



CONNECTIVITY

The Power to Touch the World

EBOOK

By: Larry Neville

Introduction: Dr. John Holland

Scripture verses,

unless otherwise indicated, are taken from

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW KING JAMES VERSION

Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982

Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tenn.

Copyright © 2000 by

Larry Neville

First published (2000) by

Planters & Pioneers

P.O. Box 787

Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91729 USA

Forward by: Dr. John Holland

One of the most enjoyable experiences of my life is the introduction of ministers and leaders in the body of Jesus Christ. And now added to that list is the honor I have been granted in the invitation to write an introduction to this important book.

For those who do not know the personal history of Pastor Larry Neville, we begin with a pastor's home and two sons who are called to the ministry. You might say that Larry has been in the ministry for his entire life. He and his brother Mike began early as evangelists, followed by pasturing. Then Larry and Janet, his wife, responded to pioneering churches and a missionary calling. Larry and Janet are both accomplished musicians so music has always been an integral part of their ministry. In these latter years Larry has continued his pastoral ministry while serving as the chosen leader of the growing fellowship of churches known as Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship

So as you focus your attention on these pages you will be reading the insight and revelation of a man called of God at a very early age, who has occupied, with great grace, almost all of the ministry positions within the church of Jesus Christ. He is a man who is seasoned by experience, gifted by the Holy Spirit, loved by his congregation, adored by his family and respected by believers in many countries of the world.

This is a book of memories that only a brother could make of pastor Mike Neville who, along with his wife Donna, experienced a modern-day revival in Maywood, California. It is a call to renew the vision, which was delivered to the new converts in that revival. It is a distillation of the principles and truths learned during that powerful moving of the Holy Spirit sometimes called the Jesus Revolution. In that time of spiritual revelation such great New Testament doctrine and practices were once again called into life through the Word of God and under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. World evangelism took on new meaning and such words as disciple, local church authority, submission, fellowship and New Testament family life were elevated to new importance.

As you meditate on this labor of the author, you will understand how difficult it is to put into words the spiritual life force of the Kingdom of Christ as experienced by Praise Chapel and its congregations and feel the effort required to reproduce pastors who understand their spiritual heritage, tradition, ritual, ceremony and trends. The author sets forth the drivers (note the action word used) that have been distilled into the life force of Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship. They are the "core values" or the "foundational beliefs of this rapidly reproducing movement. Pastor Neville names these as; God is Seeking Someone, We Are Pentecostal, Radical Evangelism, Discipleship, The Local Church, Fellowship and Missions.

The writer begins this important work with a definition of connectivity, maintains this thought throughout the entire book and closes with it as the most important element in the relationship of

the family. He seeks to help us all recognize the importance of being connected to one another just as a family is connected and through that bond reproduces itself. So he says Praise Chapel is a FAMILY OF FELLOWSHIPS where the most important structure exists and is the hope for the church to preserve the dynamic of the revival which the Lord so graciously has given this body of believers. G. K. Chesterton once wrote "Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried." Hopefully, the vital truth of this revival will not be found difficult and left untried, but because of this writing it will continue to grow and multiply until our Lord Jesus returns.

Dr. John Holland

Introduction

My brother Mike and I are from Oklahoma. We grew-up preacher's kids, our family traveled and moved around most of our early life holding meetings in gospel tents. When I was 18 and Mike was 21 we started traveling across America as an evangelist team. We went to churches, camps, anything else they dare to let us near. We grew up "independent" meaning that we were not a part of a denomination or ministry fellowship. After we both got married and were traveling separately we both joined different denominations. We began to learn that being independent on our own was not what we wanted. We began a journey from being independent, to joining denominations, to establishing a fellowship of churches and ministries. Have we found or formed the perfect fellowship? No! But we have learned to value relationship and connectivity. I realize that it is only as we are connected in God's divine purposes that each of us can fulfill our personal destiny and purpose.

At the time of this writing, Janet and I have been married 32 years. We have 2 children, 5 grandchildren. The most joy, happiness and fulfillment in my life have come out of this committed relationship with Janet (Just now my 5 year old granddaughter called and she only wanted to tell me "I love you.")). It doesn't get much better than that. It has been the same in the ministry. During the years of ministry my greatest feeling of fulfillment has come out of relationships with those I have had the honor and privilege of partnering with in the gospel. The greatest heartbreak of my life and ministry has been the relationships that have been lost over the years. People whom I still hold dear in my heart but because of various reasons (who knows what for sure) our relationship are no more. I know I will be with them in heaven and the hurts and offenses of life will be forgotten.

I have lived in 3 countries, been the pastor of a number of churches, and have traveled every continent of the world. What really matter to me are my friends. Those God placed in my life and through the years our friendship has grown more meaningful. As the years pass this is what I want – friends I am connected to. I am not interested in being his or her pastor, the head of an organization that everyone is involved in. I want holy connections, God ordained friendships

who can partner in the Gospel over the long haul of life. I am not interested in casual relationship or investing time, energy, or finances into people who do not want to connect. We will have ministers come through and preach for us or we will invite someone to speak at our conferences but all too often they are only interested in pushing their books, their program and after that night we will never hear from them again. They are not interested in relationship. That is fine for them but not for me. I want to connect. I want relationship that has meaning, purpose, goals and vision. In that setting I can find fulfillment.

Connectivity – the Power to Touch the World is a message about what can be done by a Fellowship of God’s people who will truly connect for the purpose of touching the world.

A world of connectivity

We live in a world that is driven by connectivity in every area of life. A study showed that 56 percent of people get a job through a personal connection. The best way to get into the door is a personal connection. Connections even weak ones are a source of strength and power.

Connections are not necessarily close friends; they can be people we meet, work with, minister with or a multitude of other contacts. The more connections you have the more powerful you are. But, how important is connectivity in the Body of Christ?

Jesus was broad in His relationships. He did not limit his connections to only the 12, the 70 or the 120. He ate with sinners. He was accused of hanging around with all types of people. He would minister to the multitudes yet take time for the woman at the well. Jesus spent ministry life with 12 men, connecting them to Himself, the Father and each other. "Come to me" (Matt. 11:28 NKJ). "Follow me" (Matt. 4:19 NKJ). "He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and he might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons" (Mark 3:14-15NKJ). In the next to the last prayer Jesus spoke to the Father God He said, "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father - that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me" (John 17:21 NLT). The Image of God is about connectivity, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26 NKJ).

Connecting with God and connecting with God's people. Showing the world Jesus through our love. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34 NKJ). God intended for us to live in relationship. Close and intimate community. Do you want to be truly healthy, spiritually, physically, and mentally? Then connect. The first thing we see in the early New Testament church was connecting.

Most people hesitate to cultivate acquaintances, even in church. We have our friends to whom we are committed and that’s about it. Perhaps the reason we don’t pursue connectivity is that we don’t want to feel obligated. It may end up costing me some time, money, or effort.

The Blessing of Connectivity

Life is about connecting. It is not what you know it is who you know. What do I mean when I say: Connecting? When the life of Christ in me touches the life of Christ in you we are connected. The power to meaningfully change lives does not depend on advice, counsel, rebuke, or insight – but connecting. Two people in an experience of shared life.

