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LEVERAGING THE MULTI-SITE CHURCH APPROACH AS A
LONG-TERM CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY AT THE
VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS-FORT WORTH

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I dedicate this project to the members of The Village Church. May we faithfully continue
to scatter and sow.

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PREFACE

The completion of a milestone affords one the opportunity to reflect and remember the process. It is good and right to consider the steps one has taken and ponder the faithfulness of the Lord throughout the journey. Personally, this doctoral project provides a wonderful platform for such reflection and gratitude.

First, the arm of the Lord is not too short to save. My life is testimony to this beautiful reality. Even when I was not looking for the Lord, he graciously found me. Working through this project reminded me, yet again, that God is marvelously fulfilling his redemptive plan of saving sinners and multiplying disciples through the person and work of his Son. This is profoundly encouraging.

I am also reminded of the myriad of blessings God has bestowed upon me. He has graced me with a wonderful wife, Natalie, who continues to amaze me. I am not worthy of such a gift. Thank you for pushing me on this project and supporting the endeavor from the beginning. A man who has a wife who believes in him and encourages him has a special blessing.

Natalie and I have the privilege of raising four kids: Lily, Luke, Liv and Lucy. They are all tangible reminders of the Father's love for me. And I can't quite get my heart around how much I love them. Life is full and the house is loud. I wouldn't change a thing.

I am also deeply grateful for The Village Church. This body of believers continues to be a loving community of faith who is serious about the call to multiply and make disciples. I have grown tremendously in the Lord walking with this congregation and consider it one of the great joys of my life.

I want to thank the elders and executive team at The Village who shaped,

molded and refined the vision for campus transitions. The Lord has graciously assembled a team to lead and care for the church filled with myriad gifts and talents, yet each of these men walks in transparent humility. In fact, their character is more impressive than their gifts. These are men who care more about building the Kingdom than their own little kingdoms.

In particular, Matt Chandler and Beau Hughes made significant contributions to this project both to me personally as friends and partners in ministry and to the overall corporate vision for the church. I appreciate these brothers in countless ways.

The process of moving from a conversation about campus transitions to this being a growing conviction is etched into my heart as inspiring and informative. The Lord guided our steps. And, it was with joyful sadness that I was able to watch the Denton campus staff and leadership adopt the campus transition vision. The Lord has raised them up for such a time as this.

It is one of the great joys of my life to serve alongside Matt Chandler. He is a dear friend and true partner in ministry.

I also need to thank Southern Seminary for the incredible opportunity to launch a new cohort in executive leadership. I am indebted to our fearless leader, Dan Dumas, for blazing new trails, challenging our cohort to grow and develop as leaders, and most importantly for calling us to be men of character first and foremost. I could not have asked for a better cohort experience. Kevin Peck, Todd Engstrom, David Thompson, and Chris Kouba are more than ministry partners. They are friends. Thank you for pushing me, critiquing me, and calling me to lay down my life for the church.

Finally, I want to thank David Roark and James Gordon for their editorial eye, stylistic suggestions, and technical tinkering. They demonstrated incredible patience with me from the outset and their efforts helped produce a better resource for the church. And, I would be remiss not to mention my gratitude for Andrea Bowman, my assistant. She

brings order to chaos. Thank you for covering a thousand little things and scheduling countless times for me to disappear and write.

In the end, everyone who was a part of this project from my family to the leadership of The Village to my doctoral cohort to those who helped edit and refine the paper are all compelled by the same thing: the love of Christ. And, in loving Christ, we are learning to love his people, the church. My prayer throughout is that this project would first serve the people of The Village Church as we consider how to best steward our time, talents, and resources for the sake of the gospel. As a church we firmly believe that what we create is not ours alone to keep. In that spirit, we desire to give what we have received; share what we have created. This project is no different. It was created by the church and is for the church.

Josh Patterson

Flower Mound, Texas

May 2014

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to create a strategic vision document to serve The Village Church as it considers the transition of its Denton campus, and potentially other campuses, to become separate autonomous local churches.

Goals

The specific goals for this project are as follows: (1) to construct a vision document that includes the theological and biblical foundation compelling the vision, key indicators validating the readiness of the church to implement the vision, and a vision communication plan that can serve as a guide for the elders of The Village for the transition of its Denton campus and any future campus and (2) to communicate the vision of campus transitions and lead the church to an informed vote on the vision.

The clear measurable for the first goal is the affirmation and adoption of the vision document by the elders of the church. We will know we have successfully achieved the affirmation and adoption of this strategic document by a unanimous vote of the elder board to move forward with the proposed plan.

The vision document includes the following: a theological basis for the proposed transition of campuses to autonomous local congregations, a description of the spiritual preparation of the elders, staff, and membership for such a transition, a newly proposed structure for the elder board, the formation, and structure of The Village Church Network, and the proposed communication and implementation timeline.

In essence, the plan aims to address the reasons and rationale for the transition

and describe how the church hopes to implement the change. As with any directional decision in the life of the church, the approach must be rooted in a theological understanding and motivated by theological convictions. Beyond the theological analysis, the vision document needs to include the practical elements of leading through change.

The clear measurable for the second goal is to set a date for a vote on the proposed campus transition vision and faithfully prepare and inform the church leading up the vote.

Following an affirmative vote by the membership, the church must align and execute certain elements. This includes a full implementation framework and execution plan specifying the adjustments and alignments required to transition an attached campus to become autonomous. These specific plans fall outside of the scope and timeline for this project. This project deals with the formation, refinement, and casting of a compelling vision for campus transitions.

Ministry Context

History

In order to achieve the goals of this project, it is first important to understand the particular context in which The Village functions. In August 1977, Lakeland Baptist Church in Lewisville, Texas, planted a neighborhood congregation in nearby Highland Village. That year Highland Village First Baptist Church (HVFBC) was established.

In November 2002, HVFBC called Matt Chandler as their fourth lead (senior) pastor. Prior to Chandler's arrival, the church vacillated in both attendance and ministry philosophy. One of Chandler's key stipulations of his coming was the declared expectation of theological change. Since any healthy theological change requires both philosophical and practical changes, Chandler assumed leadership and pursued such a direction.

The church navigated a theological overhaul while simultaneously enjoying an

invigorated membership and rapid growth. As the theological and philosophical framework was modified, the church saw a rush of new attendees. The church went from 168 people in the worship gatherings to over 1,000 in a year. Subsequent years have seen the church continue to grow numerically at the rate of about 1,000 people per year for the last ten years. In all, the church has grown numerically from 170 people to over 10,000 since December 2002.

Challenges and Complexities

Despite the excitement surrounding the church's growth, The Village has faced multiple challenges because of the complexities that come with change. Specifically, the complexities concerned the pace of ministry, space issues, connection points, and qualified leadership at a variety of levels.

From the years of 2002-2006, The Village Church's building was tucked in a neighborhood with one egress and ingress point, and the entire campus was composed of a small multi-purpose building, two old portable buildings, and a sanctuary capacity of 444 seats. Due to the amount of people coming each weekend, the church grew to a point where it offered six weekend services: two on Saturday nights, two on Sunday morning, and two on Sunday evening. Each service was at or near 100% capacity with many services requiring the staff to turn people away. Obviously, this approach was not sustainable for the health of the staff, and it also took a heavy toll on the facilities. The years of six services eventually began chipping away at the vibrancy of the staff, and it became generally understood that the pace would need to subside.

The space issues were a major challenge. Given the rapid growth, there was simply not enough room to accommodate the amount of people attending each week. The stress of turning people away from a church service mounted as this took place each and every week at multiple services. The parking lot resembled a perpetual traffic jam, and the neighborhood grew disgruntled.

Alongside the relentless pace and crippling space limitations stood the reality that the church's size did not match her maturity level. The church was numerically large and only getting bigger, but the maturity of the church was developmentally behind. The church offered small groups as a means of growth and community but did not have enough groups to accommodate the amount of people. This reality proved to be strenuous for people who wanted to take the next step in the life of the church. Their next point of connection, groups, was another traffic jam; the connection pipeline was bottlenecked. In an effort to alleviate this tension, many immature believers were placed in roles of small group leadership, thus leading to unhealthy groups and compounding complexities.

The final challenge existed in leadership. The church had a young membership led by a young staff but faced the issues of a large church. Leadership was greatly needed, but the church was not developing leaders at a rate that kept up with the growth and its implications. Fortunately, leaders tend to be forged in the fires, and maturity often comes through struggle. The early years of The Village Church (2002-2006) forced the young leadership to learn lessons and grow as pastors and leaders. The challenges were trying, but they resulted in the rewards of experience and maturation.

Multi-Site

The Village Church initially had several hesitations regarding multi-site, specifically about what the movement would mean for the future of the church, both local and universal. The wave of multi-site churches continued to gain momentum, and many likeminded churches had already taken the plunge. Did this mean that the American multi-site movement would eventually produce a church that was being taught by only a few preacher/teachers? Was the church only going to want to hear from the best preachers via technology, and would the local context lose some of its value? The honest answers to these questions still sit in front of the church, yet the essence of multi-site did not seem to be unbiblical to The Village Church.

Many churches opposed, and still oppose, the multi-site movement on biblical convictions, but The Village Church did not find warrant in the biblical arguments against it. Again, the questions that reverberated in the conversations at The Village Church had more to do with implications of the movement and the philosophical boundaries that needed to be put in place.

Although the conversation was happening, The Village Church did not originally have any tangible plans to become multi-site. That said, the continued growth and aforementioned challenges meant that something had to change.

In light of this situation, the leadership called the church to a season of prayer and fasting in early 2007. This season, called “Venture,” proved to be a milestone in the life of The Village Church. At the first prayer gathering, there was the usual turning away of people due to space limitations and a cry to the Lord that what the church wanted was not a solution but simply more of the Savior. This prayer served as the banner for all other prayers. At the second gathering, the church prayed for the Lord to do something that only He could accomplish. The following week, Grace Temple Baptist in Denton, Texas, approached The Village Church, requesting to “become” The Village.

In the spring of 2007, The Village Church inherited a building in Denton and took the congregation of Grace Temple through the membership process of The Village Church. Now, The Village Church was one church in two locations, and multi-site became a new reality.

The third campus was acquired in 2009 through a similar process. Dallas Northway Baptist Church donated her building and assets to The Village Church and dissolved as an entity. The former members of Northway walked through the membership process of The Village Church.

Also in 2009, The Village Church purchased and renovated a facility less than a mile from the original campus. As a result, the Highland Village campus moved into

the new facility, now called the Flower Mound campus. The church still owns the property in Highland Village and uses it as a multi-purpose venue of the Flower Mound campus.

In the summer of 2013, The Village Church launched her fourth campus located in Fort Worth, Texas. In this case, the church purchased and renovated a facility. There was not a merging of two congregations as in the case of the previous two campuses. Similarly, the church purchased its fifth campus in Plano, Texas that will launch in the fall of 2014.

The current vision and strategy at The Village Church is for campuses to be one church in multiple locations. The desire to multiply the mission of the church in a variety of contexts drives the strategy forward. Each campus represents an extension of the greater mission of the church overall.

One Church, Multiple Locations

Given the geographical and contextual distance of The Village Church's multiple campuses, the elders knew that it was imperative to delineate the bonds that unify the campuses as one church. The "oneness" of the church became expressed through six key elements: one name, one elder board, one staff, one budget, one teaching and membership, and one mission.

The name needed to be consistent at each campus in order to perpetuate a familiarity, creating a certain set of expectations. This common name also helped ensure common experiences and standards. The name is important to the church, and since it is one church in multiple locations, the name goes with the campus. The driving impetus for multi-site at this point and the reason to stay one church flowed from a collective understanding that this is what the Holy Spirit was leading the church to do. The prayer season and subsequent answers to these prayers led the elders to move in this direction.

The leadership and staff function as another binding element for the campuses.

Comprised of men from each campus who serve to lead and shepherd the entire church, the elders of The Village Church provide centralized oversight. Elders from others campuses help oversee, from a high level, all of the church.

The campus pastor leads the campus staff and campus membership. He is responsible for the spiritual development of the campus. The campus pastor also serves on the elder board for The Village Church. This structure ensures that each campus includes elder representation. Every campus staff uses the same structure, but the number of total staff varies depending on the size of the campus. This means that someone who attends any one of The Village's campuses should expect to find familiar elements and language. Yet, while many elements remain the same, the intangible "feel" of the campus varies based on context, and each campus is in a different context.

The church also approves and affirms one budget. Although each campus tracks its own budget, all of the campuses share one bigger budget for the entire church. The same concept is true for membership. No matter which campus a member attends, that individual is simply a member of The Village Church, not of a specific campus. The membership covenant is the same across the campuses and provides a helpful basis to shepherd the members of the church.

Most importantly, each campus is compelled and unified by one guiding mission: The Village Church exists to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.

Each campus enjoys a great deal of contextual autonomy and decentralized ministry. This is a benefit of the multi-site approach: a more contextually specific ministry based on a variety of inputs. The "oneness" of the church, however, is also important. At The Village Church, the six "oneness" expressions mentioned above capture this nuance. Each expression represents a significant aspect in the life of the

church, from governance and leadership to philosophical approach.

Important Contextual Notes

Given the scope of this project, it is helpful to understand a few other contextual notes that provide opportunities and challenges.

The Flower Mound campus has several aspects that make it unique among the other campuses. Although the move from Highland Village to Flower Mound technically no longer made this campus the original, the campus nevertheless functions as the original in both tangible and intangible ways. This reality provides a continuity and history but also provides some hurdles to overcome. For instance, the most tenured staff members tend to serve at the Flower Mound Campus. Also, all three of the church's lead pastors attend this campus. In addition, those who peer into the ministry of The Village from the outside tend to do through the Flower Mound Campus. Finally, the Flower Mound Campus is the only campus that does not have a campus pastor. The lead pastors and the Spiritual Formation Pastor share the role and function.

The central staff members, including the church's three lead pastors, share office space with the Flower Mound campus staff. Also, unless it is a campus-specific preaching weekend, all preaching is streamed live from the Flower Mound campus; Matt Chandler preaches at the Flower Mound campus live nearly every weekend. The other campuses watch Chandler preach via technology on a screen.

The campuses are all relatively large in size, Flower Mound particularly. They range in size from nearly 2,000 people to 5,000 people. The Fort Worth campus launched during the summer of 2013 and appears to be following the same pattern. It is important to note campus size because of how it affects the leadership quotient of the campus pastor. In many respects, each campus could be viewed as a "mega-church," numerically speaking, in its own right. Because of this dynamic, The Village Church looks for a certain caliber of leader for the campus pastor role. The position necessitates a man

capable and competent to lead his own congregation yet remains content to be a part of a grander vision for the foreseeable future.

The ground-level direction of ministry is at the discretion of the campuses. Decentralized ministry enables the campuses to contextualize with more fluidity, leverage strengths, shore up weaknesses, empower campus staff to innovate leadership, and clarify authority and expectations.

The organizational staffing structure implemented in 2010 is intentionally simpler and more nimble to adjust to future change. Each year the Lord has brought new challenges and changes, so the church wants to be poised to receive what He has next. The current structure enables both flexibility and simplicity.

Rationale

Linda Ellis, a popular American poet, brings attention to the most important mark on any tombstone: the dash.¹ Oftentimes overlooked, if even noticed at all, the dash subtly rests between the birthdate and the day of dying. This simple punctuation mark represents the narrative of a unique life—a fingerprint of sorts stamping the stone with a story to be told. As one story fades into the recesses of memories and histories, another is being made and constructed. The cycle of life continues.

The cyclical nature of life depends on one factor: multiplication. When multiplication fades or ends, the cycle either slowly dissipates or comes to an abrupt halt. All living things must multiply to perpetuate, thus a failure to multiply is ultimately a failure to exist. This principle proves true for humanity, organizations and, especially, churches.

The normative experience of humanity starts with birth, is followed by gradual growth, maturity, and multiplication through children, and eventually ends with death.

¹Linda Ellis, “The Dash,” accessed August 12, 2013, <http://www.lindaellis.net/the-dash/the-dash-poem-by-linda-ellis>.

Organizational and church life cycles work similarly. They begin with the inception of an idea or a calling and then grow. Maturity and multiplication must soon follow or extinction inevitably will.

The metaphor of children and the new life they represent is aptly fitting for the church. It is a healthy and biblical expectation for churches to multiply at various levels. Multiplication occurs as disciples, compelled by the person and work of Jesus Christ, make new disciples, but it should also occur as churches make new churches.

Over the last couple of decades, various movements in the American church coalesced to generate a new wave of multiplication. The church has enjoyed a new gospel centrality, producing a fresh missional passion, a resurgence of the Great Commission, and newly energized local and global church planting efforts. One recent movement in particular, the multi-site church movement, continues to enjoy expansion and growth as churches extend their reach through multiple venues and locations.

Everything, from the biblical mandate to multiply to the normative life cycle of growing and replicating to the existing platform of multi-site, creates a powerful impetus for the leadership of The Village Church to evaluate her vision and strategy for campuses. The timing of this project is perfect for The Village because the individual campuses are healthy and thriving, and the structures are in place to allow each campus to become an autonomous church. The campus pastors are able to lead at this level, and God is giving most of them a desire to do so. Obviously this shift would modify The Village's current approach and strategy resulting in significant implications. Rather than understanding this shift as a critique of the typical multi-site approach, it is understood as capitalizing on an opportunity. More directly, it is leveraging the typical approach to plant more churches. The Village is undoubtedly more concerned with planting, establishing and strengthening healthy churches than adding campuses. This strategic shift means that campuses would eventually become churches.

The Village Church began to answer some of the questions that circled before she ever became a multi-site church. Although there will not be answers for the greater multi-site movement itself, The Village Church will gain clarity on how she is prepared to respond, specifically to answer questions such as: What becomes of campuses down the road? Does multi-site promote only a few preachers to the exclusion of others? Can a church have decentralized ministry and strong contextual leadership in a multi-site church without eventually creating frustration at both the campus level and the overall church level? Does a healthy campus, at some point, begin to feel like it is a mature adult living in its parents' home? The Village Church is not reacting against the multi-site movement; rather, she sees an opportunity to leverage the movement to plant healthy churches.

Again, if maturity is the normative and natural expectation, it seems that campuses would eventually wrestle with these growing pains. This project intends to answer such questions for The Village Church and provide a map to navigate the change. The benefits of the project flow from a clear set of expectations regarding the launch of new campuses and the development of campuses to be independent and self-sustaining when it seems good to the Holy Spirit and The Village Church (Acts 15:28). The Apostle Paul uses this language when describing a decision regarding the church and her practice. It highlights the leadership and direction of the Holy Spirit working in and through human agents.

This principle serves church leaders in the decision-making process. A confluence of unity among the church's leadership and affirmation of the Holy Spirit presses the church forward. Sometimes God uses clear and objective signposts to follow, but other times he uses the subjective sense and collective biblical wisdom to lead a church into the unknown. Either direction takes convictional courage.

