSHIP

Makes a Difference



KENLEY WILSON

The River Student Internship has impacted my life so much. I have had so much fun diving deeper into God's word and doing it with the people that I love. The Destiny conference really helped me put into perspective what it is like to serve and be willing to drop everything you are doing to be a servant for the Lord. The River student internship has shown me how to be a leader and to wash the pastors and leaders' feet that attended the conference. It taught me to lay myself aside and help others.



JOSIAH BENNY

This summer I was able to intern at my church, The River's internship program. One of the many opportunities we were given to serve was at the Destiny conference. It is such a blessing to so many people and I know it brings joy to our Heavenly Father too! Whether I was working in the merchandise store, setting up or taking down tables and chairs, cooking, holding doors, or greeting people, it didn't matter what we were doing, I assure you we were the ones being blessed the most!



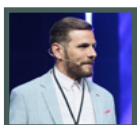
HAILEY REAMER

During our church's summer internship the Lord was teaching me about sacrifice; about what is pleasing to him and what isn't, and that he desires a servant's heart. Serving at the Destiny Conference, with the other interns, gave me a chance to put it all to practice. Everything from greeting people with signs out front every morning to restocking the sanctuary chairs after service was such a blessing to me, because I was doing what was pleasing to the Lord. I loved being able to just say, "Where else can I help?" Being able to sacrifice my time to serve others helped me grow in ways I never would have thought.





LIFE WORTH REMEMBERING



LANDON GALLOWAY

Mark 14 records a fateful dinner that would witness the establishment of two monuments. As a result of those dinners, two legacies were secured. Mary, on account of her selfless sacrifice and lavish worship, is forever remembered for her generosity. Judas, on account of his propensity to be offended and his coin-counting demeanor, is forever remembered for his treachery.

Let's set the scene. Jesus is in Bethany, three miles outside of Jerusalem where pilgrims who couldn't afford or fit into Jerusalem would stay during the festival seasons. Imagine that. Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, couldn't even afford to stay in the Holy City during the Passover festival. Jesus is at a party with Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Simon the Leper. His death is impending. The plot to take his life has already been set into motion by His opponents. The party

has been somewhat typical to the point. The group of friends gathered to celebrate in a spirit of festivity and were undoubtedly laughing, swapping stories, and sharing good food and wine. Can you imagine the stories told at the dinner table amid the Passover excitement?

Simon: "You guys, have I ever told you about the time that Jesus healed my leprosy? He must really love me..."

Lazarus: "Well, I have one for you..."

Then, all of a sudden, the party became anything but typical. *"3 As He was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over His head. 4 There were some who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment wasted*

like that? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they scolded her" (Mark 14:3-5).

We know from John's Gospel that this is Mary, the sister of Lazarus. But, in Mark's account, she remains nameless. It's as if Mark wants to remind us that the act was the significant thing, not the person performing the act. Her obeisance to Jesus is the theme of the passage. We would all do well to remember that our ministry, our worship, and our feats for the Kingdom are never about us. Mark's account and the story of our lives have but one hero, and His name is Jesus.

Each Gospel includes a story of a woman worshipping at Jesus' feet. The best we can tell, Mark, Matthew and John all record the same event. Luke 7, however, presents a different

perfume-pouring, foot washing story. Luke's account, interestingly enough, also takes place in the house of a Simon. This is Simon the Pharisee, and Luke's story is about a sinful woman who is overwhelmed with gratitude for what Jesus has done. Because she has been forgiven much, she loves much. She is contrasted, then, with the inhospitable Simon who perceives to have only needed a little forgiveness and, therefore, shows little love. There is obviously nothing wrong with worshipping Jesus for what He has done. But Mary, the sister of Lazarus, seems to take her worship a step further by honoring Him simply for who He is. There is no connection of her act to something that Jesus had done. She was simply aware that His days on earth were waning and wanted to express honor for who He was and for the life that He had lived.

Mary's gift was precious and costly, worth at least 300 denarii according to her detractors! Despite the preciousness of the gift, Mary didn't ration out her love for Jesus. She poured it out.

Too often, we ration out our devotion.

I'll give this, but not a cent more.

I'll serve, but they better not ask too much.

I'll worship, but I'm never going to be the emotional type.

I'll say yes to God's call, but I'm never going to change who I am.

But, pouring out your life for Jesus requires a breaking, not a pouring. Mary's act couldn't be undone. The vial was broken and could never be repaired. May we live in such a way. No partial surrender. No half-hearted commitment. No hedging our bets. No keeping Plan B on the table. Also, the breaking of the perfume undoubtedly impacted other people. The scent of the perfume would have filled the air. Though it was meant only for Jesus, everyone else in the room surely caught a whiff of the aroma. In the same way, ministers of Jesus pour out our lives for Him and, as a result, see others greatly impacted. When we first and foremost consider ourselves as ministers to Him, we most effectively minister to others.

This lavish display was not received well by the others at the party. Many became indignant, particularly Judas according to John 12. *"It could have been sold and given to the poor," they cried!* One thing that I've learned in my years in ministry is that criticism happens almost any time people get together, even

when Jesus is in the room. This is such a sad scene, because it could have been so beautiful. Only days from the cross, the others could have joined in and bowed down and poured their love and affection on Jesus. He wasn't at the home of a Pharisee. He wasn't dining with his religious adversaries. These are the people that He had poured into, healed, and raised from the dead. They could have sung songs, given gifts and celebrated His life. Yet, a critical spirit robbed them of this opportunity. How often have we allowed a critical spirit to rob us of joy? We miss all that is right because all we can see is all what's wrong.

I believe that many pastors and leaders have found themselves in the position of Mary the last several months. Despite the opposition that we've faced, we have continued to press forward. We have remained steadfast in these perilous times, ignoring the tug to quit or to back down. We have broken the vial and going back isn't an option. However, there are plenty of critics on the sidelines. They aren't pouring out their lives. They aren't offering their gifts. They aren't breaking their vials. Yet, they feel qualified to stand back and critique and analyze. I dare to believe that if those gathered at Simon's house would have joined Mary in worship, then they wouldn't have had time to do the math and decide whether or not the value of her offering was appropriate.