Everyone needs friends. Christian leaders need friends. Pastors need to fellowship with other pastors. There is an impartation that transpires person to person that you can't get out of a book or tape. Proper relationships help bring a perspective to our minds as we see our own situation in the view of others who are carrying the same responsibilities.

The blessing of relationship reveals itself when you don't have a solution or you don't clearly see the direction you need to go. When there has been an error in dealing with a problem. Then you have a resource in relationship. You learn that you're not the only one who has had to face such a thing.

The Bible tells us that, "Two are better than one woe unto him who is alone when he falls." The nature of ministry and life is not - if you fall – but - when you fall. I am not talking about falling into sin, or ungodliness. You will fall in the areas of judgment, in dealing with people, plans and projections you have made. You will come to circumstances when you don't know what to do. Strength comes to us in relationship. Many times I have not known what to do, where to turn, where the solution was, my perspective was blurred, I didn't know how to carry on. Direction and blessing came as a result of taking the right advice of other Christian leaders, pastors, or ministries who were able to help in the time of crisis. It sometimes involved listening to my friends or just sharing with someone who had gone before me. Many are not in the ministry today because during a crisis they had no one. They had not taken the time to value connected relationships.

When we are connected in healthy relationships it ushers us into new dimensions of growth. Enabling us to see another viewpoint. To see something you didn't see yourself. Leads us into truth we did not have on our own. To pursue an area of study, dimensions of growth and understanding that we would not have come to on our own. Relationships help us to cultivate our personality rather than allowing us to stagnate. We are not just feeding upon our own thoughts and emotions but as we share together, we both take in and give out. Relationship blossoms our personality.

I love to watch the bees go from flower to flower gathering nectar for their personal nourishment but at the same time they are cross-pollinating the plants so there can be fruit. It is the same in all of our lives. We will not grow and be productive without the diversity of cross-pollination, which comes through connectivity.

The Yoke of Connectivity

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light’ (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT). A yoke is restrictive yet releasing. It is the yoke that aims your life in the right direction. Symbols do not make saints but if you want a symbol that would give a picture of the Christian life it wouldn’t necessarily be a cross, a dove or a fish. It would be a yoke. When Jesus said, "take my yoke" He is painting a mind picture by referring to a wooden bar that yokes together two animals that work together. Jesus calls us to be yoked together with Him.

In the Old Testament the yoke was a symbol of bondage. The prophets used it as they lifted their voices denouncing idolatry. The prophet spoke of the people going into bondage as a “grievous yoke.” The Old Testament armies had a term called, “passing under the yoke.” A conquered army’s prisoners would pass under the yoke by bending down as a symbol of being conquered, broken and in slavery. God had the prophet Jeremiah present an illustrated sermon concerning the 70 years of captivity Israel was going to experience under Babylon. Jeremiah wrote, “The LORD said to me, ‘Make a yoke, and fasten it on your neck with leather thongs’” (Jeremiah 27:2 NLT).

Jesus God's son takes this symbol of bondage and transforms it into a symbol of discipleship and the Kingdom of God. He says, come and receive forgiveness of sins through grace and take My yoke. We cry out against the yoke. We get saved then comes the sermons on prayer, commitment and giving. We are being presented with the yoke of Jesus Christ. We love the blessings, but we hate the yoke. We want to do our own thing and enjoy the blessings of Jesus. But, the first condition for freedom in the Kingdom of God is the yoke. Not doing my own thing.

Paul began most of his epistles with, “I Paul the bond slave and servant of Jesus Christ.” The meaning is in the yoke of the ministry and discipleship. He defended the liberty of Christianity as not religious bondage while understanding the yoke. Jesus said, “. . . no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27 NLT). He is saying, I can show you the Father but the way involves taking my yoke. “For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light” (Matthew 11:30). You cannot have Me or know the Father without my yoke but don’t worry My yoke is tailor made for you.

Jesus was yoked to the Father's will. He did not do His own thing but only what He saw the father doing. Being yoked is bearing the will of God. The yoke limits and restricts our mobility to the will of God. To be yoked to Jesus is to labor, work and to be involved with Jesus and others who are yoked to Jesus.

Building Meaningful Relationship

" . . . but if I didn't love others I would be of no value whatsoever" (1 Corinthians 13:3 NLT).

The Missing Link in the Christian Life.

We all want to grow as followers of Christ. We want to be like Him, to please the Father as He did. I'm sure you want to do the "works of Christ." The Christian world produces what it thinks is necessary to grow in Christ. Teaching materials, videos, TV programs and Classes on every subject. Just shove a book or tape into someone's hand and this will show you how to grow in God.

When people come into contact with our ministry and see that we rise up spiritual leaders and church pioneers through discipleship they ask, "what materials do you use?" "What books do you give out, classes do you offer or which Bible School do you send your disciples to?" The missing link in discipleship is usually relationship. Personal interaction. Christian growth through discipleship is the intensely personal activity of people helping each other grow. Working together issues. Ministering together. Fellowshiping together. People often joke about how Christians fellowship. The truth is, fellowship is very important in your Christian growth. You cannot grow in Christian living without connecting. Vital to your destiny in Christ is us, them, those people. Once you establish this fact: I need you and you need me and we need each other then you can move on.

"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18).

After God made woman, "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:28 NKJV) God intended for us to live in relationship, close and intimate community.

The danger of disconnection

Disconnected people are not aware of the gift they are. That gift of me God has made if opened and poured out can change lives. Do you feel inadequate for this? Well, it is the core of the Gospel. The church world is filled with people always running away from meaningful relationship. People begin to get to close and then they run to another church. Or they get offended and leave. We are a "running away society" when we really need to stick it out and change. Why? Hurt, abused, Devil's strategy is to get you wrapped up like pretty little package. The danger is that you never become all you are meant to be. I have seen too many people run away and lose their destiny. It may be because of sin, personal shortfall, or imperfection, so rather than work through it they run and hide or move.

Chosen isolation violates our creation. You may say, "I'm a loner." No, you may be acting like that but inside you are not. No human being was created to be alone. Connecting is life.

Loneliness is the ultimate horror. Connecting with God we gain life. Connecting with others we nourish and experience life as we freely share it. Loving brings value to my life. I can't imagine life without meaningful relationships.

The Devil came to divide and to destroy. It is the Devil who causes hurt, pain, murder, and division. Know who the enemy is. It is not other brothers and sisters. "If I have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2 NKJ). "... but if I didn't love others I would be of no value whatsoever" (1 Corinthians 13:3 NLT). Loving you brings value, worth and meaning to my life.

The net of connectivity

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that is thrown into the water and gathers fish of every kind" (Matthew 13:47 NLT). Here Jesus was speaking at the shores of Galilee, painting a picture in the listener's minds of the huge nets they used to catch fish in the Galilee. Thousands of connecting knots held the net together and made it an amazing tool. The net was placed in the waters and its ends were stretched out and drawn together to gather huge quantities of fish. This same picture needs to grab our minds. We need to view the Kingdom of God as a giant net where we are all connected to touch the world for Jesus. Increase becomes possible when God's people are joined together like the interconnecting cords of a net. A Body of Christ linked in interconnecting relationship. We share resources and we become powerful tools for catching lost souls. Without these quality connections, our effectiveness is diminished. Like any good net, our ability to cause increase depends on our connection with one another.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12 KJV). Perfecting speaks of, "mending nets." An example of this word is in Mark, "When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets" (Mark 1:19 NKJ). They must have had torn or damaged nets.

