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DEVELOPING A KINGDOM-FOCUSED MINISTRY THROUGH  
INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING  
AT THE CANAAN CHURCH, COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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

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by  
Adrian LeWan Pennebaker  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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## PREFACE

I thank God almighty for His favor. I wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, those individuals who have been chosen by God to assist me along my spiritual and ministerial journey with their prayers, friendship, and guidance.

First, my mother Theresa who gave her life that I might have an abundant life, may she rest in peace. I would like to thank my wife, Sheri, for her patience and encouragement. She is always an encouragement to my work and ministry. Our children Jeremiah, Josiah, and Adrienne, inspired me to see it through in spite of the difficulties and misfortunes throughout my doctoral matriculation.

I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. T. Vaughn Walker, for not allowing me to give up and whose pastoral spirit gave me encouragement and inspiration in the times I needed it the most. He helped me keep my eyes on the prize and practically revealed to me the hand of God's grace. I want to thank my father in the ministry, Dr. Walter Malone, Jr., who has been and continues to be, an inspiration of excellence. He has been to me a ministry trailblazer. I thank him for his commitment to the cross and the ministry of the kingdom.

I am also grateful to the Canaan Church of Columbus, Ohio for their participation and sacrifice in the completion of this work.

Lastly, I want to thank the late Charles R. Pennebaker who sown into me biologically what others had the opportunity to draw out of me. May he continue throughout eternity taste his reward.

Adrian L. Pennebaker

Columbus, Ohio

May 2012

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to ignite and stimulate spiritual and numerical growth in a small group setting through kingdom-focused teaching and preaching, along with training church leaders for ongoing growth and development within the church body. This project used principles and praxis found in Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:4-8, and 2:42-47 at the Canaan Church in Columbus, Ohio.

This ministry project presents a process that can be used by senior pastors and ministry leaders as a paradigm to teach and develop a church for growth with measurable and quantitative goals, such as numerical and spiritual growth within the small group. Also, measurable growth was measured through a pre-test and post-test for the leaders involved. This process was established through kingdom-focused teaching and the exhortation of the gospel. The Canaan Church's S.A.L.T ministry (Service and Life Training classes), which serves as the small group Wednesday night Bible study, engages a minimum of twenty people in this fifteen-week kingdom-focused interactive training. This project also provided training for small group leaders for the purpose of maintaining and engendering a kingdom-focused agenda. Material for this study came from several sources. The first source was the passages previously listed and stand as the "Cornerstone Text" (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:4-8, 2:42-47). Also, the small group and its potential leadership went through a portion of *Vibrant Church*,<sup>1</sup> in order to create more awareness of our role in God's Kingdom. Key scriptures such as The Great Commission and Acts

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<sup>1</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Daniel L. Akin, *The Vibrant Church: Becoming a Healthy Church in the 21st Century* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2008).

2:42-27 were used to stress the importance and significance of kingdom-building. The goal of this project was to develop a deeper awareness of God's Kingdom here on earth and the role that we play within a church plant. There were four goals for this project that evaluated its effectiveness.

The first goal was to develop an interactive bible study based on the Sunday messages given prior to focus group meeting on Tuesday nights. Each subject in the small group was given a questionnaire relating to the action and "Kingdom Keys"<sup>2</sup> within the preached text from that previous Sunday. The questionnaire generated topical conversation concerning the kingdom of God and provided material to study throughout the week and duration of the study.

The second goal was to prepare kingdom-centered messages for the purpose of equipping and encouraging the church body to shoulder their responsibility of advancing God's kingdom. The emphasis of the messages was more on the action of the believers in relation to God's kingdom, because this was the focus of the leaders of the small group. This pastor also took principles, praxis, and the responses of disciples found in the instructions given by Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit within these three core scriptures. The success of this goal was found in my ability to empower and encourage church members to become kingdom-builders. Each week after the message was discussed, a portion of the questionnaire rated the message and the pastors' ability to empower the saints, equip the saints for kingdom-building, and encourage them to desire to do so.

Throughout my tenure as a Christian, I have seen many churches live and develop beneath their potential. Primarily due to the lack of evangelical teaching concerning a kingdom-minded agenda and because of that, their purpose has become

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<sup>2</sup>Kingdom keys were key points from messages that dealt directly with God's kingdom and our role as the local body.



(locally) banal and thin regarding the purpose of the church, in light of its true purpose and existence. Throughout my studies and understanding of the Bible, the church ought to be a vibrant and effective organism within the community. Many of these churches, which will remain nameless or forgotten, spend much of their time adhering to and knowing church tradition, as opposed to the activity and movement of God in their particular season or location. A. W. Tozer said, “If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what the church is doing would go right on and nobody would know the difference.”<sup>3</sup> I have come to attribute much of this apathy to the lack of knowledge pertaining to God’s Word. Many churches have become good at what Paul called “having a form of godliness but deny its true power.”

Although much emphasis concerning this project was placed on the New Testament and the New Testament church, the record is still true today: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos 4:6).

Larry Osborne suggests in *Sticky Church*, that a word of mouth church can stimulate church growth because of the excitement and discussion of the members involved.<sup>4</sup> During this fifteen-week period, each small group weekly meeting was based on the Sunday morning messages. The hope of this goal was to ignite discussion as well as anticipation and participation within the church body. This second goal of preaching topical sermons centered on the disciples’ response to kingdom work is to strengthen Canaan’s worship attendance and experience through effective preaching that yields the fruit of information as well as inspiration.

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<sup>3</sup>A.W. Tozer quoted in Warren W. Wiesbe, *Ten Power Principles of Christian Service* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 106.

<sup>4</sup>Larry Osborn, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 27-33.

In the African American church experience, exhortation of God’s Word is vital for faith and growth. The uniqueness of Black preaching makes it a critical and vital element in church growth. Cleophus J. LaRue suggests,

Many people—preachers, homileticians, and lay folk—praise black preaching. They admire its vitality, relevance, and communicational effectiveness. But what is it about African American preaching that makes it so distinctive and worthy of regard? . . . it is in the soul of the black Christian experience, that is, in the way that African Americans have come, in the refining fires of history, to understand the character of God and the ways God works through scripture and sermon in their lives today.<sup>5</sup>

Mark Dever suggests, “Some of the most critical groundwork in building a healthy church happens in our evangelism. Both in what we say and how we say it, we’re saying something about how we understand not only the Gospel, but its implications for our lives.”<sup>6</sup>

“Telling the story” on Sunday morning is vital and critical, however, how one tells the story is just as important. There have been numerous stories of Black preachers who were asked to step down from their pulpits, not for lack of integrity but their inability to relate the gospel in a way that drew people.

Goal 3 was to equip small group leaders with necessary training for an ongoing small group class. At least five members of the focus group were asked or volunteered to be trained as a leaders for the future teaching of this kingdom-building class. The small group class made up a portion of the church’s school classes. It was imperative that leaders were capable of explaining the text thoroughly and could drive home the relevance of our role in building God’s kingdom. To gauge the success of the training, there was a post-test given to all small group leaders. Each lesson focused on God’s kingdom and our role in it. This goal was evaluated through assessing the number of

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<sup>5</sup>Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Mark Dever, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 51.

participants in worship at the beginning of this fifteen-week project and with that of the end.

### **Ministry Content**

The Canaan Baptist Church was founded on May 25, 2007, in Columbus, Ohio. Worship is currently held at Cassidy Elementary School located in the North East Section of Columbus. As of January 2011, there were ninety-seven active members at the Canaan Church. The religious situation that gave birth to the Canaan Church was the conclusion of a body of believers that they no longer wanted to be considered a stereotypical Baptist church steeped in tradition that had no real kingdom relevance. They wanted to be part of a church that made a difference and transformed lives for the kingdom of God.

In May 2007, the body of believers began to organize around a local pastor who had recently left a church because of their unyielding commitment to keeping the status quo. Meaning their focus was primarily on Sunday worship, marrying, burying, and blessing family members who were already part of this local established body. Therefore, this pastor and the group of baptized believers began to organize what would be a church that focused on building God's kingdom, and their responsibility as baptized believers in ushering in His kingdom. Gene Mims writes,

The kingdom-focused church is one that has found its full meaning in the heart of God and in His actions toward all of us here on earth. It is broader than our understanding but not our experience. It is as majestic as the sky on a clear winter's night but as ordinary as a Sunday worship service. A kingdom-focused church reaches heights it cannot reach by itself and bends down to rescue persons from the depths of the sin it denounces. It is a community of ordinary saints used by God to accomplish extraordinary things. It is His perfect combination of heaven on earth.<sup>7</sup>

As founder and pastor, I along with sixty-eight baptized believers gave birth to the Canaan Church of Columbus, Ohio under the rubric of "Making disciples and making

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<sup>7</sup>Gene Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church: A Compelling Image of an Achievable Future* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 9-10.

a difference.” During the initial stages of the birthing of this local church body, Richard Halcom, the Metro Columbus area director of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) along with Willie Jacobs, who served as the African American Church Plant coordinator for the SBC, came alongside to assist Canaan with startup funds and various equipment, along with providing all other associational rights and privileges.

The mission of the Canaan Church is based on the biblical principles found in Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:4-8, and 2:42-47 (the cornerstone passages). The primary focus of the Canaan Church is to bring in new converts, those of whom have never expressed or made a confession of Christ as Lord and Savior. Along with making an impact within the community where we have been planted. Making a difference means that the church makes an impact in individual lives that inspires them to grow spiritually, emotionally, and socially, as well as financially. When I read the gospels I see various instances where Jesus met people where they were, and although the main purpose was salvation he would challenge them to have their best life now.

The man with the withered hand in the gospel of Mark, Legion, and others, found that knowing Jesus was more than just coming into a relationship with God for the purpose of life after death. Even Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. . . . I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 NIV). In my theological understanding I believe that God has called and is equipping us to enjoy his creation and life under his guidance. On one occasion Jesus was speaking to a group,

Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you

need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' (Luke 12:22-32)

While we do not promote a prosperity gospel or a social gospel per se, neither do we believe that we have been called to a gospel of poverty and drugging through life until Christ returns. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Canaan Church and all believers to help people find a certain peace, joy, and contentment in this life regardless of their economic and social standing. The goal of making a difference in people's lives that we come in contact with is to empower them to have the mindset of Paul when he wrote to the church in Philippi:

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phil 4:10-13)

Being an African American church, social, economic, and political justice has and perhaps always will be a part of the ministry. Henry H. Mitchell and Emil M. Thomas write in *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem*, "The entire ministry of Jesus was devoted to the liberation, healing, and affirming of people who had both low social status and low self-esteem."<sup>8</sup>

James Evans, Jr. speaks of liberation being not only a cornerstone of the African American experience but the Christian experience as well:

To speak of liberation as God's work and intention in the world means that one must understand liberation as a permanent, final, and ultimate feature of one's existence. That is, God's will is irresistible, and God's work cannot be thwarted. All Christian hope stands or falls with this conviction. God's liberation of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses and God's liberation of the oppressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus are the cornerstone of Christian hope.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Henry H. Mitchell and Emil M. Thomas, *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 33.

<sup>9</sup>James H. Evans, Jr., *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 16.

He goes on to say,

Liberation is also multidimensional. . . . Physical liberation refers to the innate desire of all human beings to enjoy freedom of movement and association and the rights of self-determination. The prominence of the emphasis on physical liberation in African-American social thought is understandable in light of the fact that physical bondage was the distinguishing aspect of the existence of Africans in the New World for four hundred years and that complete freedom has not yet come to the African American as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

There have been several challenges that plagued the Canaan Church since its beginning. One was finding a suitable place to worship. The Cassidy Elementary School allowed Canaan to hold services at their school, located on the North side of town. For three years the Canaan church family worshiped in this school, but not having a permanent place of worship continued to cause challenges within the body. The school building was only available on Sundays, therefore much of what had to be done in terms of meetings, and other church functions had to be held during the allotted time. During these trying economic times, cash flow and budgets constantly threaten the viability of the church's existence. Out of the weekly church budget was the pastor's salary along with the musician's pay. Every week the church set aside four hundred dollars (if possible) to make sure at the end of the month we were able to pay the rent. Additionally, many church members were going through financial transitions, be it a job, career, or retirement. However, Walter Malone, Jr., pastor of the Canaan Church in Louisville, was able to hold a "sacrificial giving revival" and raised over 21,000 dollars for our church facility. Other pastors in the city came and supported the revival with their presence, prayers, and patrons.

Since the birthing of the Canaan Church, it has experienced some growth and visitations. During the summer of 2005, we had three major evangelistic events. We canvassed the surrounding communities, and took a poll. We went door-to-door in twos asking the following questions: Do you have a church home? If not why? What are some

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 17.

key elements that you think the church is lacking today? We then invited them to church and gave them a calendar that listed our worship times, upcoming VBS schedule, and back to school program.

The response was overwhelming; we had many local community people come out. We had a total of 35 visitors for church, 17 for VBS, and at least 63 came for the back to school give away. At the end of the summer we had 23 new members from neighboring communities.

The average attendance on Sunday morning is 82 and Wednesday night study averages 33. North Columbus is a suburban area with a median household income of about \$23,000. It is a primarily African American racially demographic area, mostly single parent households. Another interesting demographic in this area is that only 31 percent of the people in this area have professed a hope and commitment to Jesus Christ, and 64 percent have pledged no allegiance to a religious organization.<sup>11</sup> This demographic information was collected through Neighborhood link. This web based service and information is provided to give detailed data on neighborhoods based on zip-codes. Data from this web site ranges from income levels, school credibility as well as sex offender information.

The Canaan Church is a reflection of the community around it, socially and economically. The church is made up of predominately middle-class working Christians. The main concern of many of the members is family and financial upward mobility. Several members have very good job security and about 10 percent own their own businesses. The Canaan Church is about 20 percent senior saints, 40 percent are in the age group of 35 to 50, and the remainder is toddler to teenagers, which leaves us wanting in the age group area of ages 20 to 30.

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<sup>11</sup>U.S. Census. "Southfield Area of Columbus, OH" [on-line]; accessed 11 February 2011; available from [www.uscensus.org](http://www.uscensus.org); Internet.

It is this pastor's vision that the services, which the Canaan Church provides to the community and abroad, would become an instrumental part of the church's growth and evangelism. The Canaan church has adopted the theme "Daring to make a Difference." This theme was given birth based on the illustration of the first century church in the book of Acts 2:42-47. Within the functionality of their context the first century church created a community of love, excitement, energy, and encouragement based on God's Word and His will for the church. This caused a draw or growth from within the community where they ministered.

Acts 3-4 gives some insight into this process:

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, 'Look at us.' So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (Acts 3:1-10)

Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:11-21)

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and



preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:1-4)

The church does not and will not grow based on happenstance, as could be assumed based on the church in Acts 2: “. . . and God added to the church those who would be saved.” However, there is a role that we must play. I believe that the spirit and focus of the local body is key in the efforts of church growth. Therefore, it is incumbent upon to restore or recreate this holistic atmosphere of “making a difference” in the lives of people.

One of the challenges in working through this vision during the time Canaan Church operated out of Cassidy Elementary is the lack of time and accessibility to the location. The restraints have become burdensome in reaching that goal. During this period of having a somewhat portable ministry, we faced various challenges such as recruiting members to volunteer thirty minutes before worship to transform a typical school gymnasium into a sanctuary for worship. The time constraints made it difficult for volunteers to attend classes. Often school officials were unyielding in allowing us to move various props and tables, which limited the use of the facility to the gymnasium.

These obstacles often proven to work in Canaan’s favor; for it has given the people the determination to give sacrificially in the hopes of being planted in a proper place for worship. Recently the Canaan Church acquired a building on Fairwood Avenue in Columbus on the South end of town with identical social and economic demographics as the Cassidy School area. The sanctuary seats 250 along with three classrooms and three offices. It is located two miles from the expressway and immediately off a major intersection.

The goal of this congregation was to shed the view of being primarily a Sunday morning event to a seven day a week community-involved church. The original eighty-six members of the Canaan Church came out of a religious or church setting where the actual emphasis was on being a family church. So at least two- thirds of the

membership was related in some way. As pastor, on Sunday mornings, I saw grandmothers, mothers and daughter, and even great-granddaughters, along with several men who were looked upon as extended family. Although they understood the meaning of the Great Commission of making disciples and making an impact for the kingdom, the “how to” remained undiscovered.

David Roozer, William McKinney, and Jackson W. Carroll speak to these kinds of concerns for the church in the twenty-first century in *Varieties of Religious Presence*:

The main focus of a ‘sanctuary based church’ is driven by worship and the maintaining of the church building and grounds. This kind of church does not put much monetary, social, or physical emphasis on outreach and community involvement.<sup>12</sup>

According to Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins,

Unless the church takes serious, and takes on the incarnation of Christ, the Church as we know it will lose its ability to influence and impact the world. Today numerous studies confirm that the public, especially media and intellectual leaders, do not see Christianity as a dominant social force. . . . Six out of ten Americans believe the church is irrelevant. And in the lives of the 170 million non-Christians in America (making our country the third largest mission field in the world), that irrelevance provokes an ever-increasing cynicism and hostility.<sup>13</sup>

It was the goal of this pastor to develop and help the congregation become a mainstream church with an evangelistic approach to ministry that makes church a relevant and dominate force in the twenty-first century. For example, the worship style at the Canaan Church is contemporary, with a growing music and drama department. Additionally, every fifth Sunday, Canaan has “Jean Sunday” where everyone is encouraged to wear jeans. We also merge all choirs for a combined worship experience. One of the more effective ministries in the Canaan Church is the C.A.R.E. Ministry

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<sup>12</sup>David A. Roozen, William McKinney, and W. Carroll Jackson, *Varieties of Religious Presence* (New York: Pilgrim, 1984), 178-82.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 59.

(congregational care ministry). It was designed to strengthen and support the Canaan Church family by assisting the pastor in meeting various congregational needs. The acronym C.A.R.E stands for Contact, Assist, Relate, and Encourage. The duties of those in the congregation who serve as lay leaders in the C.A.R.E ministry are as follows:

1. Nurturing and encouraging families in their discipleship development and commitment to Christ.
2. Cultivation of spiritual support for families through planning and facilitating opportunities for fellowship
3. Enhancing communication with families about special ministry opportunities, programs, and events in the life of the church;
4. Recognizing and celebrating significant moments in the lives of families, i.e. birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.
5. Assisting in the pastoral care of families by providing comfort and support during times of sickness, death, or other crisis situations;
6. Encouraging members to participate regularly in Sunday service and Bible study.