The greater value wins out over the lesser value. The reward outweighs the

risk. The Village Church values campuses. The campus model has, is, and will continue to serve the mission of the church. Yet, the landscape of the American church is ever changing. The cultural climate continues to shift rapidly, and the church must be nimble and quick to respond. Obviously, a multi-site church can accomplish such a response, and in many ways, it is happening at The Village Church. The greater value of dotting the landscape with faithful gospel-centered and multiplying congregations is the greater value that The Village Church desires to perpetuate. The campus model comes replete with benefits, but it also comes with limitations. One of the limitations is the ceiling of leadership. Although a new campus provides new service opportunities and leadership vacuums for people to fill, there is an eventual ceiling. The campus membership may not experience this ceiling to the degree that the campus pastor will feel it. A campus must exist within a structure of leadership. Campus autonomy can only go so far if it is to remain faithful to the greater mission of the church that the campus is a part of. This is not unhealthy, per se, but it is something that exists. Another limitation is the relationship between the primary communicator (preacher/teacher), the creation of culture, and contextual ministry. The primary communicator is often not the same person who is on the ground at any given campus. Thus, contextual communication can only go so far. And communication helps to establish and reinforce culture. The pulpit is also significant in pastorally leading and caring for a congregation. It is not uncommon for a campus to have a desire for more contextual ministry and culture than the overall church feels comfortable allowing. Again, this is a tension that must be managed rather than a problem to be solved in the multi-site approach.

Not every multi-site church faces these limitations, but The Village Church does. In the early life of a campus, these are not limiting factors in the least, but as a campus and her leadership mature, these issues become increasingly relevant. Eventually, every multi-site church will have to decide how to navigate such limitations. Some will

ramp up central control, while others will remain “one church” in name only.

The Village Church seeks to unleash leadership and celebrate the growth of a campus into maturity and multiplication. Transitioning healthy campuses to autonomous churches also reinforces to the entire membership the biblical mandate to multiply through concrete actions. This is a strong and tangible action that demonstrates one way a church can multiply. As a parent celebrates the leaving of children, the church has the opportunity to celebrate a campus becoming a church. What is celebrated is cultivated. The greater hope is to have young churches growing with a burden to sprout new growth and continue the life cycle.

Definitions

Multi-site church. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* defines the term multi-site church as “. . . one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership and board.”²

Multiplication. Multiplication is central to this project. The term comes loaded with meaning, ranging from replication to reproduction. In order to multiply, a disciple or a church must faithfully invest, develop, and work to see the character of Christ formed in another. Just as it is the call for believers to grow in the image of Christ, so also it is the collective call of the church. Multiplication is about Christ being formed over and over again in disciples who make disciples and churches that plant churches. Multiplication does not mean creating exact representations or cookie-cutter expressions; the essence of quality and character is the same while the contextual expression is different.

²Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church in Many Locations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2009), 18.

Church planting. Few writers adequately define what they mean by “church planting,” so *Wikipedia*’s definition provides a helpful starting point: “. . . a process that results in a new (local) Christian church being established. It should be distinguished from church development, where a new service, new worship center or fresh expression is created that is integrated into an already established congregation. For a local church to be planted, it must eventually have a separate life of its own and be able to function without its parent body, even if it continues to stay in relationship denominationally or through being part of a network.”³

In the scope of this project, a new church will be planted and established after a campus incubates and grows under the direction of a local church until the parent church eventually transitions the campus to become its own church.

Limitations and Delimitations

A significant limitation is that the greater vision and scope of the project is limited by time. The vision consists of the continuation of starting new campuses with the additional expectation that those campuses will eventually transition to be individual local churches at some point. Given this grand scope and the runway needed to implement the first transition, this doctoral project will be completed before the vision is fully implemented. The project will provide a robust theological impetus for the vision and a communication plan that will help preparing the leadership and church for the upcoming changes.

The delimitation of the project is the leadership and membership of The Village Church. Although a variety of input will help craft a vision, it is nonetheless a derivation of how The Village understands the Spirit to be leading her in this season and the season to come.

³ Wikipedia, “Church Planting,” accessed March 6, 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_planting.

Research Methodology

The research process for this project primarily revolves around the leadership and membership of The Village Church. The goals of the project will be evaluated in light of these two groups.

A variety of dynamics merge together in the creation of a vision document. A change of this scale requires convictional ownership at the highest level and a comprehensive understanding of the reasons the church would make such a change. Essentially, the research collected during this process is the internal information garnered by the elder board and nuanced throughout the discussion. Several iterations of the vision occurred before the elders finally landed on the specific vision presented to the church.

Following the discussion and refinement of the vision, the elders created the final vision document that will be used as a guide for the elders of The Village for the transition of the Denton campus and any future campus. The elders unanimously voted to approve the vision document.

As the implementation of the strategy begins, the church must be unified and hold a sense of ownership. There will be several town hall-style meetings to understand hesitations and potential blind spots. Again, the first level questions of “Why?” and “What?” are essential to stages of the process. As the project unfolds, the church will be forced to answer the questions “How?” and “When?”

The effectiveness of the second goal will be understood through the information obtained through the church vote on the proposed vision. The Denton campus will vote on the proposed vision to transition its campus into an autonomous church.

CHAPTER 2
A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MULTIPLICATION

Introduction

Expectant parents know the thrill of a sonogram. There is nothing quite like going to the doctor's office, hearing the assuring rhythms of a little heartbeat, and getting to see the image of a little baby on the screen. Each successive sonogram provides continual clarity and shape.

Sonograms provide a picture of what is coming. They display wonderful images. Yet they only provide shadows. The substance is still to come. Before the baby arrives, it is only possible to infer. The same goes with the Scriptures. The book of Genesis, in many ways, serves as a sonogram picture of the future. The shape is there, but the fullness is yet to be revealed. In the book of Revelation, the substance appears full, vibrant, and worthy of celebration. The motif of multiplication is woven throughout the entire Bible: the shape and form beginning in the Garden and the fullness beheld in the new City to come.

This chapter attempts to explore the biblical foundation for multiplication by looking at how the theme is developed throughout the canon of Scripture and across redemptive history.

**A Biblical Theology of Multiplication from Genesis to
Revelation**

Multiplication and the Image of God

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). These words declare that before there was even time, there was God. These words also proclaim

the authority and active agency of the Creator in His creation. The first words of the Bible set the perspective for the rest of Scripture, as all of the words that follow point back to an active God who is engaged with His creation.

God created. He established. He marked out the boundaries of all creation. God also designated one part of His creation as separate from and unique among the rest, namely, humanity. The benevolent words, “and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31), hang over the pinnacle of His creation like a banner. What makes humanity special and unique? Why is humanity set over and above the rest of creation? The Genesis account provides the answer: Humanity is endowed with the very image of God.

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:26, 27). The full implications and explanation of the image of God fall outside the scope of this project, but a framework for understanding “image-bearer” is important. Robert Pyne writes, “If Paul’s vision of the restored image accurately reflects the original creation, we may conclude that *the image of God consists of humanity’s investment with God-like glory and the moral capacity to reflect His character while ruling the earth as His representatives.*”¹ This definition provides both the essence and the application of the image of God in humanity. The essence of the image relates to the glory of humanity, while the application flows from it. Specifically, human beings are to reign and rule over creation responsibly as God’s vice-regents, or His representatives.

No other aspect of creation enjoys such designation, and the importance of this designation can hardly be overstated. A human being, apart from any act or ability, retains inherent worth and dignity. This dignity has been conferred upon humanity from the Creator Himself. Although the image of God has been marred by sin, the image still

¹Robert A. Pyne, *Humanity and Sin: The Creation, Fall and Redemption of Humanity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 66 (emphasis original).

remains with worth, glory, and dignity.² In other words, people matter—all people, everywhere. Even more, people have a specific mandate.

The image of God deals especially with the role and purpose for humanity. The first human command in all of Scripture outlines this purpose: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28). This command is commonly referred to as the “creation” or “cultural” mandate.

Fundamentally, the scriptural theme of multiplication begins right here in Genesis 1. God spoke a blessing over each aspect of His creation. He created and then He blessed. Coupled with the blessing was the expectation and command to multiply. Dietrich Schindler makes the point,

The book of Genesis serves as the point of entrance into the subject of multiplication. In the book, the term “blessing” (Heb. *berak*) noticeably includes multiplication. Of the aquatic animals and birds, it is said, “God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on them’” (Gen. 1:22). The first humans are addressed similarly: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Gen. 1:28).³

God charges His people to multiply His reign and rule over all of creation as His representatives. The Lord created and brought order to His creation. He ruled over it. In the same way, God expected and charged Adam and Eve to do the same as His vice-regents. They were to bring order to creation. The means by which they would establish order and rule over all of creation was to multiply. The numeric multiplication of offspring would translate to the multiplication of the reign and rule of God over the earth.

Many have a reductionist view of the creation mandate as only pertaining to

²The marring of the image of God due to humanity’s sin comes about in Gen 3. This sentence gets a little bit ahead of the unfolding story, but relates to the importance being stressed in the first implication, namely, that people matter even after the fall.

³Dietrich Schindler, “Movements: How to Create a Jesus Movement of Multiplying Churches (III),” accessed August 12, 2013, <http://m4europe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Movements-Theological-and-Practical-Principles-III.pdf>.

the bearing of children. Certainly this is in view and is important, but it is not the sole aspect of the mandate. The mandate to multiply carries with it the multiplication of the rule of God over all creation. The expectation was for the way of living in the Garden of Eden to expand across the rest of the earth.

Multiplication and the Fall

The story continues to unfold as humanity falls from grace and bruises the image of God in Genesis 3. The pride of Adam and Eve leads them to disobey God's command in the Garden, which ultimately leads to their banishment from the Garden. God justly responds to the rebellion of Adam and Eve by cursing them, along with the rest of creation. Comprehensive and chaotic, the consequences of the fall are physical, spiritual, relational, and emotional. It has ramifications both vertically (unto God) and horizontally (unto one another). Eve, the mother of all the living, will suffer through childbirth and have an unhealthy desire to usurp her husband's authority. Adam, who was formed from the dirt of the earth, will endure ongoing frustration in his efforts to live upon it. Both physical and spiritual death result from the fall. In every direction imaginable, Adam, Eve, and the rest of humanity suffer the strife of utter brokenness: before God, before one another, and before nature.

But, even in the midst of a crushing curse, a flicker of hope remains. There is a promise, a word given. As God levies curses, light shines through the keyhole of His redemptive plan. Genesis 3:15 is referred to as the protoevangelium, Latin for "first gospel." Here we see the foreshadowing of what is to come: God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). God promises to bring forth one born of a woman who would suffer but ultimately crush the head of the serpent.

The sin of humanity mars the image of God but does not nullify the mandate

given to humanity to reign and rule. Although the created order is broken and the original rhythm of life altered, God still expects His people to establish His rule over the earth. The marvelous reality here is that God himself will work to see that this hope is fully accomplished. To make it even more spectacular, He does not abandon the plan to use His people to multiply His reign; rather, He sets out to redeem the lost and fix the broken. God will enter into His creation to restore it and lead it to fulfill its original intent.

Multiplication and Covenant

A robust understanding of multiplication moves from the creation account and the fall to the installation of the covenants—God’s way of relating with His people. There is a link between God’s covenantal blessing and multiplication. The foundational covenant for God’s redemptive plan is made with Abraham. As Schindler writes,

The promise to Abraham is a word of blessing and multiplication. In the midst of godless tribes and nations, God singles out Abram and states clearly, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing...and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:2–3). This promise is reiterated to Abraham on four other occasions, in each case with multiplication attached to it (Gen. 13:14–16; 15:4–21; 17:4–16; 22:15–18).⁴

God intervenes in the life of a man named Abram who, by no merit of his own, was chosen to be the means God would use to set apart a people unto Himself—Israel. Through the Israelite people, God would bless all peoples. The Lord blessed one man to bless many. He blessed one people to bless many. The interplay between blessing and multiplication proves strong with the latter being evidence of the former. The blessing of God upon His people is again understood in terms of multiplication upon the earth.

As the book of Genesis concludes, the story of God’s covenant faithfulness continues in the book of Exodus. Again, noting the theme of multiplication through the Scripture, Schindler writes,

In spite of the four hundred years of silence which separated the patriarchal times

⁴Ibid.

from the Mosaic era, the theology hardly missed a beat... These (words) evidenced the fulfillment of God's promise that Jacob's seed had indeed been "fruitful," "increased greatly," "multiplied," and "grown exceedingly strong." It was a clear allusion to the blessing promised in Genesis 1:28 and 35:11.⁵

In looking through the relationship between covenant and multiplication, the rest of the Old Testament shows a faithful God and a vacillating people. God's blessing is regularly understood in terms of multiplication, and the people's unfaithfulness, through disobedience and idolatry, consequently results in a failure to multiply.

Deuteronomy, which means "second law," was written to reiterate the Mosaic Covenant to a new generation of Israelites. As the Israelites stood on the precipice of the Promised Land, Moses recounts God's faithfulness to multiply a people: "The Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven. May the Lord, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you" (Deut 1:10-11). The numerical expansion of God's people illustrates God's faithfulness to His promises.

Moses continues to use multiplication language as he exhorts and encourages the Israelites later in the book of Deuteronomy: "Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deut 6:3). The people of God were expected to multiply.

The Israelites enter the land, and God proves faithful yet again. The people, however, are fickle. Time lapses, and generations come and go. The Israelites are exiled from the land and then eventually return. As He chastens the people for their unfaithfulness, God again employs multiplication language: "They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply" (Hos 4:10).

The final two covenants promised in the Old Testament, the Davidic and New

⁵Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 100, cited in Schindler, "Movements: How to Create a Jesus Movement of Multiplying Churches (III)."

Covenant, shed more light on God's ultimate redemptive plan. Not all of the substance is clear, but the shadows continue to dissipate. God will send a promised Messiah to deliver His people through the Davidic line. He will write His law on the hearts of His people, rather than in stone. He will multiply the offspring of David and spread the wonder of the New Covenant (see Jer 22:3, 30:19, 33:22). A future restoration is coming, and the people of God will, one day, finally and fully be established to reign and represent their God in all the earth: "And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt" (Ezek 36:10).

Multiplication and the New Testament

The Old Testament firmly establishes an expectation of multiplication for the people of God. The Scripture correlates His blessings with the multiplication of His people. In contrast, the failure of the people of God to multiply becomes understood as an indication of faithlessness on the part of the nation. A faithful people multiply. A faithless people do not.

Remarkably, the ultimate plan for multiplication is not conditioned upon the faithfulness of anyone other than God Himself. The early promise of Genesis 3:15 and the unconditional aspects of the covenants God made with His people throughout history ensure a day to come when His people and His reign and rule will finally be multiplied over the earth. The New Testament provides the clarity around how this will finally come to pass.

Jesus, His Disciples, and the Church

The promise of a messiah lingers in the hearts and minds of Israel throughout history. Angst builds, and the long-awaited hope finally arrives in miraculous and humble fashion: a baby in a manger, born of a virgin. The prophets foretold this advent and provided the contours of what the nation should and could expect regarding the Anointed

One. Although they expected a conquering king who would sit on David's throne and redeem the kingdom, the means by which this was to happen turned the tables of expectations.

This paradigmatic shift, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sits as the rightful centerpiece of God's redemptive plan. Therefore, it is important to understand how the implications and seismic events continue to weave the thread of multiplication through the New Testament story, beginning with the inauguration of the New Covenant and culminating with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

First, Jesus, along with the Spirit of God, inaugurates the New Covenant. The continuity of God's promise finally and fully to redeem and restore occurs in and through Jesus Christ. He is both the means of fulfillment and the culmination of fulfillment. The apostle Paul writes, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Cor 1:20).

Second, Jesus expounds on the means for multiplication in His great commission to the disciples. Based on His authority, which extends over the heavens and the earth, His people will go to the ends of the earth to multiply the name and fame of the Triune God by making disciples.

Third, Jesus redefines Israel. The people of God are now those who are "in Christ." The apostle Paul writes in Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." The promise given to Abraham in Genesis finds its fulfillment in Christ, and Abraham's true offspring become those who are in Jesus. The promise that these offspring would multiply beyond the number of stars in the sky will occur in and through Christ.

Fourth, Jesus reconstitutes the people of God as the church. The twelve disciples that He called unto Himself provide the seedbed for an unprecedented movement of God's Spirit. Following the Great Commission and the ascension of Christ

after His resurrection, the disciples huddled together in the upper room to await the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to indwell believers and empower them for the mission of multiplication. The Church is born, and she has a clear mission to multiply—to make disciples. The normative mechanism for this call is the establishment of new churches.

Sixth, God's plan of redemption and restoration extends beyond the nation of Israel. Because Israel is now understood to be those who are in Christ, Jews and gentiles alike are offered the hope and promise of salvation. The church multiplies beyond Jerusalem as the apostle Paul takes the message of salvation to the gentiles.

Last, the church will be comprised of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. Multiplication has its end when God establishes the new heavens and the new earth and comes to dwell with His people. What was broken in the Garden of Eden will be made better. The only aspect of multiplication that remains is the eternal multiplication of worship and joy.

Concluding Thoughts on a Biblical Theology of Multiplication

The seeds of Genesis sprout fully in the book of Revelation and bloom with glorious grandeur. God's intent and design for His creation, specifically with humanity, was to call out a people unto Himself. God's people would represent Him on the earth and steward on His behalf, serving as His vice-regents. The command to be fruitful and multiply among the earth signified His blessing and joy. Biblical multiplication is more pronounced than simply bearing children, although numerical multiplication is certainly a component. Within the biblical understanding is also the idea of multiplying God's reign and rule over the earth. This is the charge for His people.

Sin distorts image-bearers in a significant way; chiefly, fellowship with God is

broken. Yet God sees fit to restore and reshape both the image and the broken relationship. A series of promises and covenants outline the expectations and the ways that God would relate to His people. All of the promises and covenants find their ultimate meaning and fulfillment in God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus redefines the people of God as those who are in Him. The people of God no longer have a national identity but an identity based on a person. Those who place their love and trust in the Lord Jesus now belong to the church and are sealed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The church has a mission to multiply disciples, and God will use His people to bring about His original design for multiplication: the worship of His name in every tongue, tribe and nation and the representation of His rule over the entire earth.

A Ground-Level Look at Multiplication

An overview of Scripture provides a picture of multiplication from the air and offers a unique perspective. But a ground-level perspective also proves helpful. In light of this, it is important to look at several pertinent texts in Scripture that speak to the charge for the people of God to multiply, specifically the "growth parables," the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, and the subsequent mission of the church.

The Growth Parables

Jesus uses parables as a teaching tool. They are fictional stories illustrating something true. In the case of the kingdom of God, Jesus says it is analogous to a seed growing secretly or a mustard seed. Dietrich Schindler notes, "It is in the parables of Jesus that we discover the nature of Jesus' messianic dynasty-building and that it has to do with multiplication."⁶ Jesus came with the expectation of multiplication.

⁶Schindler, "Movements: How to Create a Jesus Movement of Multiplying Churches (III)."