We have seen the lavish act of Mary. We have heard the sharp critique of the crowd. Now, we await the response of Jesus. Given Jesus' passion for the poor, perhaps He would side with the critics. It really might have been better to have sold the perfume and given the proceeds to the poor. Maybe Jesus feels uncomfortable with such a profligate display. I can just imagine the anxiety swelling up in Mary. What if she had made a big mistake? What if Jesus didn't approve? Every eye in the room was fixed on Jesus as He assessed Mary's deed:

"Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial" (Mark 14:6-8).

It was "beautiful." What I wouldn't give to know that I did something that Jesus found beautiful! "She has done what she could." You don't have to do what God can do. You don't have to do what

I can do. You have to do what you can do. Her deed was appropriate for the funeral. Rarely does one object to the cost of a funeral. Apparently, Mary had a level of discernment that the others did not. Three times in Mark's Gospel, Jesus had predicted His death. She believed Him and was giving Him His burial anointing early. **I've never heard someone stand over a casket and say, "I think I told them that I loved them too often."** Mary didn't wait until Jesus' death to show Him the honor He was due.

The critics do not have the final say in Mary's story or in your story. We strive to live a life that Jesus finds beautiful, so that we can hear those fateful words, "Well done." I can deal with someone calling my life wasteful, as long as Jesus calls it beautiful. Mary's deed has long outlived her. "And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Mark 14:9). He knew the death, burial, and resurrection would be preached throughout the ages, and Mary is a part of the story.

But, Mary isn't the only one who secured a legacy that night. *"Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him"* (Mark 14:10-11). He complained that 300 denarii was too much to spend on Jesus, but that 30 pieces of silver was just enough to betray him. Judas claimed that Mary's perfume was wasted, but Jesus calls the life of Judas wasted.

John 17:12, *"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled."*

Judas had every opportunity, but he wasted it. He was supposed to be Apostle Judas and have a position along with Apostle Matthew, Apostle Peter, and Apostle John. But, he wasted it. Mary is remembered because of what she gave; Judas is remembered because of what he took. **You will be remembered either by what you give or by what you take.** Do you give life to a room? Do you give ministry? Do you give financially? Do you give honor and encouragement? Or, do you take these things? I am willing to waste my life on Jesus, so that Jesus won't see my life as wasted.

THE EVERYDAY DISCIPLE

A Christ-Centered Life Coaching Framework

There is no shortage of resources dedicated to biblical studies, theological training, and leadership development. Obviously, Destiny deeply values these types of training and education as evidenced by Destiny Leadership Institute's two year program and the hundreds of students that we have trained over the years.

However, we recently observed the relative dearth of resources available focused on character development and spiritual formation. It would be a great shame if we taught leaders what they should do but never taught them who they should be. In response to this observation, we developed a framework called The Everyday Disciple (which we affectionately call TED).

TED is a framework that guides you step by step through four quadrants of discipleship: Cultivating the right heart, Developing a Personal Vision, Creating a Plan, and Practicing Habit.

You will be assigned a coach who will use this framework and will come

alongside you, offering encouragement, accountability and feedback as you progress. You will also be placed in a cohort so that you can learn alongside and learn from like-minded leaders who are also striving to be all that God intended for them to be.

It takes roughly one year to go through the entire coaching framework for the first time. The Everyday Disciple is split into four 12-week Quadrants to make it easy to start and stop as your life and schedule changes.

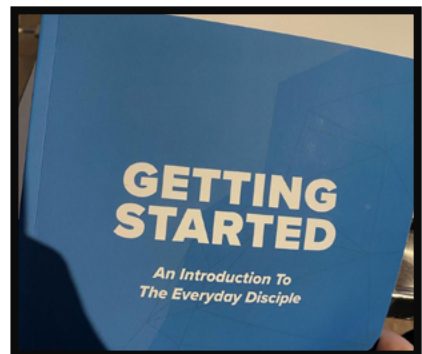
Each Quadrant includes six online sessions with activities, and each session is followed by a coaching call tailored to that session's learning.

Our first cohort launches October 4th! The cost is \$1000 (monthly payment plans available) and includes all resources, material, online sessions, coaching, and much more!

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**Pastor Landon Galloway
& Pastor Stephen Martin**



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DAUGHTERS OF THE OTHER SIDE

A FAITH-BASED NON-PROFIT RESTORATION AND TRANSFORMATION HOME FOR FEMALES IN ADDICTION.



My name is Sharon Hughes. I am the Director of Daughters of the Other Side, and am having the adventure of my lifetime.

The Lord has been gracious to me to allow me to have a front seat to the miraculous power of transformation in and through the women that come into the program of Daughters of the Other Side. I was blessed to be grafted into a family with a very rich spiritual legacy. From that, I have gleaned and have been drawn by the Holy Spirit into an intimate place to know and sense the heart of God for the lost and broken.

My mother was an alcoholic for 8 years of my childhood. My father was killed when I was very young. My older sister died of a drug overdose in 2012. Drug abuse has touched my life in many personal ways.

I learned by experience and living through the ups and downs of addiction in my own family that there is pain, but also hope to overcome. Daughters of The Other Side was an open door for me to walk through.

I have a deep love for young people and have been a youth pastor/recovery leader in the Assembly of God for a number of years and I was ordained through Destiny Ministries, June 2021.

Daughters of The Other Side (DOTS) is entering our 5th year of operations. Oh, what our eyes have seen! We are a safe place, a refuge, where broken and addicted women can find Jesus and peace.

We have had 112 graduates from Phase 1 since 2017. Our women have completed either a 6- or 9-month residential program. Along with that, we have had a total of 26 Phase 2 graduates, which includes an additional 6 to 12 months on campus. One year ago, we opened a home called Baby DOTS. Baby DOTS is a home that is the clearest of evidence that God restores, as new life is a part of everything that happens with Baby DOTS.

The power of Jesus, The Word of God, and His love is the foundation of what we believe. Love is powerful...Love delivers! The community has continuously rallied around

us, meeting needs of various kinds, including passenger vans for transportation, furniture, appliances, beds, groceries, and clothing, along with financial provision.

Our leaders and teachers come from local churches and organizations with a heart and vision to encourage change in families, individuals and our community. Our ladies are being reconciled to their children, and we are witnessing families being restored. Dreams are being fulfilled as these beautiful women come out of addiction and are returning to the land of the living. We have ladies pursuing college, returning to the professional work world, and learning how to live sober. More recently, we have even had several of our girls get their driver's licenses reinstated and get released from the court system. It's always exciting around the DOTS house! Our ladies are blessed, and they are surrounded by a network of support, prayer and love.