The leadership style that I have tried to encompass is one that delegates authority; although vision is given to the pastor by the Spirit of God. I believe that in order for the vision to become fully manifested within the church body, the vision must transcend the pastor. Therefore, it is vital that he is able and willing to empty himself into several key leaders and allow them the freedom to work the vision within their own giftedness. It is this pastor's goal is to empower the church and its leaders to be responsible for their roles and areas of ministry. Regarding the purpose of this project, I want to equip those potential leaders who function within the small groups with training with the ultimate church vision in mind.

### **Rationale**

Robert Lewis, in his book *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, says that the primary definition or function of a church “is a community of people who present living

proof of a loving God unto a watching world.”<sup>14</sup> The Canaan Church has had its challenges, and although the members work hard to bring the vision to pass, “Making disciples and making a difference,” it has been very difficult to make this vision statement a fundamental practice. In theory, the church has brought into this statement by Lewis of what the church ought to look like, but in practice we are a long way off. Canaan welcomes new growth and members however she embraces it, to the extent of new people becoming members. Having those new members take on key roles or positions tends to upset the current church model or paradigm. I believe two key factors have contributed to this shortsighted ministry mindset, lack of biblical understanding of church growth, and the ultimate purpose of the church as it relates to the kingdom of God. Secondly, I would have to say it is shortsightedness of being slow to embrace new members into various areas of ministry.

As stated earlier, the members of Canaan came out of a traditional background where the primary role of the church was a place to worship, marry, and bury. The church focus was not on growth or where ministries developed or geared toward connecting with the community. Canaan was therefore in need of a major paradigm shift. Although Canaan is a church plant, because of the spiritual state of the church, I have found Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless’ book, *Eating the Elephant*, very helpful for motivating a paradigm shift. Rainer and Lawless share in their book that many make the mistake of casting vision first, based on what we see in Acts 2:17, as well as the calling and role of the pastor. However, further investigation reveals Jesus spent several years with His disciples, teaching them to look outward. “Before the vision there came a change of mind set; the church would look outward.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>15</sup>Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant* (Nashville: Pinnacle, 2003), 39.

I find Columbus, Ohio to be a wonderful place to raise a family and earn a living. It is also a town with many attractions along with a major progressive university, which breeds contemplative thought and progressive thinking, which makes it ideal for spreading the gospel and developing mature saints for the kingdom. It is also a city that has embraced the idea of church plants. Three of the largest African American Churches in the city were born out of church plants in the last fifteen years. It is not strange for a church to worship in a school and turn an old warehouse into a house of praise. Often people may be hindered to join a church that does not resemble a traditional church from the outside. However this has not hindered the church plant catalyst of Columbus, Ohio.

Ken Hemphill suggests,

In many churches, people have voted on the irrelevance of the church simply by their lack of involvement. Studies indicate that nearly 80 percent of churches in America have experienced a plateau in attendance or are actually declining. . . . In the average church today, over half the people whose names are on the rolls are no longer active. Of course those who are considered active, half will be absent on any given Sunday. And only 20 to 25 percent of those attending will contribute to the mission of the church through their money, time, or talents.<sup>16</sup>

In lieu of the situation that gave birth to the Canaan family, I believe that for such a time as this the Canaan Church family stands ready to seek the will of God and embrace the vision of “making disciples and making a difference.” The objective of this project was that through a stimulating interactive bible study based on messages delivered by this pastor, which were encouraging, equipping thereby creating a passion for the lost. The Canaan Church made a great impact for the kingdom of God.

### **Research Methodology**

Following several weeks of promoting this project, its goals and purpose in the church bulletin, encouraging the congregation, and explaining the process from the pulpit, the church body was on board and very excited about being a part of the project. Several people spoke up regarding the opportunity to be trained to lead small group

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<sup>16</sup>Ken Hemphill, *Eternal Impact* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 11-12.

classes. The Canaan Church began a Bible study covering the power, purpose, and personality of a kingdom-minded church, based on biblical passages we designated as cornerstone passages. The purpose of this project was to aid the members of Canaan Church in Columbus, Ohio to become a vital and effective church in the community based on the model found in Acts 2:42-47. In keeping with the research goals of this project, the research focused on (1) increasing the participants' biblical knowledge and concepts for kingdom-building through interactive bible study, (2) preaching encouraging kingdom-related messages that spawned energy and excitement, increasing attendance, and (3) equipping selected individuals for small group training on kingdom-building characteristics.

The methods for evaluating the areas mentioned above were through a focus group. A questionnaire was provided for the focus group prior to the Bible study program, then a one after the fifteen-week period. Other means of evaluation were measurable through church attendance over and after the fifteen weeks.

Each participant was given a pre-test. The pre-test was used to measure their level of spirituality and biblical knowledge. The post-test tested kingdom-building aptitude. Each week following Sunday's message, focus group individuals got a "kingdom worksheet." We went over and discussed this worksheet in Wednesday night small group meetings for ten weeks. I also led the focus group through an exegetical and practical bible study on Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:4-8, and 2:42-47, with emphasis on kingdom-building for two weeks. The last three weeks of this project were dedicated to training at least five out of the twenty focus group members for leading future small group kingdom-building classes, along with project discussion, and post-test evaluation. First, attendance records were kept to give an accurate record of participation. This was an ongoing project that ultimately served as part of our S.A.L.T. ministry classes.

## CHAPTER 2

### NEW TESTAMENT BIBLICAL MODELS FOR CHURCH GROWTH AND VITALITY

#### **The Great Commission**

Matthew 28:18-20 provides detailed and vivid instruction on the role and responsibility of the church. After the resurrection, which reestablished God's relationship with man, Christ sent His disciples on a mission to transform the world. The sacrifice that Christ made was a sufficient and pleasing sacrifice that would enable God to commune with those who believed in Christ. God had work for His people to do. Paul shares in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself and has given unto you and I the ministry of reconciliation." God in Christ commissioned His followers:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.  
(Matt 28:19-21)

Viewing this inaugural scene of the birthing of the Lord's church, one must consider several facets regarding church growth and vitality. Ralph Douglas West, Pastor of the Church Without Walls, commented during our time together that we come to church on Sunday to worship, celebrate, and receive or to be reminded of the marching orders giving to the believers by Christ.

Before there was an Acts 2, where the reader could see the church having church in the practical sense, there is a scene of what I like to call "the first church having church." Matthew, in his gospel, suggests that when the disciples saw Him they began to worship Him. John MacArthur comments on Matthew 28:16:

This passage is church in its purest form. . . . The moment Jesus appeared and the disciples saw Him; they worshiped Him, prostrating themselves in humble adoration

before their divine Lord and Savior. When they saw the risen Jesus on the hillside, their confusion disappeared and their shattered dreams were restored. Their sorrow turned into unbelievable joy and their disillusionment into unwavering hope. . . . The believers gathered they were not giving homage to a human dignitary or mere earthly ruler but were worshiping God's own Son, the Lord of heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup>

MacArthur also suggests,

The third element for effective fulfillment of the church's mission is another attitude, the implied attitude of submission. The focus of Jesus' declaration here is on His sovereign lordship, but in context it also clearly relates to the believer's response to His rule. Before the Lord states the Great Commission, He establishes His divine authority to command it. It is because of His sovereign power that His followers are to have the attitude of complete, humble submission to His will. *Exousia* (authority) refers to the freedom and right to speak and act as one pleases. God's freedom and right are absolute and unlimited. The All is both reinforced and delineated by the phrase 'in heaven and earth.' The sovereign authority given to Jesus by His heavenly Father.<sup>2</sup>

The fourth element for effective fulfillment of the church's mission is obedience to the Lord's command, made possible only when the attitudes of availability, worship, and submission characterize the believer's life.

In light of His absolute sovereign authority Jesus commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." The transitional word is "therefore." MacArthur writes, "'Because I am sovereign Lord of the universe,' Jesus was saying, I have both the authority to command you to be My witnesses and the power to enable you to obey that command."<sup>3</sup>

The image of Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives before his ascension at the close of the book of Matthew is church at its best; every Sunday the people of God bring their brokenness, doubts, and fears before the almighty, and the preacher reminds them that He has risen. In spite of all they face, and go through, He has risen, which causes the congregation to worship and humble themselves before the God

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<sup>1</sup>John MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, in vol. 4 of *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1989), 337.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 338.



that created and delivered them. However, many churches lose connection; by virtue of what Christ has done, because He lives and reigns with all power, He commands his followers to go in that same power proclaiming that He is the way, the truth, and the light. Sadly, many churches become impotent upon leaving the worship experience and have yet to begin to fulfill the Great Commandment.

A vibrant church is one that recognizes the right and responsibility for that which the Lord has entrusted the congregation. Walter Malone, Jr., writes,

As Christians, it should be our privilege and pleasure to share Christ with others. We should feel that what God has done and continues to do for us is so marvelous and magnificent that we want every person we meet to come to know Him as we do.

Like the apostle Paul, we should not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe (Rom 1:16). This passion ought to be the sentiment of the church, as the body of Christ. Every Christian ought to find a fire within to make them want to share Christ with others because He forgave us and redeemed us with His blood.<sup>4</sup>

James Boice suggests that the authority that Jesus speaks to is the force that would come against our efforts rather from within or from the outside.<sup>5</sup> Jesus begins with his authority in Matthew 28:18: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This is no weak authority, because the one who spoke it is no weak master. He is the risen Lord, and “all authority in heaven and on earth” has been given to Him.

The fact that all authority in heaven has been given to Jesus could mean merely that the authority he exercised on earth would be recognized in heaven. If that is the case, it would be an affirmation of Jesus’ divinity. Authority such as that would be nothing other than Jehovah’s authority. Yet there is probably more to Christ’s statement than this. When one reads the Bible about heavenly “powers” or “authorities,” it usually means spiritual or demonic powers. When it speaks of Christ’s victory through his death

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Malone, Jr., *Let's Have Church* (Louisville: Favor, 2005), 61.

<sup>5</sup>James M Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew, The Triumph of the King*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

and resurrection, it usually also has those powers in mind.

Ephesians 6:12 is written about the Christian's warfare, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Ephesians 1:20-21, tells readers that God "raised [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come." Boice writes,

When we put Christ's announcement in that context, we sense that he is not merely talking about an acknowledgment of his earthly authority in heaven. Rather, his authority is superior to and over all other authorities whether spiritual, demonic, or otherwise. His resurrection proves his authority over any power that can possibly be imagined. Consequently, we do not fear Satan or anyone else while we are engaged in Jesus' service.<sup>6</sup>

Boice also suggests that our passion to grow God's kingdom must remain constant and at the helm of our agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus announces that he has authority over everything on earth. He has authority over his people. How can it be otherwise? If believers are truly his people, they have confessed to Him that they are sinners, that He is the divine Savior, and that they have accepted his sacrifice on their behalf and have pledged themselves to follow Him as Lord. Such a confession is hypocrisy if it does not contain recognition of His authority in every area. Jesus told his disciples, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14). If followers do not obey Jesus, they are not His friends. Worse than that, they are not even Christians. Clearly, Jesus' authority extends to the work one is called to do, including what is demanded by the Great Commission. Therefore those

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 139.

under His authority are to take his gospel to the world and “make disciples” of the nations. Boice comments,

The declaration of Christ’s authority on earth means that he has authority over those who are not yet believers. That is, his authority extends to the people to whom he sends us with the gospel. It follows, on the one hand, that Christianity is to be a world religion. No one is outside the sphere of his authority or is exempt from his call. On the other hand, this is also a statement of Jesus’ ability to bring fruit from our efforts, for it is through the exercise of his authority that men and women actually come to believe and follow him.<sup>8</sup>

In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says to his disciples after he shared with them the power that would be given to them, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.” Jesus concludes this daunting task with the seal of His presence “Lo I am with you.” Throughout all of eternity the same presence that is provided during the church worship experience is also present throughout the work in the ministry. This is to suggest that as difficult as the ministry of the gospel can be, in terms of church growth and discipleship, we do not do it alone or without support from our Lord and Master. Boice suggests that in Matthew 1 Jesus was introduced as “Immanuel” which means “God with us.” In Matthew 28:20 that very same promise is repeated.<sup>9</sup> John Stott adds,

This was not the first time Christ had promised them his risen presence. Earlier in this Gospel . . . He had undertaken to be in their midst when only two or three disciples were gathered in his name. Now, as he repeats the promise of His presence, he attached it rather to their witness than to their worship. It is not only when we meet in his name, but when we go in his name, that he promises to be with us. The emphatic ‘I,’ who pledges his presence, is the one who has universal authority and who sends forth His people.<sup>10</sup>

This text in Matthew 28:20 leaves no excuse not to execute the command of the Lord and Savior, the same God who is able to sustain his followers’ personal needs,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Great Commission: One Race, One Gospel, One Task* (Berlin: World Congress of Evangelism, 1996), 12.

restores hope during worship, and uses them greatly to advance the kingdom of God regardless of challenges, physical, financial, or even numeric. We have the Lord's power to work within us as well as His promise to be with us to the very end as we obey the Great Commission.

### **Acts 1:6-8**

Acts 1:8 reveals the essential purposes of the church as well as that of the Holy Spirit. The dialogue between Jesus and His disciples represents an ongoing conversation between the Lord and the many congregations that represent the body of Christ. Ken Hemphill writes, "The kingdom has always been central to our relationship with God, for it has always been his means of relating to us. His purpose has always been to raise up a people who would embrace his mission, embody his name and obey his word."<sup>11</sup> Walter Malone, Jr. suggests,

If as the people of God, we really knew who we were and understood the true significance of the church of the living God we would not see the church as just another institution among other institutions. We would see it for its true value. So, for the church to be credible and authentic there must be a sense of dependability and reliability in ministry. . . . Theologian, Dr. D. Elton Trueblood said the problem with the people of God is that we see the church as having marginal and not major relevancy. But the truth of the matter is that we have the power in Christ to transform the world! The church is not simply an organized institution; it is a spiritual organism that has been birthed into the world by Christ.<sup>12</sup>

In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask Jesus, now that he has risen from the grave and has all power, will he now restore Israel (them) to their rightful place in the world's social, political, and economical arena: "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" The context of the text suggests that the disciples were concerned with Israel's future regarding the re-establishing of its kingdom status. Acts 1:6 reveals that the disciples believed the personal need of the nation of Israel was at the helm of

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<sup>11</sup>Ken Hemphill, *EKG: The Heartbeat of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 5.

<sup>12</sup>Malone, *Let's Have Church*, 150.

Christ's agenda. In many regards or situations, this mindset of the disciples reveals the mood and prayers of many Christians who inhabit church buildings Sunday after Sunday. In the pews of the Canaan Church this is the mindset of many of the saints: "Lord now that I know or have been reminded that you have all power what are you going to do about my situation."

Christ recognized human needs and wants. Many Scriptures speak frankly on the issue of God supplying for human needs, for example, Luke 12:22-31: "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 'For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.'" Tony Evans argues,

The last phrase in Ephesians 1:23 'the fullness of Him who fills all in all.' proves this point. ' . . . that as we complete Christ, He completes us. As the church is faithful to be visible, physical expression of the Lord of eternity, He will involve Himself in the process to make sure we are completing the task that he has assigned.'<sup>13</sup>

Based on Jesus' response, however, he wanted his disciples as well as the church in the twenty-first century to know that the primary responsibility and focus is to do the will of the Father. He said to them in Acts 1:7 "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority." A believers' focus as well as that of the disciples was to evangelize the world, to share the good news, and to tell the story. R. Kent Hughes argues that this passage speaks to the heart of the New Testament church:

Our Lord has laid down in the clearest terms the mission for those who are to follow him. This is the mission of the church that would dare to call itself New Testament. . . . Verse 8 is the key verse of the entire book of Acts. . . . The core commission is seen in the heart of verse 8: ' . . . and you will be my witnesses.' We are to be witnesses for Christ! This is the recurring message of Acts. The word occurs no less than thirty-nine times.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Tony Evans, *God's Glorious Church: The Mystery and Mission of the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 36.

<sup>14</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *ACTS: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 15.

John Polhill suggests that verses 6-8 are tied together:

In v. 6 the disciples asked Jesus about the time of the kingdom. In v. 7 Jesus rejected the speculation about 'time' altogether and in v. 8 replaced this with the relevant subject—the Christian task in the interim period before the kingdom's coming. Jesus corrected the disciples by directing them away from the questions about 'times or dates' These are matters wholly within God's own purposes and authority.<sup>15</sup>

Polhill argues that in a very real sense the restoration of the kingdom is a representation of the restoring of humanity, that it is a worldwide mission of the church to share the good news of Christ to all of humanity. This being the mystery of the gospel, and the purpose of the empowering of the Holy Spirit which makes up the ladder of this two-part purpose of Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."<sup>16</sup>

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit allows us to take Christ with us wherever we go. Every Sunday when parishioners receive the benediction they then go forth into the world in the power of the Spirit of Christ. Jesus shows up on the job, in the office, and schools across the city.

### **A Covenant Relationship**

In the Old Testament, the temple was a place to experience the presence of God. The temple was a special place where the glory of His presence filled the atmosphere. Even before the temple was erected the children of Israel would carry the Ark of the Covenant, which held His law, holiness, and expectation.

E. A. Martens maintains that the Old Testament supplies the fiber for the Christian faith: "But unless the message of the Old Testament is clearly articulated, its relevance to the New Testament and to Christians today will remain fuzzy."<sup>17</sup> Clarity

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<sup>15</sup>John B. Polhill, *The Book of Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 84.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>17</sup>E. A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 123.

about the Christian faith will depend on a grasp of the Old Testament. Martens asserts and then sets out in search of a single central message, which he believes is the key to the content of the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup>

In the book of Genesis, God begins the process of restoring His image and mark on humanity by His sovereignty, grace, and the faith of individuals, which ultimately led to the establishment of the church found in the New Testament. Gareth Crossley points out,

The Lord takes on an obligation to care for Noah and his family. As the Old Testament revelation progresses and further clarification is given, the Lord becomes more specific. To Moses God says, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name, LORD, I was not known to them.' I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as my people, and I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord' (Exod 6:2-8).