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself" (Galatians 6:1 NLT). This is referring to those who are overtaken in a fault. It speaks of taking care of that which is useful for drawing others in. If the connection or net is useful it must be maintained. The successful connection of fellowship is mended constantly through leaders who guide and strengthen. As God's people our relationships, gifts and abilities need to be constantly mended and improved for greater effectiveness.

If connectivity is to be real each of us must take our place and become what God has called us to be in one another's lives. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7 NKJ). As responsibilities grow it is difficult to have the quality time you would like with the

brothers and sisters you are connected with. So, frequent times together in conferences, events, and various gatherings are essential. Connections enhances equipping and reproduction.

My view of the church

I view the Kingdom a band of autonomous churches that voluntarily unite. Connections become a melting pot of strategy, vision, methods, teaching, and discipling. God organizes His kingdom through gifts of friendships. Relationships are the most essential key in connectivity. Anything built on rules and control is destined to fail. If we become legalistic over every little rule we will fail as a Fellowship.

Denominations become progressively oppressive because rules and policies are relied upon to maintain relationship. In true biblical connectivity, love and voluntary cooperation is the essence and spirit. That is the difference between an organization and a living organism. Connected relationships must not be symbolic or mystical. They must be real and tangible to maintain the integrity of the Kingdom.

I view connectivity in family terms. We have friends and we have family. The Word of God calls us the family of God. You can have disagreements with family – but you are still family. As Praise Chapel Fellowship multiplies we have coined this description for our connected association of churches and ministries, “A Family of Fellowships.”

Everyone loves big and great today. I am continually asked how many churches do you have in Praise Chapel. Frankly I don't know. We are blessed to have many churches. God has honored our desire to reach the world through church multiplication. The issue is not how many nor is it how large our fellowship is. Success seems to be attached to largeness and money today. We hear how much money a ministry takes in. How many people that is church has in attendance. People question me when they learn that I am not striving to get larger crowds at our conferences or trying to get churches to join Praise Chapel Fellowship. What we are striving to do is plant churches and then to service those churches through pastors and mother churches. We learned a long time ago that there is no alternative to a mother church servicing young churches. There are benefits of being in a large organization. Name recognition; help with purchasing property and perhaps literature to assist. But, in reality denominations grew the most in the area of church planting when they were small. As they grew they establish structure to accommodate the work of God. Structure is important. We know we must have structure. The question is what kind of structure for today and the future. Do we look back at the older top down structures? Do we look at the democratic Christian structures, traditional organizations? We didn't choose to be a part of that type of structure so why should we now create one!

We learned that the local church could reproduce. It is not the size of the church that is the issue. It is not how much money the church has. It is the heart and passion of the pastor and congregation.

The Beginning of Praise Chapel Fellowship

Praise Chapel Fellowship began as Mike and Donna Neville were blessed of God to experience a move of God in Maywood California. Hundreds of people were saved and brought into the church. That is history; you can read about it in Ron Simpkins book, "The Harvest Generation." Most of these were Mexican Americans. Many were raised in the barrio, into drugs, gangs, and so forth. Most did not have formal education. Mike and Donna began to love and disciple these men and woman. As these disciples did outreaches in various areas of Los Angeles, Mike and Donna released them into these areas to pioneer churches. As they went the mother church helped them financially, with outreach teams, and pastoral care. They could call Mike, meet with him and receive continuing support as they pioneered and learned to pastor.

To further assist these young pastors and churches, Mike and Donna began to have a Bible conference in the Maywood church. The first few conferences were small and the Maywood facilities could accommodate the conference. Mike would bring in some guest speakers who had a similar vision but the real thrust was when Mike would have the pioneer pastors who had been sent out from Maywood also preach at the conference. The Maywood church would sponsor the pastor, his wife and a few couples from their young church to the conference. This would include providing them with a motel for the week and even money for meals.

Doing these things showed the folks in the small pioneer church that they were a part of something more. It gave dignity to the disciples when someone was willing to invest in them. When their pastor preached at the conference it gave him dignity in their eyes. This also it inspired other disciples in the Maywood church and the pioneer churches to believe that they also could be used of God to pioneer. The natural flow was that more churches were sent out. As the first churches matured they also began sending pastors out. Soon the Maywood church could not hold the conferences and they were moved to Hotels, Tents, Arenas and Conventions Centers in the Los Angeles area. Thousands of people began to attend. As well as everyone I enjoy the Convention Centers and huge Bible Conferences. But, I saw a breakdown in connectivity. Thousands of people but less relationship. Beautiful production but less interaction. In that setting God began to bring me back to look at our heritage and our core vision.

Dr. John Holland met with a few leaders and took us through a process of looking at our heritage. As we did I realized that the power of our Fellowship was not in the Convention Centers or large functions. Yes, there is the pull for that and we will do it from time to time, but our strength is in the local church that plants churches and services those churches around that mother church forming into a fellowship of churches.

The Original Vision

Our vision is to see men and woman fulfill their calling and destiny in God. We believe the local church is God's plan. Through the local church all the workings of God can be fulfilled. The strength of our vision is connectivity. When someone is planted out of a Mother Church there is a connection. That connection is a life flow. From pastor to disciples. From mother church to pioneer church. There is security, direction, help, and love in that connection. It can only be described in family terms.

We also believe that all we do can be reproduced. It is not one pastor who can disciple. That is one of our advantages. Our movement is not built upon super star pastors. Most super pastors are very difficult to reproduce. They are a blessing, but who can walk in their shoes? But a common man, who has to labor to produce sermons, who doesn't have all the answers, but must seek God and others for help, can be reproduced. Also we believe any church can reproduce churches and we practice that. All of our churches have not planted churches and some may never plant. But, our vision is that everything we do can be reproduced. Including the Fellowship. If everything we do moves back to the center. In other words, if everything builds a man, a local church or a fellowship we are missing the vision. The power of what happened in the first Praise Chapel in Maywood, California was a fellowship began to grow. By multiplied disciples, sending out pioneer churches and working together we became a fellowship of churches and ministries.

The strength of a movement

It is strong relationships that sustained a move of God over time. There is a bond that comes out of friendship and relationship. Without that bond of relationship in any leadership it will not be sustained and the vision imparted. It was this kind of connected friendships that Paul valued; "Because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now" (Philippians 1:5 NLT).

Jesus never sent people out to work alone. That is a type of the church. He does not expect the church to work alone. The Apostles philosophy was they always went out as a team. People who are willing to merge their gifts with the gifts of others in the Body of Christ to properly establish the Kingdom.

We are not the same. Churches are different. Style is different. Our visions vary. You are not me and I'm not you. The Holy Spirit's central job is to convincing us of our need for a Savior, connect us with the Father by drawing us to Christ. The Father is the only one who can make us one. Only the Father can enable us to love each other, sacrifice for each other and be committed to each other. "That they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me and I in You: that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent me" (John 17:21 NKJ).