Our mandate is to "raise up" - to cause to arise. We are building upon the principles of God's Word; we are watching miracles happen daily. It is exciting and rewarding for all involved. These women are being changed from the inside out. We have witnessed healing physically from Hepatitis C, along with healing in the mind and emotions. It is truly the most life-changing and God-inspiring journey that I have had the privilege to walk within.

We continue to dream bigger, pray and plan more as God is opening doors for DOTS and our girls. I truly believe we are establishing only a small part of what God wants to do in recovery. God is calling people who will dare to step out in love, compassion and faith to make a difference. We are always better together. We have not even begun to see what He will do as we all join together to change the laws and culture around us. God is doing a new thing and writing a new story for our girls. Stay tuned - you, too, are a part of our story, and we can never underestimate the power of one life to impact another.



DAUGHTERS OF THE OTHER SIDE
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THE BEST DECISION I'VE EVER MADE

(In Youth Ministry, of Course.)



JARRED MOSS

What's a really bad decision you've made? We've all made them, after all. One of the worst leadership decisions that I've ever made was when I wrongly believed that the best way for me to lead people was to stay away from them. Really. As a fresh youth pastor, I had this idea that I would do a great job by never spending time with the kids and only preaching at them.

Today, I thank God for His grace and for my pastors giving me time to develop and grow in my calling. I also thank John Maxwell for his amazing 5 Levels of Leadership teaching, which showed me that the gap between positional leadership and permissional leadership is a great one, and it's only crossable by way of relationship. The decision of that bad leadership style between the ages of 20-22 years old cost me perhaps five years or more worth of momentum. But hey, you live, and you learn!

Life has a way of giving us endless regret and deep grief when we look back and see where this went wrong and that went wrong. Decisions are a part of leadership, and while some are good and some are

bad, some have the potential to be life-altering, and even ministry-altering over the course of the life of your ministry. For better or for worse, some decisions can change the entire trajectory of your church.

While it can be easy to gravitate in memory toward negative decisions, it's important to remember good decisions and celebrate the wins. What went RIGHT? Whenever I look over my tenure as a local church youth pastor, several things went right, but I have no doubt in my mind that the greatest decision I ever made was the decision to develop young people in Christ by starting our River Student Internship.

When I was a teenager in youth group, I couldn't wait to graduate high school to attend an on-site internship for young adults at a large church in a neighboring state. I knew I had a call of God on my life, but I didn't sense the capacity or opportunity to be able to explore it and grow into that calling in my local church. I remember my pastor telling me that he could see me coming back from my internship to start an internship at our church. I was so excited. After graduating my internship, moving



back home to Searcy, Arkansas, and taking over the youth ministry, I couldn't wait for the opportunity to launch something similar for our young people. But, I just had a few problems.

For starters, we didn't have the money to hire staff to lead it. Secondly, we didn't have the budget to promote it. And last, but certainly not the least of problems, we didn't have any college-aged students that wanted to do it. That's a pretty big problem.

That said, I've always been a big believer in making the best of what's in your hand. And all that I had in my hand year one was seven interested high school kids and an open summer. So, seven years ago, we launched our first ever River Student High School Internship. The concept was simple - take a group of hungry students, meet with them for in-depth Bible study and corporate prayer, take them on an outreach, teach them to serve, and mentor them in character, all the while. So, we did just that!

We met two days a week, and 8 weeks later, we had a core group of committed youth that were equipped and ready to help us grow our youth ministry. And grow, it did. These students continued to read their Bible and pray daily as they started to invite other teens to our monthly United Nights. And out of these United Nights, we recruited more students for our second and third year summer internships.

Eventually, our youth group began to meet for corporate prayer on a weekly basis, and we wound up with a group of interns that formed our young adult leadership team that placed the final piece of campus clubs in the youth ministry puzzle. The youth

group was booming, because God was moving. I knew we'd made a right decision. However, I didn't know as a young mid-20's youth pastor just how RIGHT that decision was.

You see, now, at almost 30 years old, and as an associate pastor at my home church, I've seen so much. People have come; people have gone. Trends have blown in and blown out, and God has shifted mine and Evelyn's hearts toward the greater Church as a whole and changed our focus as our own seasons have changed. But, in and out of season, the fruit of the high school internship has remained.

Many of these former summer interns have grown up, married and even begun to have children! Many of them are our current church leaders today. They do everything at The River from leading the worship and running the cameras to greeting the people and becoming the new youth pastors. They even help my wife and I with our kiddos on the mornings that I preach and she sings. If I could describe the fruit of the internship in one word, it would be the word, FUTURE.

I knew that starting a summer youth internship would be a great decision for the present moment of our youth ministry. I just had no idea then that it would be the greatest decision for the FUTURE of the entire church. Thank God that He knew, and now that you know, I want to encourage you to not put off starting up an intentional youth development intensive for your own young people. Take what's in your hand, look at who's in your church, and let us help you birth something great of your own. You never know just what and WHO the future holds for you!

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WILLIE ROBERTSON LEADS US

BACK TO THE BASICS:

EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM IN THE CHURCH TODAY

Ask any pastor, “Do you want to see regular salvations and baptisms in your church?” and you can bet the answer will be a resounding, “Yes!” What pastor worth his weight doesn’t want to see people getting saved and the church outgrowing its facilities? The problem is that wishing for change is not the same as leading change. If we are going to see lasting change, many times, the culture must first change. For the culture to change, we have to change what we value. We can preach the power of the Gospel, but we also need to be reminded that it’s still just as powerful to save people today as it was for the early Church in the book of Acts.

The term *evangelism* may seem outdated to some people today, even in the Church, but evangelism is essential to the heartbeat of the Church. It can’t be a thing that we talk about sometimes or that some of us do. Evangelism is *the* mission of the Church. Jesus said Himself that He came to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). The often-quoted Great Commission was Jesus establishing the mission of the Church to His disciples. The mission is incredibly great, but also simple – “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Of everything Jesus could have told Simon Peter and Andrew that they would be doing if they followed Him, He told them that He was going to make them fishers of men (Matthew 4:19).