Such passages lead to the conclusion that the essence of a covenant . . . is the bonded relationship between two parties. The people of God during the Old Testament period are the covenant community. The Lord declares his responsibilities towards his people, and marks out their responsibilities towards him. But the concept of a covenant community does not end with the Old Testament. The New Testament church of Jesus Christ is just as strongly a community under covenant. Indeed, in outlining the blessings of a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying and there shall be no more pain', the highlight is that 'The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' (Rev 21:1, 4, 3).<sup>19</sup>

Today, the church serves as the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells.

During the days of Moses, the Ark of the Covenant was the representation of God's eternal presence. From the Ark, David orchestrated the movement of the Ark into the King's city, which made Jerusalem the holy city where God's presence resided. After

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<sup>18</sup>Gareth Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (Faverdale North, England: Evangelical, 2006), 31.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 32.

which Solomon built a temple that represented God's presence and worship for the Children of Israel was established. When Jesus Christ stepped on the scene he made it clear that the temple where God dwells was in the heart of man:

Jesus said to her, 'Women, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship him. "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'" (John 4:21, 23-24 NKJV)

In Acts 1:8 the stage was set because of the love displayed on Calvary by Christ. The Spirit of God was then able to dwell in the hearts of men, through the Holy Spirit. The writer of Hebrews makes this clear when he writes,

God who at various times and in various ways, spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb 1:1-3)

Concerning the Canaan Church, the lack of having an adequate church facility or church setting has helped this reality. If Canaan were to grow, initially it would not be because of a beautiful edifice wherein their worship was held. The attraction would be found in the presence of God in the hearts of the people. Her power will lie in the presence of God found in the body that serves as the membership of the Canaan Church. Through the leadership and teaching of this pastor, the Canaan Church will come to fully understand that the body of Christ is the church. That church is not predicated on a building, but rather the building of the kingdom through the people of God. Tony Evans affirms by suggesting,

The church is called to fulfill the function of taking Jesus everywhere . . . although the Old Testament temple was a building. I'm talking about the church as the people of God, who are called to manifest His presence wherever we go. Yes, Christians usually gather in a building for worship, praise, and instruction in the Word, and when the church is gathered God's presence is in evidence. But we take His presence with us because the church is God's human temple.<sup>20</sup> God no longer limits His presence on earth to a building made of wood and stone.

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<sup>20</sup>Evans, *God's Glorious Church*, 38.



Evans likens the church's presence in the world to that of the American embassy: "A little bit of American a long way from home."<sup>21</sup>

Acts 1:8 is written, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witness both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." The word "power" found in this text is *dunamus*, where we get our word dynamite. This is the same word found in the gospels when they speak of the miracles performed by Christ.<sup>22</sup> Miraculous power is the mystery of the gospel and the key to church growth and vitality. God takes the perfect gift, the Holy Spirit, and places Him in the hearts and minds of a broken humanity.

Ephesians 3 affirms the mystery of the gospel as well as the praxis of Acts 1:8:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you. How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. . . . and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. (Eph 1:3-7; 3:8-10)

Tony Evans affirms, "The church is the crowning jewel in God's plan throughout eternity that will demonstrate to the entire angelic realm His infinite wisdom in choosing weak vessels like us through whom to manifest His glory."<sup>23</sup> Paul concludes Ephesians 3:20 with a doxology of praise, power, and possibility. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us."

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Polhill, *The Book of Acts*, 80.

<sup>23</sup>Evans, *God's Glorious Church*, 39.

Klyne Snodgrass references J. B. Phillips' book *Your God Is Too Small*, and suggests that Ephesians 3:20 could have been the focal point of the book. Snodgrass argues,

Surely this is the real problem behind the failure of Christians to understand and live their faith, is theological; our image of God is too small. Our God is too remote, disinterested, and inept. In fact, he is too much like us. We neither expect anything from him—unless it is a handout—nor are we engaged with him. Our view of God can never include all that he is, and his way and thought will always be far above us. But the God of the Bible is not too small. Here is the God we need for life.<sup>24</sup> The God we need to fulfill Acts 1:8.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12,

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always caring about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

The power found in Acts 1:8 is the power by which the church moves forward in light of difficulty and circumstance for the purpose of church growth and vitality. The church of Jesus Christ must be bold in its endeavors to fulfill the Great Commission.

Scott J. Hafemann writes about Paul's letter to the church in Corinth:

Paul counters his opponents influence on the Corinthians by again reminding them that this glory is not mediated through a health and wealth gospel and lifestyle. Rather, Paul carried his treasure in a jar of clay, a reference to his weakness and sufferings. . . . This is God's design in order to make it evident that the power of the gospel does not reside in Paul, but belongs to God. The power of the gospel is so great and its glory so profound that it must be carried in a jar, lest people put their trust in Paul himself.<sup>25</sup>

Here again the word *dunimus* is used to express the power that has been entrusted into the hands of the body of Christ's miracle working power that enables us to display the love of Christ to the world amidst the suffering one might experience growing

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<sup>24</sup>Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 180.

<sup>25</sup>Scott J Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 68.

and building God's church. When the Canaan Church was planted, I preached a sermon based on this text entitled "Quitting Aint in Me!" It was the declarative statement of resolve, that this church, as the body of Christ will fulfill the task of "making disciples and making a difference because of the power that lies within us." Similar to the point Jesus made to His disciples prior to His ascension in Acts 1:8, "you will receive *dunimus* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses . . . to the uttermost parts of the earth."

## Acts 2

In Acts 2, we see the purpose, power, and presence of the Holy Spirit at work within the body of Christ. The evidence in the power of the Holy Spirit is found in two particular areas of which we must take notice. First, the bold preaching of Peter. The apostle at one point was afraid of owning up to even knowing Christ. In John 18:25, Peter denied being the Lord's disciple twice. Now, with the help of the Spirit and the proof of Christ's resurrection behind him, he speaks boldly before the people and perhaps to those who viewed Christ as a mad man or a magician who ran out of tricks.

In Acts 2:22-23, Peter stands and says, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words: 'For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.'" But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, say God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughter shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death: whom God raised up

having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Peter, no longer was afraid to own His Lord, stands up to speak to those gathered to witness the astonishing phenomena that had been manifested. He stands up “with the eleven,” which suggests that the others apostles are backing him. Ministry is almost always as a team in Acts: Peter and John in Acts 3 concerning the lame man who was healed; Paul and Barnabas on what is considered Paul’s first missionary journey; and Paul and Silas on the last two missionary journey. This speaks to the heart of the intent of Christ concerning the advancement of the kingdom, in that it is a commutative, collaborative, and co-laboring component found in kingdom-building. In the gospel recorded by Luke, on two separate occasions he sent out His disciples to preach the good news and in both instances it was a group effort (9:1-6; 10:1-12). It is evident that one of the purposes for the group activities was for support: “Go your way; behold I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals and greet no one along the road” (Luke 10:1-7).

The obvious reason behind Jesus’ command to go with only the support of each other suggests that ministry is not a one-man show, which is seen throughout the New Testament record. There are many cases of one individual supporting another, starting with the twelve, then Peter and John, Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Silas, and Aquila and Persilla. Second, the purpose for ministry as a group undertaking is that it hinders complacency and closed-minded mentality. In the case of Barnabas and Paul, we see this manifest itself in the story line of their missionary trip, and their ruptured relationship, which led to a sharp contention; they had John Mark over continuing to accompany them:

Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.’ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. (Acts 15:36-38 AV)

Had there not been a Barnabas mentality of grace and encouragement present, who knows what effects Paul's rejection of John Mark's failure would have had on his ministry and life. We do know, however, at the end of Paul's earthly life and ministry, he requested John Mark's presence. In 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul writes, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." In an article by Brian Tubbs he writes,

A local church that withdraws into closed-door legalism, 'Comfort Zone' complacency, or elitist judgmentalism is a church outside of God's will. This is not to suggest that a church shouldn't stand for truth or practice sound doctrine. Both are clearly part of God's mandate for the church.

The biblical model for a church is a church that actively and passionately ministers to both the physical and spiritual needs of those around it—especially, of course, the spiritual needs. Such a church should desire to grow—not for its own glory or satisfaction, but because of its love for God and the people within its reach.<sup>26</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the church must maintain its theological integrity in terms of its doctrinal position regarding Christ being the absolute truth. However, there is something to be said of those who operate with a "seekers" mentality or those who are willing to seek out and meet the immediate needs of those who are lost in this post-modern Christian world.

Church growth does not happen by osmosis, it requires intentionality and observation as well as direction. Gene Mims writes,

Healthy Skepticism is a good thing whether you're looking for new ways to build a church or the secret to a better golf swing. One study I've seen claims that 87 percent of all institutional reorganization programs fail completely within the first two years. . . . The big problem with the 87 percent of programs that fail is that they focus on mechanics and procedures instead of on results. You may be riding a different horse, but you find you're on the same old merry-go-round. Success comes when we have a clear vision of what God wants from us. . . . But when you have a kingdom-focused church, the pressure's off. You allow yourself and your ministry to be used as an instrument of God's will. You come alongside Him where He is at work and behold, you discover that the solution you've been wracking your brain for isn't programmatic or mechanical; it's spiritual. . . . God will show you and your church what to do.

God saves the unsaved through the ministry of a kingdom- focused church, then inspires and equips the new believers so that others can be saved. One Christian

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<sup>26</sup>Brian Tubbs, "On the Web the Death of Moral Truth in Modern Circles" [on-line]; accessed 30 April 2010; available from <http://briantubbs.blogspot.com>; Internet.

believers the good news to a number of people, who each witness to several more; and the message multiplies. A kingdom-focused church makes disciples, matures them through spiritual transformation, and multiplies them as kingdom agents throughout the world. Such a church has a passion to see every person complete in Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Paul said it best when he declared that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and has given unto us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19).

In Peter's initial sermon post-Pentecost, he compels the house of Israel to make a decision to accept Christ as God's Messiah (Acts 2:14). This conviction was not born out of a vacuum, but by the Holy Spirit, Peter inspired by the prophet Joel and the affirmation David received from the Lord where by declared that his decedents would remain on the throne in Israel which validates to them the expected fulfillment of prophecy. Then, Peter immediately transitions to Christ, it the center piece of our faith: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:14). Ajith Fernando writes,

Peter's next statement represents the second major fracture of the apostolic kerygma: a theological evaluation of the person of Jesus. The worlds with which he begins his major affirmation, 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this,' are appropriate considering the convincing way he has argued his case up to now. His conclusion is clear: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. Peter claims first that Jesus is Lord. With the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, the disciples now fully understand the implications of who he is. . . . Moreover Jesus as Lord has taken on divine functions, such as pouring out the Spirit and being the object of faith.<sup>28</sup>

Christianity is Christ. Peter's message at Pentecost gives an indication of why we can make such a claim. Every step in Christ's career opens the door to some facet of the faith and practice of the Christian. Acts 2:14 gives the reader the first evangelistic sermon of the New Testament church. In terms of results, it was eminently successful. Therefore, we can only assume that he intended it as a model of evangelistic preaching in

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<sup>27</sup>Gene Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church: A Compelling Image of an Achievable Future* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 15, 17.

<sup>28</sup>Ajith Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 104.

the early church. We can therefore expect to learn much about evangelistic preaching here.<sup>29</sup>

Within the vein of evangelism each of the following points is vital in the Christian gospel and forms the basis of proclamation; our message to focus on Christ. Leighton Ford suggests several key elements that must become the foundation of all of our evangelistic efforts:

Jesus incarnation and ministry made it possible for him to be our Savior (v. 22). His death on the cross-achieved salvation (v. 23). His resurrection confirmed the efficacy of and validated his work (vv. 24-32). His exaltation made it possible for him to send the Holy Spirit, who actualizes this salvation (vv. 33, 39). His second coming will consummate his work (not explicitly stated, but implied in v. 35). In view of who Jesus is and what he has done, our salvation depends on him (vv. 36, 38) Our receiving of salvation involves admitting our need through repentance and accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord. It results in our reception of the Holy Spirit and is expressed in baptism in his name (v.38).<sup>30</sup>

Christianity is all-inclusive; however, it is exclusive in relation to our means to salvation. As the people of God, we must find as the first century church found its unity in diversity, and our focus must be kingdom-driven. Luke tells us in chapter 2:42-47,

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Church life or vitality focuses on the energy and enthusiasm that marked the first-century church which is shown in Acts 2:42-47. The church was on fire for what God had done for them in the person of Jesus Christ and their enthusiasm and commitment was so contagious that Luke tells in Acts 2:47, "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." As the people of God grow in spiritual

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<sup>29</sup>Leighton Ford, *The Christian Persuader: A New Look at Evangelism Today* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 92-139.

<sup>30</sup>Fernando, *Acts*, 107-08.

maturity and come to understand the full knowledge of what God has done in Christ Jesus, excitement and vitality should begin to emerge and manifest itself through growth. The goal of this project, through sound biblical preaching and teaching, is that those of the local body of the Canaan church would come to the full knowledge of their salvation. Also, through this continued knowledge of God's word that spiritual and numeric growth would began to take place. Ajith Fernando writes,

When God's people come together and enjoy fellowship, 'praising God' is the natural result (v. 47a). True fellowship focuses on God and helps people to remember the good things he has done, which, in turn, causes praise. Such fresh and powerful community life would win the admiration of people outside the church. And this is what happened in Jerusalem too, for the early Christians enjoyed 'the favor of all the people' during their first few weeks.

In the meantime the church grew numerically. But it was 'the Lord who' added to their number. Ultimately, God is the evangelist. Paul wrote, 'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God only God, who makes things grow' (1 Cor 3:6-7). God does use our efforts and our techniques, but we must ensure that we are in the place where he can use us and that our techniques are acceptable to him.<sup>31</sup>

R. Kent Hughes suggests,

'They devoted themselves to . . . the fellowship.' This kind of fellowship did not exist before the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Greek word used here (Koinonia) is not even found in the Gospels. This is the first occurrence of the word in the New Testament. The root idea is 'commonness' or commonality.' New Testament Greek is called Koine Greek because it was the common Greek of the day—the street language of the people.

Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it denotes some kind of sharing—either sharing something with someone (for instance, in 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13 where it means an offering, collection, or contribution) or sharing in something someone else is experiencing. Here in Acts the emphasis of the word is on contributing or giving. The foundation of the early Christians' fellowship was giving. Fellowship cost something in the early church, in contrast to our use of the word fellowship today. Fellowship is not just a sentimental feeling of oneness. It is not punch and cookies. It does not take place simply because we are in the church hall. Fellowship comes through giving. True fellowship costs.<sup>32</sup>

Church growth and vitality come when the individual or church body gives the best of their time, talents, and treasures, and with each there is a cost involved. Not just

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 123-24.

<sup>32</sup>Hughes, *ACTS*, 47-48.



referencing our fellowship, but even the evangelistic arm of the ministry comes with an attitude of “cost.” If the church truly desires to grow numerically then she must be willing to put in the time to tell others about Christ. What He has done for “those” who have been redeemed who witness to other. When they met him and since they have encountered him. Witnessing or evangelism (used interchangeably) requires us to come out of our comfort zones of complacency and share with others regardless of gender, race, and worldview, and in many instances that requires work. Walter Malone, Jr. writes,

Nobody ever met Jesus who did not want to tell somebody else about Him. The great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, Evangelism is ‘one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.’

So the question is, are we sharing Christ with others intentionally? How does the church grow? Does the church grow by popularity or by practice? Does it grow by happenstance or intentionality? When is the last time we shared with somebody about Jesus Christ? When is the last time we prayed for somebody who was unsaved or un-churched? When is the last time we asked God to put us in a situation where we could share with somebody about Jesus Christ?

If everyone would win one soul to Christ the church would double in size to the glory of God. It is kingdom business. ‘The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few’ (Matthew 9:37).<sup>33</sup>

Malone goes on to say,

The Apostle Paul was serious about the evangelistic responsibility of the church. The ecclesia (Greek for ‘called out ones’) must go back into the world and spread the good news. We must be real and radical about evangelism. In a real sense, in the first century, everybody that was saved preached. Everybody went out and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

One of the greatest challenges the Canaan Church faces is presenting their faith to others in an evangelistic way to promote church growth. Ninety percent of the members came from a traditional background with the mindset that the church is a place to gather, marry, bury, and bless their children. The church in which they came from would be looked upon more as a country club rather than a place for Christians to gather to be empowered then go out to witness. Religiosity took precedence over the lost.

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<sup>33</sup>Malone, *Let's Have Church*, 75.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 139-40.

In many dying congregations today this same mindset is prevalent, it is a mindset based on a fear of change and the attitude of complacency. An example of this mindset was found at the previous church that many of the members of what now makes up the Canaan Church were once a part of. A young woman who is now a part of Canaan, shared regarding a matter of change to me and the leadership of the Canaan Church that had taken place within the former church which she had attended. At the time the goal of the pastor was to provide a small reception for first time visitors. This would give the visitors an opportunity to meet the pastor along with his family, and in return give the pastor an opportunity to express his vision and answer any questions that they may have. The response she received from the chair of deacons was “you see we let you all (referring to new people) in and you just take over.”

This mindset that the deacon had and perhaps others not only in this church but in other congregations that make up the Ecclesia, will destroy the foundation that help grow the First-Century Church. The first-century church vision of *koinonia* (fellowship) was vital to her growth and development. The study of God’s word and vitality, many would-be saints have taken literal ownership of the church and held serious saints hostage from their spiritual mandate: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The word vitality, although it is a noun, functions within the church and organization as a verb. There is an implied thought that vitality brings life and even a renewed life to the object or persons that are being mentioned. Its purpose “vitality” for this project is to express one’s willingness to be led of the Spirit of God for knowledge, and His will. A church that cannot or will not leave themselves open for fresh revelation from God regarding methodology, will soon find themselves in a stagnate pool of disobedience. For the purpose of change and growth, I would like to shed some

hermeneutical light on another passage of Scripture that signifies the importance of being open to the will of God for growth.