The seed growing secretly: Mark 4:26-29. The parable of the seed growing secretly, recorded only in Mark 4:26-29, teaches God’s sovereign yet meticulous involvement in the multiplication and the growth of the kingdom, especially when growth appears stalled or nonexistent. Mark writes,

And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:29-29)

Ironically, the secretive nature of the seed growth points to the work of God in multiplication even in the midst of apparent inactivity. R. T. France summarizes,

The first parable, then, is a message about rightly interpreting and responding to the period of the apparent inaction of the kingdom of God. Despite appearances to the contrary, it is growing, and the harvest will come. But it will come in God’s time and in God’s way, not by human effort or in accordance with human logic.⁷

This work is His business, and He ensures the fruitfulness. Interestingly, the farmer simply scatters the seed and goes about the monotony of his day. His efforts tie to the scattering of the seed rather than the growth and fruit of the seed. James Edwards notes,

Despite the farmer’s absence and ignorance, however, the soil brings forth “all by itself” (Gk. *automatē*), from which we derive the word “automatic.” The seed contains within itself a power of generation and an orderly process of growth—“first the stalk, then the ear, then the full kernel in the ear”—that transpires quite apart from the farmer.⁸

The burden of fruitfulness lies in the secret and sovereign work of God, but the Church, both individually and corporately, must remain faithful to scatter. The growth may indeed be imperceptible and slow, but God superintends the multiplication of His kingdom and promises that nothing would stop its growth. As churches consider the call to multiply disciples to the ends of the earth, great comfort settles into the heart which rests in Jesus’

⁷R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 215.

⁸James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 142-43.

words: “I will build my church” (Matt 16:18). Jesus is the primary church-planter. Jesus promises that His church will prosper. Edwards concludes, “The faith that Jesus requires of disciples is to sleep and rise in humble confidence that God has invaded this troubled world not with a crusade but with a seed.”⁹

The mustard seed: Matthew 13:31-22, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19. The parable of the mustard seed provides yet another profound truth about the nature of the kingdom. It reads, “And [Jesus] said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade’” (Mark 4:30-32).

The teaching on the growth and multiplication of the kingdom continues, but this parable stands to emphasize a different point. France notes, “The message is clearly related to that of the previous parable [parable of the seed growing secretly], but presented here in a simpler form, with the focus on the contrast between beginning and end rather than on the process of growth.”¹⁰

The contrast also focuses on the size and dimension. The kingdom of God starts perceptively small but eventually grows noticeably large. The seed, at one point relatively obscure and unnoticed, profoundly multiplies in size and in such a dramatic fashion that the relationship from the beginning seed to the final tree bewilders. Leon Morris writes about this significance:

Over against the mighty numbers of worshippers of heathen gods and even of the Jews who acknowledged the true God, those who proclaimed the kingdom were a tiny minority. Jesus teaches them not to be hypnotized by size. These tiny beginnings would grow into something greater by far than any of the religions found

⁹Ibid., 144.

¹⁰France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 216.

in the disciples contemporary world.¹¹

Mark 4:32 describes the eventual result of the tiny seed: birds nesting in the tree. This concept hints at the final result of multiplication, namely, that the kingdom of God will include people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. Edwards writes, “The OT prophets occasionally use the image of birds nesting in branches to allude to the inclusion of the Gentiles on God’s chosen people (Ps. 104:12; Ezek 17:23, 31:6; Dan 4:9-21).”¹² John Nolland offers a nuanced interpretation of the birds finding nest in the tree as a sign of protection, stability and peace. He writes,

In Luke’s form of the parable, there appears to be an allusion to Ezekiel 17:22-23. Here and elsewhere in the OT a tree with birds nesting in its branches becomes an image for a powerful king or kingdom able to provide a widely used protective canopy of stability and peace. The birds that come are the people who find shelter and protection, but Luke will want us to think particularly of the prospect of the coming of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God.¹³

Not only will the kingdom multiply in size, but the scope of the kingdom will include people from all of the earth. This idea squares with the thread of multiplication throughout the Bible. The growth parables provide continuity with the promises given to Abraham and Israel regarding multiplication. Specifically, one small seed would grow and multiply to fill the ends of the earth.

At this point, the biblical theology of multiplication demonstrates God’s intention throughout Scripture to multiply His reign and rule over the earth through His people. He made covenants and promises to His people ensuring their fulfillment. Specifically in the Gospels, the growth parables teach that God will grow and multiply His kingdom and that this kingdom will spread across the earth. A beautiful continuity exists between the Old and New Testament on this point. The mechanism by which God

¹¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 351.

¹²Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 145.

¹³John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 728-29.

will fulfill His mission to multiply is through His people.

The Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20. The conclusion of Matthew's Gospel, known as the Great Commission, speaks directly to God's intended design for multiplication:

And Jesus came said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20).

Jesus charges His people with a clear purpose: multiplication. The multiplication that Jesus desires revolves around making disciples. A few careful observations of the text reveal several important elements. For example, the use of the word "all" binds the Great Commission together. Jesus states that He has "all authority in heaven and on earth." Jesus teaches that His authority is without boundaries, and the scope is untethered. There is no place in heaven or on the earth in which Jesus does not have authority.¹⁴ It is under the banner of this authority that Jesus then issues the imperative for His disciples to make disciples of all nations. D. A. Carson makes an important point about Jesus' authority: "It is not that Jesus' authority becomes more absolute [following his resurrection]. Rather, the spheres in which he now exercises absolute authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e. the universe."¹⁵

After teaching on His own universal authority, Jesus commands His people to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." This is the second of three uses of the word "all" in this text. Based on His global authority, Jesus charges His disciples with a global mission comprised of a specific purpose: make disciples. Andreas Köstenberger

¹⁴ It should be noted that the Father gave this authority to Jesus, so that Jesus, still gives deference to the Father in a beautiful demonstration of love within the Godhead.

¹⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 594.

and Peter O'Brien write about this startling command, "Perhaps the most striking element of the present command. . . is the fact that Jesus' followers are called not merely to disciple *individuals*, but entire *nations*, indeed, *all nations*."¹⁶

Jesus' third use of "all" comes at the end of the paragraph, which also happens to be the end of the book of Matthew. He states, "I am with you always (lit. "all the days")." This reminder comforts and assures the disciples that the Great Commission is not a solo mission but that Jesus Himself joins His people, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in the work of multiplication. The Great Shepherd cares for His sheep by staying near, offering the solace of both presence and protection. D. A. Carson reminds the reader of Matthew's early words at the beginning of this Gospel, "he who is introduced to us in the prologue as Immanuel, 'God with us' (1:23; cf. also 18:20), is still God with us, 'to the very end of the age.'"¹⁷

It is significant to see the development of the Great Commission. First, Jesus declares that His authority is universal. This develops confidence and courage in His people for the mission of multiplication. Next, He defines the scope of the mission as universal, providing a perspective for His people regarding the scope of the mission of multiplication. Last, He gives a reminder that His presence is universal in order to comfort His people while doing the mission of multiplication.

The multiplication of God's reign and rule, originated in the created order and broken by the fall, will be restored by the person and work of His Son working through His disciples. Carson writes, "More telling yet, Matthew's gospel is now, in its final verses, returning to the theme introduced in the very first verse—that the blessings promised to Abraham and through him to all peoples on earth (Gen 12:3) are now to be

¹⁶Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 104.

¹⁷Carson, *Matthew*, 599.

fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.”¹⁸

The picture of multiplication grows in clarity as the book of Matthew concludes with open-ended expectation. Carson writes, “the Gospel of Matthew is not a closed book till the consummation. The final chapter is being written in the mission and teaching of Jesus’ disciples.”¹⁹ Köstenberger and O’Brien provide a helpful summary that recognizes the thread of multiplication from Genesis to the Gospels:

Matthew 28:16-20 marks the culmination and fulfillment of Jesus’ mission: the fulfillment of Israel’s destiny as the representative, paradigmatic Son, with the result that God’s blessing to the nations, promised to Abraham, unrealized through Israel (despite Exod. 19:6), would be fulfilled through Jesus in the mission of his followers, which nevertheless remains his own mission.²⁰

The continuity of God’s plan, beginning in Genesis, marches forward as Jesus outlines the mission for His people. The story continues as the Gospels pave the way for the book of Acts, where the Holy Spirit creates the Church. The Spirit then uses the people of God to proclaim the Word of God to form new people of God. The disciples multiply and create new churches. Churches multiply and create new disciples. Thus, the normative cycle of multiplication begins until the Son comes again for His Church.

The church: Acts 1:8. According to Dietrich Schindler, “The book of Acts depicts growth and multiplication as results of the Holy Spirit’s activity through the preaching of the Gospel. The mission is universal, ‘unto the ends of the earth,’ and brought on by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The book of Acts records the unfolding of this mission.”²¹

In the early verses of Acts, Luke records the final words of Jesus before His

¹⁸Ibid., 596.

¹⁹Ibid., 599.

²⁰Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 106.

²¹Dietrich Schindler, “Movements: How to Create A Jesus Movement of Multiplying Churches (I),” accessed August 12, 2013, <http://m4europe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Jesus-Movements-Laying-the-Foundation-I.pdf>.

ascension: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Luke records that, as He finished these words and as the disciples were looking on, Jesus ascended into the heavens via a cloud. These words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 provide the theme for the book of Acts.

The Holy Spirit enables, empowers and emboldens the disciples to be witnesses. This point cannot be overstated. Considering the scope of the mission and the lostness of humanity, this combination proves the mission is unattainable outside of supernatural enablement. In this sense, the book of Acts more clearly demonstrates the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the church rather than simply the acts of the apostles alone. From the very onset, the witnessing of the disciples is preceded by and absolutely connected to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Darrell Bock writes, “The Spirit is tied to power (*dynamis*), which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God’s work through Jesus.”²²

Next, Acts 1:8 provides the scope of the mission and, again, the layout for the rest of the book. Jesus will have disciples who bear witness to His name first in Jerusalem and then germinating out to the ends of the earth. Bock notes,

This testimony will start in Jerusalem, but it will spread to Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Jerusalem will be important in Acts 1-7. Judea and Samaria will become a concern in Acts 8-10. After a brief return to Jerusalem in Acts 11-12, the gospel will spread, primarily focused on the mission from Antioch, eventually reaching Rome through Paul.²³

The structure of the book of Acts highlights the theme of multiplication. As Luke relates to his readers the events of the apostles and the movement of the Holy Spirit, it becomes clear that from Jerusalem the message of the gospel will multiply through to the ends of

²²Darrel Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 63.

²³*Ibid.*, 64.

the earth. Like concentric circles in a pond, the ripple effect of the Holy Spirit moves the message further and further from where it started. This is not by accident, but through providence. D. G. Peterson describes Acts 1:8 in relationship to the rest of the book in terms of prediction-promise. He writes,

Acts 1:8 is a prediction of the way the divine plan will be fulfilled through the witness of the apostles. The rest of the book shows how that happened, first in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7), then in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-11), and in principle ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 13-28). In other words, the selection of events in Acts illustrates the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in 1:8.²⁴

The book of Acts serves not simply as a descriptive account of the growth of the church, but also as a comforting reminder that God will ensure the multiplication of His people. The prediction and promise of God’s redemptive plan continues to unfold and gain greater clarity. Acts 1:8 stands as a signpost pointing to what is coming for God’s people.

The significance of this verse can hardly be overstated, as it creates the framework to understand how the mission of multiplication will transpire. The Holy Spirit will empower the people of God to faithfully scatter seeds over the entire earth. The next major development in the book of Acts is the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The Church

The Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost in Acts 2, and God takes possession of and resides within His people. Edmund Clowney describes the phenomena, “At Pentecost the Lord came to take possession of his people, filling his spiritual house with his presence. The phenomena of Pentecost recalled the wind and fire of Sinai, as well as the cloud of glory that filled the tabernacle.”²⁵ With the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the New Testament church was born.

²⁴D. G. Peterson, “Acts,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 288.

²⁵Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 52.

It is interesting to note that the church in Jerusalem does not grow by expansion alone. While people are added to the church daily, new churches begin to sprout and develop. The persecution of Stephen in Acts 6 sends fear into the hearts of believers, and they scatter. In turn, the mission scatters just as it was predicted in Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Word, forms new churches. George Peters argues, “The concept of multiplication seems to point in the direction of an increasing number of groups and churches rather than an expansion of existing ones.”²⁶

Church Planting

The conversion of Paul and his subsequent missionary journeys start the quest to take the gospel to the nations. Acts 1:8 introduces the scope of multiplication for the Church, while the missionary journeys of Paul begin to catalog this multiplication. The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament confirm that the mission of God for His people to multiply is fulfilled in and by the church. Thus, the formation and establishment of new communities and new churches becomes the missionary pattern for multiplication.

According to I. Howard Marshall, the establishment and strengthening of new church plants was a strategic aspect to Paul’s work: “It was his general policy to remain in one place until he had established the firm foundation of a Christian community, or until he was forced to move by circumstances beyond his control.”²⁷ Ben Witherington, quoting Robert Tannehill, affirms the same idea:

Paul’s work included not only conversion of new disciples but also strengthening of those already converted. ‘Once churches have been established in an area, Paul will visit them again in order to strengthen them. Only then is Paul’s work in an area relatively complete.’ Thus the motif of disciples being strengthened is a boundary marker, indicating the completing of one missionary task and the transition to a further work.²⁸

²⁶George W. Peters, *A Theology of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 193.

²⁷I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 216.

²⁸Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand

Köstenberger and O'Brien further establish the normative expectation that the mission of God carried out through the church includes both the work of creating and developing new churches:

We have already seen, particularly in Acts and the letters of Paul, that the advance of the gospel or the progress of the word of God leads to the founding of settled Christian communities. The apostolic documents of the New Testament bear witness to a wide-ranging series of activities that result in believers' being built up in Christ, and formed into vibrant Christian congregations. . . . He [Paul] was engaged in primary evangelism and proclaimed the message of the grace of God so that men and women were converted, but he also founded churches and sought to bring believers to full maturity in Christ as a necessary element in his missionary task. Conversion to Christ meant incorporation into a Christian community.²⁹

Redemptive history and the call to multiply coalesce in the church. God has been building toward the church and is now going to use the church to finish His plan of redemption. The book of Acts ends similarly to the Gospel of Matthew. It concludes with eager anticipation and the strong assurance that the gospel, regardless of present circumstances, cannot be hindered. The work of the early apostles and faithful churches passes on to the next generation of faithful leaders and faithful churches. The church scatters and continues to scatter, sowing seeds. The Lord does the secret, slow and profound work of growth and multiplication. New churches will be established and endowed with the same mission Jesus charged His disciples with just prior to His ascension. The cycle continues until its expected end.

Multiplication in Scripture has a definitive end, a consummate goal: the worship of God from all nations in the new heavens and the new earth. Looking to this glorious end compels the Bride of Christ, His church, to faithfully scatter and sow. To this end, the Church labors and waits.

Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 560-61.

²⁹Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 268.

CHAPTER 3

COMPONENTS OF A CAMPUS TRANSITION

A healthy campus transition hinges on three critical components: the man, the leadership, and the membership. Taken as a whole, these three aspects establish a portfolio of faithfulness. The consideration of a campus transition without these clear evidences—faithfulness by the man who would lead the new congregation, the leadership who will undergird and share the burden of responsibilities with the lead pastor, and the membership who has a strong sense of ownership and identity—would be premature at best. The three components make up the key indicators to evaluate the readiness of campus to transition into becoming an autonomous church. This chapter explores in greater detail the factors surrounding the man, the leadership, and the membership in order to establish a portfolio of faithfulness for The Village Church regarding campus transitions.

A Portfolio of Faithfulness

A portfolio is a collection of items, whether sketches and drawings or securities and holdings, that describes a bigger picture. A graphic artist comes to a job interview with a portfolio of her design work to demonstrate the skill and diversity of her talent. An investor's portfolio details the various holdings he has and shows his approach to financial investments. A portfolio, regardless of the field or trade, takes a variety of elements and coalesces them into a collection that creates a clear picture. In considering the readiness of a campus to become a separate autonomous church, it is pivotal to look into its portfolio. Attachment to a greater church body affords each and every campus various economies of scale, support, and security that autonomy may reduce. Given this

reality, it becomes imperative that the campus demonstrates a track record of faithfulness and readiness. The portfolio must tell a compelling story about a man who is called and convicted to lead in a new and unique way. It must contain evidences of a leadership base ready and equipped for the new challenges and opportunities ahead. The portfolio must also include a membership ready to affirm the direction and own the new mission.

The Man

The first component within the portfolio is the faithfulness of the man. “The man” serves as a euphemism for the pastor/leader who will lead the congregation. It should be noted that a healthy congregation does not solely rely on the leadership of one person but on a plurality of leadership. This plurality of leadership is a critical part of the portfolio and will be examined in greater detail in the next section. Yet, the man must have the pastoral leadership insight necessary to humbly lead and submit to a plurality. This section studies five categories necessary to evaluate the strength of a portfolio for the lead or senior pastor of a church: calling, character, competency, capacity, and chemistry.¹

The man: calling. The most basic and primary calling necessary to lead a congregation may often be fatally overlooked. The foundation of calling begins with the first call: the call to adoption, the effectual calling of salvation. God, in Christ, and through the Spirit, calls men and women unto Himself. While a thorough discussion about the regenerative and adoptive work of the triune God falls outside of the scope of this project, its importance does not.

The man who is set apart to lead a congregation must first and foremost have a

¹It is difficult to trace the origins of the “C’s” of leadership. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek discusses the 3 “C’s” of leadership, but others have tweaked, added and modified this grid. The Village Church uses the 5 “C’s” in its hiring process. Each “C” proves vitally important in the context of The Village and stands as common language.

definitive calling unto Christ Jesus. Jude begins his short epistle, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, *To those who are called*, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1, italics added). The audience of this letter is not Christian ministers, but Christians. A fundamental aspect of Christian identity is being called by God, namely, called out of darkness into light and called a child of God. In the context of pastoral ministry, the fundamental identity of the man leading the congregation must square with this New Testament reality. He must be fundamentally and distinctively Christian. His life and his love bear witness to the fact that he is loved by the Father and kept forever in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is upon this foundation that the rest of his life and leadership are built. Likewise, it is upon this foundation that the call to vocational ministry is built. The call to vocational ministry contains two important elements: the internal calling and the external calling.

Charles Spurgeon describes the internal call to ministry as “an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work.”² This is the work of the pastor-shepherd in leading and caring for the flock of God. It is the work of preaching and expounding the Word of God. It is the work of evangelism and missions. It is the work of equipping and training the people of God for the work of ministry. The absorption Spurgeon describes delineates a sense of purpose and direction in an individual’s life to serve the church by means of vocation. The personal affirmation of the internal call is bolstered when it is coupled with an external call.