There’s an older quote from Dr. Kermit Long that says, “We’re no longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium, and we spend most of our time swiping fish from each other’s bowls.” There’s a lot of truth in that statement. Think about the vastly different nature of those two jobs. An aquarium is stationary. It’s mundane. It’s predictable. It’s easy to control. What about fishing? It’s unpredictable. You can’t control it because it happens out in the world - in the rivers, the lakes, the ocean. Fishing is exciting. It produces stories. Aquariums are made to look at; fishing is about doing something. Anyone ever heard a good aquarium story?

What happens when we as Church leaders become more concerned with keeping our aquariums than fishing for the lost? We forget that our calling is to share the Good News of Jesus. We end up being consumed with trying to keep our fish happy, so they don’t change fish bowls. “How were the fish this Sunday?” “I heard four of the fish were upset about the

volume this week.” “Make sure to keep the giving fish happy!” That might seem a little overblown, but if you’ve gotten more concerned about the comfort of the fish in your aquarium than the lost ones outside your front door, you might have veered off the path.

A few years ago, I attended a conference. One of the breakout sessions was on evangelism and was being led by none other than Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*. During his session, he encouraged everyone to go back to their local church and ask their pastor, “Who here is in charge of evangelism?” The truth is the majority of churches across the American landscape will not have an answer. Pastors will generally give an answer that ends up with “me” or “all of us.” How can we say evangelism is *the* mission of the Church, and we don’t even have a point person? We have kids’ leaders, youth leaders, serve leaders, even outreach or singles’ ministry leaders, but no one is driving evangelism to ensure it is incorporated into every ministry and age group in the church.

Lee gave a six-stage process to help churches with their effectiveness in evangelism.

1. CHURCH LEADERS HAVE TO GET BACK ON BOARD.

Just like any other program or ministry in a church, if the leadership isn’t on board, it probably isn’t going to go very far. We have to get back to the basics. Pastors don’t just need to be preaching about sharing the Gospel, they also need to be out there doing it themselves.

2. INSTILL EVANGELISM INTO THE BODY.

When we began this initiative at Christ Church, we dedicated an entire month of sermons on evangelism. We have to show the church that a lifestyle of evangelism is normal for any Christian.

3. IDENTIFY A POINT PERSON.

You have to put a name on it. This doesn’t mean they are the only ones doing the work of evangelism. They are partnering with the pastors to unleash what the church can do when they are all empowered to share their faiths.



4. TRAIN THE CHURCH TO SHARE JESUS CHRIST.

For Christ Church, I developed seven styles of evangelism that we see in Scripture:

EVENTS: Planning public and social gatherings, Luke 5:27-29 (*Matthew the Tax Collector*)

ENCOUNTER: Using unexpected encounters to share Jesus, John 4:1-39 (*Woman at the Well*)

EXPERIENCE: Sharing a life-changing experience, John 9:1-12 (*Blind Man*)

EMPATHY: Serving others with compassion and understanding, Acts 9:36 (*Tabitha*)

EXPLAIN: Presenting a detailed explanation of the Gospel, Acts 19:1-8 (*Paul in Ephesus*)

ENGAGE: Proactively initiating conversations with others, Acts 2:14-41 (*Peter in Jerusalem*)

ELITE: A select group primarily trained in reaching the lost, Matthew 9:10-11 (*Friend of Sinners*)

5. FIND THE GIFTED.

1-5% of the church is especially gifted to evangelism. These are the "elite" evangelists who have a unique ability to become all things to all people in order to reach some for Jesus.

6. CREATE EVENTS, IDEAS, AND TRAINING SEMINARS TO REACH PEOPLE FOR CHRIST.

If we are training our members, we have to also be creating safe events where our people can bring others to hear the Gospel. Get creative. Know the people in your community, and plan events that your members will want to bring their friends and family to. Our church has set up a First Step room. Members of our E-Team are there after every single church service ready to share the Gospel with whoever walks into the room. It is mentioned from the pulpit as a safe place for anyone who has made a decision for Jesus or for anyone who just has questions about their faith.

If you do not have a specific evangelism ministry and point person in your church, I just want to encourage you to start somewhere. Jesus just said to go. So, begin sharing. Begin teaching. Begin training. Begin empowering. Just go. As you call your church up to be bearers of the Gospel, we know that we can then trust the rest to the One who is faithful to bring the harvest.



WILLIE ROBERTSON IS THE CEO OF DUCK COMMANDER AND BUCK COMMANDER AND STAR OF A&E'S "DUCK DYNASTY." HE IS THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF A&E'S "DUCK DYNASTY" AND NEW YORK TIMES' BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE DUCK COMMANDER FAMILY: HOW FAITH, FAMILY AND DUCKS BUILT A DYNASTY*, *AMERICAN HUNTER*, *AMERICAN FISHERMAN*, AND *AMERICAN ENTREPRENEUR*. HUSBAND TO KORIE ROBERTSON AND FATHER OF SIX, ROBERTSON'S STORY IS A REMARKABLE EXAMPLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DEDICATION BUILT ON FAITH, FAMILY AND HARD WORK. WILLIE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT EVANGELISM AND CURRENTLY SERVES AS THE DIRECTOR OF EVANGELISM AT HIS CHURCH.



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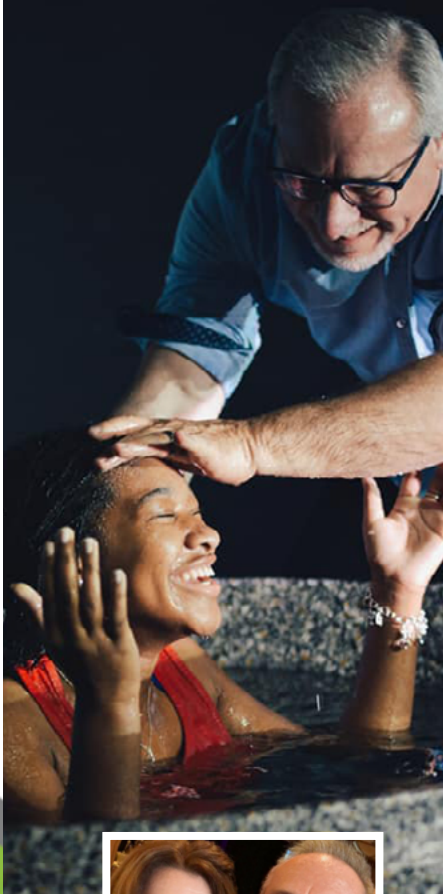
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RICHARD AND SHERRI WILSON WERE CALLED INTO THE MINISTRY IN 1996, AND AFTER ACCEPTING THE CALL ON THEIR LIVES, THEY PLANTED THEIR FIRST CHURCH IN ARIZONA IN 1999. WITH MUCH SUCCESS AND A MINISTRY THAT WAS TELEVIEWED ON TBN AND KATV-CHANNEL 5 IN PHOENIX, THEY REACHED ACROSS THE GLOBE WITH THEIR MINISTRY. IN 2000, WITH THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN PLANTING THEIR FIRST CHURCH, THEY WROTE A DISCIPLESHIP COURSE CALLED "THE KEYS TO A FIRM FOUNDATION" THAT WENT WORLDWIDE. 11 YEARS LATER, RICHARD AND SHERRI FELT A BURDEN FOR THE NORTHWEST, WHERE THEY MOVED TO AND LIVED FOR FOUR YEARS, PREACHING AND TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD AT NEW BEGINNINGS, FOUNDED BY LARRY AND TIZ HUCK.