### **Acts 10:9-22, 27**

Paul speaks passionately in his letters to the church about the mystery of God's will that Christianity would be a universal religion, here we read about her inception.

Peter, while waiting to eat, falls into a trance and it is revealed to him that nothing that God has created is impure that He has made clean. What a marvelous revelation and reality that through the blood of Christ all have the opportunity to express the abundant life found in Christ. Many churches only experience transfer growth because they have not yielded to the idea that Christianity is all-inclusive. There are thousands of unsaved people in every community and although they may not look and live as we do, we have been given a mandate to share the gospel with them. Ajith Fernando writes,

Peter, the one to whom the keys of the kingdom were given (Matt 16:19), is again chosen to open another important door for the gospel—as he did with the Jews on the day of Pentecost and the Samaritans a short while later. We find him in Joppa, where he will disregard his prejudices, obey God by traveling to Caesarea, and open the door for Gentiles to respond to the gospel—the very thing Jonah resisted in the same city.<sup>35</sup>

In the dialogue between Peter and Jehovah, I am sure too many Christians they have heard this discourse in some form or fashion: “I cannot do it now because I never did it before.” Although the exegetical understanding is race and cultural relations, and for the purpose of church growth and vitality we will continue to move in this vein. Many churches are drowning and declining because of their fear of the unknown or the refusal to come out of their comfort zones. As it relates to evangelism, often times churches miss their blessings and a tremendous opportunity to be blessed and be a blessing because of their unconscious refusal to present the gospel to those who may not

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<sup>35</sup>Fernando, *Acts*, 325-26.

look or live as they do. Sometimes knowing a person's background will hinder a would-be saint from engaging for the purpose of sharing the gospel. Ajith Fernando writes,

Often Christians have not wanted to break the barriers of caste, class, and race because it is inconvenient to do so. Sometimes believers do not bring up these issues, fearing that doing so will affect the evangelistic effectiveness of the church. At other times it seems advantageous to treat those different from them as inferior.<sup>36</sup>

In his commentary, R. Kent Hughes gives even more clarity and consequence to these issues that continue to plague the church of the living God:

Mahatma Gandhi shares in his autobiography that in his student days in England he was deeply touched by reading the Gospels and seriously considered becoming a convert to Christianity, which seemed to offer a real solution to the caste system that divided the people of India. One Sunday he attended church services and decided to ask the minister for enlightenment on salvation and other doctrines. But when Gandhi entered the sanctuary, the ushers refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go elsewhere to worship with his own people. He left and never came back. 'If Christians have caste differences also,' he said to himself, 'I might as well remain a Hindu!'<sup>37</sup>

Hughes acknowledges,

Our attitude toward the world—those who do not know God—is supremely important. That is the thrust of the book of Jonah. It was the prophets' bad attitude toward the world that landed him in the belly of the great fish. God was saying to him, 'Jonah, this is what I think of yourself will, your prejudice, your elitism.'

In Christ there is no basis for discrimination of any kind. Prejudice or elitism on the lips of a believer is an obscenity whether it be racial, national, cultural, or social. If only there had been more love and less bias in the usher's heart when he met Gandhi the future world leader had read the New Testament and had even seriously considered Christianity, but his conclusion was, 'I like the New Testament, I like your Christianity, but I do not like your Christians.'<sup>38</sup>

The goal of this project is to teach the people at the Canaan Church to live with a sense or attitude that is inclusive, open-armed, and optimistic toward all who would be potential children of the most high God. Hughes writes, "The gospel never changes. But we can become unchangeable, inflexible, and thus unusable."

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>37</sup>Hughes, *ACTS*, 149.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 154.

### CHAPTER 3

## CHURCH VITALITY THAT LEADS TO CHURCH GROWTH

In *The Antioch Effect*, Ken Hemphill speaks on church vitality that leads to church growth:

We've all experienced the phenomenon! Our church is touched by the hand of God during a 'special revival' meeting, conference, or prayer meeting. We have true confession and repentance, holiness is restored, relationships are healed, vision and vitality are once again evidenced in the church, and super natural results are experienced. We bask in the moving of God's Spirit and think that nothing could ever deter us from remaining in this empowered state of supernatural living. Yet we watch as conditions change and everything returns to normal. We sigh impotently and muse, 'I knew it was too good to last.'

We experience the inevitable roller coaster of spiritual highs and lows in the church, living more on the plains of human empowering than in the heights of supernatural experience? Are we simply expecting too much to think we can have the empowering hand of the Lord continually upon us?<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesians, Paul expresses to the body of believers at Ephesus that they ought to expect the continual anointing of God, which had been purposed before the foundation of the earth. He concludes chapter 3, "Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we could ask or think according to the power that works within us."

Both Ken Hemphill and Paul agree regarding the impact and the effect that the Spirit of God has on a congregation; both agree that the indwelling of God's supernatural presence is necessary for sustained church growth and effectiveness. Life energy and Spirit are the terms Websters dictionary uses to describe vitality. The purpose of this project is to stimulate a church plant to the point of continual effectiveness and growth.

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<sup>1</sup>Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 35.

Church vitality speaks to the life and energy that a church gives off that draws people:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers . . . many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And they continuing daily with one accord . . . did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

The first century church was contagious, vibrant, and effective. The one thing that first century Christians ultimately had in common and made all the difference was their relationship with Jesus Christ. The gospel recorded by Luke tells that two of Christ's disciples were on the road to Emmaus. When these two disciples found out who Jesus was and that he had risen, they were excited. Full of so much energy these two disciples traveled seven miles back to Jerusalem to find the eleven and that they were with them all together, and affirm that Christ had risen.

George Barna suggests in *High Impact African American Churches*, "Effective ministries foster significant and continual changes in how people live. When your church is able to consistently facilitate a personal metamorphosis among its people, then it is operating in the realm of effectiveness."<sup>2</sup>

In explaining a spirit filled worship experience Walter Malone states,

Inasmuch as we tell others and have been told ourselves that we need to attend church and be a part of a church, it is incumbent upon us that if we join church we need to experience church. When an individual's expectations are raised about attending a church, it is most disappointing and discouraging if they become affiliated with that church and they do not experience what they were told to expect in that church—we need the experience of church to impact us. So, if the church is going to have authenticity and credibility, then we must have God's empowering presence.<sup>3</sup>

The church of the living God must become vibrant if it is to be contagious and effective. An effective church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not founded on games or gimmicks such as entertainment during worship, auxiliary ministry trips, and fellowships.

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<sup>2</sup>George Barna and Harry R. Jackson, Jr., *High Impact African American Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>Walter Malone, Jr., *Let's Have Church* (Louisville: Favor, 2005), 45-46.

Church vitality is neither found in the largest churches with excessive budgets. During the dark days of slavery, during the embryonic stages of the black church, it was recorded that some of the most impactful and effective God-felt worship experiences took place in Brush Harbor. The Brush Harbor was a place down by the river where slaves would go and worship God freely. There were no baby grands, Hammond pianos, padded pews, or big budgets; the only elements present were the disenchanted and disenfranchised yet hopeful hearts of the slaves along with the unyielding love, power, and presence of “I Am That I Am.”

As a church plant, it is incumbent upon the Canaan Church to be excitable, effective, and contagious in order to fulfill the mandate given by Jesus Christ; however, effectiveness and exuberance must be rooted in the Word and presence of God. Thom Rainer’s book *Breakout Churches*, describes a breakout church as one that is effectively reaching the lost and ministering to the young. A church that is not satisfied with *status quo*, but has found its faith in the word of God: “Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all you could ask or think according to the power that works within us” (Eph 3:20). Rainer suggests,

The breakout churches never strayed from the central doctrines of the Christian faith. These doctrines are the churches core values. While the comparison churches indicated adherence to these values in their written documents their practice of the values was dubious.<sup>4</sup>

The challenge of the Canaan Church and any other church who desires to pattern itself after the first century church, is to maintain the integrity of the gospel while at the same time becoming so contagious that one would want to become a part of the dynamic movement and raise the question “what must I do to be saved.” Ken Hemphill suggests,

Many books and conferences on church growth address the issue of worship and church growth, but focus primarily on worship as an entry point for the unbeliever or first time visitor. Some have called worship the front door to church growth. . . .

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<sup>4</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 186.

Yet the emphasis on worship as a front door to numerical growth may have caused us to over-look other aspects of the role of worship in church growth. I would go so far as to say that authentic worship is the wellspring of most elements of church growth.<sup>5</sup>

Warren Wiersbe defines worship:

The believers' response with all that he is mind, emotions, will, and body—to all that God is and says and does. This response has its mystical side in subjective experience, and its practical side in objective obedience to God's revealed truth. It is a loving response that is balanced by the fear of the Lord, and it is a deepening response as the believer comes to know God better.<sup>6</sup>

Evelyn Underhill defines worship as “the total adoring response of man to the one Eternal God self-revealed in time.”<sup>7</sup> A Christians' worship is centered in Christ. When one thinks about worship it is important to understand that worship is transcendent and imminent. To say that worship is transcendent is to acknowledge that one is not equal to God nor a constituent or colleague.

Since God is transcendent, He is above creation and beyond creation. Therefore, as Scripture declares, His thoughts our not our thoughts nor are His ways our ways (Isa 55:8-9). There is a sense of reverence that one should have when they come into His presence. In Isaiah 6 the reader is given a wonderful description of worship. Isaiah moved from the loss of King Uziah to seeing God high and lifted up. In God's presence Isaiah recognizing his own brokenness and need while standing before the almighty, which leads to Isaiah's cleansing, commission, and commitment: “Here I am Lord send me.” Thus, church vitality is predicated on the church knowing God and knowing God is predicated on knowing His Word.

Worship by definition to this preacher's understanding of the Scriptures is coming into the presence of a Holy God to exalt Him and celebrate His presence and

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<sup>5</sup>Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect*, 41.

<sup>6</sup>Warren Wiesbe, *Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Chicago: David Cook, 2008), 32.

<sup>7</sup>Evelyn UnderHill, *Practical Mysticism* [on-line]; accessed 7 February 2012; available from [www.createspaces.com](http://www.createspaces.com); Internet.



authority in our lives, through many facets of human expression. This thereby compels the people of God to line up with the will of God. The people of God not only have the right but also the responsibility to worship God.

In *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches*, George Barna suggests,

One stumbling block for many churches is in getting their people to possess an accurate understanding of what worship is and is not. This must be addressed at two levels: (1) What does worship mean for the worshiper? (2) What does worship mean for those at the church who will be responsible for consistently facilitating true worship?<sup>8</sup>

He goes on to list several ways in which highly effective churches evaluate the worship services:

People are clearly moved - physically, emotionally, or intellectually—by the experience: deep questions were answered, dubious behaviors were seriously challenged, personal faith- commitment level was stirred;

Emotional or physical healing of some discernible nature occurred;

People are anxious to return to the church for another God-encounter, hoping to again experience the intense joy or fulfillment of that day's encounter;

Worshippers had an undeniable sense of God's presence in their midst;

Individuals experienced a deep need to repent before God;

There was a willingness to surrender control of their lives and allow God to direct them in a more intimate and pervasive manner;

The sermon provided a biblical impetus for people to clarify their worldview and to grow holistically.

One of the many challenges that the Canaan Church faces coming out of a traditional setting is defining what true worship is and acknowledging it. After defining and acknowledging what worship is, developing a worship style that is kingdom-focused and all-inclusive. The idea of worship that many of Canaan's members were accustomed to is that of the mindset of many believers across America; worship by definition is attending church, being a church member, and believing that God exists.

In preparing to establish Canaan as a church of vitality, understanding the true

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<sup>8</sup>George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1999), 88.

nature of worship is essential for this undertaking. George Barna in *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* lists several approaches highly effective churches use to educate their congregations about worship:

Establish that worship is about our focusing on God, not God focusing on us. Most adults attend worship services with one dominant person on their mind: Before people can worship God, they must see how crucial it is to focus their attention on the Being they have allegedly come to worship. Provide adults with a compelling reason to engage in worship.

Based on the information that I have read the majority of adults now attending churches today are Boomers and Busters; people in their twenties, thirties, and forties. The characteristics and traits of these generations of churchgoers do not have the mindset of following tradition. The busters or generation Xers as some call them, may have grown up under the philosophy that does not question authority or traditions. As the buster generation came into their own reason and accountability, they challenged expected patterns of activity, and have not blindly followed tradition. Highly effective churches often challenge younger adults to articulate why they go to church and, upon discovering reasons that have nothing to do with worship, refocus the conversation on the meaning of worship and related reasons that justify worship. Among the reasons suggested are that the Bible commands us to worship Him; He deserves our worship; our worship gives God pleasure; if we truly love Him, we should be willing to honor Him through worship:

Robert Smith explains how worship is both an attitude and an action:

Most people are used to thinking of worship as something that they do (or, unfortunately, a place they go or an event they attend). Highly effective churches teach their people that worship is both an action (i.e., engaging in efforts to intentionally glorify God) and an attitude. An attitude of worship implies that we feel privileged to give God glory and honor, that we are humbled by the ability to experience and interact with Him, that we acknowledge our own sinfulness in contrast to His purity, and that we view worshiping God to be one of the most incredible opportunities we may experience in life.<sup>9</sup>

Smith suggests that that it is up to the pastor or church leader to facilitate the

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Smith, Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 38.

worship experience with in the congregation. Part of their responsibility is to aid the people on Sunday morning to have intimacy with God.

The challenge most pastors and worship leaders have in Robert Smith's opinion is that many people struggle with achieving true intimacy with one another. Culture has quietly moved from community to individualism. There was a time when neighbors would sit on their porches, converse with each other, and perhaps throw up their hands at those riding by. Now people are witnessing a culture of privacy fences, large back-yard patios, and limited front porch space. If people are not challenged Monday through Saturday to experience intimacy with their neighbors, there will be a challenge come Sunday morning to ask people to open up their hearts and minds to the willingness to be expressive to one another, let alone new faces that come to the worship experience.

Again Robert Smith comments,

Interestingly, our research suggests that many people may struggle in achieving intimacy with God because they have never had true intimacy with people on earth and therefore are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with such closeness. - defining what intimacy means and accomplishes, then moving forward progressively to the point at which they are able experience that depth of connection with God.<sup>10</sup>

Smith goes on to suggest that in order for pastors and worship leaders to break this cycle of lack of intimacy within the church they must encourage the people to come to the worship experience prepared. Just like those who prepare for sporting events. By the Canaan church being in the city of Columbus, Ohio where Ohio State Buckeye football is a major league event, it was easy for me to provide powerful illustrations of those going to an event prepared to celebrate and fellowship with people that they may have never met. Seeing that those fans were all Buckeye fans and they were all rooting for the same team, fellowship and intimacy was not a challenge.

In leading up to the five-week sermon series on worship I met with the worship

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<sup>10</sup>Smith, *Doctrine that Dances*, 38.

leader and minister of music to select songs that are specific to worshipping God in accordance to his nature, attributes, and character. It is vital when choosing a worship leader or minister of music that they have specific attributes and qualifications. A worship leader must be personable, charismatic in nature but above all in tune with the presence of God throughout worship and the spirit of the congregation. Like a doctor who recognizes the ailment and provide the prognosis. The Canaan Church has been gifted with such personalities in her worship leader as well as minister of music.

During the five-week series of messages the Canaan Church service opened up with Scriptures such as Psalm 24, Palm 121, and Psalm 151 just to name a few. “Holy, Holy, Holy” was the congregational hymn, along with several contemporary worship songs selected by the worship leader and minister of music.

### **Preaching for Information and Inspiration**

Robert Smith in *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* suggests,

The function of the exegetical escort is to embrace the text of Scripture in order to usher the hearer into the presence of God for the purpose of transformation. Preachers of Christian doctrine must draw out of the bible what is in the bible without projecting their own presuppositions and interests on the text.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, he preached and taught the kingdom of God with a sense of passion and skill that led to trust and transformation and compelled men and women to follow and lead others to the “way.” Jesus used practical illustrations, parables, and metaphors to give description of the Father, His will, and the kingdom. Jesus used the universal language of imagery and metaphors to express “thus says the Lord.”

Smith points out that in the acclaimed movie “A Time to Kill,” white lawyers appeal to a white jury to exonerate a black man who killed two white men for the rape of

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 40.

his daughter failed in their proposition. Yet, when the black man's lawyer played by Mathew McConaughey asked the jury to close their eyes as he told the story of a little girl being abused and raped by two drunken men, and before he concluded his words were "can you see her . . . now picture her being white." The verdict came back not guilty; the man was acquitted for the two white men's murder. Smith concludes that a picture in many cases triumphs over a proposition.<sup>12</sup>

During the preaching or teaching moment in the black church it is not uncommon to hear a worshiper say, "paint the picture doc," in response to picturesque preaching. Smith suggests,

Before the days of visual technology, the black preacher who often could not read the text could paint so vividly the picture of Joshua and the battle of Jericho that the worshippers could see the walls tumbling down. Black preachers could describe so clearly what they saw in the text that the hearers could vividly see the biblical image.<sup>13</sup>

To create an atmosphere of energy and effectiveness, the pastor of the Canaan Church has sought to bring expository preaching to life through stories and practical illustrations that the congregation can relate to, understand, and apply to their daily lives. Painting pictures and metaphors are essential to application. The late William Augustus Jones, long-standing pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York, said that they are the handlebars of the proverbial bike of exegetical preaching.

Warren W. Wiersbe suggests,

Inescapable preaching is a work of metaphor. David Buttrick says this on *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, he goes on to say Theological meaning must always be embodied in images drawn from life. One of the bridges between the world around us and the world within us is a system of symbols that we call language; and language is basically metaphorical. It communicates in pictures. God's creation is a theater and the human mind is a picture gallery, and we link the two by using words.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>14</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 41.

Theologian Sallie McFague writes, “Images feed concepts; concepts discipline images. Images without concepts are blind; concepts without images are sterile.”<sup>15</sup> In the Old Testament the prophet Nathan went to David to confront the king about his sin, which could have proven to be catastrophic for the prophet. Instead of a blunt confrontation or finger pointing, Nathan tells the King a story that was effective, channeled his emotions, and stirred up conviction. He then proceeded to declare “thou art the man” (2 Sam 12).