Sadly, the world is filled with people who have an overestimation of their gifts, talents, and abilities. Their internal desires do not match the external requirements. The church is no different. Many sense a personal call to ministry yet lack the confirmation of this calling from external sources such as the congregation, a group of elders, trusted

²Charles H. Spurgeon, “Lecture II: The Call to the Ministry,” in *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 27.

friends, and family. Thankfully, the Lord equips those He calls. The importance of the external call cannot be overstated and speaks to the gravity of the call. The church, or a subset of the greater church, has a sober responsibility to speak the truth in love to an ambitious brother who desires to serve in the pastorate. Do they sense, through the Spirit, that this man is first and foremost called unto God by means of salvation? Is there evidence of what the book of Galatians describes as the fruit of the Spirit? More than that, do they sense a genuine call to ministry on this man's life? Is he equipped for the role? Does he have the necessary gifts to preach, teach, lead and oversee the people of God? A man called by God to serve the people of God has his life supported by the two strong pillars of an internal call and external call.

These two aspects of calling must be in place to consider transitioning a campus into an autonomous church. The man who will lead the church must have the personal conviction and clarity around the vision to transition a campus, and he must have a similar calling and conviction to serve as their pastor. He must own and affirm the direction and opportunity internally. Secondly, but no less important, this calling and conviction needs the affirmation of others. The leadership and congregation must also affirm this same calling.

Some key points that may guide the process of discerning a call of any particular person could include the following:

1. a rich understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ability to articulate this message to the greater corporate context
2. a description of his conversion to Jesus Christ
3. an explanation of his view of the role of the Church in the purposes of God
4. a description of how and why he feels called to pursue ministry, or a specific ministry endeavor. How did this call develop? How was this call confirmed internally and externally?

5. an explanation of his primary spiritual gifts? How did he come to know this? How have these gifts been confirmed? Explain how these gifts and the calling complement each other.
6. does the man feel equipped to rightly handle the Scriptures in preaching? In teaching? In counseling? In leading? Do the leaders and congregation affirm this?
7. what is the man's philosophy of ministry and approach to caring for and serving to oversee the flock of God before him?
8. how does he define "success" in ministry? How has this definition played itself out in his past ministry experiences?
9. what are his personal ministry ambitions and aspirations?
10. are his answers confirmed by his past? Are these answers aspirational or are they demonstrable?

Beau Hughes leads the Denton campus of The Village Church, which is the first campus that will become an autonomous church. Chapter four will discuss in greater length the process of his internal call and how the elders of The Village substantiate his internal calling with an affirmed external call. This combination creates a clear and convincing momentum to work through the other components of the portfolio. The next section looks into the character of the man.

The man: character. In their classic work on leadership, *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner cite credibility as the foundation of leadership. Repeatedly and routinely their research reveals the same important point: the primary attribute people look for in leadership is not a skill but a virtue. Kouzes and Posner write,

It's clear that if people anywhere are to willingly follow someone—whether it be into battle or into the boardroom, the front office or the front lines—they first want to assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust. They want to know that the person is truthful, ethical, and principled. When people talk to us about the qualities they admire in leaders, they often use "integrity" and "character" as synonymous with honesty. No matter what the setting, everyone wants to be fully confident in their leaders, and to be fully confident they have to believe that their

leaders are people of strong character and strong integrity.⁴

This should be no surprise for the discerning Christian as the Scriptures prescribes the very same thing. The specific New Testament qualifications for leadership in the local church revolve around the character and virtue of the leader. Gene Getz writes, “The primary criterion for selection and approval was maturity in Jesus Christ.”⁵ What exactly does maturity in Jesus Christ look like? Again, it centers on the character of the individual. The qualification for elders, enumerated in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, begin with the overarching principle that an elder must be above reproach. Principally, the elder-leader must have a good reputation with both those inside the church and with the greater community. In fact, the list found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 contains bookends that speak to the reputation of the elder-leader.

The portfolio of faithfulness for the man who is called to lead a congregation must contain the fruit of character, integrity, principles, and an overall Christian ethic. Thus, it is important to evaluate both his self-awareness and his reputation. Can this man stand before the congregation and, like the Apostle Paul and with great humility, say, “Follow me as I follow Christ?” Would the community affirm this man as someone with credibility and integrity, regardless of whether or not he shares his faith. Last, does this man see himself rightly? Does he have a healthy self-awareness of his shortcomings, temptations, and blind spots?

The Village Church employs a formal elder-candidate process as the evaluation rubric to ascertain the character, qualification and self-awareness of a man who aspires to the role of an elder. The process includes a questionnaire for the elder candidate, his spouse, a background check, reference checks, a personality profile, doctrinal acknowledgements, etc. These items help shape the formal and informal group

⁴James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 27.

⁵Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 96.

interviews with other elders. Obviously, the process for an elder candidate involves more, but never less, than an inspection of the character and maturity of the man.

Some key questions, taken as a whole, that may guide the process of discerning the character of any particular person could include the following:

1. what do you feel most strongly about?
2. what about your character makes you a qualified candidate for this opportunity?
3. describe the pattern of your devotional life?
4. what areas of your life are a consistent struggle, weakness or temptation for you?
5. is there anything about you currently, or in your past, that you need to make known?
6. describe how a significant wound in your life has shaped you and formed your character.
7. provide a candid narrative of your marital history.
8. have you and your spouse always been faithful to each other and without improper sexual behavior either emotionally or physically? If not, please describe the circumstances of any unfaithfulness.
9. describe your relationship with your spouse, your children and your parents.
10. how would your family describe you?
11. how would both your previous and current employer describe you?
12. who knows you best?
13. read through the qualifications for an elder found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and share how you see your life in light of these passages.

All the campus pastors at The Village also serve on the elder board. They have walked through the elder candidate process and consequently been affirmed by both the elders and the congregation as men who are qualified for the role of elder-leader. The process of inspecting the portfolio for the faithful demonstration of integrity, credibility, and

character for the men who lead each campus precedes the decision to place them as leaders over their respective campus.

Beau Hughes has served as an elder of The Village Church since 2007. His life and character demonstrate maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ. In light of the proposed vision to transition campuses into autonomous churches, the church affirms the campus pastors who would lead the new congregations. Their portfolio, by God's grace, is brimming with evidence of their character.

The man: competence. The Lord does not always call the equipped to the work of vocational ministry, but He always equips those He calls. In the establishment of a portfolio of faithfulness for the man who will lead the campus transition and eventually the new congregation, it is vital to know whether or not the man can actually lead.

In the world of cycling, despite all of its impurities and scandals, the technique of drafting is essential, especially in longer races. The French word, "peloton," means field, bunch, or pack and is used to describe a group of cyclists in a race. A cyclist drafts in order to conserve energy, but the leader must be able to break free, at some point from the group, to lead the charge. Not everyone is wired to be able to break free and lead the pack. In fact, in races like the Tour de France, riders who are on the same team understand their role is simply to draft the leader and help him succeed. It is a team win, but only a few riders are equipped to lead the charge.

In a multi-site context, one of the great benefits is the ability for campuses and leaders to draft, allowing these men to get support from a greater ecosystem of leadership. In a campus transition, it is imperative that the man who will lead the new congregation have a demonstrated ability to break free from the peloton to lead the group. He will no longer be able to draft off the system in the same way. He will have to lead a new system.

The context, scope, and expectations of the role the man is being asked to lead

varies. It is impossible to cover all of the situational aspects a leader will face or consider each nuance particular to a given context, but a few areas of competence cover a spectrum of possibilities. This section briefly discusses theological competence, leadership competence, and communication competence.

Theological competence coincides with the qualification of an elder mentioned in the above section on the character of a man. One aspect for the qualification for an elder is that the man rightly understands biblical doctrine and has the ability to teach it to the congregation. A mature theological understanding brings with it theological discernment. Discernment provides a necessary grid to evaluate one's thoughts, ideas, and the thoughts and ideas of others. Simply put, the man must be a man of the Word.

Yet, an effective pastoral leader possesses more than doctrinal knowledge and discernment. He also has a gospel fluency; an ease in his communication and understanding about the nature and implications of the gospel. Gospel fluency carries the idea that he can easily and adequately articulate the gospel, its implications, and applications. Essentially, the gospel stands at the center of life, and all else emanates from its rich center. Pastoral leadership requires the keen ability to both understand and correlate how the gospel relates in any situation. This fluency flows out of a rich theological competence, but just like learning any foreign language, it requires immersion and practice. In the consideration of the man who will lead the new congregation, he must possess and seamless gospel fluency. The congregation cannot afford for him to still be learning the language.

Theological maturity and gospel fluency allow for the leader astutely to contextualize the truth of Scripture in a meaningful way. The ability to contextualize serves as a motivator in the consideration of why a campus would transition into an autonomous church. The impetus for contextualization is biblical love, a consideration of one's neighbors. The message of the gospel does not change, but contextualization

considers how to steward, shape, and share the message in a way that is meaningful to a context. The leader must possess the ability to translate the static truths of the Scriptures into an ever dynamic and changing culture.

Along with theological competence, the man called to lead a congregation must have leadership competence. Godly pastoral leaders are concerned with God's agenda. Godly leadership is stewardship. Personal agendas, entitlements, vainglory, and selfish ambition have to be put to death. Pastoral leadership involves no less than stewarding the mysteries of the gospel through teaching and preaching, stewarding the growth of the church through worship, evangelism and discipleship, and stewarding the purity of the church through discipline. A thorough examination of each of these responsibilities falls outside the purview of this project, but suffice it to say, pastoral leadership means leading faithfully in the aforementioned areas.

Organizational leadership requires a leader to navigate the challenges of making strategic and organizational decisions. It should be noted here, as it is assumed elsewhere, that the man called to help transition a campus into an autonomous church does not do this alone. He is buffered and supported in many respects throughout the entire process. This section simply calls attention to the fact that organizational leadership is an aspect of competency necessary. This certainly does not mean that the leader's primary gift must be organizational or strategic leadership or that he is fully prepared to lead in this manner, but his head cannot be buried in the sand regarding it either.

Organizational leadership involves planning, executing, staff development, culture creation and reinforcement, personnel issues, navigating change, facilities and space management, financial oversight and other related issues pertinent to the health of the organization. Pastoral ministry is not the same as leading or running a company, but a level of executive maturity is important. Organizational decisions, whether they are

financial or directional, carry a weight of responsibility. The leader of any organization must be privy to the workings of the organization. This is true in the public for-profit sector as well as the social non-profit sector.

Having followers is fundamental to leadership. If someone does not have followers, then he is not a leader. In the discussion of leadership competence, especially in a church context, multiplicative leadership is essential. The leader must be able to create other leaders. He must form disciples who form disciples who form disciples. This is the essence of multiplication. The driving question here is whether or not the leader has a demonstrated ability to produce more leaders. Can he build teams? Can he build leaders and release them to build more leaders? Can he make disciples who can repeat the process? With the multi-campus model, the leader can draft from the larger group, but at some point, he will need to break free and go.

A final component in evaluating the competence of the man is his communication ability. Communication involves more than preaching, but it is not less than his ability to preach. The capacity to generate a compelling vision is the first step in instituting change and leading people, but sustaining a vision and leading through vision all the way to implementation requires a special leader. Ideas come and go, and vision is easier stated than executed. Kouzes and Posner state,

Having a voice and giving voice to your deeply-held beliefs requires competence. Words alone do not make the leader credible. Having a clear and authentic message is a necessary first step, yet the ability to consistently deliver the message and act on it requires a high level of skill.⁶

Communication competence involves the capacity to cast a compelling vision and understand how to wield communication to see vision actualized. The forms of communication vary from written to visual to verbal, but the leader understands he must communicate in a variety of forms in order to see vision come to fruition. He must also

⁶Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 62–63.

use a variety of places to communicate from the conference room to the hallways to the pulpit.

Preaching is also a primary responsibility for the pastor of a congregation. The pulpit serves a vital function in the health of a church. A weak pulpit produces a weak people, and flimsy sermons produce a flimsy flock. In the evaluation of the man who will lead the transition of a campus into an autonomous congregation, it is prudent to ascertain whether or not he has the gift of preaching. It should also be noted the difference between the ability to preach a sermon and the ability to carry a pulpit. The obvious difference between these two centers on the capacity to sustain a congregation through regular preaching. A strong sermon is different than a strong pulpit. One highlights a singular act, while the other emphasizes an enduring work.

The clearest way to evaluate the preaching gift is through the affirmation of the congregation. Does the membership affirm the preaching gift of the pastor? Does his preaching bear fruit in the body? Do the elders and leaders of the church affirm the work of the Spirit through his preaching?

Theological competence, leadership competence, and communication competence paint a helpful picture for many of the necessary skills and abilities the key leader of a congregation must possess. Again, the church is trying to establish a portfolio of faithfulness as it pertains to the man who currently serves in the campus pastor role but will transition this campus into an autonomous church.

Some key questions and deliverables, taken as a whole, that may guide the process of discerning the competence of a key leader could include the following:

1. a thorough description of how his education and experience factor into the qualification for the position
2. an honest description of his gift set and skill set; how do these gifts and skills enable him to thrive in the position while adding significant value to the organization?
3. give tangible examples of how this person has influenced and led others in the past

4. describe some significant past leadership challenges and accomplishments
5. examine and evaluate writing samples, preaching samples, teaching samples, case studies, personality profile, past strategic plans and vision ideas that were actually implemented, etc.
6. describe how you continue to learn and grow as a leader

At The Village Church all campus pastors also serve as elders. As stated earlier, a qualification for eldership is doctrinal maturity. These men must have theological competence in order to be qualified to be an elder and considered to be a campus pastor. Additionally, one of the great benefits of the model at The Village is that these campus pastors serve on the executive staff, although they do not lead it. This gives them years of executive leadership experience. They have the opportunity to grow in organizational leadership and pastoral leadership simultaneously. Each campus pastor is also responsible to lead Elder-Led Prayer services each month at his respective campus as well as fill the pulpit about 15 times a year.

Essentially a campus pastor has the opportunity to draft while riding in the bigger peloton of the church. This process allows him time to grow and develop in each of the vital areas of leadership competence. It also allows him to invest in others for the sake of leadership multiplication. Eventually, he will, prayerfully and prudently, break free from the peloton and lead from a new position. The church will not send him out on this new venture unless they have formed a strong team to ride with and alongside. As we will see later, this is a mark of readiness in the portfolio of faithfulness.

Specifically relevant to this project is the opportunity for the Denton campus, led by Beau Hughes, to transition into autonomy first. In the areas of theological competence, leadership competence and communication competence, Hughes has a clear portfolio of evidence indicating strength in each of these areas. Experience bears witness to this reality.

The man: capacity. The idea of capacity is the evaluation of the leader's reach, aptitude and scope. Many of the principles discussed at this point translate across various contexts and complexities. Capacity is the recognition that these principles differ by matter of degree not kind. For example, many leaders possess the ability and leadership quotient to operate at a high level within the boundaries and scope of an organization of a certain scale, but if the scale should widen and the complexities increase, then the leader becomes less effective. Also, in play with the issue of capacity is the emotional, physical and spiritual health of the leader. A leader who has the affirmation of a calling, the necessary character to qualify for leadership and the competence to lead effectively but fails to have the margin or capacity to lead in a given context becomes a troublesome liability. These important elements, particularly aptitude and margin, cannot be overlooked or glossed over in the inspection of the portfolio of the leader.

To be human is to know limits. Capacity speaks to this reality. Despite genuine aspirations to lead at certain levels or at a certain capacity, some leaders simply do not have the aptitude to do so effectively. Churches and organizations alike know the story of the faithful pastor or employee who serves in a role that has simply outgrown him. Oftentimes, this issue relates to capacity. The aptitude of a leader speaks to the trajectory of that leader. An honest discussion around capacity and aptitude reveals that much of this information can only be learned through experience. For instance, professional NFL scouts rigorously study and project talent for their football teams. They also regularly overestimate and underestimate aptitude. Sometimes they stumble upon Tom Brady through happenstance in the 6th round of the draft, and other times they bet the franchise on Ryan Leaf. Leadership capacity in terms of aptitude is more art than science, and providence always plays a vital role.

A second component of capacity deals with margin, which speaks to holistic

health of the leader. Richard Swenson writes, “To be healthy, we require margin in at least four areas: emotional energy, physical energy, time and finances.”⁷ Obviously, the Christian worldview undergirds this statement with the truth that spiritual health impacts each component. It is imperative for the leader to understand the correlation and seriousness of stewarding these areas well. A decrease in capacity and margin in one area severely hinders effectiveness in all areas.

Oftentimes there is a direct correlation between responsibility and pressure. Thus, an increase in responsibility needs to correspond to increased capacity. A wise leader lives to mitigate the pressure by increasing margin in the four areas above through healthy rhythms and routines, working to garner and sustain capacity. It should be noted that all people and every leader enter into seasons of sustained pressure, decreased margins, and overall unhealthy lifestyles. This should be expected and not alarming, but the wise leader understands that such a pace and lifestyle is ultimately unsustainable and requires a change in pace in the near future.

Some key questions and deliverables, taken as a whole, that may guide the process of discerning the capacity of a leader could include the following:

1. what can people expect from the leader attitudinally and behaviorally when facing stress and pressure?
2. what are some common fears and anxieties experienced by this particular leader?
3. how does the leader process stress and pressure? Does pressure and stress manifest externally in some manner or is it primarily dealt with internally? How should others expect to know when the leader is under pressure or stress?
4. describe situations and circumstances that “stress you out”
5. how have you mishandled stress and pressure in the past? What lessons were learned from this experience? How were these lessons implemented when faced when stress and pressure again?

⁷Richard Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 79.

6. describe your effectiveness at time management. What tools and technologies do you employ to aid you in the management of time and productivity?
7. describe your regular pattern of family routines rhythms
8. describe your regular pattern of exercise
9. describe your regular pattern of sleep
10. describe your diet (food, beverages, alcohol)
11. is there an evidence of generosity in the life of the leader? In what measure?
12. does this person have considerable debt? Consumer debt?
13. is there evidence of solid financial stewardship for the leader and for the care of his family?

The campus pastors at The Village Church walk through these questions prior to being offered the role. There is a thorough evaluation at the beginning of the candidacy process. In addition, these questions and more are staple conversations throughout tenure at the church. The Village operates as a relatively fast-paced environment with many layers of complexities. The campus pastors have tremendous responsibilities as the primary pastors of their campuses and give oversight to the day-to-day operations of their campus and campus staff.

An honest evaluation of the capacity of each campus pastor reveals that each varies in his own leadership potential and quotient. They also have various leadership aptitudes. The model at the church serves to strengthen and give these pastors a prudent environment to grow and foster strength as leaders. Obviously some men are further developed than others.

Beau Hughes has served in a high capacity for seven years in his role as a campus pastor. The campus has walked through seasons where margin and health were more difficult to come by, but Hughes was faithful throughout. In the process, he has learned and sharpened his strengths and built teams to compensate for his weaknesses. He

has also employed helpful strategies and routines to engender margin for sustainability. The elders affirm he has the leadership capacity, both in terms of aptitude and margin, to lead the Denton campus as a separate autonomous church.

The man: chemistry. The final point of analysis in the portfolio of faithfulness regards how the man will actually fit, culturally speaking, into the new role. Chemistry speaks to the issue of fit and feel. It is more difficult to measure quantitatively, but the qualitative impact is tremendous.