AFTER BEING IN THE PORTLAND/VANCOUVER AREA FOR FOUR YEARS, RICHARD, SHERRI, AND THEIR SON, BRANDON, TOOK A TRIP TO TEXAS. WHILE TRAVELING THROUGH THE AREA, THEY FELT GOD CALLING THEM TO SAN MARCOS, WHERE THEY WOULD SOON PLANT CHRIST LIFE SMTX IN 2016.



Love Lead Change

RICHARD WILSON

I thought long and hard about this article when Dr. Brassfield asked us to write this spotlight to introduce Christ Life SMTX to the Destiny family, and what I came up with over and over is the vision and emotion behind Christ Life. So, if you're reading this right now, you, too, might understand what I am about to say about our church.

We are all just the same; both large and small, each week we come with worship and a message to faces that stare back at us from the seats we have provided. But there is one constant thing happening in the minds of pastors and the teams they build. For the small church, they are praying each week that people will come and the church will gain the traction that will help them attract those in their cities. And for the big church they are trying their best to accommodate the people walking through the doors. But no matter what the situation may be, the end game is the same-to reach people for Jesus.

When you look at Christ Life SMTX, what you will see is that we are somewhere in the middle - a medium church that is gaining traction as we strive for the WHY in what we are doing each week. Jesus said we should be a city set on a hill for all to see. That is our WHY-we see our end goal to be those words spoken by Jesus. So, we do what we do with excellence. We prepare each week for a future that will give us more fishermen and more farmers, so that the legacy of our vision in San Marcos Texas will be established for generations, not just for today's church.

That is why our mission is LOVE. LEAD. CHANGE. That mission says it all, and at Christ Life we strive to fulfill that call. One of the most common comments about Christ Life that we hear is, "There is so much love there." We are trying each week to make the next week

better, just like you are in your church. With our determination to fulfill the WHY, Christ Life SMTX will one day grow from a small footprint to a larger shoe that will make a bigger impact not only in San Marcos, but in other cities. As we lend a helping hand to those who need someone to help them put on a bigger shoe so they too will make a bigger footprint in their cities.

Looking back to our conception. Christ Life was conceived in our hearts along with our son, Brandon. After being in Texas for a year and attending Christian Life in Austin under Pastor Rex Johnson, with his blessing, Christ Life was established. In response to a small ad on social media for interest meetings, we met Isaac and Natasha Valles who instantly caught the vision and signed up as our worship pastors. From that moment, Christ Life began to emerge! With interest meetings at the local library and more people catching our vision and wanting to be part of this new church plant, we launched Christ Life on October 9th 2016.

Out of a seed planted in the Texas soil came forth this church named Christ Life, and not being connected to a church planting organization, we launched out into the deep on a wing and a prayer! My wife and I are just first generation believers that God called. We followed His lead into the ministry, and today have great men of God who cover us. Something we have always said is, "We just had a vision and enough faith, and with those two things God came through."

Christ Life was birthed with 80 people in our first service, and we are celebrating five years this October. We have baptized over 300 people in a short 5 years and were blessed to have purchased our land and church building in 2019. We are so excited for our future as we look forward to the growth of Christ Life SMTX.

WITH LOVE FROM LITHUANIA

Missions Spotlight: Tony & Shasta Miller

Tony and Shasta Miller, have spent much of their lives in the ministry of the gospel. God led them to Vilnius, Lithuania and they permanently relocated to Vilnius in 2005. Tony has also worked heavily in a number of construction and home improvement job fields over the years and enjoys the challenge of a renovation project. Shasta has been involved in gospel music ministry since she was in high school, and she is highly involved in charity. She has been working with multiple organizations for social causes, and continues to do so, to better communities all around.



To live in Europe, sounds like a fairytale. far away lands, castles, emotions of every kind, and yes, even romance. In 1993, we began our journey as two single adults in Belarus. We were there working for nine months. Until two weeks before our scheduled return to the States, there had been no interest in each other or none that we would admit. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Little did we realize "all these things" would be each other.

On one particular evening, as we finalized preparations for our trip back to the states, Tony and I were out in the city together. Now, to this point, there had been no mention of our relationship, no hint of romance. Nonetheless, Tony took my hand for the first time, kissed me, and asked me to marry him all that same night.

Committing to go anywhere he went, Belarus was not quite what I had in mind for an extended honeymoon. Nevertheless, we were married on July 23rd and, in August, moved to our first home: Mogilev, Belarus. Here was where we began our ministry and lives together. The fact that we were in our early twenties didn't matter to us. We were so excited to be there - to be with each other!

We poured ourselves into everything we did - Sunday school, services, Bible studies, and whatever else we could do that would reach people. With much prayer and fasting, both voluntary and because we ran short of money, God truly blessed. It didn't come without challenges, culture shock, sickness, and all the added "joys" of being newly married. Life was full of adventure! We lived in an area saturated by Chernobyl radiation, and we learned to trust God through it all.

God has an incredible sense of humor. Laughter is a medicine and a must! I could tell story after story: 24 hours in an airport because "the planes don't have enough fuel"; sharing two "small" fold-out couches for beds with four other girls; having to explain to our neighbor, who spoke no English, we needed to borrow their shower because ours wouldn't drain after six people were baptized; mice and roaches. Not to mention road trips were always packed with surprises, crazy taxi rides, and being six months expecting our first child and pushing...a car. The list could go on and on.