Hershael W. York says of preaching,

Sermons are not about just imparting information. They should be custom—built to change lives. We don’t want to fill their heads; we want the proclamation of the Word to grip their souls and motivate them to conform to the will of God. Our approach to the Bible and to preaching, therefore, has application as its ultimate goal. Application is what makes the Bible come alive and makes sermons practical.<sup>16</sup>

During this fifteen-week project five sermons were preached on practical evangelism, a control group was used for measurable effectiveness during Wednesday night bible study. The effectiveness of the message was gauged on these factors:

1. How well was message conveyed?
2. Was it biblically and doctrinally sound?
3. Where was the practical application?
4. Did it effectively inspire you to share the gospel?
5. Based on the delivery could they obey the commands or the implications of the text?

Hershael York and Bert Decker suggest,

The goal of our preaching should be engaging exposition. The preacher of the Word should not settle for being a commentator or a communicator. His passion must be to preach the Word in such a way that he accurately teaches the meaning of the text and leads his audience to discover its implications for their life situations so that they respond in obedience and become more like Christ as a result.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987), 63.

<sup>16</sup>Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 11.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

The purpose of this project was to stimulate church growth through inspired and imaginative preaching which incites church vitality and evangelism. The vision statement of the Canaan Church is to “make disciples and make a difference.” Preaching is the cornerstone of that vision and therefore it is essential that the preaching be informative as well as inspirational. It is a historical fact that black preaching has always carried with it a charismatic colorfulness that has brought certain vitality to the worship experience.<sup>18</sup> This vitality causes members to share with others on their jobs, at school, and at beauty and barbershops, what a wonderful job pastor did in “making it plain” on Sunday. This, in turn, struck a chord of curiosity in the hearts and minds of those whom they shared the gospel.

A focus group was established to take part in this project to grade whether the messages throughout the project were biblically sound while inspiring one’s heart and mind. Prayerfully, the messages would yield a mind-set of celebration and exaltation from within the focus group of thirteen individuals. With the purpose of them leaving Sunday morning worship with the mindset of the women at the well in John’s gospel, along with the goal of sustained growth to the body of Christ:

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? . . . Many Samaritans from that town believe in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ . . . And many more believed because of his word. They said to the women, ‘it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.’ (John 4:28-42 ESV)

### **Growth through Leadership Development**

T. Vaughn Walker suggests, “The challenge for the Christian church of the twenty-first century is to hold to the truths that never change and at the same time address

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<sup>18</sup>Samuel D. Proctor, *How Shall They Hear? Effective Preaching for a Vital Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1992), 83.

a people who live in a time where everything keeps on changing.”<sup>19</sup> The key to establishing or even maintaining a vibrant church in the twenty-first century is relevant, cutting edge, and transformational leadership. As the reader continues throughout this chapter the reader will prayerfully get a glimpse of various transitional leadership components that make for vibrant ministries.

Quality leadership is about always evolving and training others; evolving and developing for self-enhancement for the purpose of reaching one’s greatest potential. True leadership is furthermore graded by those that are willing to follow. Therefore, a true sign of one’s effectiveness in leadership is having the ability to equip others. Paul tells the church at Ephesus that God in Christ has given gifts to the church, “The body of Christ” for the purpose of developing a fundamentally sound and vibrant church:

And He himself gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, some evangelist, and some pastors and teachers. for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting but speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ. from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does it share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:11-16 NKJV)

Paul informs through this passage of Scripture, that leadership is the stimulating heartbeat of church ministries. One of the challenges at the Canaan Church is developing leaders to carry out the work of the kingdom with a sense of excellence and integrity. Many members, prior to Canaan, had no significant leadership roles within the church from which they came. Leading volunteers and family members to the proper pursuit of advancing the kingdom has been a noted struggle for this pastor; therefore, there has been a conscious and constant effort to bring to light the cognitive aspect of leadership.

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<sup>19</sup>Barry C. Johnson, Sr., *A Change Is Gonna’ Come The Transformation of a Traditional to a Contemporary Worship Celebration* (Nashville: Author House, 2008), 38.



Geoffrey V. Guns writes,

Leadership is the process of getting a group of people to willing work together toward a common goal and objective. There are several key factors that relate to this definition.

1. First Leadership is a process The word process has in it thoughts of a step by step method. It denotes order and direction. Many young, inexperienced clergy and lay leaders fail because they do not recognize that leadership is more than just being elected. It is a matter of learning how to get things done in an orderly manner through a group of people. In voluntary organizations, such as churches and para-church organizations, coercion, intimidation and demanding does not work. Volunteers will quit when they are forced to serve. Leaders must be able to motivated their followers to serve.

2. Second, leadership involves a group of people. You cannot stake any claims to being a leader, without followers. There must be at least two other people in order to comprise a group. Sometimes leaders are called to lead people who are from various backgrounds and who have no relationship to anyone in the group. Within the context of the church, leaders are often called to lead large and small groups of people to achieve various goals during the course of a year. Leaders within the church must master the art of leading groups of working with people.

3. Third, leadership is the process of getting people to willingly work together. It is essential that leaders understand the art of getting people to work together. Nehemiah is a very good example of a leader who was able to galvanize various groups of people into a cohesive team (see Neh 3). He was able to get his people to work together to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem in fifty-two days (Neh 6:15). There may be times when a group goes through a series of cycles before they are galvanized into a cohesive working group. The leader must know how to lead the group through decision-making conflict, problem-solving, discussions and other activities that can potentially destroy a group's effectiveness and togetherness. Skillful leaders are able to help groups make decisions in a way that is not disruptive to the group. Sometimes the groups goals can be sabotaged by the very people who are assign.<sup>20</sup>

As the pastor of the Canaan Church, my purpose is to instill within the hearts and minds of the congregation a kingdom advancement mentality for the congregation. In order for this to take place I understand that there must be a leadership paradigm change. The current paradigm is that of a church where the pastor is the only leader and does the preaching, teaching, and ministering. This has long since been the mentality of the past, primarily in small rural settings. If the Canaan Church is to advance and become a viable

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<sup>20</sup>Geoffrey V. Guns, *Spiritual Leadership: A Guide To Developing Spiritual Leaders in the Church* (Lithonia, GA: Orman, 2000), 11.

force for the kingdom of God, it must have the mentality of a more contemporary kingdom focused church.

Geoffrey V. Guns makes an interesting argument concerning the leadership paradigm change for the African American Church:

The most important question facing leaders of our denomination today is this: What are the factors that will determine our long term success or failure as a denomination? Further, what are the things that the national convention needs to be engaged in that will strengthen the local churches? What are the kinds of skills our leaders need to have today? What do we need to do today to prepare leaders for tomorrow? . . . When you look at religious programming on television, just look at the number of Black faces you see in non-Black churches. I am in no way holding up a flag and saying that this should not be. What I am asserting is this: Black churches will have to become more aggressive and assertive in their evangelistic efforts. We must face the fact as pastors and church leaders that people have choices and they do not have to belong to or attend our churches. There are far too many other viable options that individuals can give their time and money to.<sup>21</sup>

Leadership training for the lay leadership is critical. Helping people to understand the biblical dynamics to the necessity and role of lay leadership and organizations is vital. Spiritual leadership must transcend or not be exclusive to the pastor and deacon ministry. In an effort to bring clarity to this pastor's vision concerning this leadership paradigm shift, a sermon was preached on Acts 6:1-7 along with a Bible study follow up. The central focus of this message was that biblical leadership must stretch beyond the pastor and be shared with other spiritually-gifted members of the congregation. Also, this passage is not exclusive to deacons only. Considering the cultural dynamics of the times of the first century church, it is understood why the nature of this passage is geared toward men (such as deacons). However the twenty-first century kingdom-builder lives in a completely different culture and time, and therefore the primary purpose of this passage, as this pastor points out, is to give birth to lay leadership. Lay leadership with the heart and mind of God; lay leadership that is spiritual, sacrificial, and under the authority of the pastor and that of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 134.

Kenneth O. Gangel writes concerning spiritual leadership: “It is the exercise of one’s spiritual gifts under the call of God to serve a certain group of people in achieving the goals God has given them toward the end of glorifying Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

### **The Road to Building a Church with a Kingdom-Focused Agenda**

Gene Mims suggests,

A local church is a kingdom community of believers in dynamic fellowship under Christ’s Lordship. Its purpose is to establish the kingdom as it fulfills the Great Commission with a passion to see every person complete in Christ through making disciples, maturing believers, and multiplying ministries.<sup>23</sup>

The first step in changing the mind-set of the Canaan Church was this primary example of this paradigm shift, which was brought before the congregation by me to illustrate a fundamental aspect of twenty-first century leadership needed to advance the kingdom of God in this generation. Thom Rainer writes in his book co-authored with Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*,

In a church where I served I saw the need to change the way they do ministry. For years they had attempted to carry out a deacon family ministry, where each deacon has pastoral ministry responsibility for a group of families. We discovered that those deacons with shepherding gifts enjoyed the ministry and were very effective in their work. But deacons who had different interests, gifts, and desires placed the family ministry low on their list of priorities. They felt guilty for doing so.

The deacon chairman took a bold step and suggested that the deacons do their servant-ministry by spiritual gifts. The response was exciting! The different ministry teams that were started by the deacons including: evangelism; new members, inactive members; widows and senior adults; crisis ministry; and of course, family ministry.

Accountability forms were maintained. Meetings of the teams became a regular occurrence. The structure developed after the other stages on the vision cycle had been completed. The previous structure, the deacon family ministry plan, was greatly modified with this new approach to ministry. However, the change in the structure followed a new outward focus, spiritual gifts emphasis, and a rekindled vision.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading: A Practical Handbook on Administration in Churches and Christian Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 31.

<sup>23</sup>Gene Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church: A Compelling Image of an Achievable Future* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 65.

<sup>24</sup>Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating The Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth* (Bemidji, MN: Pinnacle, 2003), 51.

Ministry in the twenty-first century, if it is to be vibrant and kingdom-focused, must become a group initiative supported by purpose-driven lay leadership. Leadership that falls under the spiritual rubric of the pastor therefore, so goes the leader so goes the congregation. Andy Stanley writes, “People can follow and accept a bad decision but they will not follow if you are unclear.”<sup>25</sup> It is incumbent upon the pastor and lay leaders of this church and any church that desires to grow with a sense of intentionality, to be clear and concise about the church’s vision, objectives, and purpose. The vision is the kingdom of God, the purpose is to set the captives free (strengthen the saved and to save the lost), and the purpose is to fulfill the will of God in the Great commission.

Brennan Manning writes in *The Furious Longing of God*,

Healing is a response to a crisis in the life of another person. It’s enough of a response, a satisfactory response to a crisis in the life of another. And wherever the word crisis is used in the Greek New Testament, it is translated in English as judgment. . . . Healing is a response that I make to a decisive moment in the life of a brother or sister: whether I respond or not, I have made a judgment.

Healing becomes the opportunity to pass off to another human being what I have received from the Lord Jesus; namely His unconditional acceptance of me as I am, not as I should be. . . . To affirm a person is to see the good in them that they cannot see in themselves and to repeat it in spite of appearances to the contrary.<sup>26</sup>

Members of the body of Christ (ambassadors of reconciliation) are called to reconcile the world back to God. This means that Christians live, move, and encourage with the heart of God in the vein of evangelism. As stated previously, the kingdom-builder must not change the message of Christ but the kingdom-builder must change how he or she disseminates the message of the gospel. “Fishing with Flavor.”<sup>27</sup> Although this projects’ focal point is not evangelism, but rather developing the key awareness of it

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<sup>25</sup>Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leadership: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003), 25.

<sup>26</sup>Brennan Manning, *The Furious Longing Of God* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2009), 82.

<sup>27</sup>Fishing with Flavor is a term used at the Canaan Church for keeping with Baptist Orthodoxy yet changing it to our methodology.

being a responsibility through leadership training and biblical studies, the end result is to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ. Churches do not grow necessarily by default but rather by design. To transform a church member to a kingdom-builder is this pastor's goal for the Canaan Church of Columbus, Ohio. This pastor believes this to be possible through understanding the nature of God regarding His kingdom.

### **Canaan Christian Church Louisville, Kentucky**

On March 16, 1983, Walter Malone, Jr. and ninety-seven kingdom builders came together to form the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church, which was later renamed the Canaan Christian Church. They initially worshiped in a Seventh Day Adventist church prior to purchasing a permanent facility on Dixie Highway in Louisville, Kentucky. The initial ninety-seven came from various economic and social backgrounds and raised over \$100,000 in a year's time. In April 1996, the Canaan Church acquired a new church facility valued at 11 million dollars. Under the visionary leadership of Malone, Canaan has grown from ninety-seven people to over 4,000.<sup>28</sup>

Malone is a native of Tennessee. He attended Fisk University and later Nashville's American Baptist College, where he earned his B.A. in theology. He received his master's degree and 28 hours above his master's at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and received his Doctor of Ministry degree from the United Theological Seminary. He has written three books, *An Operative Word for an Oppressed People*, *From Holy Power to Holy Profits*, and *Let's Have Church*. Malone built his ministry on preaching a relevant word for real life situations, along with developing ministerial lay leadership that serves with a sense of excellence and accountability. Malone was instrumental in creating ministries that were kingdom-

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<sup>28</sup>Canaan Christian Church "Church History" [on-line]; accessed 2 February 2011; available from [www.canaanchristianchurch.com](http://www.canaanchristianchurch.com); Internet.

focused and met the needs of the people spiritually, socially, and emotionally. In his book *Let's Have Church*, he writes,

Vision does not come about by accident. Vision transpires because God speaks to individuals. . . . Often many church folk do not even think about the kingdom until they arrive at church: but the kingdom is always on the mind and heart of the shepherd long after the benediction. True shepherds think about it 24/7, 365 days a year. True shepherds continually ask God, 'What is it that you are trying to do, say, and work out in the lives of your people? How is it that you want them to be blessed? How do you want us to bless the city at large?'<sup>29</sup>

### **First Church of God a City of Refuge Columbus, Ohio**

On October 25, 1937, a few saints met at the house of Marvin Thompson to discuss the possibilities of beginning a Church of God congregation on the east side of Columbus. The first service was held on March 13, 1938. Since that faithful day, the First Church of God has worshiped at 562 St Claire Avenue, 487 North Champion Avenue, and 115 Wilson Avenue in Columbus, Ohio.<sup>30</sup>

On Father's Day, Sunday June 18, 2000, under the leadership of Timothy J. Clarke, the congregation took possession of 124 acres and began worshipping at the "City of Refuge" at 3480 Refuge Rd. It is currently the largest and fastest growing predominately African American Church in the city of Columbus, Ohio. Clark is a visionary leader and senior pastor. Under his dynamic leadership, First Church has become a spiritual beacon at the local and national level.

Clark was called to the ministry in January 1974 and served as associate minister at the First Church of God in his hometown of Far Rockway, New York. In February 1982, he was called to the senior pastorate of the First Church of God in Columbus, Ohio. He was consecrated to the office of bishop in September 2000, in

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<sup>29</sup>Malone, *Let's Have Church*, 7.

<sup>30</sup>Timothy J. Clark, interview by author, 15 March 2011, Columbus, Ohio.

addition to his commitment as a pastor; Clarke willfully serves the body of Christ as an evangelist and teacher.

Clark is a visionary pastor. He came to First Church began with thirty members, however, his ministry outlook was based on kingdom development. He preached messages centered on God's kingdom and the believer's responsibility as his children to be "co-laborers with Christ" to help advanced God's kingdom. Clark describes himself as a community pastor, preaching the kingdom and meeting the immediate needs of the community. First Church is defined by he and his members as the "City of Refuge," where the least, lost, last, and left out have a home. Clark not only preaches with this mindset, but also with a humble demeanor and a very approachable spirit, which has essentially transformed the area around his church; property value has gone up in that area and various businesses have flooded that area as well.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Many churches throughout the country have experienced a spiritual and congregational downsizing in the last decade. From the theoretical perspective, one can say that the church in general has lost focus of its purpose and calling. In chapter 2 the reader should have discovered that Jesus established the church for the universal purpose of promoting the gospel. The gospel of healing, hope, and help with the woe of this world, and the promise for all who believe: eternal life.

In the current economic state that this country faces, unemployment on the rise, lack of trust in the governments' ability to create jobs in order for people to have sufficient living and lifestyles. These challenges can affect all areas of the human life economically. Now is the time for the church to renew its first love for the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. In these challenging times people have sought help, hope, and healing in the far country of materialism, narcissism, and humanism and still

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

find themselves wanting. It is incumbent upon the church to stand ready and waiting with the Word of God rightly divide, His purpose for humanity and the responsibility of advancing God's Kingdom on earth.

Robert Dale suggests,

Christianity is much more likely to be caught than taught. Often our personal theology is not well organized or easily defined. We may not always be able to explain God, but we can tell the story of what God is doing in our lives. He calls this experiential theology—faith based on and understood out of our own pilgrimage.<sup>32</sup>

The purpose of this project is to create an atmosphere where Christian living and kingdom-building becomes contagious within small groups within the local church. So then the question is raised, if one professes to be a child of the king, then one must asked themselves hard questions like does my life match my theology? If my theology is based on what I know of and about God, His will and His way for my life. I come to know God through the study of his Word and the imparting of God's Word from my pastor/teacher. By living in a fallen world with God's Word hidden in my heart I then become an overcomer. For others who face the same human dynamics that I as a Christian face that come in to contact with me will soon see and perhaps become attracted to my ability to maintain overcome and have peace in spite of and because of. I am performing my role as a Christian and kingdom builder.

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<sup>32</sup>Robert D. Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Help Your Church Come Alive* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1981), 51.



## CHAPTER 4

### MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the goal of this project was to stimulate a kingdom-focused church through small group classes and leadership training for the Canaan Church of Columbus, Ohio. This ministry project was designed to stimulate church growth by centering the church's focus on the kingdom of God, through adequately prepared leaders. Throughout this project a curriculum was developed for future use within the small group classes offered to new members as well as tenured saints. To have a better understanding of not only the content, but also the development of this curriculum, information is provided concerning (1) the development of the focus group (2) the twelve-week curriculum, (3) the pre-test and post-test, and (4) the leadership training program for the kingdom-focused small groups. The discussions in this chapter focus primarily on what was trying to be accomplished with the curriculum rather than a presentation of the actual curriculum. Most of the components of this curriculum referenced throughout the chapter are presented in the Appendix.