Experience bears witness to the reality of someone who meets all of the necessary criteria on paper from qualification to credibility to competence but simply does not fit the culture. The chemistry is off. The leader must enjoy the benefits of a strong chemistry with the greater leadership team and the membership he is called to lead. To the contrary, a toxic chemistry will always trump a strong combination of calling, character, competency and capacity.

Some key questions and deliverables, taken as a whole, that may guide the process of discerning the chemistry or fit of a key leader could include the following:

1. describe previous organizational, team, and/or church cultures you have been a part of. What was your experience in these?
2. describe your ideal work environment? What is your ideal role? Describe your ideal team? What areas are you willing to compromise on the ideal? What areas are you not willing to compromise on the ideal?
3. what attracted you to this church personally and professionally?
4. describe your involvement in this church? Describe the various sub-cultures of the church and how you have interacted with them.
5. candidly describe your impression and perception of the leadership of this church.
6. do you currently have any strong relationships on this staff? If so, with whom and at what level?
7. what are your relational expectations from leadership team? From your department?

8. describe your understanding of the staff culture of this church. What about this culture attracts you? What apprehensions do you have?
9. describe your understanding of the specific context in which you will serve. How do you think you will fit into this context? In what ways do you think you can positively refine these contexts?
10. examine and evaluate how the leader fits into the context through informal gathering such as meals, events, etc. How do they fit as they lead meetings, weekend services, etc.?
11. is the leader loved? Do other key leaders respect him? Is he respected in the community?

The Village places a high premium on chemistry. One of the greatest strengths of our staff is the overall health it enjoys. The culture adds value rather than detracting value. It is the job of the key leaders in any organization to ensure that the health of the team remains a top priority, and nothing contributes more to the culture of any team than the people who are a part of it. Consequently, healthy teams positively impact the organizations they lead.

The chemistry component is a great strength for Beau Hughes and the Denton campus. At this point in the life of the church and the campus, Hughes enjoys tremendous favor with his team and the campus. They love him with deep and genuine affection. They gladly call him, “Pastor.”

The portfolio must tell a compelling story about a man who is called and convicted to lead. The consideration of a campus transition without the clear evidences of faithfulness by the man would be premature at best. The elders of The Village Church along with key leadership at the campus level firmly believe Beau Hughes is called and qualified to lead in this capacity.

The other two indicators to evaluate the readiness of campus to transition into becoming an autonomous church include the leadership (elders, deacon and staff) and the membership.

The Leadership

The portfolio of faithfulness contains three key indicators of readiness: the man, the leadership, and the membership. The leadership refers to the campus-based leadership of elders, deacons and staff. In essence, this combined group represents the key leadership at the campus level. There are three categories necessary in evaluating the strength of the leadership of a campus: prepared local leadership, a pipeline for leadership, and ownership of the vision.

Prepared local leadership. On the one hand, individuals are always preparing and never truly prepared. On the other hand, there are times when a team is as prepared as they will ever be. The beauty of new ventures and new challenges is how the occasion presents new opportunities to stand and deliver. There is a time to draft in the race to conserve energy, and then there is a time to break free. This principle remains helpful when considering how the leadership team of a campus has historically functioned and will presumably function in the future.

As long as a campus remains a part of the greater multi-site church community, it continues to draft within the peloton. One of the beautiful realities of this element is that it affords the campus, and its leadership, time to conserve energy and build reserves. The campus leadership can develop a sense for the race before them, understanding the contours of the course and the rhythm of the ride. Working with the identified man who will lead the campus, this team works to create a peloton of its own. So, when it is time to break free from the greater group, there is still a team in place to labor alongside and stay in the race. They prepare to break free.

A prepared local leadership speaks to readiness and proven faithfulness. The team needs a history of leading together and a history of fruitfulness in their leadership. This is the difference between aspirational leadership and actual leadership. Aspirational leadership speaks to desires, hopes, and ambitions. Actual leadership speaks to concrete

examples, a track record, and experience. The leadership team must have actual leadership experience. Another point of nuance is that this leadership must be local.

In consideration of a campus transition, the locus of leadership cannot be maintained and sustained through a central structure. The campus will soon be a local and separate autonomous congregation. Thus, the leadership must be local, as well. The campus leadership must have a proven ability to lead their campus, steward its growth, care for its members and understand its community.

The Village requires all elders, deacons and staff members to work through a comprehensive process prior to confirmation of leadership. The process for elders, deacons and staff is robust and quite similar. Many of the questions listed above in the section outlining the five C's are contained in this process. The process also involves a spouse essay, doctrinal affirmation and acknowledgement, group interviews, and a confirmation by the elder board.

The campus leadership operates with delegated authority from the central elders, and the campus enjoys great freedom and latitude for contextual nuances. As noted earlier, the campus pastor also serves on the central elder board and executive staff of The Village Church, ensuring that each campus retains involvement in directional decisions.

At the Denton campus, the campus pastor and another elder serve on the central elder board. All the other Denton campus leadership is localized. Their leadership investment directly impacts the campus, and it has been fruitful. The campus has a healthy identity, solid understanding of membership and its implications, enjoys the fruit of diversity, experiences favor in the community, and celebrates the gospel through life change.

Leadership pipeline. Shortsighted leadership terminates on itself. Leadership with generational impact and influence requires a steady pipeline for identification,

development, and empowerment. The leadership pipeline serves to multiply prepared local leaders and raise the leadership quotient at the campus.

Various churches and organizations have different approaches to leadership development, and sadly, many have no plan for development at all. John Kotter, author and leadership professor at Harvard Business School, discusses the importance of leadership development in his classic article, “What Leaders Really Do”: “Leaders almost always have had opportunities during their twenties and thirties to actually try to lead, to take a risk, and to learn from triumphs and failures.”⁸ This quote stresses the critical nature of finding leaders and giving them opportunities early. The leadership challenges faced early in life develop key leadership muscles that can be used moving forward. Though it seems counterintuitive, young leaders also need opportunities to lead before they are totally ready to lead. The leadership pipeline identifies young eagles and gives them a chance to fly. In turn, they become stronger leaders in the long run.

A mechanism for identifying key leaders is important in any organization, but identification alone is not enough. A healthy leadership pipeline also includes the teaching, training, and development of leaders. Again, Kotter notes, “Armed with a clear sense of who has considerable leadership potential and what skills they need to develop, executives in these companies [successful companies] spend time planning for that development.”⁹ Leadership development is intentional not accidental. Another critical note highlights the importance of leadership development from the highest level of leadership. Development cannot be relegated to others within the organization, or church, with the expectation that a culture of leadership development will ever take root. If leadership development is ever going to be a cultural marker, it has to be championed, modeled, and celebrated by the senior leadership.

⁸John Kotter, “What Leaders Really Do,” *Harvard Business Review* (December 2001): 96.

⁹Ibid.

The pipeline ensures a consistent flow of leadership. Leaders must be released and empowered to actually lead in significant ways. Leadership cannot be isolated to a single individual or sheltered cluster of people. Leaders with a view to generational influence and impact give leadership away to others. True empowerment means the opportunity and authority to lead. It does not mean ultimate authority, but it certainly means genuine authority. In order for a healthy leadership pipeline to flourish with a consistent and steady stream of new leaders, there has to be a sincere release of leaders following the identification and development. They need to actually have the opportunity to exercise leadership.

The most consistent leadership pipeline at The Village Church is found in the Home Group and Recovery Group ministries. Through these group ministries, new leaders emerge, receive training, and go on to lead groups. Oftentimes, current leaders identify leaders within their current group and recommend them for new leadership opportunities. These new opportunities most often come in the form of leading a new group. Potential leaders walk through an application and assessment period followed by training and development. Once they have completed this aspect of the process, they receive a new group to lead. As the church and campuses continue to grow, there remains a consistent need for new groups and new group leaders, thus the pipeline has been essential. Over the last three years, the number of group leaders at the Denton campus has doubled from forty to eighty-two groups.

In addition to the group leadership pipeline, other less formal opportunities exist for leaders to be identified, developed, and empowered. Many of the current local leadership at the campus (elders, deacons and staff) lead development discipleship groups. For instance, the Campus Outreach team, which consists of Denton campus staff members who evangelize and disciple college students at the campuses of UNT and TWU, enjoy a fruitful leadership pipeline that extends from conversion to a Christian

leader who is equipped to train and equip others. This ministry is explicitly set up to identify, develop, and release young leaders.

Alongside Campus Outreach, other staff members lead similar groups. Beau Hughes, the Denton campus pastor, leads a development group consisting of members of the congregation. Over the last two years, he has led five such groups with forty total participants. Three of the groups consisted of people interested in pastoral ministry and the other two groups consisted of faithful members he identified as potential leaders. The fruit of these groups is evidenced by the fact that 50% of the current Denton campus elders participated in one of these groups, and 40% of the current Denton deacon body participated in a group, as well. The remaining participants serve in some other capacity at the campus.

The church continues to see a rise in the leadership quotient across all campuses. The Denton campus specifically expresses a vibrant culture of leadership development from the group leader pipeline, Campus Outreach and staff led development groups.

Vision ownership. In the consideration of campus transitions, the local leadership plays a vital role. In fact, the readiness of a campus hinges on a prepared local leadership working in conjunction with the man who will lead the new congregation. It is entirely possible to have a campus leadership who is prepared to lead but unwilling to do so. It should be obvious that the local leadership must endorse the proposed vision to transition the campus to become an autonomous church.

In many respects the leadership helps form the vision for a campus to transition. This vision formation does not have to be with the idea of a transition in mind; rather, it comes as the leadership helps create a campus identity. This identity must preexist a transition, and for a healthy transition to take place, the vision driving the desire cannot be ill will toward the greater church. The vision and desire driving a

campus transition is multiplication, proactive succession, and increased contextualization for the overall health of the membership now and in the future.

The Village Church leadership believes this is the right vision for the church to pursue and believes the first campus to transition is the Denton campus. The Denton campus leadership also affirms the vision and believes in the direction. This affirmation is not without concerns, but there stands a willingness to address and work through the concerns to navigate the new congregation. As it stands, 92% of the key campus leadership voted to affirm and own the vision and direction to transition the campus to an autonomous church. The dissenting votes have vocalized their concerns in a healthy manner and continue to process the vision with the campus leadership.

The Membership

Fundamentally, a church is not a church without people. And, specifically, the people who constitute a local church are those who have, in some form or fashion, declared their membership to the church.¹⁰ The beauty and wonder of the church emanates from the rich truth that God, in his infinite wisdom, conferred upon his people the role of ambassador. He declared that the message of the gospel would be carried forth in broken vessels. The people of God herald the message of God.

As we consider the vision for campus transitions, this burden cannot reside in the pastor or leadership alone. A missional fire must burn in the hearts of the people as well. They must demonstrate an understanding of the vision and an eagerness to own it corporately for the sake of the gospel. The membership must sense the urgency of the Great Commission and show a willingness to press against the tendency for complacency. In short, the membership matters.

¹⁰A theology of church membership falls outside the purview of this paper. Churches handle the process and practice of church membership differently and some have decided to not have any formal membership at all. The Village strongly believes in the biblical merits of church membership.

The readiness for a campus to transition into an autonomous congregation pivots on the leadership of the campus, but the final vote lies, as it should, with the members. If the leadership is ready, but the people are not ready to be led into this venture, a transition is unlikely and unhealthy. In many respects, the sense of ownership and preparedness for a campus is anecdotal. It is difficult to measure. Certainly some metrics are helpful and shed light on specific areas, but oftentimes it does not tell the entire story. Quantitative data captures the numbers and provides clear insights, but the qualitative essence is noticeably missing. An honest investigation into the health and readiness of the membership must strike the balance between the statistics and the stories.

This section primarily examines the statistical information from the Denton campus, but the stories from the membership abound. The church works diligently to capture these stories in various videos, written testimonies, letters written by the membership, in membership meetings, and by just recounting the evidences of grace to one another in everything from the announcements to casual conversation. In many ways, it is the qualitative indicators that speak louder than many of the quantitative ones.¹¹ Following is a deeper look into some of the marks of health a church should consider, the financial viability of the campus, baptism trends, volunteerism, and membership.

Marks of health. A healthy campus bears similar marks to a healthy church. The organization “9 Marks,” which is dedicated to building healthy churches, provides nine key marks for health: preaching, biblical theology, the gospel, conversion, evangelism, membership, discipline, discipleship and leadership.¹² A full treatment of each mark falls outside the scope of this project, but suffice it to say, each of these marks

¹¹The stories and qualitative indicators of a healthy membership culture can be found on the church’s website, but many of them have to be experienced in the dynamic life of the body that occurs in the normal rhythms and routines of the life of the church.

¹²9Marks, “What are the 9 Marks?” accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.9marks.org/what-are-the-9marks/>.

is present at The Village Church generally and the Denton campus specifically. The church thrives off a robust preaching ministry rich in theology and the wonder of the gospel. The church enjoys the fruit of conversion through evangelism and maintains a high threshold of membership. The Village has a formal church discipline process for members. The church takes serious the call to disciple and help form believers in the grace of God. The church is also led by a qualified plurality of elders. It is with great humility and gratitude that these marks are present at The Village, and there is room for the church to mature in each mark.

These nine marks are also present at the campus level. The Denton campus bears the fruit of these marks. The only mark that has been missing at the campus level has been a campus based elder board. In recent months, the church recognized this weakness for the campuses and instituted a change to formalize a structure to include campus elders. The process of implementation is currently underway at all the campuses. With the exception of one campus, the Fort Worth campus, all the campuses already had at least one non-staff elder present at the campus level. This new leadership model will ensure more campus leadership. The Denton campus presently has ten new elder candidates in the affirmation process at the point of writing this project. These men should finish the process and be confirmed as elders in Spring 2014.

Alongside the nine marks listed above, there are other factors that point to the health and readiness of the membership of a campus to transition to become an autonomous congregation. For instance, is the campus financially viable? Does the campus see those evangelized eventually in the baptism waters? How is the volunteerism and membership at the campus?

Financial viability. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels the believer to walk in generosity. Recognizing that generosity emanates from God himself, as he was generous in the giving of his Son, the people of God respond in kind. A healthy understanding of

finances includes the truth that all things, including one’s very life, belong to God. The people of God operate as stewards.

A look into the financial picture of the Denton campus calls attention to an area of needed growth. The most pressing concern for the Denton campus remains the financial viability of the campus. According to the church’s 2013 annual survey taken during a weekend service, the Denton campus had 47% of members who were not regularly giving. This percentage is 17% points higher than the cross-campus average. The amount of college students and overall earning power of the members at the campus is likely a key factor, but the campus still needs to see greater participation regardless of the amount given.

The table below shows the total giving from 2008–2013 at The Village Church and the Denton campus:

Table 1. Total giving (2008–2013)

Year	The Village Church	Denton Campus
2008	\$7,024,888	\$776,745
2009	\$8,530,313	\$994,964
2010	\$11,436,219	\$1,283,374
2011	\$13,900,489	\$1,228,325
2012	\$16,390,043	\$1,444,492
2013	\$17,181,684	\$1,629,025

The church and the Denton campus have both enjoyed a steady and healthy rise in giving, with the exception of 2010–2011 at the Denton campus. The following year from 2011–

2012 the campus exceeded their previous highest total and continued to trend upward in 2013. How does the giving fare against the campus expenses? The following two tables show the expense trends for the church and the campus over the previous two years:

Table 2. Total annual ministry expense

Year	The Village Church	Denton Campus
2012	\$2,527, 713	\$437,417
2013	\$3,156,576	\$422,122

Table 3. Total annual expenses

Year	The Village Church	Denton Campus
2012	\$12,320,408	\$1,563,788
2013	\$13,538,412	\$1,650,473

The Denton campus has not had a year in which they were fully able to cover their expenses. In 2013, the giving was the closest to expenses thus far. It is important to note that the current model The Village Church operates within allows for other campus giving to offset and subsidize any shortfalls that may occur. This has been a key learning for the church in this process. The campuses must show a greater degree of financial viability from the early stages of the campus development. In many respects, since the Denton campus has not had to generate all the revenue to cover their expenses, there has never been a call for greater generosity. Again, this is a significant point of learning for The Village’s leadership and will change the manner in which campuses develop henceforth.

One last table shows the average annual gift per giving unit:

Table 4. Annual giving per giving unit

Year	The Village Church	Denton Campus
2010	\$2,262	\$1,476
2011	\$2,629	\$1,469
2012	\$3,093	\$1,823
2013	\$3,107	\$2,006

This table demonstrates that The Village Church and the Denton campus both see a trend upward in the average annual gift per giving unit. The financial numbers can be sliced to give numerous reports and trends. They tell an important story and provide helpful insight into the readiness of the campus. The financial viability remains the key concern for the transition. In light of these concerns, The Village pledges to remain financially available to the Denton campus as a new congregation for up to three years after the transition. Alongside this pledge from the church is a call to the members to increase their ownership and stewardship of the campus through increase giving both in regularity and amount. The campus will also look to decrease its overall expenses.

Baptism trends. Baptism represents an outward expression of an inward change. Each baptism tells a story of the saving work of God in humanity. A look into the number of baptisms sheds light into what God is doing in and through the church. Baptisms point to evangelism, the preaching of the gospel, and conversions.

The Village Church celebrates baptism several times a year through special Celebration Services. During these weekends, the church enjoys the celebration of

salvation through baptism. Everyone who is baptized during these services has taken a Baptism Class offered by the church. Many people in the church are also baptized in swimming pools across the metroplex by their Home Group leaders, and those numbers are not reflected below. There has been an increase in baptism at the Denton campus for the last several years:

Table 5. Baptisms at the Denton campus

Year	Number of Baptisms at the Denton Campus
2010	52
2011	37
2012	76
2013	110

These numbers represent people whose lives have been impacted by the gospel of Jesus Christ. By God’s grace, this number trends upward and demonstrates the evangelistic and missional impact the campus has in the community.

Service and volunteerism. Every Christian is a servant. The Lord Jesus made this evident in both his teaching and by his example. He was clear that his people would also bear the mark of a servant. The church is called to serve one another, serve her community and ultimately serve the world. The Village’s mission statement promotes the truth that gospel-centered service is a mark of a disciple and the church provides a myriad of opportunities to grow in the grace of service both inside and outside the church.

Gospel-centered service is motivated by the reconciling work of God and seeks to share this same grace with others. It is outward focused and connotes sacrifice and

care. Gospel-centered service expresses the love of God in tangible ways. A church that rightly understands the gospel of Jesus Christ is a church that will grow in the grace of service.

The Denton campus has a healthy understanding of service both inside the church and in the community. Clear pathways for involvement exist for both. The campus has a vibrant music ministry involving a diverse cross-section of the community producing excellent music. Home Groups and Recovery Groups continue producing new leaders. The same is true for the preschool, children and student ministries. Each keeps pace with the demands. All of these expressions represent people who are sacrificing their time and utilizing their resources to serve both those inside and outside the church.