There is one word that helps place everything in perspective: flexibility. In the States or on the mission field, ministry has a way of identifying characteristics and challenges in our lives. Just how flexible and dependent on God we are will determine the character that will show. In 2005, after ten years in the state of Louisiana and the addition of our sons, Taylor, eight, and Tyler, six, we felt our lives being bent in a new direction. Bending demands flexibility, and flexibility requires stretching, often bringing pain. Leaving the securities of home, family and friends is never easy, especially with children. However, with the assurance God was in control, we stepped out by faith. We held to a scripture's promise: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Knowing first hand the difficulties of language, culture, and beginning a new life, we understood the importance of preparing not only ourselves but our children. We told them from the beginning, "When God called us, He called you, too." This is a family ministry. With this understanding and assurance, our tough times are made bearable. We filter each day with the belief God has "brought us here for such a time as this."

Fast forward sixteen years. Here we are - All of us!

A few weeks ago, we proudly watched as our youngest delivered the commencement speech for his university graduation ceremony. Now he is working full time and committed to serving in the church and encouraging those struggling with depression. Our oldest recently made the decision to call Lithuania home. He too is serving faithfully, behind the scenes every week in the church with media and production while running his own marketing and advertising company, Rhinobob. We couldn't be more proud.

More often than not, we hear and share the wonderful stories of people being baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit, and how many were in church on Sunday. While the underlying stories of struggle, fear, loneliness, confusion and yes, suicide seem to be erased or overlooked. Lithuania has the highest rate of suicide in the world per capita. Then in 2010, our ministry focus in life shifted. We began to understand our purpose was not to save the lost. Luke 19:10. Our purpose is to love them and share the gospel. Only God can save them. Wow, this was a relief!

July 30, 2018, The streets were empty, and it was quiet. Tony and I were walking across the Green Bridge. Nothing was out of the ordinary, until he became very concerned, "Oh no, that doesn't look good." As I looked, to the middle of the bridge there she sat, with one leg over the railing, weeping. Not even thinking about traffic, I ran across the middle of the street. Getting as close as possible, all I could think to say was "You are not alone." "You don't want to do this." "Let me be your friend." and "I'm here for you." It wasn't: come to my church or let me tell you how to live or even let me tell you about Jesus.. It was: let me help, let me listen, let me be your friend.

We began exploring more ways to serve within our community. The opportunities are not lacking. In 2011, We started Youth Point, UNITED Voices Choir and Taboo, a suicide awareness project. This association, the choir and project work hand in hand to help young people help others by investing their talents through charity events and concerts. Through other various associations we are also sharing hope and love with the elderly and orphans. Recently, Tony joined a group of businessmen that have taken on the initiative to purchase and deliver food to the homeless. It may sound strange, but for us, after years of trial and error, we have learned this is what brings people to the point of wanting to know our God. First love.

*For us, this life is His Life in us,
and we are so grateful for the opportunity.*

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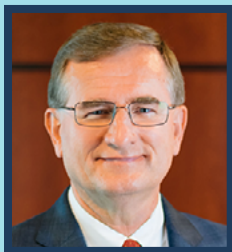
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You may have decided it's time to consider more space for your church. The coffee line wraps into the parking lot. The youth are meeting in the hallway. Last week, three toddlers were running through the supply room.

Preparing yourself and your congregation for an expansion project begins with a careful season of planning. To help get started, consider these thoughts:

GET THE HOUSE IN ORDER. All obligations to every vendor and creditor should be current. All credit card debt should be paid off. (If you have outstanding credit card debt, you are basically telling the prospective lender that you spend more money than you receive-not the place to start a lending discussion.) Make sure your bylaws are up to date. Financial statements (income & expense) should be up to date and accurate. The bank will likely ask for the past three years' financial statements.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF DEBT. A good rule of thumb is to keep monthly debt payments at no more than 25% of operational revenues. When utilities, insurance and maintenance are added, facility costs should be at or below 30% of budget. Most churches are comfortable borrowing 2.2 to 2.5 times their annual undesignated giving. If you have heavy personnel expense (over 40-45% of budget), then the share of the budget dedicated to facility expense may need to shrink.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN. A well-managed capital campaign can supplement the amount you can borrow for a larger project or reduce the amount needed to borrow. A three-year commitment period is most common and, generally, the most effective. Prior to the financial collapse of 2008-2009, for a typical three-year commitment period, we saw a range of pledges and receipts between 1.0 and 2.5 times annual revenues. Many people now feel less secure in the amount of their savings and are less willing to give from stored resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this impact, as people have seen that their livelihood can be shut down for an extended period of time. A more reasonable expectation for a three-year capital campaign from 2022 - 2024 might be 0.75 - 1.25 times annual revenues.

PREACH IT. Don't be shy about preaching what the Bible says about tithes and offerings, generosity and abundance. The number one factor in the success of any capital or stewardship campaign is the spiritual maturity of the congregation.

SHARE IT. I have often shared the story of the time back in 2000 when I chaired my church's capital campaign to raise funds for our church expansion. My wife and I had carefully considered and decided upon our contribution at the start of the campaign. During the course of the six week campaign, our pastor asked one family each week to share how God had spoken to them about the campaign. As school teachers shared about taking a second job cleaning offices three nights a week to raise money for their contribution, and a construction worker shared about contributing the amount of what would have been his monthly payments on a badly needed new pick-up, we ended up increasing our pledge to almost double the original amount. People who are actually sacrificing can have a big impact on those of us who only thought we were being generous.

This may seem a little overwhelming, but planning is essential for successful financing even if it slows down your initial timeline. It will all be worth it when your senior adults are all seated, happily sipping their coffee, the youth are hanging out in their space, and the toddlers are safely corralled.

Be in touch. We welcome your questions and are happy to help no matter where you bank.

Dominic Sokolosky is Chairman and CEO of First Bank of Owasso, which serves over 270 church and ministry clients in 30 states.



REACHING & KEEPING NEW PEOPLE



BRIAN DAVIS

One of the goals of the local church is to reach and keep new people. Not for the sake of numbers, but because genuine church leaders WANT to reach their communities with the life-changing message and power of the Gospel of Christ.