#### **Focus Group Selection**

In order to enlist church members for the project, announcements were placed in the church bulletin for several weeks prior to the start of this project and reemphasized from the pulpit as well. Participation in the project was voluntary. Thirteen members volunteered for the kingdom-focused Bible study, in the beginning nine of which agreed to become leaders of this potentially on going ministry. The Bible study was held on Tuesday nights aside from normal Bible study night, which is on Wednesdays.

Prior to the implantation of curriculum and pre-test, the focus group was given

a photocopy of the particulars of the ministry research project in the first week. They were given (1) the purpose, (2) the three goals of project, (3) the methods by which these goals were to be measured and evaluated, and (4) the proposed timeline of the project. The thirteen-member focus group was then divided into three smaller groups in order to visualize and experience the small group concept, along with streamlining material for small group curriculum.

During the first week a focus group a pre-test was administered a discipleship questionnaire. This questionnaire raised question pertaining to the individual's habits in church. How often they showed up, did they read their Bible on a regular basis, how much time was given to study and prayer and their given habits. The focus group pre-test was used to measure the biblical aptitude and biblical interest of the focus groups. The focus group was made up of 10 women and 3 men. Six were between the ages of 28-35, 4 where from the ages 37-48 and 3 were 50-76 with the average being about 46. To measure the effectiveness of the focus group, a Likert four-point scale post-questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of the twelve-week class.

I met with the focus group for an hour each week, and an additional 30 minutes for those who would potentially lead kingdom-focused church small groups in the future. I initially met with the focus group and gave an in-depth overview of what is to take place in the twelve weeks. Following the opening discussion concerning the goals and procedures, I then presented the focus group with three components I believed necessary for an effective and successful curriculum: (1) a committed and effective core of teachers, (2) information received and learned by the participants must have the ability to be put into action, and (3) the curriculum must be systematically structured in such a way that the purpose of the kingdom-focused small group classes materializes. The focus group was asked to review the information and was given an opportunity to ask questions.

### **Administering the Pre-Test**

In the first week, I met with the focus group for sixty minutes. The purpose of

the second session was to administer the pre-test. The questionnaire contained fifty-six questions; the majority of the questions were focused on discipleship and participants' overall church experience. It took approximately thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the questionnaire, time was spent in a question and answer session.

Following this discussion, the focus group was asked to answer five questions in order to develop "an effective curriculum in theological education."<sup>1</sup> According to Leroy Ford, the five questions are (1) who are the somebodies? (2) what are the something's that somebodies need to learn? 3) what are the some ways in which the somebodies learn the something's? 4) what are the somewheres which influences the shape of the somethings that somebodies learn in some way? and (5) what are the some purposes for which the somebodies learn something, somewhere, in some way?<sup>2</sup> According to Ford, "As designers answer these questions, the unique input provided by the contextual and cultural influences which affect the design makes the design belong uniquely to the culture in which the curriculum lives."<sup>3</sup> Answers to these five questions are presented in Appendix 1.

### **Twelve-Week Kingdom-Focused Bible Study**

This Bible study was developed under a three-unit curriculum guide. In the first unit we discussed and utilized handouts presented within *Vibrant Church Becoming a Healthy Church in the 21 Century*, by Daniel Akin and Thom S Rainier. Each segment of the book had sections of questions and answers given for the purpose of review and

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<sup>1</sup>Leroy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 51. Ford calls this the "5-S Principles."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. According to Ford, this "organizing principle reflects all of the elements of curriculum design: the institutional purpose, institutional educational goals and objectives for learners, scope, multiple contexts, methodology, and instructional and administrative implementation models." Ibid., 50.

discussion. These questions and answers made up the initial and introductory portion of curriculum for the small group Bible study, “Kingdom-Driven Liven.”<sup>4</sup> The first thirty minutes of Bible study was used to go over the chapter and key scriptures. The last thirty minutes was used for group interaction and expression.

### **The Vibrant Church**

When you look at what characterizes a healthy or vibrant church, you may get all kinds of responses and answers. After reviewing several books such as *Experiencing God*, *Sticky Church*, and *Purpose Driven Church* regarding discipleship training, and workbooks on spiritual maturity, I felt that *The Vibrant Church* workbook would be instrumental in developing a curriculum for kingdom-building small group classes. In a local magazine called *Mogul*, Walter Malone, Jr., pastor of the Canaan Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, was asked, “What is it like being a Pastor in the 21st century:”

I would say when I started ministry over forty years ago there were more people in the pew who had a stronger biblical foundation, who knew the Bible so that when you were preaching to the congregation, the people understood more readily the revelation and the messages that you were delivering because they were more informed of the biblical text. Today, preaching is more challenging because in many cases, the congregation that we preach to today are not as biblically informed, particularly the young adult generation that is more given to religious hype.<sup>5</sup>

However, Rainer and Akin suggest,

*The Vibrant Church* is a study of one of the most important doctrines of the Bible and one of the most crucial topics in Christianity today: the doctrine of ecclesiology, or the study of the church. The nature of a biblical, New Testament church is a discussion that devoted followers of the Lord Jesus cannot ignore. . . . Our goal is to be rigorously biblical while at the same time being relevant and practical.<sup>6</sup>

Unit 1 of the “Kingdom-Driven Liven” Bible study was centered on the

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<sup>4</sup>Kingdom Drivin Liven is the name given and used throughout the remainder of project when referring to twelve-week Bible study.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Malone, Jr., “Three Wise Men” *Mogul Magazine* 3 (2011): 18.

<sup>6</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Daniel L. Akin, *The Vibrant Church: Becoming a Healthy Church in the 21st Century* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2008), 7.

doctrinal truth of the church, her origin, and her purpose within the context of this world. There are six chapters in this work by Rainer and Akin, however, for the purposes and goals of this project we looked at four of them.

### ***The Vibrant Church Chapters Discussed***

**“Just what is the church anyway?”** The purpose of this sessions’ exercise was to come to the knowledge and understanding of the meaning, essence, and nature of the church, who the body of Christ is and their role within the world (Community). Questions and discussions in this segment were (A.) How do you define church? i.) In the Scriptures discussed, identify three positive terms God used to describe the Israelites. ii.) Biblical images of the Church were discussed: The people of God (Exod 19:5-6; Deut 4:20; 7:6; Hos 1:10; 2:23). The four terms given in 1 Peter 2:9 were listed and discussed. This segment concluded with the focus group describing and discussing the way the church reflects the image of the body of Christ in the areas of worship, fellowship, and ministry.

**“Is my church acting like the church?”** During this session the key component was to have a better understanding of the essential marks or distinctives of a New Testament church. Examples would include that the early church showed that the church is one, the church is holy, and the church is universal and is apostolic in nature, meaning that it is founded upon Scriptures given by the apostles. The pastor along with the focus group discussed church unity and individual acts that promote the unity and fellowship of the church. The focus group also discussed the contributions of early reformers who placed emphasis on the Word being rightly divided. The leadership guide for session 2 is presented in Appendix 1.

**“How does a vibrant church carry out its main purpose?”** The purpose of this session was to understand the primary mission and purposes of the church with the hope of the group becoming motivated to pray and do more to help the church achieve its

mission. During this session the focus group and pastor discussed the biblical vision for the church. The focus group gathered to discuss and state what they considered to be the main mission or purpose of the church. They also expressed two or three of the primary ways the church achieves its mission. Several critical and thought provoking questions were discussed as well: (1) explain this statement in your own words: “The twenty-first century church, particularly in America, is suffering an identity crisis,” (2) what evidence of this identity crisis have you observed? (3) list three or four primary characteristics of your church, and (4) how do you think persons outside your church would describe it? Sample answers and responses found in Appendix 1.

**“What should a vibrant church look like in the twenty-first century?”** In this segment, the focus group had the necessary tools to see and understand what a healthy church looks like and was therefore capable of evaluating their church in light of the New Testament model. Most importantly, if the local body is not fully functioning in the right capacity and vein of what the church ought to be, what necessary steps must be taken to achieve that goal.

Unit 2 was a twelve-week curriculum consisting of sermonic messages delivered by the pastor that are kingdom-driven and centered, which was developed into a Bible study. The purpose was to design a sermon series that explored and exploited biblical texts from the Old and New Testament and revealed the evolution as well as the empowering purposes for God’s Kingdom and the church’s role in it. The details of these eight messages were discussed in detail with the focus group on that following Tuesday night.

The kingdom of God is a New Testament concept. The purpose of the Old Testament messages is to depict the origin and evolution of the kingdom of God in the calling of a physical nation that would give birth to the Messiah, who would establish God’s kingdom. Therefore more time and impute was given to the three New Testament texts given in the beginning of this project, which are the cornerstone text for this project.

## **The Twelve-Week Curriculum**

There was one lesson plan per Old Testament message, and two per New Testament message for a total of twelve lesson plans provided during the twelve-week Bible study. Each lesson plan was designed with: a title, the date of the lesson plan, the unit title, and the subject. This title-subject format was used in an effort to incorporate a technique commonly used in the African American preaching tradition.<sup>7</sup> Four lesson plans for the Old Testament text are unit labeled “Introduction” for reasons stated previously, the eight lesson outlines that made up the remainder of the twelve are based primarily on the information presented in chapter 2 and chapter 3 of this ministry research project. Therefore, in an effort not to be redundant, a summary is given on the thought process behind the composition of each lesson outline. The complete sixteen-week curriculum is presented in Appendix 3.

The twelve-week curriculum for this interactive Bible study, called Kingdom-Driven Liven, is divided into three separate learning units, each unit having a specific theme. The three teaching units are “The Beginning,” “The Blessing,” and “The Burdensome Joy.” Unit 1, “The Beginning,” consisted of the first two lesson outlines. The basis of this unit was derived from Matthew 28:16-28 and discussed the initial age of the church. The church’s primary purpose and plan is to evangelize the world, and build God’s kingdom on earth through the power and authority of the Lord and Savior. The goal at this point was to build the bridge from the Old Testament people of God to the New Testament body of Christ. As I shed light on characters like Abraham, and God’s call upon his life for the purpose of building a nation that would love, serve, and worship Him, a people who would be a light to the rest of the world to see and follow. The focus

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<sup>7</sup>Traditionally, in the African American preaching event, it is not unusual for the preacher to use a sermon title to coincide or correlate with the scriptural subject selected for a particular sermon. Typically, the use of a title sets the direction or path of the sermon, thereby narrowing or widening the parameters of the sermon subject or message, making it a more emphatic presentation. This technique was used throughout all three units of the curriculum in order to solidify its contextual base.

group discussed the role of Christ in God's kingdom and the role of those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

Unit 2 was titled "The Blessing" with the scripture base of Acts 1:4-8. During this segment the focus group discussed the filling of the church by the Holy Spirit, His constant presence and commitment to aiding the body of Christ in fulfilling, and the church's calling as it relates to God's kingdom. The focus group also looked at the design of Christ for the church to wait on the Spirit of God (the Comforter) who was given for the purpose of direction, as well as protection.

Unit 3, "The Burdensome Joy" of kingdom-building was centered around Acts 2:42-47, where the church is seen growing through the Word, through structure, and passionate fellowship. This section was labeled "Burdensome Joy" because ministry is and can be difficult. The focus group looked at the first century church and discussed the struggles from within the body, along with the struggles from outside forces. When one views the book of Acts in its entirety, the reader sees the church during its embryonic and infancy stages. When the reader looks at the book of Acts, they find the various difficulties that the church faced. The church's existence and her disciples fell under constant pressure, and a constant threat of death. For the specific purposes of this project the church's overall plight is briefly addressed in this segment. Acts 2:42-47, however, provides for the church the necessary structure for maintaining a healthy and vibrant church in spite of difficulties and pressures that the church faces even today. Each lesson plan was designed with three learning objectives for the participants. The twelve-week curriculum included ten weeks of training and one week of overview question and answer. One week was for leadership training.

Unit 3 also consisted of leadership training and preparation for teaching the Kingdom-Driven Liven class. It was the goal of this project that by the end of twelve-week curriculum this class would give birth to individuals willing to reach back and teach others in a small group setting. This unit had a journaling aspect to it. The purpose of



the journaling was that after completing all three units of the curriculum lesson plans, the individual taking the course was able to chronicle thoughts, prayers, and what God had revealed during the twelve weeks. Also, the focus group took part in a journaling activity for the purpose of tracking individual progress and outcomes. The journaling unit consisted of a section for prayer, along with cornerstone scriptures,<sup>8</sup> kingdom-building encounters, and results. The journaling unit was labeled “The Fishermen’s Report”<sup>9</sup> Each of the three units included: (1) a front cover, (2) table of contents, (3) introduction, (4) a letter from the pastor,<sup>10</sup> (5) a unit cover,<sup>11</sup> (6) a unit outline, (7) lesson plans, (8) note section (at the end of each lesson plan), (9) a certificate of completion (only in unit 3), and (10) a back cover, which introduces the next unit.

The purpose of the next five weeks of the curriculum was to focus on unpacking the past Sunday’s message during the Bible study sessions that was preached under the rubric of Kingdom-Driven Living, found in the three-principle text selected for project. The Sunday morning messages were centered on principles and praxis that stand as the cornerstone passages of Scripture for this particular project: Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:4-8, and 2:42-47.

Prior to going over Sunday morning messages during the weekly Bible study the pastor and focus group came together and viewed all material discussed in lessons from *Vibrant Church*. It was important that regardless of how vital *Vibrant Church* had been for the purposes of a curriculum designed for this local body, the collected data and information was discussed for the implementation of small group classes. The small group classes will be provided yearly for new members who have completed new

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<sup>8</sup>See appendix 2 for sample prayers with core scriptures.

<sup>9</sup>See appendix 2 for sample of journaling unit.

<sup>10</sup>See appendix 2 for samples of “Letter from the Pastor.”

<sup>11</sup>See appendix 2 for samples of the Unit Cover.

member orientation in order to equip them with the necessary direction, mindset, and heart for ministry. Members who have been in the church will also have the opportunity to come to class to restore and refresh their outlook of ministry and kingdom purpose.

The following Tuesday after the Sunday message series began on “Kingdom-Driven Liven” (Change of wording for purpose Bible study promotion). I met with the focus group to lift up and line out the central focus of text, various themes, and necessary applications of messages. Each message had at its core the community and kingdom of God. The focus group took this opportunity to discuss message points and themes. This time also allowed for questions and answers and other feedback to insure that the focus group had a clear understanding of what a vibrant kingdom-building church looked like. The Sunday message was outlined and printed in the Sunday morning worship program. This was to make following the kingdom-driven message easy to understand. It also allowed the members to use a printed message outline for witnessing purposes. Members as well as the focus group were able to follow and take notes from the pastor’s messages on kingdom living. This also enabled the focus group to come prepared to Bible study on Tuesday night with questions and answers. There were a total of eight messages.<sup>12</sup> The first four messages were taken from the Old Testament in order to lay the foundation for the three New Testament texts that served as the basis of this project’s goals.

### **Message 1**

The first message was titled “It’s Time to Move.” The message came out of Genesis 12:1-9. The purpose of this message was for the focus group and church to see the forming of a nation beginning with one man following by faith the will of God.<sup>13</sup> The central point of the message was that God’s call is active, adventurous, and autonomous

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<sup>12</sup>See appendix 3 for a sample of the Sunday program with message outlines.

<sup>13</sup>See appendix 3 for a full outline of messages.

(sovereign). The keys to this message were that as Christians we partner with God for a greater purpose in life. God works through the individual for the purpose of advancing the group. The Christian must always remember that risk is a required resource for righteous living.

### **Message 2**

The second message was titled “I’m Traveling on a Promise.” Genesis 15:1-21 was the text discussed. In this text the goal was to understand that if we do not see what God is doing as the people of God the people must still trust that His promise will come to pass, but if not, God is faithful to reveal and fulfill His promises. The central point of text was that the promise will come to pass and the keys to this message were that God sees what we do not see; God will also renew and remind His people of His intentions for their lives through His word. Then finally God’s revelations will restore the body of Christ willingness to work.

### **Message 3**

The third message of this series was found in Exodus 1:1-12. The title of the message was “Afflicted but not Effectuated.” The key and main principle of this text was that the difficulties of life and spiritual warfare cannot and will not hinder God’s vision for His people. God’s presence sustains and keeps His people under enormous suffering. After this message about the children of Israel increasing in spite of the enemy’s pressure is preached and taught the focus group and church body will come to the knowledge that spiritual warfare will manifest itself in the physical realm. The promise that God has given to His people challenges the people of God to press their way through in spite of pain and suffering.

### **Message 4**

The fourth message was found in Exodus 19:1-9. The title of the message was “Let’s Stay Together.” At Mount Sinai, God established a covenant with the children of

Israel. A covenant which suggested that if Israel would be faithful to God, the children of Israel would live as examples of God's favor in peace and prosperity designed by God. The central point of the text was that obedience brings blessings however disobedience brings about burdens. The keys to message 4 were (1) the children of Israel's relationship with God was regulated by rules and the first rule is that He reigns, (2) the children of Israel's blessing was predicated on their behavior, and (3) the promise of God required their participation.

### **Message 5**

Message 5 was found in Matthew 28: 16-20. The title of this message was "I'm Still Traveling." The title and purpose of this message in the series was to build a bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament messages. The Old Testament revealed God who called one man to build a nation through God's favor and promise. The New Testament passage revealed a God who through the sacrifice of His son is preparing to establish His Kingdom. The central point of this passage was that because of what God has done in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the believer now has complete access to God, and full knowledge of His will and purpose for their lives. The keys to this message were the kingdom-builders responsibility to go in God's power. The second point is kingdom-builders' responsibility to grow His kingdom. Thirdly, the kingdom-builder's responsibility to give others the promise that was given to them.