Membership culture. Membership at The Village Church is more than a database or names on a roll sheet. Membership is a biblical conviction and is a call to join a spiritual family. The Village maintains a high threshold for membership requiring prospective members to walk through a clear process involving a class, affirmation interviews, additional reading, and the signing of a membership covenant. All of this promotes and reinforces a culture of church membership. It means something to be a member at the church. It means that one has walked through a process including a time of affirmation. It means that one has covenanted and committed to love, care for, and submit to this church body. Local church membership continues to remain a strong and significant piece of The Village's identity. Given the high threshold for membership and our annual membership renewal process, the church will have more people in attendance each week than covenant members. In other words, attendance will outpace membership.

The membership trends are interesting across the board for the church. Each year, The Village performs a Covenant Membership Renewal process. Essentially, membership is an annual affirmation. All members are asked to renew their Covenant Membership. This process means we lose members who choose not to renew based on

several reasons. Some do not renew because they have physically moved locations, while others do not renew for theological or preferential reasons. At any rate, the membership numbers decrease following the renewal process and increase throughout the year as new members are added through the membership process. In short, the church and the Denton campus enjoy a net gain in membership from year to year. More than that, the culture of membership gains ground each year. This is evidenced by greater membership retention year to year following the renewal process and an increase in member involvement in such things as regular member meetings held at the campus.

Overall, the membership is healthy at the Denton campus. In fact, the Denton campus enjoys the strongest culture of membership at the church. The financial concern is currently being addressed at the campus, but the ownership and implications will impact the entire church. The leadership believes the campus membership is ready to transition into an autonomous church. The membership will have the final vote on this. The campus will express their willingness and readiness through a formal congregational vote in May 2014.

Conclusion

A healthy campus transition hinges on three critical components: the man, the leadership and the membership. These elements work in congruence and provide a portfolio of faithfulness. With great humility and faith in the power of the Spirit, the elders of The Village Church believe the Denton campus is ready for such a transition for the good of the people and the glory of God.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS: FROM CONVERSATION TO CONVICTION

Change is unavoidable and often unwelcome. Most people and organizations desire to remain in a stasis of comfort and familiarity. Change stresses the environment and stirs the waters of uncertainty. It requires energy to move a person or organization from a position of stability to a position of dynamic movement. Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ necessitates change. It is not stationary; the very essence of the gospel and its implications necessitate movement, mobility, and change. When the gospel collides with the heart of a person or a church, it produces movement. This movement assumes a myriad of forms from initial conversion (a movement from death to life; darkness to light), sanctification (from one degree of glory to the next; growing to look more like Jesus), moving overseas for missions, restructuring programs for more strategic outreach, or planting new churches in neighborhoods and cities across the world. At The Village Church, this process of movement was initially fluid and dynamic, traversing along the waves of relationships and informal conversations, but a noticeable pattern emerged in hindsight. As the conversations gained traction, the process grew in formality, and a more detailed process materialized. The entire process consisted of three key phases: (1) the conversations, (2) vision refinement, (3) and vision casting.

Phase 1: The Conversations

Healthy teams enjoy honest conversations. These conversations are both a byproduct of health and contribute to it. At times, these conversations need to be robust and filled with healthy conflict, while at other times, they need to be about the blue-sky

dreams before an individual or the team itself. A healthy environment undergirded with both relational and professional trust allows conversations to flourish without being threatening. Generally speaking, The Village thrives within a context of relational and professional trust.¹

The early discussions about the possibility of a campus becoming an autonomous church occurred between a few individuals, and the content of these conversations remained high-level and non-binding. In other words, the conversations stayed casual and included no agendas. Over time, though, the circle widened to include more voices contributing to the conversation about a possible campus transition.

A Conversation Among Friends

The normal rhythm of serving alongside one another on the elder and executive teams at The Village means meeting together regularly, both formally and informally. Togetherness becomes a reality, and friendships exist within and across both the elder and executive teams. One example of this friendship lies in the relationship between Matt Chandler and Beau Hughes. Their friendship extends beyond their tenure at The Village. They are more than co-laborers; they are friends. Chandler serves as the lead pastor of Teaching at the church. Hughes started as the church's college pastor and briefly served in this capacity until the launch of the Denton campus when he became the church's first campus pastor in 2007. Both presently serve on the elder and executive teams. Sometime in or around 2008, Chandler began talking with Hughes about how he envisioned his future regarding the campus. This context provided the seedbed for the initial conversations regarding Hughes transitioning the campus to become an autonomous church.

¹I use the word "generally" here to leave room for the reality that not everyone on The Village staff operates in this manner. There is always a push toward greater health and unhealthy mindsets and behaviors are typically addressed early. The Village staff is healthy, but not utopic.

The early and initial conversations were nothing more than passing dialogue. They were enjoyed over lunch or coffee with no strings attached. That said, Hughes did not take these conversations lightly. He processed them genuinely and always had a similar response, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

The rationale behind this seeming rejection of the vision had to do with timing, season of life, and leveraging of gifts. Hughes believed that he was not in a season to lead in this capacity. In his eyes, the church needed to continue to grow off Chandler’s teaching, and he felt the Denton campus continued to benefit from the overall attachment to The Village. At this point in the conversation, very little rigorous or robust dialogue was taking place. It was the germination of an idea.

Several months, or perhaps a year, after Chandler approached Hughes with these conversations, I approached him with similar questions and ideas. Similar to Hughes’ relationship with Chandler, my relationship with Hughes precedes our time at The Village. Chandler and I were instrumental in bringing him on staff, and he has reported to me in direct line from his first day on staff until now. The conversation that Hughes and I had around the idea to consider transitioning the campus into an autonomous church looked very similar to that of his and Chandler’s. Interestingly enough, neither Chandler nor I intentionally had these conversations with a directional tone, but with more of a curiosity of what the Lord might be doing: What was the Lord stirring in Hughes’s heart? What was Hughes sensing as he led? How could I encourage him and come alongside as he led and pastored in Denton? In all the early conversations, the response from Hughes was the same, “My heart is content, and I feel we are all on course.”

In 2011, a slight turn occurred in these conversations. Hughes poignantly asked the question, “Are you asking me, as lead pastors of the church, to consider transitioning the campus into an autonomous church? Are we wanting to move this from a

conversation to see if there is a conviction?” By this time Chandler, Hughes and I were all aware that the three of us were having separate conversations, and it would be good to ask the Lord for clarity. We encouraged Hughes to consider this option prayerfully as we joined him in prayer. His response came back similar with a slight nuance, “If you are telling me this is the direction the church is going, then I am all for it, but I am as content as ever and do not think the timing is right.”

In spring 2012, the campus pastors and I took a trip to the northeast to visit several of The Village’s partner churches. During a breakfast meeting with some trusted pastors from a congregation in New York City, Hughes asked the pastors to share with us some areas of weakness and opportunities they saw in The Village. The intent behind the question was to learn and grow, and these brothers had the advantage of knowing our leadership yet possessed the distance to see things to which we might be blind. In short, they believed the church had a unique opportunity to leverage the gift of Chandler to gather people, so they encouraged us to consider how we might best steward this gift. In hindsight, this simple conversation proved pivotal.

The Lord provided more voices in the conversation. Prior to the meeting in New York, the conversation primarily included the lead pastors at The Village. Shortly after the breakfast meeting in New York, one of the campus pastors who provides a great deal of sagely wisdom to Hughes personally mentioned that he really believed God was leading him to transition the campus into an autonomous congregation. In addition to this situation, another trusted pastor who serves a congregation in Washington D.C. encouraged Hughes to consider leading the campus to become an autonomous congregation. Alongside these affirmations, Hughes developed a growing local church ecclesiology. These convictions were not contrary to the multi-site model, but they bolstered his view of and love for the local church. The Lord seemed to be stirring momentum around an idea that was initially little more than a curious conversation. The

seed of conviction, at last, took root.

The Circle Widens

The initial conversations that began casually in 2008 strengthened as the circle of influence widened. The confluence of voices and growing local church ecclesiology sprouted a desire within the heart of Hughes to move from being on the receiving end of the conversation to initiate a new one. In the late spring of 2012, Hughes shared with me that he was ready to lead a campus transition if the church believed this was the right move. He shared that God had used the previous years to form a conviction within him that this was good and right.

At this point, the lead pastors brought the question of a Denton campus transition before the elders and executive staff. Now the circle involved the key leaders at The Village to process and understand the vision. The elders requested that the executive team work on vision proposal and submit it to the board. In fall 2012, at an executive staff off-site meeting, the question of a Denton campus transition was the primary agenda item. This time proved to be significant in the life of our church both for what happened and what did not happen. The executive team spent two days working through the high-level vision of Denton becoming an autonomous church. We asked a series of probing questions to better understand the vision, refine the vision and understand the implications:

1. what exactly is our multi-site strategy? What are we hoping to do with this strategy?
2. why would we transition a campus?
3. should we stop adding campuses and work to build each existing campus to operate as a “hub”?
4. can we create a network of churches and have the current central leadership oversee the network?
5. are the campuses viable without the support of being a part of a greater church system?

6. should Beau Hughes just plant a church in Denton rather than transition a campus?
7. would all campuses eventually transition?
8. if all campuses did transition, then what would become of the Flower Mound campus pastor position? Would the person in this role transition to another role or lead it as a new congregation?
9. do we still affirm the multi-site model?
10. how did we get to this point?

The conversation was challenging and vigorous, especially because the team operates with a healthy amount of personal and professional trust. This trust, of course, provides a safe environment for conflict and disagreement, which the off-site meeting had plenty of. In the end, the team generated a proposal to take to the elders as the next step. The proposal was a “2020 Vision.” By the year 2020, we wanted to transition all existing campuses to become autonomous churches. In effect, we would stop functioning as The Village Church and simply become three separate entities. The elders soon after voted down the proposal.

A few key implications resulted from this process. First, the executive team and elders were now involved in the vision. The circle indeed widened. Second, it was apparent that Beau Hughes now had a conviction to lead this endeavor should the church leadership endorse it. Third, running parallel with Hughes’ conviction was his contentment; he genuinely did not feel restless or like he needed to part ways with the church based on his conviction. Fourth, unity and a spirit of love prevailed. The process was robust and aggressive, but never veered toward disunity. Fifth, the denial of the proposal caused some healthy reflection for all involved, as we questioned our conviction and the timing and aggressiveness of the proposal. Sixth, alongside the denial of the vision was the affirmation of Beau Hughes and the Denton campus by the elders. They could see in him the leadership for such a cause and felt that the Denton campus, if any,

would be the closest for a transition. Seventh, while the proposed vision was denied, there was a clear desire to continue to have the conversation among the leadership.

Phase 2: Vision Refinement

The months following the rebuff of the vision proved quiet so far as campus transitions were concerned. The elders wanted to continue to process it from a high-level, but there was no timetable for such conversations. Three unforeseen and seemingly unrelated events helped spark the vision refinement process.

The first event occurred at the spring 2013 executive staff off-site meeting. This meeting was the first to follow the fall off-site meeting, where the team created the “2020 Vision.” One agenda item was a discussion about the challenges and opportunities of the current structure of the church’s elder board. The primary question was, “How can we increase the shepherding, oversight, and care of the church?” This conversation resulted in a proposal for the elders to consider a new structure for the elder board at The Village Church. The executive team and elders then worked to refine the proposal and eventually agreed upon a new structure. The details of this proposal will be discussed below in “Phase 5: Structural Implications.” This new elder structure did not drive the refinement process for campus transitions, but it is definitely an essential piece that must be in place before a campus can be ready to transition. It allows each campus to have greater campus leadership autonomy. The elders knew that this move put more leadership into the hands of the campus, so they gladly welcomed it.

The second piece of the puzzle occurred with the transition of the Flower Mound campus pastor during the summer of 2013. The Flower Mound campus is the original campus of The Village Church and continues to be the largest campus. It is also the campus where all three lead pastors have offices and serve. Chandler preaches from this campus each weekend, and we stream video of his sermons to the other campuses. The church hired a campus pastor to oversee this campus and function as the other

campuses function. The man who was hired served faithfully and improved the campus in terms of identity and health. That said, the campus pastor role proved demanding, requiring more capacity than the campus pastor currently had to give in this season of his life and the life of his family. The church worked to modify the role, reduce some requirements, share the load, etc. It became clear, however, that the Lord was simply moving this brother to a new role at a different church that was a better fit for his season of life. The transition was noble, filled with integrity and honor. It also meant the church needed to fill a key role.

As the leadership considered how to function in the interim, it became clear that the prevailing desire was not to rehire someone for the Flower Mound campus pastor role. All three lead pastors decided to split the function of the campus pastor role at the Flower Mound campus. This decision was made independently of the vision for future campus transitions, but it did raise the topic once again. The lead pastors expressed a desire to work more closely with the Flower Mound campus and oversee her care and growth. During this season of transition, the Lord seemed to align both the hearts of the lead pastors and the structure of the Flower Mound campus to consider the idea of campus transitions again. Chandler conveyed a growing desire to pastor the people in front of him, and these ambitions now aligned structurally.

The third event that helped refine the vision to transition campuses was personal. I was invited to join the Doctorate of Ministry program in Executive Leadership at Southern Seminary, which began in August 2012. The main thrust of the program is the final doctoral project. The doctoral cohort started with rudimentary ideas of each cohort member completing an independent project that we would, at the end of the writing process, blend to form a unified work. The overarching theme was “multiplying movements,” and each member would be assigned a component part. Initially, I thought that I would produce something around developing and maintaining a healthy staff

culture in a church environment, and the executive team at The Village affirmed this approach.

However, the decision to restructure the elder board in spring 2013 and the transition of the Flower Mound campus pastor in summer 2013 stirred the conversation again about campus transitions. It was during this time that the executive team suggested I change the focus of my doctoral project to be campus transitions. The hope was to better understand the theological drive of multiplication in the Scriptures, the implications for the Church of Jesus Christ and how The Village may faithfully steward the call to multiply. Essentially, the project would serve the church by helping refine the campus transition vision.

Personally, during studying for and writing the second chapter of this paper, the Lord crystalized a conviction within me. As I explored a biblical theology of multiplication, examined Jesus' teaching on multiplication, worked through the book of Acts and some epistles to understand the normative expectation of churches and the movement of the gospel, and finally ended with the culmination of multiplication in the book of Revelation, the Lord seared a deep confidence within me regarding the assurance of the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth and a renewed hope to see The Village faithfully scatter and sow for the sake of the gospel. It was also clear through this study that the normative practice for the spread of the gospel was through the creation of new groups and churches rather than the increase of an existing church. For me, personally, this point is when the conversation finally turned into a conviction.

At this point, in the fall of 2013, the elders now had a theological document (chap. 2 of this project) to work through regarding the vision for transition. For several successive elder meetings, campus transitions remained a consistent topic of discussion. A pivotal turn occurred when the elders were asked whether or not they sensed the Lord was leading the church to transition the Denton campus into an autonomous church. The

elders unanimously voted, “Yes.” This affirmative vote occurred on Tuesday, October 1, 2013.

It should be noted what a “Yes” vote actually meant for the elders. First, it indicated what they sensed regarding the future of the Denton campus. It did not mean the decision was made. Second, this vote gave the green light for the executive staff to proceed with the development of a tentative implementation framework including suggested timelines, anticipated implications, and a communication plan to be reviewed by the elder board.

The executive staff then assembled for a fall off-site meeting on October 14-15, 2013, to construct the preliminary campus transition document. Over the course of these two days, the team worked to refine the vision, generate anticipated implications, draft a timeline for a possible transition, build a communication timeline to share the vision with the staff, and move toward sharing with the body at large, producing an FAQ concerning campus transitions. After the off-site meeting, I was tasked with inputting all of our thoughts into one clear and concise document. We titled this document, “The Village Church Campus Transitions: Vision, Rationale, and Responses.”

The elders received the campus transition document for review, as they had requested, via email several days prior to the next scheduled elder meeting. The final review meeting occurred on Monday night October 21, 2013. Candidly, the review began amid concerns that the document was too aggressive in nature. Specifically, many of the elders felt as if the document presented a decision rather than invited the congregation to join the elders in discerning the vision. As a result, we walked through the document, as a group, word by word, nuancing and crafting each piece collectively. By the end of the night, a strong spirit of unity emerged around the document and the overall rollout process.

The final review meeting with the elders proved noteworthy for several

reasons. First, it confirmed the health of the elder team. This group of men is serious about loving and honoring the Lord and leading and caring for The Village Church. This group also loves one another, and this night demonstrated that reality clearly. The men felt safe to disagree, engage in conflict, and process with open hands and humble hearts. Second, walking through each word of the document *together* allowed for a new level of ownership and understanding among the team. This producing a “centering effect” confirmed that we were all on the same page moving forward, especially as we rolled out the vision to the staff and key leaders. Lastly, the sobering responsibility of leading the church was evident to the elders on this night. Sobriety does not diminish the joy of leading the church; rather, it creates a more significant perspective to experience it. The vision was refined and now we owned it in a new way.

Phase 3: Vision Casting

The vision for eventual and prudent campus transition effectively moved from conversations to conviction. Underlying the conviction to transition campuses was a theologically driven compulsion to remain faithful to the call to multiply disciples. Alongside this theology was a stated awareness that transitioning campuses was simply *a* way to make disciples and not *the only* way. Armed with conviction and humbled by the opportunity to lead, it was now time to share the conviction with others. To this point, the conversations about campus transitions remained with the elders and executive staff and had not been shared with others. Thus, it was time for the vision to be shared with increasingly larger circles of people as an invitation to consider campus transitions prayerfully.

An Invitation, Not a Declaration

The elders wanted to approach the communication of the vision as an invitation to prayer rather than an announcement of a decision. This was an opportunity

for others to join in the discernment process rather than receive a directional shift. Certainly, at times, leaders must declare a direction and paint a compelling vision of the future. In this situation, the conviction to lead was clear, but we needed confirmation from key leadership and the congregation at large, especially the Denton campus, to move forward. The elders firmly believed that this open process would either confirm the vision or temper it. A confirmation of the vision meant the church would move forward with the suggested timeline for implementation. If the church proved slow to adopt or receive the vision, this response would demonstrate that we needed additional time to teach, lead, and love the church as we moved toward this end. The vision and conviction were solid. The timing was flexible.

Concentric Circles of Communication

We wanted to communicate the vision in concentric circles. Each group receiving the vision would have time to prayerfully process the desire to use multi-site as a prudent and long-term church planting strategy. We would begin by sharing the vision with the most immediate group being impacted, the Denton campus staff, and move out from there eventually to share it with the church. The elders believed that if the Denton campus staff and key leaders did not affirm the vision, then it was not time to share it with the church. This indicator would clearly show that more time was needed teaching and shepherding the campus leadership in this area. The process proved open-handed, guided by a genuine belief that if the Lord was moving this forward, He would affirm the vision throughout the process.

The Communication Plan

The approach for how we wanted to cast the vision was clear: (1) make an invitation, not a declaration, and (2) share the vision with increasingly larger groups of people based on receptivity to the vision.