I've had the privilege of traveling and assisting hundreds of churches over the past 20+ years. Several years ago, I became extremely frustrated, because I personally witnessed so many churches that would see new people visit, but not stay. They would have special services, revivals and events where they would see new people visit, but hardly any of them would stay. Interestingly enough, I saw that church leaders craved the next "special event" where they could see more people come, but didn't recognize the need to work on their processes for KEEPING new people.

If people try our church, but don't stay, it's our responsibility as church leaders to discover why and take action to make it better.

3 WAYS TO REACH AND KEEP MORE NEW PEOPLE:

1. SUNDAYS HAVE TO BE GREAT

Especially in America, when somebody starts surrendering to the tug of God on their life, attending a church is their "go-to" move. That's good, as long as the experience is great. If it isn't, we've actually hindered their journey to Jesus.

Weekend Services have to be GREAT, but "great" doesn't mean perfect. Don't aim for perfection. Aim for **Life-Giving** and **Excellent**.

Our weekend services are the entry-point where people are trying out Christianity. They're curious.

They're probably feeling conviction. But they're probably not sure whether or not they're going all-in.

With that in mind, we should prepare our weekend services as if new people really are coming - people who are hungry for God, but also trying to decide if "church-life" is for them.

When they show up at our churches, the experience should be GREAT. Because, no amount of follow-up will bring people back to a poor weekend experience. **Here are three areas to focus on first:**

1. **THE MAIN SERVICE:** Prepare your service intentionally to eliminate dead air-time, have high quality worship and life-giving messages, and flow seamlessly from start to finish. NOTE: Yes, you can be "Spirit-Led" and "Well-Planned" at the same time.

2. **KIDS' DEPARTMENT:** Parents have to believe in it, and kids have to love it. If kids love it, the parents will come back.

3. **FIRST IMPRESSIONS:** New people are evaluating everything as they arrive. They don't need it to be perfect, but the CULTURE matters so much to them. Pour tons of time and energy into creating an incredible experience as people enter your property and building. Make their entrance easy, fun and life-giving.

2. NEXT STEPS HAVE TO BE CLEAR

The local church is in the business of taking people from where they are to where God wants them to be. Lots of people are saying to themselves, *"I like how I feel, but I don't know where I fit."* **The answer to this problem is when the church leaders:**

- are crystal clear on **where** they are trying to take people
- understand and develop the **steps** people need to take
- put in tons of effort to clearly **communicate** those steps

We don't get to decide their speed of progression, but we do get to decide whether or not they know what steps to take.

The weekend service is all about making a great first impression and giving people the opportunity to connect with God. Beyond that, we have to make their next steps CLEAR and EASY.

Make sure they know how they can easily:

- Discover more about your church and find out how they can get involved.
- Connect with other people outside of the Sunday service.
- Serve on a team.

You may need to develop some of these things, but once you have them, you should constantly communicate these Next Steps, rather than communicating lots of new and random things.

3. FOLLOW-UP HAS TO BE CONSISTENT

We really need to recognize that random follow-up isn't good stewardship. So many churches focus tons of attention on outreach (which is great), but very little on follow-up. The goal isn't to get somebody to visit once. The goal is to lead people into a growing relationship with God and with the local church. The way we follow-up makes a huge difference in that journey.

I'm NOT saying we shouldn't do outreach, but what I've seen is that God is already pulling people toward Him, but He's depending on the local church to take really good care of them and show them the right kind of attention once they show up. **Here are some starter-points for Guest Follow-up:**

- **You need a REAL PLAN.** Literally write it out on a whiteboard. Whatever action they take, we need a systematic response. *"When they say or do THIS, THESE are the EXACT steps we take."*

Example: If somebody fills out a Connect Card and marks that they are a 1st-time Guest, what are the EXACT STEPS we will take?

- **Create a Weekly Schedule.** Once you have a clear plan, create a weekly schedule to make sure these tasks are completed.

Example: If one of your steps is to mail a letter to every 1st-time guest, and you want it to arrive on Wednesday of that week, create a weekly schedule to mail those out on Monday.

- **Stick To it.** Consistency is massive in the eyes of God. No matter how many guests you have, be consistent with the plan. Do it faithfully week after week, and trust that God is doing a work in their hearts.

Don't be overwhelmed and don't feel like you have to recreate the wheel. Reach out to a church that is several steps ahead of you and doing these things well, be honest and submit to learning from them.

These things won't happen without intentionality on your part. These are the things that are mapped out in a backroom and nobody notices. But God does.

And when our churches become life-giving places where Next Steps are clear and guests are cared for, God HIMSELF will be at work drawing people to us.

Brian serves as Staff Pastor at Church of the Crossroads in Corinth, MS, and co-owner of Faith Teams Software. He has a degree in church consulting and has worked with hundreds of churches across the country. Brian and his wife, Lisa, have been married for over 25 years, and they have two sons, Avery and Adam.

CREATING *a Legacy of* AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

LANDY MAUGHON

I have always been fascinated by how certain traits tend to flow within families. Music and ministry are definitely no exception. Growing up there was always the sound of singing and music filling our home, and now my own home is no different. As I type this article, my middle son is walking through the house singing at the top of his lungs. My youngest son is in his room recording and mixing a new tune he's been working on. I hear another child on the piano hammering out their latest piece. The sounds of music have become so commonplace in our home, my wife and I often wonder how deafening the silence will be once our kids have left the nest.

I've heard it said that a calling cannot be passed down. While I understand that we cannot simply ride the coattails of those who have gone before us, I do feel that there are certain aspects of ministry that can flow down to those who are waiting behind, whether that be our children or someone in our congregation with a heart for ministry. We should always be evaluating what is flowing from us to the next generation, and correct our course when needed.

Let us consider three points on this vast topic of worship. These are just a few values and lessons that I've learned (and still learning) that I believe are pertinent for future generations of worship leaders, as well as a needed reminder for those of us who have been at it for a long time.



AUTHENTICITY

Being in full time worship ministry for thirty years, naturally, I have seen many music styles and trends make their way through the Church. I have even hopped on a few myself from time to time. While I believe there's nothing innately wrong with new ideas or current worship trends, I think we do ourselves and the next generation a great disservice if we allow these to motivate us while missing the heart of worship altogether. We must never sacrifice authentic, Christ-centered worship at the altar of cultural relevance.