Why do so many not want to connect? Because it cost something. “After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God’s message with boldness. All the believers were of one heart and mind, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had” (Acts 4:31-32 NLT). “As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this . . . And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:15 & 19 NLT). Our fruitfulness and needs being supplied is in relationship to our connecting with others in ministry.

I was in a Praise Chapel Harvesters Homecoming Leaders meeting with men and women I am connected to when I felt the Holy Spirit speak into my heart and say, “I have provide enough resources, workers and means to reach the world in every generation.” God did not give us a command to go into the world and then leave us with no means to accomplish it. I believe the problem is the body of Christ is kept so disconnected and fragmented that the available resources are not utilized to the best extent.

Our Heritage

For the past 30 years Praise Chapel has been involved in discipleship and church planting. We have been blessed to see this ministry grow from one inner-city church in Maywood, California into a fellowship of churches and ministries worldwide. This book has come out of a heart searching through these years of ministry with an eye to understand how the Holy Spirit has guided our activities to see this pioneer ministry developed.

For two days about 25 leaders of Praise Chapel Fellowship met together with Dr. John Holland to search through our heritage seeking to discover what has been our main core values. We plastered the walls with white paper and began listing all the activities that have repeated themselves over and over again throughout the years. Then we put them into categories under headings. What emerged is what I am writing about in this book: The 6 drivers of Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship International.

Heritage is the spiritual, emotional or social legacy that is passed to you. You can visit church organizations or denominations and they all have their heritage. We do need to remember our heritage, especially our spiritual heritage. Every movement that has passed from one generation to another has a strong heritage and traditions. But, so many move on into the ritual mode and lose what their heritage and traditions are really all about.

Tradition is the practice of handing down stories, beliefs, and customs from one generation to another. This is to establish and reinforce identity. Traditions are holidays like Christmas or birthdays. In the United States we celebrate the 4th of July (independence day). Every tribe, culture, religion and family has various types of traditions. It may be grandma’s recipe for that

special meal or the family get-to-gather during a holiday. It is weddings, anniversaries, and birthdays. Our heritage becomes traditions as we establish habits to help pass down our heritage or our core values to succeeding generations. From here the path divides into two roads one is rituals the other is trends.

A ritual is a ceremonial observance of set forms or rites. “The leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day...But the Lord replied, ‘You hypocrite! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from their stalls on the Sabbath and lead them out for water?’” (Luke 13:12-17 NLT). When Jesus healed a person on the Jewish Sabbath day it went against the ritual of the religious people. Ritual is where most religions and churches get stuck. They began in a spiritual outpouring where prayer, evangelism, discipleship and various other aspects of revival are renewed. The heritage then becomes traditions. This may be the services time, style of music, manner of speaking or praying, times of prayer and so many other activities. Let me give you an example. During the spiritual outpouring someone feels inspired to pray at a certain time of the day. After a while others join in. This becomes a habit then as years pass this becomes a tradition. Often it is not long until this spirit inspired prayer time becomes a ritual. It becomes a rule or an ordinance and an attitude develop, “This is the time and way we have always prayed.” If your not praying at that time, in the same way you are breaking the ritual. The same spirit that we see in Luke 13 appears today. It doesn’t seem to matter if all joy, life and power have gone out of the prayer. If the once alive and active and well attended prayer time has dwindled to a faithful few. It has become their sacred ritual. It is so common to see rituals.

Trends are the other path and apparently the most difficult for people to deal with. Trends break the pattern. There seems to be a natural flow to move from heritage to traditions and on into rituals especially in the spiritual realm. Trends shake this up. Trends can be described as season of change, times of opportunity or revival. Paul wrote, “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons” (Acts 20:18 KJV). “Now concerning the times and the seasons, you do not need to have anything written to you” (1 Thessalonians 5:1 NRSV). Here we come to two important roads in the life flow of any movement. One leads to death and the other leads to life.

Heritage + tradition + rituals = death

Heritage + tradition + trends = life

The only church or movement that can afford to be indifferent to trends is a church that is not on a mission. To abandon our past is to forget what we know. The church builds on tradition - it doesn’t live on tradition. We graft new ministries onto old roots. There are certain things in our heritage, which make us uniquely who we are. Tradition is important, but it’s not God! At most it is a route to God. “A triple-braided cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT). The braid of our cord is heritage. Memory becomes one of our most prized possessions. Our past gives us

security in the present and hope for the future. Heritage is something to hold on to when life is tossing us around. To prepare for our future it is important for us to understand where we came from. Yesterday shapes who we are today and what we do today shapes who we will be tomorrow.

I want to renew your sense of appreciation for your spiritual heritage. Like driving a car we need to check the rearview mirror now and then but remember, the rearview mirror is there only for us to glance at, not to stare at. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). Our past is not hoped for. Faith is for tomorrow. Paul said, “I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people” (Ephesians 1:18 NLT).

I use the word “drivers” rather than other words or phrases like “core values” or “foundational beliefs” because drivers can move us down the road toward trends rather than traditions. As we move along in time we are seeing third and fourth generation workers sent out to pioneer new churches around the world. With the ever-changing global scene we are facing new frontiers in church multiplication, fellowship and world evangelism. We diffidently cannot move toward rituals! We also cannot move away from “who we are” our spiritual heritage and distinctive God has graciously allotted to us. So while being adaptable to the spiritual climate of the “seasons of life” Paul spoke of, we value our heritage and celebrate our traditions.

Our six drivers are the key to this. We can adapt these to the seasons, cultures and trends without the danger of losing our spiritual footing that ultimately leads to getting off course of our calling and heritage. If we will set at the wheel of our ministry and drive along this path we will see continued fruitfulness and by the grace of God fulfill His purpose for us in our generation while passing on a heritage that can also guide the next generation of Praise Chapel pioneers.

Structuring a global movement

Structure determines our destiny. How we structure ourselves will determine our entire future. It will determine if the spirit of God will continue to give revival and move in our behalf. Structure will have eternal ramifications.

If the early church has known that they were establishing an institution that was going to last for centuries they would have organized it to death. But because they thought they were making temporary provisions for a year or so they left it free to live. You can search the New Testament in vain for a careful fixed structure of church government. It is not there. Structure was only put in place to service a need. Structure is to facilitate the function of a community. If that community is committed to a radical obedience in faith to its risen Lord then structures have a constant need for restructuring.

As I grew up my dad was involved in independent ministry. We traveled doing gospel meetings in large tents also pioneering and pastoring churches. My brother and I began traveling as evangelist when I was 18 and he was 21. We went to just about anywhere we were invited. So I have experienced the bureaucracy of organization and the danger of independence. I've seen the abuse that can come to a local congregation where there is no check and balance through some kind of committed relationship to other congregations of like faith. I've seen where the independent pastor was the only authority of the local church and had power to abuse the doctrine, people and finances.

The abuses we have witnessed from some electronic ministries expound the fact that independence without some check and balance is very dangerous and is not the true biblical structure. These same types of things can and do happen in local congregations that have no check and balance through some type of relationship. I know that organization in itself does not stop abuse, error in doctrine or sins in the church. But it does provide a method of discipline, if nothing more than excommunication.