The Village Church staff. Tuesday morning, October 22, 2013, the lead pastors and several elders gathered with the Denton campus staff to cast the vision about campus transitions. We determined the best course of action was for Matt Chandler to share a brief narrative history of his time at and heart for The Village. A key highlight occurred when, during his interview process, he drew a picture of the church multiplying through church planting. This early story showed the continuity of the vision from the very inception of his leadership at the church. The hope was to connect this early vision with what we were prepared to share. Following Chandler's time, I read word for word the document titled, "Campus Transitions: A Vision, Rationale and Responses." We then opened the meeting up for questions and answers.

The Denton staff responded favorably to the vision, though not without caution and concern. The idea of a campus transition "made sense" to many individuals, and they were willing to prayerfully discern with the elders. The vast majority of the questions asked were covered in the campus transition document that we gave them. Some questions asked were more tactical and logistical in nature. Our hope was to avoid delving into too many questions of this nature too early. At this point, we wanted to hear from them whether or not they felt it was prudent to move forward and share the vision with the Denton campus. We asked them to take a month to process the information, and then we would reconvene to make a decision about next steps.

Later in the afternoon on Tuesday, October 22, each campus pastor met with their respective campus staff and walked them through the same document. Each campus pastor took a similar approach sharing Chandler's original vision several years ago and demonstrated the continuity with the campus transition vision. Everyone read from the same document. Each campus staff affirmed this vision as a good and right move for the Denton campus in this season. The Dallas and Fort Worth staff asked questions about the timeline for transitioning their respective campuses, which, at this point, is at an

undetermined time in the future. These questions were anticipated and covered in the document they received.

Overall, the staff received the vision favorably. The following week, October 28-31, the entire church staff convened for our annual all-staff retreat. The timing proved extremely helpful as we corporately gathered for the express purpose of worship, fellowship, encouragement and prayer. Staff members utilized this time to process together, ask questions in casual conversations and pray for one another.

Denton deacons. Thursday morning October 24, 2013, the lead pastors, Denton staff, and several elders gathered to share the vision of a possible campus transition with the Denton deacon leadership. This meeting followed the same format as the others: sharing Chandler's narrative, reading the campus transition document and ending with a time for question and answers. The tone of this meeting paralleled that of the Denton staff. These leaders asked questions and shared concerns but generally sensed the vision was positive and good. The next step was for the Denton staff and deacons to reconvene a month later to make a collective decision about whether it was prudent to share the vision with the church or to temper the rollout.

The intervening weeks between meetings were filled with a plethora of conversations with staff members and deacons, particularly at the Denton campus, about the vision. Most of these conversations were very positive and generated a sense of excitement and momentum about transitioning the Denton campus for the sake of the gospel. That said, some shared their concerns with the vision and expressed disagreement. Some people's disagreement with the vision stemmed from previous wounds. They had been a part of an unstable and unhealthy church previously and feared moving back to what they perceived to be a less stable environment. Another concern dealt with losing the preaching voice of Matt Chandler. Some felt the church was operating in the best of both worlds by having Chandler as their primary preacher and

Hughes as their primary shepherd and were worried that the Denton campus would numerically decrease in size. The primary concern expressed centered on the financial viability of the Denton campus as some wondered if the campus could sustain itself apart from The Village.²

Even those who disagreed believed they would ultimately yield to what the Lord was doing but felt they needed to share their hesitations. Even with these concerns, a spirit of unity and health prevailed. These conversations provided wonderful opportunities to shepherd and care for the staff and campus leadership. The idea of a change from the status quo stirred up fears, insecurities, and comforts that were latent. At this point, we all had a chance to place these before one another and minister to each other.

Denton staff and deacon meeting. Following one month of prayer and discussion, the Denton campus staff and deacon body gathered on Thursday, November 21, 2013, to make a determination about the prudence of moving forward with the vision. The lead pastors and several elders also attended this meeting. After a brief introduction, a secret ballot vote was taken to get a true pulse of the room.

The secret ballot was not ideal or desired but proved necessary at the time. During the previous month of processing, various reports surfaced that some deacons or staff members were not in favor of the vision but were hesitant to say so. Beau Hughes, the Denton campus pastor, could not valid this information as his conversations revealed a different story. Evidently, there were individuals who did not want to share any disagreement with the vision because they feared disappointing the leadership. Again, most of this was hearsay, but it was troubling nonetheless. Perhaps through a lens of

²Interestingly, the categories of concerns (finances, Chandler's preaching, and not being a part of The Village) remained consistent throughout the process. The concerns that were voiced, whether by a staff member or church member, fell into one of these three categories. These concerns and other practical considerations are addressed in chap. 5.

naiveté, the elders assumed that because we provided open feedback channels and requested dialogue from others about the vision, that people would be willing to share it. Needless to say, following the secret ballot vote, the Denton staff and deacons voted 31-4 to move forward with the vision rollout. The four dissenting votes had already voiced their concerns and were not a surprise to anyone. So, the hearsay proved to be just that: hearsay.

The meeting was fruitful and encouraging. Many of the same questions were raised, primarily ones surrounding the financial viability of the Denton campus and whether or not this was to be understood as an experiment for the Denton campus or if it was a conviction for the church. The participants believed we should put the vision before the church and agreed with the proposed timeline for rollout that the executive staff created. They also suggested that we schedule a meeting with the Denton Home Group leadership to share the vision with these leaders prior to sharing it with the church.

The last meeting scheduled prior to informing the church at large was with the Denton Home Group leadership. Home group leaders at The Village help carry the leadership and shepherding load for the church. Therefore, they provide an important point of contact with the members from a day-to-day standpoint. This meeting occurred on Sunday afternoon, December 15, 2013. The format of the meeting followed the same pattern as the previous meetings: Matt Chandler shared the narrative about his early vision and continuity with what we were considering with campus transitions, we read the campus transition document, and ended with questions and answers.

The response from the Denton Home Group leaders was generally positive with a few concerned leaders. Overall, the responses paralleled the previous meetings and continued to fuel the momentum to share the vision with the church. After this meeting, it was clear to the elders that we needed to move forward with the plan to cast the vision of campus transitions to the entire church body. The process of casting the vision to

concentric circles, from a small group of staff to a larger group of over 100 Home Group leaders, allowed for multiple opportunities to share the vision, increased momentum along the way, increased ownership of the vision, and emboldened the elders and lead pastors to bring this vision before the church.

January month of prayer. On Sunday, January 5, 2014, we shared the vision of campus transitions with the entire church body by way of the pulpit. This Sunday was the launch of our annual month of prayer, so the context fit perfectly. Again, the elders were extending an invitation to join them in prayer to help discern a direction, and this was not an announcement of a decision. Matt Chandler preached at the Denton campus and shared the information with them personally. The Denton campus also received a hard copy of the document titled, “Campus Transitions: A Vision, Rationale and Responses.”

The campus pastors also shared the vision at their respective campus as a part of the weekend sermon. I preached at the Flower Mound campus and shared the vision with this campus. The only caveat being that the Flower Mound campus Saturday night services did not hear the vision. We wanted to reserve sharing the information on Saturday night as a way to honor the Denton campus and to ensure that the Denton campus would hear the information first, as it was most pressing and timely for this group. Each pastor preached a message on prayer, exhorting the church to understand the corporate nature of prayer. The sermon application was focused on prayer regarding the campus transition vision. Each pastor then encouraged the campuses to make it a point to listen to Chandler’s sermon from that day at the Denton campus, allowing them to hear the vision twice from two different voices. Also, each pastor encouraged the congregation to look on the church’s website on Monday for a post with the campus transition document and Chandler’s sermon and to attend a Night of Worship the next Friday night where the campus transition vision would be a point of corporate prayer.

The church posted the campus transition document on Monday, January 6, and began to spread the word through a variety of communication mediums. On Friday night, January 10, the church gathered for a Night of Worship at Prestonwood Baptist Church. The attendance was over 5,000 people, and an element of the night included prayer about campus transitions, with specific emphasis on the Denton campus. The night was marked with celebration and worship. The momentum seemed to be building.

January town hall meetings. Throughout the month of January, the Denton campus hosted three open town hall meetings with the Denton campus staff and the lead pastors. The first town hall had an attendance of 184 people. The attendance for the second town hall gathering was 290. The third meeting had a smaller attendance of seventy. Each meeting followed a similar format of brief narrative, Hughes sharing how the Lord developed his personal conviction about campus transitions, the biblical impetus for multiplication, and a full hour of open time for questions and answers. Specifically, these gatherings allowed the leadership to express why this vision was compelling and why the campus was poised to transition. These town hall meetings allowed the members of the church to process excitement, concerns, hopes and fears. They were truly helpful for all involved, and rather than stopping the momentum, each meeting generated more.

February-May sermon series: Acts. Toward the end of 2013, as it became apparent that we were going to bring the campus transition vision before the church at large, the leadership decided to change the planned sermon series for the spring semester. Originally, a series titled “The Good Life” was scheduled for the spring. Although an anticipated and relevant series about God’s design for humanity and human flourishing, the greater burden remained to walk the church through the book of Acts in order to show how the church multiplies.

The purpose of the Acts sermon series was to demonstrate the spread of the

gospel through the multiplication of God's people. The series provided the theological foundation and biblical exposition driving the vision for campus transitions while generating a fresh impulse for corporate and personal evangelism. Although an immediate application point, this series did not centrally focus on campus transitions. The series design was twelve weeks walking through the major sections and movements in the book of Acts with Acts 1:8 serving as the launching point. The Village Church Communications department created a host of complementary resources, including a digital guide for our members to walk through for further study personally or in their Home Groups, wall art displaying the timeline of the book of Acts, a timeline of The Village's history as a church plant and becoming a church planting church, bumper videos playing at the beginning of weekend services summarizing where we are in the series and what is coming up next, and a series of blogs that examine certain topics from Acts. Collectively, these resources provided a variety of angles by which to understand the message of Acts and to reinforce the purpose of the series.

Spring 2014 communication timeline. Leaders cast vision in order to create movement toward a desired end. A failure to make the call to action clear is a failure to execute. The vision for The Village Church to use the multi-site model as a long-term church planting strategy requires a clear call to act.

The leadership believes the church needs to own the vision of campus transitions in order for it to succeed. Thus, the final call to action that we are leading the church toward is a decisive vote on whether or not to transition the Denton into an autonomous church. At this point, there is not a stated timeline for the other campuses, but we will prayerfully and prudently move toward that end. The spring of 2014 includes several key points leading up to the vote in May. Some of these points are meant to keep the members included in the process, informed with any updates, and to keep the vision fresh before them. These include the following:

1. February 5, 2014— A special member meeting will provide an update on staff transitions and communicate the remaining timeline leading to the vote
2. February 9—Sunday services will announce staff transitions and the remaining timeline to the congregation, and an in-service annual church-wide survey that includes questions about the vision for campus transitions will be completed
3. March 5—A regular elder-led prayer and member meeting will make campus transition a point of prayer emphasis and inform covenant members with any updates on the transition
4. March 30—During the Sunday services, a vote on the revised church constitution, which includes a key review concerning the newly proposed structure of the elder board creating both campus and central elders, will take place
5. April 3—The results of the revised church constitution vote will be communicated to the church via The City
6. April 6—The Denton elder candidates will be presented to the congregation during Sunday services at the Denton campus
7. April 27—During the Sunday Services, the new Denton elders will be affirmed (assuming the church’s consent), and Matt Chandler will preach live at the Denton campus (affirm new Denton elders, assuming the church’s consent) giving a sermon that emphasizes the radical spread of the gospel and encouraging the church (specifically the Denton campus) about the campus transition vote the next Sunday
8. April 28—The absentee ballots for the campus transition vote become available at the Denton campus during normal office hours for the entire week
9. May 2—A night of prayer will be held at the Denton campus, which will include prayer, celebration, and video testimonies and encouragement from trusted pastors outside The Village Church
10. May 4—During Sunday services the congregation will vote on the proposed Denton campus transition (only covenant members who attend the Denton campus will vote³)

³Covenant Members from other campuses will not vote on the decision for Denton to become an autonomous church. However, if the Denton campus votes in favor of the transition, then members from other campuses will vote on the transfer of assets—the building, equipment, etc.—to the new church in Denton. We will, though, be asking our members and attendees across all campuses to be praying about the transition.

11. May 7—Elder-led prayer and member meetings will be held at the Denton, Dallas, and Ft. Worth campuses (the Flower Mound campus has a different date for Elder Led Prayer), at which time the results of the Denton campus transition vote will be announced and celebrated, regardless of the outcome
11. May 8—The results of the Denton campus transition vote will be communicated to the church via The City
12. May 10-11—Matt Chandler will communicate the results of the Denton campus transition vote during weekend services

We anticipate a timeline of twelve to eighteen months following an affirmative vote to prudently transition the Denton campus into an autonomous church. This amount of time would allow our elders, staff, and church to prepare accordingly for the transition. Regardless, the timeline will not be rushed to assure we handle this move with care and detail.

Conclusion

Regardless of the results of the campus transition vote, the church will begin a new season of ministry in May 2014. The focus entering the summer and fall will either be finalizing a transition plan for the Denton campus or continuing to teach and prepare the church to transition at a later date. Embedded within the hearts of the leaders is a conviction to consider the opportunity for generational influence through multiplying churches. We are committed to patiently and lovingly shepherding our church toward this end, for the good of the people and the glory of God.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction: A Narrative Arc

In fall 2002, Matt Chandler sat in The Village Grill restaurant with a group of leaders from Highland Village First Baptist Church. The table was covered in butcher paper, and some crayons became Chandler's instrument to provide a picture of his vision for the church. He drew a simple illustration of a circle with several lines extending from it. At the end of each line were more circles, representing churches. Chandler's vision for Highland Village First Baptist Church, compelled by the Great Commission in Matthew 28, was for it to be a church that planted churches for the glory of God.

As Chandler assumed the pastorate at the end of 2002 and Highland Village First Baptist Church became known as The Village, this vision began to take shape. The Lord closed some doors and opened others. As God brought numeric growth, there were decisions that had to be made regarding how The Village would steward this growth. The leaders and elders had to decide whether to build one large building to house everyone or steward the growth another way.

During a season of prayer and fasting in 2007, called "Venture," the Lord brought clarity. As we were gifted with what is now known as the Denton campus, we made the decision not to refrain from one large single building. The Lord guided our hand and decided a direction for us. At this juncture in the life of the church, we moved toward multi-site rather than one large site.

The church has steadily added campuses over the years. In 2009, the Lord graciously provided the Dallas campus. In 2013, we opened our fourth campus in Fort Worth. The Village recently purchased a building in Plano, Texas and will open its fifth

campus later in 2014.

The story of God's work at The Village continues as we sense His call for us to utilize the multi-site church model to establish, strengthen, and launch churches. It seems that a next step in the church's collective burden to plant churches *may be* for the Denton campus to transition from being a campus to becoming an autonomous church. Following the vote in May 2014 on this proposed vision, the leadership will have the necessary clarity to move forward in one direction or another.

A transition of this nature raises many questions, unknowns, and challenges, but it also creates new realities and possibilities. This project concludes before the full implementation of the vision and before all the questions related to the project can fully be answered. The leadership of The Village expended considerable energy forecasting the challenges, questions, and implications but recognizes this journey will lead the church down a path that is not entirely predictable. This chapter serves as a guide, but contains the necessary flexibility to deal with what is unforeseen. This chapter examines the benefits of campus transitions for The Village, the impact on the church's approach to multi-site, and the various implications involved with the proposed change.

Kingdom Economics

Questions provide a wonderful opportunity to examine an issue or situation. A well-crafted question peels layers off the proverbial onion and reveals deeper levels of clarity. A question the leadership of The Village Church is compelled to answer for the congregation is, "What is the overall gain with campus transitions?" In reality, several aspects of this vision provide a compelling picture of the future for the church. It is important to remember that spiritual dynamics are at play in a decision of this nature. Certainly this does not mean that practical considerations are not valuable; they are and definitely factor into the decision, but there is more involved than pragmatics.

Sometimes the economics of the kingdom do not match our economic

sensibilities. We read about a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that is lost. Jesus praises Mary when she pours an entire bottle of expensive perfume on His feet. A widow is told that her two coins are more valuable than the contributions of the wealthy. A farmer pays the same wages to workers who put in different hours. At other times, armies are dwindled from thousands to hundreds to make a point, while loaves of bread and fish are multiplied. Kingdom economics do not always work well on a typical balance sheet. This is a spiritual decision, not a mathematical one—but we do see several positive gains with this transition.

First, the church’s focus and contextualization would improve. This contextualized mission would be reinforced from the pulpit and by the church leadership (elders, deacons, and staff). Our original hope with multi-site was to provide greater contextual ministry, so a transition of this nature clearly aligns with the original aspirations for campuses.

Second, as George Peters writes in *A Theology of Church Growth*, “The concept of multiplication seems to point in the direction of an increasing number of groups and churches rather than an expansion of existing ones.”¹ This stirs within the leadership a growing conviction to consider what opportunities we might be able to leverage with multi-site.

Third, this vision is a concrete and tangible outworking of our church’s mission statement: to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication. The church firmly believes in gospel-centered multiplication as a trait of discipleship. The call to multiply injects vitality and life into the heart of individual believers and the corporate church body.

Last, it is proactive succession. At some point in time, each and every church

¹George W. Peters, *A Theology of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 193.

will face the issue of succession. Campus transitions will inevitably be an issue at some point in the life of a church. The leadership will eventually turn over. People will leave. Pastors will pass. Change remains unavoidable. We believe we can be on the front end of succession and celebrate it rather than be surprised by it—or, worse, reluctant to embrace it. A Denton transition would serve to help The Village better understand succession and navigate any potential transitions in the future.

A variety of factors make this vision attractive and compelling. Yes, multiplication is driving it. Yes, greater leadership and contextual opportunities are driving it. Yes, a view toward succession is driving it. When taken together, these reasons paint a beautiful picture for the church to consider.

It is also important to note what is not driving this vision. Matt Chandler's health is not a driving factor in this consideration of campus transition. Interestingly enough, the conversations about the Denton campus becoming an autonomous church began prior to any health complications for Chandler. That said, the church did learn about the sobriety and frailty that faces each one of us through his battle with cancer. Given that each one of us is replaceable, and God intends this to be so, the elders should always lead with an eye toward the next generation of leaders.

Also, the vision is not driven even by a hint of animosity or acrimony. By God's grace, the church family and all our campuses exist within and maintain a genuine spirit of love in the bond of peace. This vision is not a pseudo church split but, instead, the proactive multiplication of congregations.

Finally, this vision is not motivated by experimentation. It is motivated by conviction. The church has a growing conviction to see the gospel multiplied and to use the multi-site model as a strategy for church planting. We also believe this strategy gives our church the opportunity to use Chandler's gift of preaching and gathering to raise up strong, gospel-centered churches. To this end, we will labor.

Current and Future Campuses

Given the growing conviction to use the multi-site platform as a long-term church planting strategy, The Village will continue prayerfully and patiently to explore how this strategy affects current and future campuses. At this point, only the Denton campus is in view for a near-term transition, but the vision impacts the entire church.