Unfortunately, there are times when our focus has been on making a good impression, and we have missed the mark on authenticity. I've been guilty. I'm learning to recognize that in the current age we live people aren't looking to be impressed; they are seeking a genuine encounter. It is a fact that the device they hold in their hands offers a 24/7 opportunity for them to be "wow'd." Our worship service does not need to feel the pressure to compete. I honestly enjoy some of the extra bells and whistles we can include in our services. I just hope to challenge us all to keep them in their proper place of significance.

THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

When ministry takes up a large portion of our life, we have to be careful not to allow the familiar to lose its sacredness and become too mundane. After literally thousands of worship services, on a technical level, it would be easy for me to mindlessly lead a congregation in music and song. Muscle memory definitely comes into play when you've played the same or similar chord progressions for thirty years! I believe this can contribute to worship pastors and leaders of my generation getting to a point of frustration or a feeling of total irrelevance in ministry. Operating on autopilot is not sustainable.

The only way to avoid this is to consistently and intentionally redirect our focus to the majesty of the God we are singing about, and pursue His presence the other six days of the week. When you are leading a worship ministry, Sunday is generally "game day," and this means our thoughts are filled

with an array of technical and logistical events that make a service happen each week. If we depend solely on Sunday for our spiritual recharge, inevitably, our life and ministry will pay a price. The Monday through Saturday of our week will be what makes the difference in our effectiveness as worship leaders.

If you are just getting started in ministry, keep the pursuit of God's presence and daily worship non-negotiable values in your life. If you are "seasoned" like me, avoid the temptation to simply coast on your skills. Continually seek the heart of God, allowing Him to keep even the all-too-familiar fresh!

SING THE GOSPEL

Hear me clearly, there is always room for another song about the Cross, the Blood, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our set lists must reflect our passion for the gospel. I know I am not the only one that needs reminding of my total dependence on the finished work of Jesus! There is something uniquely beautiful that happens when we corporately lift our voices in song, proclaiming this great Gospel of Christ, which is our unshakable foundation!

Finally, whether you are a Gen X, Gen Z, or any other Gen, let me encourage you to never stop seeking the heart of Jesus. Your worship ministry will rise to the level of your passion for Christ and His Kingdom! Stay away from "Worship Wars" (Google it), and remain intensely focused on following HIM as we lead from a place of authenticity and humility. New generations with various musical styles and preferences will come and go, but the true heart of worship must always remain sure and ever-pointing to Jesus Christ.

Landy Maughon is a songwriter and worship leader with more than thirty years of ministry. Landy, along with his wife, Stephanie and their four kids, currently lives in Winnsboro, Louisiana where he serves as the Worship Pastor at Life Church.

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BUILDING A GREAT CHURCH

DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD



It's hard to believe I have been traveling and working with churches and leaders full time since 1993. Wow! That's almost thirty years. I have watched, listened and learned over that time as I have engaged with churches of virtually every size and shape from denominational to independent, large and small congregations that are traditional, contemporary and somewhere in between. Over the years, it seems to me that most churches have a dominant style or philosophy of operation, and that style defines their identity, purpose, and even effectiveness.

Let's talk about different styles of church in America today.

I will list three for our consideration. None of them are wrong, in and of themselves. They all have strengths and weaknesses, areas of effectiveness and efficiency, and areas of ineffectiveness and inefficiency. Below, I've listed them and some of their characteristics that I have observed over the years.

1. THE EVENT DRIVEN CHURCH

- Generally, they are personality focused and driven.
- Usually led by dynamic speaker(s)
- Normally heavy on religious structure and culture - Typically, their leadership orientation is **"command and control."**
- Performance driven (Know "how to do good church")
- Experience oriented (Their main success metric was someone's experience.)
- Normally strong in experience and evangelism, but weak in discipleship
- Low volunteer engagement/high leadership burnout rates
- Key Word: **Experience**

2. THE PROGRAM DRIVEN CHURCH

- General leadership style is through administrative gift
- Programs drive their culture and **gravity** in the community.
- They tend to offer strong programs that are normally targeted at specific demographics like men, women, children and youth, etc. They can also be oriented to deal with issues like drug and alcohol addiction, divorce, parenting, etc.
- Most services are less about experience and more about recruiting for ministry programs. Sunday is a sort of showroom where programs are sold.
- Success metric is normally based on levels of **participation in programs** and organizational **membership**.
- A weakness is the lack of collective purpose in the organization. One can participate in three or four programs and not necessarily grow as a believer or in community.

- Heavy on activity not always strong in discipleship
- Key Word: **Participate**

3. THE PROCESS DRIVEN CHURCH

- Everyone is encouraged to be in the process of discipleship and service.
- Volunteers and serving are critical in the process.
- Engagement and activation of believers is the focus.
- Personal development and growth of the person is the goal.
- They can be similar to program driven churches, except there is a core concept of integrated growth objectives and philosophy that are threaded through programs, leading the participant toward a deeper relationship with God and local community.
- Normally, there is a path that facilitates the process (like Growth Track, Next Steps, etc.).
- Key Word: **Development (Discipleship)**

While each of these can be effective to varying degrees, I believe that great churches learn to integrate the best elements of all three. For example, about 70% of people come to Christ in moments of personal crisis. This is why an experience, something they can feel that creates hope, can be so effective, evangelistically. But, if we offer only an experience, we must always be one-upping their last experience to hold their attention and to sustain their commitment. It can create an unhealthy "What have you done for me lately?" culture that creates consumer Christians instead of disciples of Christ. The experience should only be the beginning of a relationship. Great churches understand the power of a strong experience-based event, but also understand that we must add great programs that encourage deeper community in smaller settings. It's in these smaller settings that people are engaged on a personal level and can encounter and process truth. Here, we begin to see lasting transformation. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," but truth is encountered and experienced through layered progression as it is taught and modeled through a process. When programs are simply steps in a greater process that is filled with transformational truth, disciples are created, community is developed, and individual and collective purpose is discovered. Churches that master these elements grow, and many grow a lot!

What's your church's style? How does it operate? Do you know? Have you ever thought about it? Well, it matters. It can have a lot to do with growth and missional effectiveness. Three keys to church growth today? Great events and strong integrated programs that lead people through a process of spiritual growth are critical keys for any church moving forward.

What are some qualities of each that are appealing to you?



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