### **Message 6**

Message 6 came out of Acts 1: 4-8 and Acts 2: 1-4. The title was "The Essentials to an Effective Ministry." The emphasis of this message was placed on the kingdom-builder's ability to wait and focus on the spirit of God in their lives, and if they are willing to prayerfully wait on God's will as well as do God's will He will meet their needs and concerns. The keys to this message were for the kingdom-builder to remain focused. The second point was that the kingdom-builder must remain fearless, and

thirdly the kingdom-builder must remain faithful.

### **Message 7**

The final message in this series on Kingdom-Driven Liven came out of Acts 2:40-47. In this text we saw the church in its raw yet structured state. This text revealed the skeletal system by which the church must be built and maintained. This particular text in Acts, concerning the first century church, reveals that Paul spoke to the Church at Corinth about being co-laborers with Christ. As co-laborers, the kingdom-builder must follow the pattern in which Christ left behind, and that is living off of the Word of God, fellowshiping with one another to find strength and courage, and committing him or herself to the service of others. The keys to this message were that the kingdom-builder must stand on the Word of God. The kingdom-builder must seek the will of God. Thirdly, the kingdom-builder must be willing to share what he or she has. Finally, the kingdom-builder must be willing to serve.

The lesson review sections contained the same information that appeared in the curriculum section, but in a question format. The lesson review section provided a weekly assignment of activities related to what was discussed within the curriculum units. One of the reasons that I placed a sermon outline within the church bulletin was for the focus group to make notes and prepare for the weekly review during the Bible study. The focus group members brought their notes to the Bible study along with any questions concerning the past Sunday's message. Often times I have heard from members that they wished they could have discussed or dialoged about the message preached on Sunday. This format allowed members to digest the message sufficiently on Sunday. When I consider the time and effort placed in Sunday morning preparation, it stands to reason to give the congregation an opportunity to go over messages and raise questions on how to apply the message in their personal lives.

Along with sermon outline for Sunday morning messages throughout this project, and a weekly outline for the Bible study the following Tuesday. The focus group

was given a small journal to write what God had revealed to them concerning the lesson plans. The focus group was also given devotional scriptures that were kingdom-focused in nature. The primary purpose of the kingdom journaling unit was provided to chronicle devotional thoughts and outcomes of activities relating to weekly assignments. Also, it gave the focus group a foundation for daily reading and devotional time. I have often been asked, pastor where do I start reading the Bible and what are the key elements that I should be looking for throughout my study. The journaling and devotion piece within the curriculum makes allowances for the student to begin a weekly reading of the Bible and direction for study. Prayerfully those who take this course will discover a pattern for study and Scripture contemplation. A certificate of completion was also included in the final unit for those who completed the twelve-week curriculum, along with a letter of congratulations from myself.

### **The Pre-Test and Post-Test**

At the beginning of the twelve-week curriculum the participants were given a pre-test. This same pre-test was given to the participants at the end of this period as a post-test. The pre-test and post-test were used to not only indicate the participants' level of biblical knowledge and understanding of kingdom-building concepts, but was also used to indicate any improvements in the knowledge and understanding of kingdom-building. These tests helped measure whether any change occurred in the participants' attitudes toward reaching the lost for Christ. An evaluation of the pre-test and post-test are presented in chapter 5, while a sample of the pre-survey and post-survey is presented in Appendix 4.

### **The Teacher Training Program**

During the implementation of the twelve-week curriculum, weekly meetings were conducted to equip the teachers of the Kingdom-Driven Liven class with the tools necessary to guide the Kingdom-Driven Liven class through this ministry research

project. Each teacher was equipped to function effectively in an inter-generational learning environment. Selected information from chapter 2 and chapter 3 were used as the basis for the training program.<sup>14</sup> An outline of this training program was presented in the twelve-week curriculum, to those who desired to teach this curriculum on a yearly basis. I took the time to teach those in the focus group who wanted to lead this class, certain elements of teaching found in The “5-Principle” for Curriculum Design.<sup>15</sup> Along with Ford’s Curriculum Design are the answers that were given to these questions.

### **The “5-S Principle for Curriculum Design**

The first question was: “Who are the “somebodies””? The answer was: The Canaan Church Family are the somebodies for which the first question is addressing.

The second question was: What are the something’s the somebodies need to learn? (In other words, what are some of the thing we want to the congregation participating in our Kingdom Driven Liven Bible study to learn? The answer was (1) to gain knowledge God’s establishment of His Kingdom in the biblical record; (2) develop a passion to seek and do God’s will in relation to advancing God’s Kingdom; and (3) help build members their confidence in sharing the good news of God’s Kingdom.

The third question was: What are the some ways in which the somebodies learn the somethings? (In other words, what are some of the ways the participation members of the Canaan Church can learn kingdom building through the interactive Bible study kingdom driven living: (1) how to apply these skills learn in their daily lives; (2)

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<sup>14</sup>The weekly training sessions were limited to a more in-depth discussion of the information presented in the twelve lesson plans. Most of the focus during these weekly sessions was on helping the teachers and leasers become comfortable in an intergenerational learning environment, and on effectively operating the cooperative learning sessions. To develop a more extensive training program for the teachers is beyond the scope of this ministry research project.

<sup>15</sup>Leroy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 50.

how to teach and train others about the Kingdom of God and our roll in its advancement; and (3) develop a systematic approach to studying God's word as it relates to the purpose and praxis of the church. The answer to the third question was: (1) by coming and actively participating in small group Bible study; (2) through interactive learning were we engage each other and learn from each other; (3) physical environment should be receptive to learning; and (4) empower others to learn by leading by example.

The fourth question was: What are the "somewheres" which influence the shape of the somethings the somebodies learn in some way? (In other words, what are the positive and negative indicators within the body that influence): (1) whether the ideas of the kingdom of God can penetrate the hearts and minds of people to motivate them to do his will; (2) where do they find support when facing obstacles from within or from without? (3) whether through their commitment stimulate growth and vitality. The answers were: (1) the Focus Group must provide motivation support and encouragement; (2) this is where journaling and devotional's become invaluable; and (3) the basic influencers would be motivation, attitude, correct knowledge, and commitment. This is a long journey that requires patience and perseverance.

The fifth question was: What are the some purposes for which the somebodies learn something somewhere, in some way? (In other words, Why a kingdom driven liven Bible study curriculum) The answer given was: So the church family can experience single mindedness as a local body, one purpose and one body adjoined together spiritually. This practice mostly took place during the cooperative learning sessions. The effectiveness of this training program, along with some of other aspects of this ministry research project, is evaluated in chapter 5.



CHAPTER 5  
EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY  
RESEARCH PROJECT

The Canaan Church was established four years ago, in 2007, with the hopes of moving away from a stagnate and stale traditional fellowship. The previous worship experience had the primary focus of just fellowship, bury, and marry loved ones. In the original church setting of the charter members of the Canaan Church there was essentially no expectation for growth and development. When planting the Canaan Church, God revealed that in order for Canaan to become effective in its attempts to be the church that God would be pleased with and meet the needs of this twenty-first century churchgoer. It would be essential that the Canaan Church had a kingdom-focused agenda at her core. A kingdom-centered church in my study is focused on the advancement of God's kingdom under His direction and guidance provided through His Word. Therefore, Canaan had to be biblically-based and sound, with a kingdom-minded agenda. The mission statement for the Canaan Church is "making disciples and making a difference." The Scripture reference that gave birth to the mission statement is Matthew 28:16.

At the start of this project there were four quantitative goals to be accomplished. Goal 1 was to increase biblical knowledge within the congregation. As stated in chapter 1, it was imperative in order for the people of God to know as much about the will of God for the church there must be a solid biblical foundation for the church to build upon. The pre-test and post-test show that after the twelve-week curriculum the focus group was more biblically sound. The focus group was also confident in their understanding of the nature and historical background of God's

kingdom. The ability to trace God's kingdom back to Abraham on up to Christ and ultimately to us as co-laborers with Christ gave the focus group a target or goal to achieve.

Goal 2 was to increase Bible study attendance. The second goal of this project was to create a curriculum or Bible study that would excite and inspire people to come out consistently to a mid-week interactive Bible study. Goal 3 was to increase ministry involvement. For goal 3, I believe that when people have a solid biblical foundation and recognize that God's words will meet the practical needs on a daily basis, people will get involved. I liken it to the spirit of the woman at the well in John 4 who left her water pots and went back into the village. She told the villagers, "Come see a man who knows all about me, could this be the Christ." Goal 4 was to promote sacrificial giving of the congregation's time, talents, and treasures. I believe that people will give of themselves as well as their financial means to causes and personalities, the cause being the kingdom and the personality being Jesus Christ. The purpose of this ministry research project was to develop and implement a contextually based curriculum that would help Canaan achieve the objectives of the mission statement. In order to evaluate whether this project accomplished this task, the following is presented: (1) an analysis of quantitative data, (2) evaluation of the project goals, (3) a personal evaluation, (4) a theological reflection, and (5) suggestions for further research.

### **Analysis of Quantitative Data**

To analyze the quantitative data, an evaluation is given on the results of the pre-test and post-test, and the results of the post-focus group. At the beginning of the twelve-week curriculum, the participants were given a pre-test. This same pre-test was given at the end of the twelve-week curriculum as a post test. The purpose of this test was to test biblical knowledge, their understanding of the purpose of the church, and their commitment to the church: Are members of the Canaan Church fully engaged in the mission of the church through their time, talents, and treasure? The pre-test and post-test

revealed how often the participants came to church, got involved in advancing the kingdom, and their willingness to give financially to the mission of the church.<sup>1</sup> .

The pre-test showed a lack of biblical knowledge and understanding of the kingdom of God as it relates to the Christian's requirements or role within it. The pre-test and post-test indicated a strong migration from an uninterested lack of knowledge to interest in kingdom-building and church growth. Ninety-eight percent of the focus group went from being unfamiliar with the idea of God's kingdom to becoming excited as well as informed about the keys to advancing the kingdom. Although on the onset a low percentage of participants believed in the pre-test and thought perhaps that the pre-test actually was some type of experiment, many of the participants that were in the focus group answered the same question from pre-test, more confident and transparent during post-test. The positive response from the participants in the focus group indicated a positive attitude toward the acceptance of a study on the importance of God's kingdom and the Christians' work in it. Questions 17 and 18 of the test asked "how often do you attend a mid-week or Sunday school Bible study?"

In order to understand whether this project had success there were several key questions from the questionnaire that related directly to project goals. Many of the responses from the post-test went from seldom or never to about once a week. Concerning giving, which was one of the goals of this project—to promote a more consistent giving of the congregation, one of the questions in this section was "how often do I give to the church" and the responses from the pre-test and post-test went from seldom or never to about once a week. In the section pertaining to biblical knowledge and one's ability to share the gospel, the responses from pre-test and post-test were overwhelmingly different. In this section, out of the 13 members of the focus group, 9

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix 1 gives a further review and comprehensive breakdown of the pre-test and post-test.

went from “somewhat trained” to “adequately trained.” Two of the members of the focus group went from “not trained at all” to “well trained.” For question raised on how often you go to church, responses went from once a week to several times a week, which was an indication that people were not just coming to Sunday service but attending Bible study as well. The entire focus group felt comfortable from the post-test to share their personal testimony about how they came to Christ. With a more comfortable mindset regarding their own salvific experience all the members of the focus group said that they would be willing to lead others to Christ. Out of the 13 members of focus group, 4 have agreed to become leaders or teachers of this curriculum. By just selecting a focus group to take part in this project it has created a buzz within the church. Many members who chose not to take part in the focus group are now interested in going through the Kingdom-Building Liven curriculum.

### **Personal Reflection**

This project gave me the opportunity to sharpen and develop my own time of study and preparation. It challenged me to look at ministry and its purposes from a different perspective. It is incumbent upon pastors and preachers to do more than just preach a sermon on Sunday for the purpose of scratching some emotional or social itch within the congregation. Christians are called to equip the saints with the necessary tools to advance the kingdom of God. As Paul said, Christians are called to lay a foundation and to build upon that foundation (1 Cor 3:9-14). The people within the congregation must come to church with the outlook that they are in service for the purpose of celebration and to receive marching orders from their leader.

This project also aided me in a systematic approach to thematic preaching. Although the kingdom of God and its advancement are at the heart of the gospel ministry, there are a cadre of themes and spiritual disciplines that a pastor must give his attention to if he is to be effective and the people that he serves to have a well-balanced spiritual diet. Series not only benefit the preacher in terms of direction but it stimulates spiritual growth

and congregational interest. During this project, many members came to church on tiptoe anticipation as to where we would go next with the series of messages. What helped to build this excitement was providing for the membership the Kingdom Driven Liven sermon outlines the Sunday prior to preaching them. Also, this method of the focus group having sermon series Scriptures on hand prior to them being preached, gave incentives for the focus group to tell others what would be preached on Sunday morning.

When I look at the challenges that were faced while doing this project, I would have to say that one particular challenge gave birth to this project. I had originally planned to do something in the area of leadership, however the challenges faced at my former ministry assignment which gave birth to the Canaan Church (stated in chapter 1). These challenges caused and compelled me to look at doing something dealing with the primary focus of the church. The church's primary focus is to make disciples for the advancement of God's Kingdom. Often, with so many issues arising within the church, as well as the members own personal lives, the body of Christ can lose sight of its ultimate goal and mission, and find itself serving some base motive of one's own selfish agenda.

I believe this was the argument that Paul had time and time again with the churches at Corinth and even Ephesus. For it was this mindset that gave birth to the great text in Corinthians when Paul declared that the greatest gift any Christian can have is the gift of love. When you look at Ephesians 4, Paul placed his weight on living in unity and harmony for the purpose of growing the body spiritually.

Hosea 4:6 is written, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. This project afforded me the opportunity to speak to this situation. The research done on this project intensified my passion and brought a new awareness among my congregation. This project and curriculum development has been both challenging, but rewarding, and I look forward to doing further research in this area.

## **Theological Reflection**

When I began preaching, my pastor would always say to me that God did not call and invest in his people just for their good pleasure, He has a purpose for His people and it is the job of every Christian to seek and fulfill it. The Christian's purpose for existence is far greater than any fleshly or personal desire that one might have. The saints of old would sing the hymn "must Jesus bare the cross alone and all the world go free?" and they did not leave that question in limbo. The response was "no there is a cross for everyone and there is a cross for me, the consecrated cross a bare till death shall set me free. Then go home my crown to wear for there is a crown for me." Jesus, through his earthly ministry, expressed that he came for a purpose to seek and to save that which is lost (Matt 18:11). Jesus fulfilled that purpose on the cross at Calvary. In a climate and culture of "name it and claim it,"<sup>2</sup> a culture where people, Christians included, are looking for God to primarily meet their physical needs and address their emotional concerns. The church must realign herself to her primary purpose of bringing glory to the name of God by fulfilling the mandate found in the core scriptures of this project. The church must be prepared to do God's will, even in the most adversarial conditions, with the promise that he will keep us along the way and reward us in the hereafter. This is not always an easy lesson to learn, the lesson of "not my will but Thy will be done." Many of the people of God must go through and experience the trials of life before they can come to the solemn conclusion; the conclusion that God's will supersedes the Christian's demands or concerns on this earth. In one of the core Scriptures for this project, this idea is brought to light when the disciples asked Jesus after the resurrection; would he now restore Israel to her original place of power on earth? These disciples still had not come to the full understanding and knowledge that Jesus' kingdom was not here on earth and if they these disciples were to be a part of the

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<sup>2</sup>"Name it and claim it" is a term used in a prosperity gospel which suggests that God stands waiting as some spiritual bell hop to just do what we ask or require.

kingdom of God, then they too would have to relinquish an earthly mindset of power and possession.

In 2011, on my fortieth birthday my mother was called home to be with the Lord unexpectedly; it was a difficult and dark period in my life. It put me in a place of the realization of the finiteness of life. That experience left a lasting impression upon my life. At that time, this project was simply that, a project written out of an experimental vacuum. Written and worked out during a season of peace and myself having a certain sense of arrival concerning ministry. However, after that day this project became a plea to take an even deeper look at why we are here and what we have been commissioned to do. The writer of Hebrews reminds the reader that the saints of old lived with a mindset of “I’m just passing through here:”

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Heb 11: 13-16 NASB)

In light of this painful and epic event it was a reminder to me that the human existence is just for a moment in time. We did not come here to stay and God’s purpose and plan for life is what must sustain His people in times of controversy and conflict. The people of God must realize that the ultimate joy that anyone can have is not tied to family, friends, finances, or the material things in life. The greatest joy and experience anyone can achieve is to fulfill his will. To live as the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11, although they did not experience the best that this life has to offer and perhaps it was even short-lived, there was something far better for them.

Although it is evident that this ministry research project had more strengths than weaknesses, there are several adjustments I will make as I continue to develop and tailor this curriculum or if I had to do this project again. The strengths found in this project were that the project challenged people to look at their spirituality in depth, as

well as raise relevant questions throughout the twelve weeks. This project also helped those who are serious about their spiritual maturity; something to reach for in terms of the spiritual growth along with a visual gauge which they can follow their growth as well as the church's growth. The weakness found in this project is that it needed a more narrow focus. Other adjustments that would be made in light of this project's weaknesses would be more Scripture references and examples of kingdom-building from the biblical record. Also, this project would be more effective with other practical applications for developing participant's biblical knowledge.

In June of 2000, I preached my father's eulogy. I dealt with the passage of Scripture found in 2 Timothy 4:6. I titled the message "Life at its Best." Paul said to young Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give to me." ( 2 Tim 4:6-8 AV). It is my prayer that in spite of my human frailty that I prepare the people of God of which he has placed me over to equip them thoroughly to run the race, keep the faith complete their course, and then stand ready to receive their prize.

### **Future Research**

In my deliberation for the perfecting of this Bible study program, there were several things I wish to tackle. (1) streamline the lesson plans, (2) enhance the lesson plans, and (3) develop a better incentive for completing and follow up to curriculum. Other adjustments I will consider will be to create my own personal format for developing a vibrant church, instead of using Rainer and Akin. (2) Provide physical classroom setting to make it more conducive for interactive learning, (3) provide comprehensive training program for the teachers, and (4) develop similar curriculums for various other spiritual disciplines throughout the church that would make up small groups. It is my prayer that God will continue to bless and advance our efforts for His Glory and for His kingdom.