The remaining campuses will continue to function, grow, and develop with this vision in mind. When it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us, the church will prayerfully explore the next steps for any particular campus. Should we move in a similar direction for a specific campus, we would prayerfully and patiently move in this direction looking for the same three key indicators: 1) the man, 2) the leadership, and 3) the membership.

We continue to have strong desires to start new campuses. They would be started with the wisdom of past experience and prayerful hope that, in due time, if it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us, they will transition to become separate churches. We will move prudently, prayerfully and faithfully, one step at a time, and learn as we go.

Structural Implications

Several structural changes are presently underway at The Village in order to implement and complement the campus transition vision. Some of these changes would only occur should the church vote to affirm the proposed campus transition vision, while a few implications are in motion regardless of the outcome. This section outlines the structural change for the governance structure at The Village, the staffing implications as a result of campus transitions, and the creation of The Village Church Network.

New Elder Structure

The new elder structure² is intended to complement the campus transition

²The church is set to vote on the new proposed elder structure on March 29/30, 2014.

vision but stands independent of it. As the elders considered the long-term care for and leadership of the church, we realized that the campuses needed more intentional care. It was also evident that, in order for a campus to be prepared to transition into an autonomous church, it needed local and established leadership. In light of this reality, the elders proposed a structural change to the board.

A brief description. The proposed elder model describes a shared leadership allocation among the elders of The Village Church. The church would have a leadership team of “central elders” and several teams of “campus elders.”

The central elders would lead The Village Church from a centralized vantage point and be comprised of representative elders from each campus. They would accomplish the following tasks:

1. a centralized team overseeing the directional needs of The Village Church.
2. the central elders would also serve as campus elders at their respective campus.
3. the central elders would consist of a simple majority of non-vocational elders to vocational elders.
4. the lead pastors and campus pastors would serve as the vocational elders on the central elder team.

The campus elders would lead a campus of The Village Church from a decentralized vantage point and be comprised of elders from their respective campus. They would accomplish the following tasks:

1. a decentralized team overseeing the contextual and unique needs of a specific campus.
2. each campus elder team would have at least one non-vocational representative on the central elder team.
3. campus elder teams would consist of a simple majority of non-vocational elders to vocational elders.

4. campus pastors and staff pastors would serve as the vocational elders on the campus elder team.

The campuses and campus pastors would have an increased leadership responsibility, while maintaining a strong connection to the central elders of The Village Church. The New Testament gives ample latitude for structure. The structure around the current elders has served the church well, but opportunities abound to shift the structure to facilitate greater care, oversight and shepherding of the church. The elders believe the positive opportunities necessitate a transition. Thankfully, by addressing the structure of the eldership at The Village, key limitations become key opportunities.

Analysis of key limitations and future opportunities. The following presents the current limitations of the elder structure along with the future opportunities resulting from a change to the proposed model of eldership. There seem to be six key limitations and opportunities:

1. size of the current elder team
2. scope of the current elder team
3. campus care
4. campus leadership development
5. campus contextualization
6. campus transitions

Again, this structural change for the elder board complements the campus transition vision. It is a necessary adjustment that must precede any future campus transition, but not all of the above limitations and opportunities pertain to this project directly. Therefore, I will only elaborate on the last four opportunities as they relate to the preparation for campus transitions.

First, the new structure allows for greater campus care. One of the key

functions of an elder is to shepherd the flock of God. Simply put, The Village needs more shepherds who walk in the humble authority of an elder. The campuses are currently limited and would greatly benefit, from the staff to the membership, with an increase in the number of elders at each campus. As it currently stands, most of the staff does not interact with the elders, and the majority of the church does not interact with a majority of the elders.

This implication serves as one of the key opportunities present with a shift in structure. The campus elders would be more tightly woven into the fabric of the staff and campus membership. Campus elders would focus on their specific campus, which translates to more intentional leadership and shepherding at the campus level.

Second, the new structure allows for greater campus leadership development. The elder structure currently in place limits the amount of men we can add to the elder team. At this point, an increase in the number of men in the room would potentially decrease the effectiveness of the room. The size dynamics of a team are an important reality to consider.

The Fort Worth campus currently has only one elder. The Denton campus only has two elders. These campuses may be able incrementally to add elders, but not the amount they need to handle the shepherding responsibilities at the respective campuses. It could easily be argued that the Dallas campus and Flower Mound campus also need more elders than they currently have. The size limitation of the room impacts the leadership ceilings at each campus.

The church wants to develop more men to be elders. Obviously, regardless of structure, not every man who is qualified to be an elder will actually be an elder, but the new structure would allow each campus to have considerably more official elders than is currently possible. The campus leadership pipeline would be stronger and healthier. This is vital for campus health and campus preparation for a future transition.

Third, the new elder structure allows for more contextualization at the campus level. Each campus presents unique contextual opportunities for ministry. Currently, the elder meetings do not lend enough time to consider the specific contextual needs of each campus. Contextualization is ultimately an expression of love toward neighbors and should be a consistent conversation between elders as they consider the flock.

Increasing the contextual leadership present on a campus directly impacts the potential health that campus can achieve. The campus elders will have the opportunity to spend significantly more time prayerfully considering the contextual needs, challenges, strengths, weakness and opportunities at the campus.

Fourth, all the aforementioned limitations impact the ability of the campus to multiply at a variety of levels. Multiplication is the fruit of healthy leadership development and discipleship. The number of elders available to provide care, leadership, development, and oversight at the campuses currently limits The Village. Each campus faces certain leadership ceilings and contextual ceilings. How we deal with and interpret these ceilings is based upon our long-term goals, values, and strategies for campus development.

Lifting the leadership development and contextualization ceilings at the campuses will increase multiplication and maturity at a variety of levels including staff members, deacons, elders, covenant membership and community engagement. Given the church's growing conviction to establish, strengthen and transition campuses into autonomous churches, the structural move regarding eldership at The Village is essential.

Staffing Implications

Much has been written and stated about the importance of leading with the right team. It is vital to have the right players poised to play the right positions and everyone creating a positive momentum to move the vision forward. A vision with any energy or force creates movement and change. It does not occur in a vacuum of isolation.

The force of the vision for campus transition reverberates into the staff of the church.

The Denton campus staff unanimously affirms the vision for their campus to transition into an autonomous church. Interestingly enough, this affirmation does not mean that all of the staff desires to stay and be a part of the transition. Honest conversations with each staff member at the campus revealed that one believed his calling was to the greater work of The Village and not the new work of the Denton church. Another staff member recognized this shift in the life of the church as the opportune time the Lord was using to transition him into a new avenue of ministry life altogether. These staffing conversations occurred with a high degree of relational and professional trust and were honest and transparent.

Structurally, the Denton staff made some adjustments, as well. The campus enjoys a healthy music culture, reflected in the diversity of styles presented in the weekend services. Given the diversity of the campus, a decision was made to hire a new worship pastor who was better equipped to lead these diverse styles, especially gospel music. The staff member who previously served in this role shifted into a role with greater overall oversight of the campus ministries, including music. The Denton staff and membership welcomed this shift in roles. In essence, the church now has an opportunity to see who will be leading them from a staff perspective as they consider and vote on the campus transition. All these staffing transitions have been announced to the church at the time of this writing and will be implemented by the middle of March 2014.

The campus transition vision also impacts how the church understands the staffing of campuses moving forward. Basically, the church wants to start a campus with a smaller staff. Launching with a lean staff puts a healthy pressure on the campus pastor and his team to develop key leaders and utilize volunteers to a greater degree. Starting a campus with a larger staff eases some of this pressure, which can adversely affect the campus in the long run. Admittedly, in the early season of a new campus, there is a lot of

development work that needs to be done, and the staff cannot do it alone, thus requiring lay leadership involvement. Ultimately, we desire to see an increased leadership pipeline, and we believe starting a campus with a smaller staff helps build and reinforce this culture.

Also, starting a campus with the end in mind is extremely helpful regarding staffing. The vision to transition campuses was not developed when the church launched the Denton or Dallas campus, but the Fort Worth and Plano campuses have a different perspective. Now that the conviction and vision are in place, these two campuses enjoyed a different perspective when building their teams. First, the campus pastor was significantly more involved in the process. Obviously this freedom is ideal, but it has not always been the case. Primarily, the executive team assembled the Denton and Dallas campus staffs, with some campus pastor involvement. Now the campus pastor serves as the key driver in recruiting and establishing his team. Second, all new campuses will be started with the vision in mind, so the campus pastor recruits the team thinking and considering who is best suited to lead an autonomous church down the road. The Plano campus, which will launch in fall 2014, will be the first campus to start completely with the end in mind. This understanding of the long-term vision greatly benefits the campus pastor as he assembles his team; it benefits the recruits to know whether or not they desire to be on the team and any prospective members as they consider joining the campus.

Finally, the campus vision directly impacts who the church will consider for the role of campus pastor. This role has always been a significant in life of the church. The campus pastor is more than a host or campus emcee. He is an elder who serves on the executive team, which will continue to be true moving forward. We will, however, consider whether or not potential campus pastors could lead a separate congregation. The measurable mentioned in Chapter 3 will be applied to those in consideration. Also, the

church will utilize the Acts 29 assessment for each candidate. This assessment gives an outside evaluation of our leadership. It also provides growth areas for the church to consider with each individual candidate. We are looking for qualified men to develop, give them a platform to establish a healthy leadership base and membership and release them to lead.

The Village Church Network

The last structural implication for our consideration is the creation of a new network called, “The Village Church Network.” The purpose of this network is to promote the relational connection between congregations and share resources between congregations. The network will only consist of The Village Church, its campuses and campuses that transition into autonomous churches. Other churches and church plants will not be eligible to apply in hopes of keeping the network small and functioning like a family. The authority of the network resides with The Village Church and revolves around The Village’s statement of faith, including our doctrine and distinctives, but leaves freedom in the philosophy and practice of ministry for campuses that become separate churches. The statement of faith and doctrinal distinctives provide the theological safeguards and boundaries for the network. Should a church within the network drift from the statement of faith or functionally no longer affirm it, they would be removed from the network. While the theology foundation of the network is tight and explicit, the philosophy and practice of each individual church is held loosely. This gives ample room for contextual distinction and approaches to ministry.

Network churches will benefit from the familial relationships within The Village Church and its campuses. It will also benefit through the availability of shared resources, including curriculum and Ministry Services. The latter consists of the central services that The Village currently provides to all campuses. These services include the following: communication, finance, facilities, human resources, technology, and

production. If affirmed by the vote, the new church in Denton would be afforded the opportunity to utilize any and all ministry services offered by The Village, and they would pay for the services at a fair and equitable rate.

The availability of these resources is a key benefit to being a part of The Village Church Network. These ministry services would be available for the duration of membership in the network, but are not required as a basis of membership. Over time, the continued use of ministry services would be a decision of the Denton leadership as they the needs of their church.

The familial aspect of the network ensures that the church will help contribute and care for network churches financially if needs arise. Specifically considering the Denton campus, The Village will continue to encourage the members of the Denton campus to give faithfully and regularly, but it will remain committed to helping in the transition financially. The Village is committed to supporting the Denton campus financially for three years from their launching out—in a way similar to how they are supported now. The Village and the new Denton church would continue to evaluate the needs on an on-going basis.

The relational nature of the network continues to be point we want to leverage and maintain. As it currently stands, the leadership enjoys close relationships. It is clear that a transition of this nature will change the dynamics and proximity of our relationships, but for the network to thrive we do need some elements in place to nurture the relationships. At this point, the only mandated gatherings for network members include an annual network off-site meeting aimed to discuss the health of the network and its churches and a meeting of network leaders with the central elders of The Village Church. Other opportunities will certainly present themselves and we will evaluate these on a case-by-case basis.

New Expectations

Change ushers in something new. It is natural and normal to grow accustomed to our current state and wonder what effects any change will bring. At times, change is welcomed and necessary. Other times it is feared and engenders anxiety. In all honesty, we do not know exactly all of the changes that the campus transition vision will bring, but we are all aware that change is on the horizon. This last section briefly touches how the church's membership should process their expectations with everything regarding the new church's philosophy of ministry to the name of the new congregation.

First, the vast majority of what members experience now will likely remain the same. It is important to remember that Beau Hughes and the staff of the Denton campus have had an integral part in leading and shaping the philosophy of The Village Church. There are no foreseeable changes in ministry philosophy. That said, the Denton church would have the latitude, under the leadership of their elder board, to prayerfully change and shape the church, as they deem needed and necessary to faithfully fulfill the call to make disciples. In light of this freedom, the membership can expect change just as they should expect it if a transition does not occur. The normative expectation for a growing and healthy church is change.

The most notable change for the new Denton congregation would be in preaching. Matt Chandler would no longer be the primary communicator in Denton. Beau Hughes would begin to transition into this role. The music trajectory in Denton, however, would remain the same.

At this point, there are no foreseeable changes in the membership process or the membership covenant. Once a transition is affirmed, the new congregation will likely walk through a membership renewal process as they start life as a new church. This process will likely be similar to Covenant Membership Renewal, which our church does each year.

The current strategic partnerships and missionary support of the Denton

campus would remain after the transition. Any missionary that was sent by and from the Denton campus would remain a supported missionary by the new congregation. Should the missionary not desire to have the new congregation remain as his or her sending congregation, The Village will gladly take over that role. The same is true for the strategic partnerships that the campus has in place. For instance, the ministry of Campus Outreach would remain with The Village Church but maintain offices and a strong presence at the new Denton congregation. There are no foreseeable changes in view here.

One of the most often asked question revolves around the name of the new Denton congregation. Would they sense a desire to cast a new identity and have an entirely new name? Would The Village Church mandate this change? Or would it be wise to use the same name? A host of practical and pragmatic issues surround the choice of the name for the new congregation, but one simple reality won the day. The Village Church has a warm reputation in the city of Denton and is a welcomed name in the community. More than the name itself, the community has grown in appreciation for what is behind the name. They know The Village as a congregation that cares about the city. They know this church invests in the schools, helps care for the poor and social injustices, and consists of a group of people who extend and express a genuine desire to be fighting for the good of neighborhood. The name carries a good reputation that we think should be leveraged for further good. Candidly, most people in the city of Denton only know about The Village Church through the Denton campus. They have no understanding of our multi-site campuses, and most do not care to know. So, the name of the new congregation will be The Village Church Denton, which the Denton campus is often referred to now. We hope the good reputation of this name will provide opportunities to introduce the city of Denton to the name above all names.

Conclusion

This project began under the genuine auspices of remaining faithful to the Lord

in the oversight of His flock and in the spreading of his gospel. The empty aspirations of selfish ambition and vain pursuits that tempt our souls pale in comparison to spending life in the building up of God's people and adding to His kingdom. It's to this end we labor and, ultimately, it is this end that compels the campus transition vision.

Personally, this project afforded me a great opportunity for study, reflection and writing. The biblical and theological work for the second chapter profoundly impacted my heart and infused me afresh with great confidence that the Lord will ensure the multiplication of His name and the multiplication of His glory. What solace is found in these truths; we do not labor in vain.

Also, this process increased my admiration and appreciation for the elders, staff, and membership of The Village Church. This vision is a corporate project and not an individual pursuit. We have been in this process together and the contributions to the refinement and implementation of the vision are myriad. It is an absolute joy to love those you have the privilege of laboring alongside.

At this point, it seems that the Spirit is leading our church to move forward with the vision of campus transitions. We fully anticipate an affirmative vote and believe we are entering into a new season of ministry using the multi-site model as a long-term church planting strategy. Shortly after we announced the vision to the congregation, the word about our proposed approach to multi-site spread beyond the walls of our church. Other church leaders shared with us that this vision piques their interest, and they believe it may impact the greater multi-site movement at large. Although this reach did not drive our decision to move forward with the vision, we hope to steward the opportunity to help other churches faithfully as they discern how best to faithfully steward the message of the gospel. Regardless, we are grateful for the encouragement and humbled by the entire process.

I want to conclude this paper with a beautiful truth one of our pastors, Jared

Musgrove, wrote about in a blog series titled, “Gospel People Say Goodbye.” The compelling message of the series is that the gospel ensures that we will tell people we love, “Goodbye.” We say goodbye as we send off missionaries to the field. We say goodbye as faithful members move to another area to help with a new work. We say goodbye to staff members whom God moves to serve a new congregation. If we are serious about the Great Commission and the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will say goodbye quite often. Musgrove writes,

Truth is, godly people hold one another with an open hand. Godly people who are about the gospel say goodbye often, confident in our union together as the family of God and confident that we will celebrate again. We WILL see one another again at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We will be with God together. For all time.

But now, just for a little while, we have little time to waste. The Great Commission overrides any attempts to build our own little castle of community we want to rule over. God is so much greater. We're called to hold one another with an open hand. This is the legacy of disciple-making into which the first disciples were called—a call that still resounds.

It still resounds. . . . No one in our lives is with us constantly, save for the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit. . . . It is in this that we trust, as we say our goodbyes with great hope.³

So it is with the Denton campus. The Lord is preparing us to say goodbye to dear friends, faithful members and beloved pastors. He is teaching us in this transition that the gospel, for the sake of the gospel, compels us to say goodbye. Yet it also comforts us with the wonderful hope of eternal reunion and celebration. So, may we faithfully scatter and sow as we long for the day of sweet reunion with the Lord and His Church.

³Jared Musgrove, “Gospel People Say Goodbye,” *The Village Church Blog* (August 20, 2013), accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/the-village-blog/gospel-people-say-goodbye/>.

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ABSTRACT

LEVERAGING THE MULTI-SITE CHURCH APPROACH AS A LONG-TERM CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS-FORT WORTH

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The purpose of this project is to create a strategic vision document to serve The Village Church as it considers the transition of its Denton campus, and potentially other campuses, to become separate autonomous local churches. Chapter 1 delineates two clear goals driving the project. It also explains the ministry context of The Village Church and the rationale compelling the vision to use the multi-site ministry platform as a long-term church planting strategy. The chapter ends with the limitations and delimitations of the project, key definitions, and the methodological approach.

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundation for the project. Specifically, it develops a biblical theology of multiplication from Genesis to Revelation. The chapter ends with an examination of multiplication through the growth parables, the birth of the church, and the spread of the gospel through church planting in the book of Acts.

Chapter 3 explores the three key indicators pointing to the readiness of a campus to transition into an autonomous church: the man who is called and convicted to lead in a new and unique way, the evidences of a local leadership base ready and equipped for new challenges, and a membership ready to affirm the direction and own the mission.

Chapter 4 outlines the process of how The Village Church moved from initial

conversations about the possibility of campus transitions to this being a directional conviction of the leadership for the church. The chapter identifies and explains three phases of this development: conversations, vision refinement, and vision casting.

Chapter 5 looks at the practical considerations of the campus transition vision for The Village Church. It also frames the structural and staffing implications of the vision for both current and future campuses of The Village. The chapter ends with an awareness of a new season of ministry in the life of the church.

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