I understand why men with vision many times have difficulty working within the bureaucracy of organizations. Nothing can bind the vision of a man of God like a organized congregation with it's carnal elected board or church counsel which is usually made up of men and woman who want to flaunt some authority and the church is a good place to do it. They want to control the pastor, budget, and the vision of the church. If a man of God is satisfied being an "employee" of the "Laodecian" church, hired and fired at the whim of the congregation or some organizational supervisor, then he can function within the traditional organizational hierarchy structure. But, if a man of God has vision and wants to contend for revival allowing the Holy Spirit to be the guide of the local church being free to move in the direction God leads on the local scene and in world evangelism then he will have a difficult time functioning within the framework of much of today's religious structure. I recognize there needs to be some form of structure but please without the bureaucracy and inadequacy of the antiquated, obsolete religious structures that are still hanging around and trying to survive in today's world.

We find very little structure in the New Testament. We know they had structure. Every movement throughout the ages has had structure. But, that is just it. Every generation has its own structure that is formed out of the need, the culture and the time. Structure forms around ministry. Wine fills the wineskins.

We are not bound to reproduce the institutional forms (7 deacons, a Widow's List, and so forth) of the early church. We have freedom to work out a structure, which fits current ministry. The early church is a model for us. The Bible says, "They delivered them the decrees to keep" (Acts 15:36-16:5). It may sound like these messengers went out of Jerusalem laden with a heavy load of by-laws and articles of incorporation filled with regulations to put the deacons in their place with detailed rules on who can plant a church and who can't. "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these requirements: You must abstain from

eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or eating the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28-29 NLT).

The Holy Spirit said these are the simple things that are necessary. This is a profound principle for setting structure in order. This is going to determine the entire future of the New Testament church, whether the world is evangelized or it stops in Jerusalem. This is going to determine the life flow of the congregation. Throughout the book of Acts and the entire New Testament we see an emphasis on functional ministry as opposed to an institutional ministry. The problem of the church of Jesus Christ is not doctrine. The problem is with life flow.

In the Old Testament the people of God rebelled and serpents began to bite and kill them. They cried out and God moved and brought deliverance. Moses put a brass serpent upon a pole, as the people looked upon it multitudes were healed and saved from death and delivered from the curse of the serpents bite. It was not long until this very instrument of deliverance was deified and finally it was called Nehushtan or the divining serpent. They began to worship it. It became an instrument of witchcraft (Numbers 21, 2 Kings 18:4).

This is the history of man's mind but God does not want that to happen. The twelve apostles and the churches in Jerusalem was structured. It could not move and would not move with God's purpose, which was the evangelization of nations. In Acts 7 and 8, God reached in and touched the circumstances. Persecution comes with Stephen being stoned to death. To escape the church began to scatter through the known world. Some ended up in the city of Antioch and they continued to witness about Jesus Christ and preach the gospel. As this ministry was flowing, the church immediately recognized God was at work and the structure of the church began to flow with it. As they did the church makes tremendous impact throughout the known world. This was probably the single most important factor that saved the ongoing ministry and enlargement of the church.

The objective of any structure is to be able to minister to people's needs. Structure is not put in place to propagate an institution. There is no place in the New Testament where God left us instructions to propagate an institution. We only have what God is doing right now. When we try to institutionalize revival, to structure and keep it through some kind of institutional procedure that act will begin to kill the thing that we are trying to save. You can't smother life. Life needs freedom to grow.

Very little is said about the structure of government because the focus is on specific individuals who functioned charismatically. It was not until the people lost this that they began to formulate systems of church government. Government is not a system but a gift. In order to fulfill its purpose a group of people establishes structure. Every group must have an operational process, norms and values all organizational characteristics in order to function. Even the family has some type of a building to live in, schedules for sleeping, eating, bathing that are general accepted by

the other family members. There is a division of labor where individual family members carry out certain functions for the good of the whole.

Praise Chapel is a “birth” movement. Our churches are birthed out of mother churches. Our structure is relational the same as a family, it involves nurture, release, and relationship. Janet and I have two children, Paul and Carrie. There is nothing in life that has brought us more joy than to be apart of these two lives. Experiencing the seasons of their lives from birth, childhood, teens and young adult has been life’s greatest trip. Now they are both parents experiencing the same joys Janet and I have through the years. Is our relationship over? No. It only becomes more rewarding with each transition. If Janet and I had locked ourselves into the mode that Paul and Carrie are our little children and continued to treat them like children our relationship would be strained. But we are enjoying the “seasons of life,” it’s a trip being papa and mimi. Our relationships has transitioned we have flowed with the trends of life. Some things have changed and not all the changes have been easy. Our family no longer comes together during all the holidays; those traditions have had to adjust. There are added relationships with their spouses and in-laws. They also need to develop their own traditions with their children just as Janet and I did with them. Like the oldie song, “The beat goes on.” So the Neville’s get together less these days, it is a big task to get everyone’s schedule together for a family gathering but when we do – it’s a wonderful occasion.

We have coined the phrase, “**A Family of Fellowships**” to describe our Praise Chapel Fellowship structure. I will cover this more when we get to the fifth driver. If you can view our structure in the light of a healthy family that continues to reproduce and multiply families you will see how we can “fill the earth” the same way the human race has multiplied through families. You will see that at the end of the day structure is not the issue – but relationship is. I will choose relationship over structure every time. It is Janet’s and my relationship with Paul and Carrie and their families that matter. Those relationships are based upon love not structure. We don’t have “Neville Incorporated” but we do have a lifetime relationship of love and devotion that means more than life itself. I believe this is what is meant when Paul wrote, “What can separate us from the love of God...” nothing! At the end of the day I love and value “you” more than any structure or organization man can conceive. I pray that Praise Chapel Fellowship will always be a family. Families are not perfect but they are able to weather the storms of life because they are family.

I pass on to you that which the Lord has given to us, these six drivers of Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship. Much like the early church Apostle I have not giving you a heavy revelation or binding structure but drivers that can continue to guide Praise Chapel Fellowship toward fulfilling purpose for which God has connected us in fellowship.

The First Driver: God is seeking for someone.

“I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one” (Ezekiel 22:30 NLT).

I personally believe that if Jesus were to stand in the midst of a crowd of believers today he would say much the same things He did to His disciples, “The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields” (Matthew 9:37 NLT). This tells me that there are not enough someones responding.

Someone must be challenged

“If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine” (Matthew 10:38 NLT). “Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. ‘You lack only one thing,’ he told him. ‘Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me’” (Mark 10:21 NLT). Jesus did not hesitate to challenge would-be disciples. He challenged Peter when he said to him, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Jesus challenged Matthew right at his place of work. He challenged the rich young ruler. Saul was challenged on the way to Damascus, “He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?’” (Acts 9:4).

Fear is what hinders leaders from challenge people to sacrifice and take up their cross and follow Jesus to the ends of the earth. They are afraid that if someone leaves everything to pioneer a church or goes to the mission field they may fail. What if they don’t make it? What if they end up bitter, back at the sending church?