APPENDIX 1

FOCUS GROUP PRE- TEST

**Canaan Church Twelve-Week Bible Study Curriculum**

Presented here is a pre-test provide to shed light on the participant's knowledge of the Word of God, His desire for His people, along with questions revealing the participant's personal religious habits. After the twelve-week bible study the participant took a post-test questionnaire of these same questions to gauge their growth and knowledge. It is my prayer that as participants take these pre-test and post-test that they take time to answer questions truthfully and thoughtfully.

**Discipleship Inventory**

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you male or female?      Male    Female

Age: age group: 1   2   3   4   5   6

1 = 18-22      4 = 41-50

2 = 23-30      5 = 51-60

3 = 31-40      6 = 61 and over

Education Completed: Grade 10      11      12

Technical School

College 1   2   3   4

Graduate School      1   2   3   4

Marital Status:    Married    Divorced    Widow    Never Been Married

If married how long?

How long have you been a member at Canaan Community Church, OH \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a Christian

Have you ever been involved in discipleship training (an organized, weekly, discipleship group)? Yes    No

Have you ever been discipled one-on-one by another Christian?    Yes    No

How true is each of the following statements of you? choose from these responses:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1 = never true     | 4 = often true         |
| 2 = rarely true    | 5 = almost always true |
| 3 = sometimes true |                        |

1. I strive to live by the Bible's moral and ethical teachings. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Reading and studying the Bible has made significant changes in the way I live my life. 1 2 3 4 5
3. My faith shapes how I think each day. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I talk with other persons about my beliefs in Christ as Savior and Lord. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I take time for periods of prayer or meditation. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Because God has forgiven me, I respond with a forgiving attitude when others wrong me. 1 2 3 4 5
7. While interacting with others in everyday contacts, I seek opportunities to speak about Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My neighbors and the persons I work with know that I am a Christian. 1 2 3 4 5
9. When I realize that I have disobeyed a specific teaching of the Bible, I correct the wrongdoing. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I pray for God's help when I have needs or problems. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I share personal feeling and needs with Christian friends. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I like to worship and pray with others. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I use my gifts and talents to serve others. 1 2 3 4 5
15. When I become aware that I have offended someone, I go to him or her to admit and correct my wrongdoing. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I pray for the salvation of friends and acquaintances who are not professing Christians. 1 2 3 4 5

How often, if ever, do you do each of the following? Choose from these responses:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = seldom or never    | 4 = several times a week |
| 2 = about once a month | 5 = once a day or more   |
| 3 = about once a week  |                          |

17. I participate in a small group Bible study, other than Sunday school. 1 2 3 4 5
18. I study the Bible on my own. 1 2 3 4 5

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.  
Choose from these responses:

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 = definitely disagree | 4 = tend to agree    |
| 2 = tend to disagree    | 5 = definitely agree |
| 3 = not sure            |                      |

19. It is my personal responsibility to share the gospel message with non-Christians in my life. 1 2 3 4
20. I believe that the Holy Spirit is active in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
21. A Christian should consider himself accountable to other Christians. 1 2 3 4 5
22. A Christian should regularly find ways to tell others about Jesus. 1 2 3 4 5
23. Salvation is available only through receiving Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I express genuine praise and gratitude to God even in the midst of difficult circumstances. 1 2 3 4 5
25. I avoid close relationship with others who hinder the expression of my Christian values and principles. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I am consciously aware that God placed me on earth to contribute to the fulfillment of his plans and purposes. 1 2 3 4 5
27. I recognize that everything I have belongs to God. 1 2 3 4 5
28. I believe that God will always provide my basic needs in life. 1 2 3 4 5
29. I am somewhat hesitant to let others know that I am a Christian 1 2 3 4 5
30. I seek God first in expressing my values and setting my priorities. 1 2 3 4 5
31. Being a Christian is a private matter and does not need to be discussed with others. 1 2 3 4 5

How many of these have you done or experience within the past year? Choose from these response:

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1 = never     | 4 = 6-9 times        |
| 2 = once      | 5 = 10 times or more |
| 3 = 2-5 times |                      |

32. Clearly felt God's presence in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Invited an unchurched person to attend church, Bible study or another evangelistic event. 1 2 3 4
34. Met with a new Christian to help him or her grow spiritually. 1 2 3 4 5

35. Told others about God's work in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
36. Helped someone pray to receive Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following. Choose from these responses:

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 = strongly disagree | 4 = agree             |
| 2 = disagree          | 5 = strongly disagree |
| 3 = not sure          |                       |

37. One day God will hold me accountable for how I used my time, money, and talents  
1 2 3 4 5
38. All Christians are to follow Biblical teaching. 1 2 3 4 5
39. I have identified my primary gift. 1 2 3 4 5

Indicate how well trained and prepared you believe you are in the following areas.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 = not trained at all | 4 = Adequately trained |
| 2 = somewhat trained   | 5 = well trained       |
| 3 = average            |                        |

40. Presenting the plan of salvation. 1 2 3 4 5
41. Individually following up or helping a new Christian grow and develop spiritually.  
1 2 3 4 5
42. Leading someone to pray to receive Christ. 1 2 3 4 5
43. Sharing my personal testimony about how I became a Christian. 1 2 3 4 5

How often during the past two or three years have you done each of the following?

- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| 1 = never       | 4 = weekly |
| 2 = a few times | 5 = daily  |
| 3 = monthly     |            |

44. Read the Bible by myself. 1 2 3 4 5
45. Prayed by myself. 1 2 3 4 5
46. Made the necessary changes when I realized as a result of exposure to the Bible, that an aspect of my life was not right. 1 2 3 4 5
47. Directly tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

How true is each of these statements for you? Choose from these response:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1 = never true     | 4 = often true         |
| 2 = rarely true    | 5 = almost always true |
| 3 = sometimes true |                        |

48. When convicted of sin in my life, I confess it to God as sin. 1 2 3 4 5

49. Through prayer I seek to discern God's will for my life. 1 2 3 4 5

50. I am generally the same person in private that I am in public. 1 2 3 4 5

How often do you attend the following activities? Choose from these responses:

- |                 |                           |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 = never       | 4 = weekly                |
| 2 = a few times | 5 = more than once a week |
| 3 = monthly     |                           |

51. Worship service at my church. 1 2 3 4 5

52. Sunday school class. 1 2 3 4 5

53. Bible study other than Sunday school. 1 2 3 4 5

54. Prayer groups or prayer meetings 1 2 3 4 5

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Choose from these responses:

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 = definitely disagree | 4 = tend to agree    |
| 2 = tent to disagree    | 5 = definitely agree |
| 3 = not sure            |                      |

55. Christ designated local churches as His means and environment for nurturing believers in the faith 1 2 3 4 5

56. How many of your closest friends are professing Christians? 1 2 3 4 5

Thank-you for your cooperation it is my prayer that as you began this course in Kingdom-Driven Liven. You will embrace the challenge as well as the commitment to "Making Disciple's and Making a Difference."

APPENDIX 2

A BIBLICAL VISION FOR THE CHURCH

**What should the Church of Christ look like**

In this section the participant began with the end in mind. The purposes of these exercises are to compare the participant's views and beliefs of Church to that which the Lord has designed for the church to be. The answers in this section are intentionally open ended, in order to get a good understanding of the participants thought process concerning the Church.

***The Vibrant Church* by Thomas Rainer and Daniel Akin**

Imagine that you started a church from scratch. How would you begin? Where would you look for a blueprint? What would be your mission? Your primary, purpose?

Your objectives?

State what you consider to be the main mission or purpose of the church.

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State two or three of the primary ways the church achieves its mission. Later in the study, we will evaluate what you have written.

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List three or four primary characteristics of your church.

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How do you think persons outside your church would describe it?

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### Section 1: Basic Meanings of Church

In attempting to define church, you can expect a variety of different answers.  
How would you define church?

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List the four terms for church 1 Peter 2:9

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Describe ways your church reflects the image of the body of Christ in the following areas.

Worship: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Fellowship: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Refer to the definition of church that you previously wrote. In light of what you have learned, rewrite your definition here.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 3

### CORE CURRICULUM FOR TWELVE-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Building and Advancing the Kingdom of God Bible Study  
Session 1: Where does the building of the kingdom of God begin.

I. Genesis 12:1-9

God's call is active, adventurous, and autonomous (sovereign)

Keys to this message

- As Christians we partner with God for a greater purpose in life.
- God works through the individual for the purpose of advancing the group.
- Risk is a required resource for righteous living.

You were created with purpose in mind for the glory of God. Read Psalm 8 and Luke 4:18-19

- Briefly describe what you believe your gifts are and how they can help the church.
- Are you willing to step out on faith to become a co-laborer with Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances that keep you from fulfilling your work in the church

Devotional reading – Hebrews 11

II. Genesis 15:1-21

God is committed to bring to pass what he promised to you; however, we must be willing to work and wait.

Keys to this message:

- God sees what we don't see.
- God will renew and remind us of His intentions for our lives through His word.
- God's revelation restores our willingness to work, and ward off the enemy.

Devotional Reading- Jeremiah 33:1-8; Isaiah 43:1-3

III. Exodus 1: 8-12

The difficulties of life and spiritual warfare cannot and will not hinder God's vision for His people. God's presence sustains us in the midst of our trial

Keys to the message:

- Spiritual warfare will manifest itself in the physical realm.
- The promise challenges us to press our way through in spite of the trouble.
- What you thought would take so much from you is the very thing that adds so much to you.

Devotional Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 6:10-18

- IV. Exodus 19:1-9  
At Mount Sinai God establishes a covenant with the children of Israel.  
“Obedience brings blessings.”

Keys to the message

- Our relationship is regulated by rules
- Our blessings are predicated on our behavior
- Our participation in the promise demands God’s presence

Devotional reading: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Luke 12:22-31

- V. Matthew 28:16-20  
(This message in the series is to build a bridge between the Old Testament message and the New Testament).  
Because of what Christ has done we now have the access and authority to fulfill our responsibilities as believers.

Keys to the message

- Our responsibility is to go in His power
- Our responsibility is to get His people
- Our role in giving others the Promise

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 3

- VI. Acts 1:4-8  
The emphasis of this lesson is placed on our ability to wait and focus on the Spirit of God in our lives. And if we do God’s will He will meet our needs and concerns.

Keys to the message:

- The Church must remain focused.
- The Church must remain fearless.
- The Church must be faithful.

Devotional Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 12:1-5

- VII. Acts 2:40-47  
As co-laborers we must follow the pattern in which he left behind of living off of the Word, fellowship, and service.

Keys to the Message:

- The church must stand on the Word
- The church must seek His will
- The church must be willing to share
- The church must be willing to serve

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-17, 13:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-16

## APPENDIX 4

### SAMPLE MESSAGES FOR SERMON SERIES

#### **Sermon Title: “It’s Time To Move... !!!”**

Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family and from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. (Gen 12:1-9 KNJV)

#### **God’s call is active, adventurous, and autonomous (sovereign)**

##### **Central Point of Text**

As Christians we partner with God for a greater purpose in life. God works through the individual for the purpose of advancing the group. Risk is a required resource for righteous living.

So how do we fit what we know of Abraham, our first father in the faith, into this new way of looking at things? If Abraham, by what he did for God, got God to approve him, he could certainly have taken credit for it. But the story we're given is a God-story, not an Abraham-story. What we read in Scripture is, “Abraham entered into what God was doing for him, and that was the turning point. He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own.” If you're a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it's something only God can do, and you trust him to do it—you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked—well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, by God. Sheer gift. (Rom 4:1-5 MSG)

##### **Spiritual Food for Thought**

God is out to making something out of us. For His glory and someone else’s sake. Is Christ Lord and Savior in your life or is he just Savior? If He is Lord it means I have an unreserved confidence in His will and way.

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. (Heb 11:1-2 NLT)

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Heb 11:8-10 NKJV)

### **Sermon Title: When Misery Causes You To Multiply !!!**

**Just give me some more....**

**Exodus 1:8-12 (NKJV)**

Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. (Exod 1:8-12 NKJV)

#### **Historical Background**

The Egyptians launched a brutal persecution against Israel. They enslaved Israel and set slave-masters over the people, forcing them to labor for the state. The Egyptians wanted to stop Israel's population growth to break their spirits, keep them from bearing children, and to cause a number of them to die from hard work and harsh treatment, thereby shortening their days on earth.

#### **Central Point of Text:**

No earthly afflictions will ultimately affect God's plan and purpose for His people.

#### **Key Points:**

They were providentially destined to make it.

They were durable in spite of their misery.

They were designed to multiply.

**God's providence suggests that His Glory and the good of His people are never antithetical.**

#### **Spiritual Food for Thought**

The promises of God are irrevocable. He had promised the promised seed to Abraham, the birth of a great nation of people. This passage shows how God poured out His grace upon Israel, how He fulfilled His promise, how He caused a great nation of people to be born of the seed of Abraham. Whatever God promises us, He will do. No matter what

confronts us—no matter how terrible or painful—God will be with us and help us. He will fulfill—carry out, complete—exactly what He has promised

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:35-39 NKJV)

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (2 Cor 4:7-10 NKJV)

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isa 41:10)

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. (Isa 43:1-2)

## APPENDIX 5

### THE “5-S PRINCIPLE” FOR CURRICULUM DESIGN

1. Who are the “somebodies”?  
Answer: The Canaan Church Family:
2. What are the something’s the somebodies need to learn?(In other words what are some of the thing we want to the congregation participating in our Kingdom Driven Liven bible-study to learn.)  
Answer:
  - (1) Gain knowledge God’s establishment of His Kingdom in the biblical record.
  - (2) Developing a passion to seek and do God’s will in relation to advancing God’s kingdom.
  - (3) Help build members confidence in sharing the good news of God’s kingdom.
3. What are the some ways in which the somebodies learn the somethings? (In other words, what are some of the ways the participation members of the Canaan Church can learn kingdom building through the interactive bible study kingdom driven living.  
(1) How to apply these skills learn in their daily lives. (2) How to teach and train others about the Kingdom of God and our roll in its advancement. (3) Develop a systematic approach to studying God’s word as it relates to the purpose and praxis of the church.  
Answer:
  - (1) By coming and actively participating in small group bible study.
  - (2) Through interactive learning where we engage each other and learn from each other.
  - (3) Physical environment should be receptive to learning.
  - (4) Empower others to learn by leading by example.
4. What are the “somewheres” which influence the shape of the somethings the somebodies learn in some way? (In other words, what are the positive and negative indicators within the body that influence) (1) whether the ideas of the kingdom of God can penetrate the hearts and minds of people to motivate them to do his will (2) where do they find support when facing obstacles from within or from without? (3) whether through their commitment stimulate growth and vitality.  
Answers:
  - (1) The focus group must provide motivation, support, and encouragement
  - (2) This is where journaling and devotional’s become invaluable.
  - (3) The basic influencers would be motivation, attitude, correct knowledge, and commitment. This is a long journey that requires patience and perseverance.
5. What are the some purposes for which the somebodies learn something somewhere, in some way? (In other words, Why a kingdom driven liven bible study curriculum)  
Answer:
  - (1) So the church family can experience single mindedness as a local body, one purpose together. (i.e. the bible said that they

were one, on one accord, and that God added to the church daily such that should be saved)

- (2) So that the Church can come into alignment with God's perfect will of making disciples and making a difference in a broken and fragile world.
- (3) To have a firm foundation for worship, celebration, information, and inspiration.

## APPENDIX 6

### SAMPLE LETTER FROM PASTOR

Letter from the Pastor,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. First, let me say what an honor and privilege to be your Pastor and that you have made Canaan your church home. By enrolling in this class I personally take that as you have allowed God to minister to you through our ministry. This is something that we don't take lightly here at the Canaan Church. Our job is to adequately to the best of our ability is to have you firmly rooted and established in the knowledge of God's kingdom and your role and purpose within it. In this twelve-week bible study you will come to understand the purpose, place, and the establishing of God's kingdom, and what God has called you to do in it.

I fully understand as Job "man born of a woman is but a few days and full of trouble" Jesus himself said that in this life you will have tribulation. With that being said, I recognize that we all have our own personal needs and issues that we face that may cause us to put kingdom building on the back burner until "we get ourselves together." However, if Christ has become Lord and Savior in your life may you find power, determination, and comfort in these words.

*And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.*

It is therefore my prayer that you stand firm and walk in the light of your divine destiny as you pursue God's kingdom and His will for your life.

In His service I remain...

Pastor A.L. Pennebaker



APPENDIX 7

KINGDOM DRIVEN LIVEN JOURNALING  
AND DEVOTIONAL READING

*Please fill free to write all thoughts comments and concerns relating to Lesson unit study along with reading of devotional.*

**Lesson 1**

Psalm 8; Luke 4:18-19

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Devotional reading – Hebrews 11

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**Lesson 2**

Devotional Reading- Jeremiah 33:1-8; Isaiah 43:1-3

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A KINGDOM-FOCUSED MINISTRY THROUGH INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING AT THE CANAAN CHURCH, COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Chapter 1 introduces the purpose of the project, which was to create and develop a Bible study with a kingdom-focused agenda. This kingdom-focused Bible study informed the reader of the kingdom's origin, purpose, and the Christian's responsibility to the call of the kingdom of God. The goals of the project are precisely stated, along with the ministry context for which this project was implemented. The rationale along with the research methodology are also in chapter 1.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological foundation for the purpose of the project. Old and New Testament Scriptures are used as the foundation for the theological justification. This chapter introduces the development of the Kingdome Driven Liven Bible study curriculum. Also, the reader is provided a portrait comparison of the New Testament church alongside the contemporary church.

Chapter 3 shows the necessity of having a vibrant church and its impact on the Kingdom of God, as well as the individuals who play their roles. The chapter discusses church vitality and the kind of preaching that inspires vital church growth. Chapter 3 indicates several churches that good sample copies of vital kingdom-centered church ministries.

Chapter 4 implements the project while discussing the coming together of the twelve-week Bible study necessary for the project to become an ongoing opportunity in the life and ministry of the church. It also reveals the project summary at the conclusion.



Chapter 5 evaluates the project, discussing what worked, what did not work, and why, as well as where the church can improve the project for future use and implementation. The conclusion of chapter 5 provides the author's theological reflection concerning the project and process.

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