We have had some experiences like that. But overwhelmingly we have experienced “much fruit” when we challenge people to fulfill their calling. Personally, I believe there is an eternal reward for anyone who gives-it-up for Jesus. “And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will have eternal life” (Matthew 19:29 NLT).

Our Heritage involves challenging people to give their lives for the work of God. Most pastors in Praise Chapel would never have even thought about going into the ministry if they had not received a clear challenge to go.

The Holy Spirit chooses someone

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said . . .” (Acts 13:2 NKJ). The choice of someone for ministry is vital to the life of a church or movement. Only the Holy Spirit

is qualified to select. We do not pick people to minister. Our call is to help them discover, develop and deplore their spiritual giftings and callings. We believe in gift-based ministry. The Holy Spirit does the picking. I have had couples say to me, “you sent us to this city.” I will always correct that statement. I have never sent anyone out to a city. I have only been an instrument of God to help people recognize their calling and giftings. I have recognized opportunity in cities or churches and presented the opportunity to go if they felt that the Holy Spirit had called them.

“They were assigned without regard to age or training, for it was all decided by means of sacred lots” (1 Chronicles 26:13 NLT). This Scripture is giving instruction about the setting of the Old Testament Tabernacle in order. God said to select men without regard to age or training but that selection would be decided by means of sacred lots. I don’t know exactly what selecting by “sacred lots” fully means or how they did it, but the real issue is that they were seeking for God’s selection. God’s selection was not according to age or training.

If we use the same process which the world uses to select those qualified to minister, we will miss many of whom God really has called. Many leadership books today limit who can be productive in the ministry. One writer said that a pastor needs to be a “10”, and needs leadership skills we can recognize. I wonder who judges? Would Jeremiah pass the modern test? What about Isaiah who ran naked for 3 years? “The LORD told Isaiah, ‘Take off all your clothes, including your sandals.’ Isaiah did as he was told and walked around naked and barefoot” (Isaiah 20:2NLT). I wonder if Hosea and his prostitute wife would be picked for ministry today? What about Paul, who had killed Christians or Peter with his temper? In the Old Testament the Prophets were often farmers called to service from between the handles of the plow. Some were simple gatherers of fruit, others kings attendants.

Someones come from among us

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2 NKJ). Out of this understanding the Holy Spirit helps us to discover and release ministry. It is not a human process. People will ask us, “Where do you get your preachers.” We say, “From among us.” Our pastors, evangelist, missionaries and other ministries come from within our congregations. We don’t go searching from church to church or school to school for someone. We get them saved. It is as simple as that. Our future leaders are in our congregations or they will be soon. Perhaps at the next outreach we will get another man or woman of God.

Someones are result of radical release

“My dear friends, remember what you were when God chose you. The people of this world didn’t think that many of you were wise” (1 Corinthians 1:26 CEV). When I was 18 I registered for the selective service, America’s registration of men who could be drafted into the military.

The Vietnam War was going on and they were drafting young men as fast as they could. At the time of this writing there is no major war and consequently no draft. The military can be much more selective on who they take in.

The problem with the church is that we think there is no war, no threat, so we can take our sweet time and be very selective on who is released into the ministry, especially who will pioneer churches. We want only those we feel will be successful. The Number “10.” The one with clear leadership qualities. What we really need is to get on a war footing. It’s time to draft. Radical release is what Praise Chapel is all about. We send out couples to pioneer that others would probably not send out. Radical release is our heritage. Believing in men and women others would not believe. Investing in those the world says won’t make it. We have been doing that for 25 years and I am proud of every one of them. “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2 NKJV).

Here is what happens too often. A congregation will release someone and they may not be as successful as expected. So it’s decided that they need more training or they we need to be more selective on whom to send. So they hold back, raise the standard of requirements for leadership ministry and often quit sending. A friend of mine Dan Hardway said, “Most groups if they send 10 out and 7 fail and 3 make it, they will say we need to train better and hold back then the ration of success will be higher. Praise Chapel says, ‘we need to send 20 out so 6 can make it.’”

There are some areas that are not easy to take in any war. When the allied forces decided to go after Hitler and take Europe back during World War II they cost was high. The invasion of Normandy will forever be remembered. One in 9000 soldiers lost their lives that day. Did the Allied commanders withdraw? Did they say, “We didn’t train them good enough...” No! They were at war. They had to take the territory or lose the war. If the church is going to send our troupes to the ends of the earth is it a risk? Yes! Does it cost? Yes! Do we have casualties? Yes! Do we stop sending? No! Do we become so selective that only a few can ever go? No! “So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields” (Matthew 9:38 NLT).

Cities must be taken for Christ. Nations are being weighed in the scales. There is someone God has for that city, that country. We believe those someones are in the church. Perhaps “you” are that person.

The Second Driver: We are Pentecostal

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” Acts 1:8 (NKJV).

We believe in a personal baptism in the Holy Spirit that empowers us to do the work of ministry. That work is taking the good news into all the world. Our worship, enthusiasm, and prayer in the Spirit reflect that we have a Pentecostal heritage. Our fruitfulness is a result of this empowering of His Spirit.

The Pentecost movement is littered with traditions and rituals just as any denomination. We think Pentecost equates to a style, a method, or emotion. Pentecostal has nothing to do with style of speaking or preaching. Pentecost is not culture or personal preference. One group may like everything loud and fast including their preaching another may prefer soft and slow. One will accuse the other of being dead because they don't shout enough and visa a versa. The truth is some of us eat fast some eat slowly. Some are extremely emotional some are not. Preferences of worship style or preaching methods has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, He is comfortable in any setting that seeks Him and accepts Him. People may be dancing to Indian worship music in Madras, India or with the African drums in Kenya. The preacher may be running down the aisle and shouting as he preaches or sitting on a stool calmly speaking. It is time to separate Pentecost from personal or historical style and culture.

Holy Spirit and Fire

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11 NKJ).

This is the first statement we read about being baptized with Holy Ghost. It includes fire. A lot of people seem to have the baptism but not the fire. You might be saying, "I want the Holy Spirit but not the fire!" He is not speaking about a controlled fire for warming a few cold saints, but a consuming fire. “For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29 NLT).

The real issue is control. We want to control the Holy Spirit while the Holy Spirit wants to control us. When someone is on fire with this "consuming fire" many will call that person a fanatic. If someone makes a little noise or shouts in church someone will say, "Oh we must be reverent." The fact is people want to control the fire. Turn it up when we want and turn it down when we want. We say we want freedom in the Holy Ghost but to get "drunk on this new wine" is another story. Twice in the book of Acts Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:8 gives us the second account, "Then Peter, (because he was) filled with [and controlled by] the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and members of the council. . . ." (AMP).

We are Spirit driven and Spirit led

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. - If by the (Holy) Spirit we have our life (in God), let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25 AMP). “That night Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia in northern Greece, pleading with him, ‘Come over here and help us’” (Acts 16:9 NLT). “Now glory be to God! By

his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope" (Ephesians 3:20 NLT).

The Holy Spirit of God is now constantly working in us, in the interests of Jesus. God is able to give us greater Holy Spirit power in prayer, and so use us more and more in His service. Only in proportion as we allow the Holy Spirit power we possess to constantly control us in thought, word, and deed in the interests of Christ, not selfish interests. God will only "do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think," when we are letting this power of the Holy Spirit control us constantly and continually.

The Nature of the Holy Spirit

The first thought picture that enters the mind of most people when you say the nature of the Holy Spirit is that of a dove. This is because we all know the story where John the Baptist was baptizing Jesus and as He came up out of the water the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove landed on his shoulder and a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." So we assume the nature of the Holy Spirit is that of a dove, especially in the area of gentleness.

The Dove is one aspect of the nature of the Holy Spirit. The idea Holy Spirit will always be manifested in a soft, dove way is not a complete picture, and at most it is only a part truth. The dove is not to show the gentleness of the Holy Spirit but more so to show that the Holy Spirit of God is easily grieved.

The Holy Spirit is God, so to understand the nature of the Holy Spirit we must look at the nature of God in the Old Testament and the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was gentle but that was only a portion of his nature. When writing to the Corinthians Paul said. "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you . . ." (2 Corinthians 10:1). We also know that one of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit is, "gentleness." So I am not saying that the Holy Spirit is not gentle or that the dove is not a type of the Holy Spirit. I want to open your thinking up to see that gentleness and the dove is not the full picture and does not give us a true understanding of Him or His nature.

One of the most important statements I have ever come to understand is, "We become like the god(s) we serve." A pastor from Madras, India told a story about a man in India his preacher father was witnessing to. The Hindu man said, "I have four wives." The preacher asked, "Why do you a poor man have so many wives". He answered, "my god has many wives so why can not I have four". You see, we become like the god (God, in our case, we don't capitalize false god) we worship.

It is very important that the church understands the nature of God, because we become like the God we worship. If the church only views the Holy Spirit in the form and nature of a dove then

we will take on that nature. A soft, gentle, defenseless nature. Many Christians have taken on this nature and feel this represents a Spirit filled Christian. This shows up in their prayers, type of worship, evangelism and so forth. The overall spirit of the church takes on a passive nature.

As we look throughout the Bible and especially into the book of Acts we do not see the Church of Jesus Christ in that way. To understand what I am talking about let's look at what happened to the people in the book of Acts as they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Peter of course gives us the first picture. Now remember a few weeks before he denied Jesus three times, he was filled with fear and timidity. Now, he has received this Baptism of the Holy Spirit, "Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.'" What has happened to Peter? Standing before this mob of people who had recently crucified Jesus was not a dove like characteristic. It was an act of boldness, power and raw courage. Peter now has a power, authority, and boldness he never had before. Here we begin to see the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Later in Acts as Peter and John were brought before the religious Sanhedrin council, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Yes, they had been with Jesus but there was more to it than that. They were with Jesus for three and a half years and did not have this "boldness." This "boldness" came from the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. God's nature of boldness, authority, dominion and power came into their lives and was manifested through them here in boldness. And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the Word of God with freedom and boldness and courage" (Acts 4:31 AMP). Strength, power, courage, boldness are all attributes of the personality of the Holy Spirit. This understanding of the Holy Spirit has been a driver in Praise Chapel Fellowship.

People who are weak become strong,
People who live in fear begin to walk in faith,
People who are timid become bold,
The passive become aggressive.

The Bible reveals to us the nature of our God, so we can become like the God we worship. Peter and John had become like Jesus to such an extent that the religious elders had to recognize and say, "They have been with Jesus." Oh that the world would say that about church leaders today, "There is something about them, they have been with the God of the Bible."

Moses was speaking to the Children of Israel about going in to take the Promised Land. He told them these nations are greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. He said the people are strong and tall. "But the LORD your God will cross over ahead of you like a devouring fire to destroy them. He will subdue them so that you will quickly conquer them and drive them out, just as the LORD has promised" Deuteronomy 9:3 (NLT). Here we see the

actions of God toward His people, and on behalf of His people. He moves as a consuming fire. He reveals himself as an irresistible fire. This is the God I want to go before me into my future. This is the Holy Spirit of God I want as I go fight the devil.

Many people want to make God what they want Him to be. They want to design and tailor the Holy Spirit to fit-in to the present day religious systems. To be acceptable. It all comes back to control. Do we control the Holy Spirit or does the Holy Spirit control us. Can you turn the fire up or down by a knob on your spiritual oven. What do we want, a God who will fit into our little camp-oven, our little stove. Or a God Who is a Consuming Fire.

The Third Driver: Radical Evangelism

“With my authority, take this message of repentance to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me.’” (Luke 24:47 NLT). “This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15 NLT).

What you believe about evangelism will affect all your vision. God’s purpose in the earth is redemption. This is the core value of our heritage. Church planting and the fellowship of churches and ministries that we are apart of is the fruit of radical evangelism.

Jesus’ passion was Evangelism

“They said, ‘Everyone is asking for you.’ But he replied, ‘We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too, because that is why I came’” (Mark 1:37-38). Everything Jesus did and said was motivated by this consuming passion. To his disciples it was definite command. Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be do.

Our Evangelism Style: Go out and get them

“Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled’” (Luke 14:23 KJV). I like the Contemporary English Version of Luke 14:23, “His master then told him, ‘Go out along the back roads and fence rows and make people come in, so that my house will be full’”.

Our Converts are runners. My good friend Evangelist Larry Reed always used the phrase, “The Hound Dog of heaven” when he referred to the call to evangelism. The picture is the Hound Dogs chasing after a run-a-way convict. Our heritage is street preaching, dramas, park outreaches, in other words – aggressive evangelism.

We are either going to be city builders or earth fillers.

“God blessed them and told them, ‘Multiply and fill earth’”(Genesis 1:28). Cain had other ideas and founded a city and named it Enoch. Lot’s heart was upon the city of Sodom, but Abraham journeyed throughout the land of Canaan. Too many are like Lot who spend their lives building “my” thing. In the end what do they have left? Lot and two immoral daughters pulled out of the city by the Angels. The real need is for somebody to go. I have used this scripture already but I want to repeat is again, “The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields” (_____).

Today churches are competing to see who has the best facilities, children’s programs, small groups and on it goes. The same people go from church to church to be a part of the best one for their kids and themselves. One area where there is very little competition is evangelism. How many churches do you see doing major outreaches in the parks, streets, or door to door? Putting on outreach dramas or evangelistic music concerts? When you get someone saved at an outreach, they don’t care if your church is in a storefront building, a warehouse or a temple. They don’t know if you have the worst or the best worship team. They just got saved. Hallelujah!

Evangelism is the answer to growing a church. Quit trying to compete in the same arena with all the rest of the churches. Go to the fields for they are ripe unto harvest.

The Fourth Driver: Discipleship

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship is Jesus’ method. “Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matthew 4:19 NKJ).

The Call to Discipleship

“Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him” (Matthew 4:19-20 NKJ). There is no stronger call in the NT, from Christ than this. Jesus came to the disciples and said, “Come, follow me.” Come with me, walk with me, and delight in me. Matthew tells us, “He ordained twelve that they should be with Him.” Follow me is a tremendous term. The Greek word that is used for “followers and follow” is the word “mimetes” it means to “to imitate.” You and I are not good at taking orders but we are good at imitating others.

Here is where the church so often fails.

Discipleship is the Lord’s way to reach the World. To change the world. To build the church and to populate heaven. Discipleship is far more profound than any kind of book you can read. It is more than a system. Discipleship is supernatural. A spiritual work of God in the heart of men and

women. It involves transformation, formation and spiritual training. Discipleship is the key to multiplying ministry and helping people fulfill their personal God given destiny. This all flows out of a true understanding of discipleship. It is difficult to move into a place in Christ where you grow, develop and fulfill your purpose in Christ without being a disciple.

“Then Jesus said to the disciples, ‘If any of you wants to be my follower (disciple), you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life. And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?’” (Matthew 16:24-26 NLT).

What does it mean to be a disciple?

A Disciple is a Serious Follower of Jesus Christ. How serious? “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me’” (Matthew 16:24 KJV). Follow me means to imitate me, be like me. This was not a lose term. The call to follow me is used 77 times in the Gospels.

Discipleship is a commitment.

“Jesus told him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me’” (Matthew 19:21). Elijah told Elisha, “you must follow me if you are to have a double portion.”

Discipleship is surrender to the will of God.

“The truth is, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked and go wherever you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will direct you and take you where you don’t want to go” (John 21:18NLT). Jesus was speaking to Peter about the direction his life was going to go as he surrendered to God’s will. He is saying to Peter that the will of God is not necessarily what you want to do. This is very difficult for people to receive today. They want the will of God to be all blessing, prosperity and God blessing what I want to do. The true will of God will cut across your personal will at some point in your life as a disciple. If it hasn’t yet, just continue the discipleship journey and it will.

Discipleship is Exemplification

“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you” (John 13:15 NLT). “Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity” (John 13:15 NLT). “You received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the Lord. As a result, you yourselves became an example to all the Christians in Greece. And now the word of the Lord

is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Greece, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 NLT). We believe that truth is more caught than taught. We impart what we are. You cannot disciple people without being the example for them to follow. The greatest need in the church is for people to be the right examples so others coming in can follow.

Discipleship is the development of people with whom you relate, so they can make decisions related to their life with God.

"When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, 'What can I do for you before I am taken away?' And Elisha replied, 'Please let me become your rightful successor'" (2 Kings 2:9 NLT). Discipleship is not telling people what to do. It is letting them settle that with God.

What is the process of Discipleship?

Discipleship can only come out of a person who genuinely wants to see another fulfill his or her own destiny. It begins in the heart of the discipler. Discipleship transpires in a proper environment. There must be in the church the heart and opportunity for the disciple to develop and grow through ministry opportunities.

Discipleship is a commitment to impartation.

Paul was referring to this when he wrote to the Roman Christians, "I long to visit you so I can share a spiritual blessing with you that will help you to grow strong in the Lord" (Romans 1:11 NLT). He knew the value of letters but he also understood the need to be with them so he could impart to them blessings. This is the law of impartation. "So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8 NKJ).

"And the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. He took some of the Spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon the seventy leaders. They prophesied as the Spirit rested upon them, but that was the only time this happened"(Numbers 11:25 NLT). You couldn't see it but you could examine its effects. The process of impartation we do not understand because it is a sovereign work of God. The anointing that was upon Moses was imparted unto seventy elders, including Eldad and Medad who were not present with them. Elisha received a double portion of the spirit, which was upon Elijah. We do not understand, we simply know that it happened. We accept it as the word of God.

In the Kingdom of God, as we live for God and are filled with the Holy Spirit we impart that to others. Whatever you are as a Christian you are imparting to others.

Moving toward destiny in God.

Joseph brought two sons Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob for a blessing. Jacob was old and his eyesight had gone but by the spirit he could discern between the boys, Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph asked his father to put a blessing upon them. The eldest would be the one to receive the right hand and the superior blessing. The spirit of God was in the old man giving him the power to confer grace and to transmit spiritual destiny. As he laid his hands on the boys he crossed them putting his right hand on the youngest. Joseph corrected his father but Jacob said, “I know it my son.” The blessing then was transferred to the youngest son.

This is a spiritual principle of the Kingdom of God. The essence secret of discipleship lies in this. Discipleship is more than simply reading a book, attending church, or learning methodologies. It is a mystery of God and it involves spiritual impartation. Paul is talking about this mystery of the Kingdom that occurs when you and I impart what we are.

The secret of making disciples.

“And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:22 NKJ.) This is not a method, a system or an empty ritual but a conferring spiritual grace.

“And of the angels He says: ‘Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire’” (Hebrews 1:7 NKJ). They were to start a fire that would spread all over the world. Fires get out of control. One bush to another. The spirit of discipleship is imparted from heart to heart. You don’t spread a disease you don’t have. Life begets life. A critical factor in disciples is the mysterious power of a man to pass vision and purpose by the will of God to another man. The key to discipleship is not found in books or manuals, but in the give and take of men’s lives. Impartation calls for the personal touch, honesty, and openness.

There is a personal dimension of discipleship.

“Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, ‘Lord, who among us will betray you?’ Peter asked Jesus, ‘What about him, Lord?’ Jesus replied, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You follow me’” (John 21:20-22). In other words, it is none of your business what I do with him. I work with each individual personally. You follow me! If more disciples would take this to heart they would not be comparing themselves with other disciples and would be busy about the Lord’s business in their own life.

The Blessing of Discipleship

“Then Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak and returned to the bank of the Jordan River. He struck the water with the cloak and cried out, ‘Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ Then the river divided, and Elisha went across” (2 Kings 2:13-14 NLT). “As a result of the apostles’ work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter’s shadow might fall across some of them as he went by” (Acts 5:15 NLT). Destiny and purpose was released in these men as they followed and lived the lifestyle of discipleship.

Discipleship is a Sacred Heritage.

“You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass it on” (2 Timothy 2:2 NLT). Timothy received a great heritage from Paul. His challenge was to embrace that heritage and to pass it on. If more disciples would simply take the sacred heritage they have received in a move of God and pass that on in the same spirit as they received it there would be generations of fruitfulness passed on in the Kingdom.

There must be a willingness to be discipled by another person. Elisha, Joshua, the disciples of Christ, Timothy are all examples of this. They were willing to follow, imitate, and to receive impartation. If you really want to be discipled you need the same attitude of heart.

Driver number five: The Local church

Jesus ordained the Church. He said, "I will build my church..." 115 times the church is mentioned in the New Testament mostly speaking of the local assembly. The church is a Divine creation. God's unique possession. It is referred to as the church of God, the household of God, and the habitation of God. The New Testament is about Jesus, salvation, and the establishing of His church. The Book of Acts is a story of planting local churches.

The Local Church

God’s purpose is carried out through the local church. “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1 NKJ). Paul sends greeting to the church that meets in the home of Priscilla & Aquila, “Please give my greetings to the church that meets in their home” (Romans 16:5 NKJ). “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers” (Acts 13:1 NKJ). To make anything real make it local. The book of Acts is about local churches and the spiritual explosion of similar local churches from town to town and nation to nation. All that God is doing in this dispensation rests on understanding that God’s purpose on the earth is the local church. Thank God for every ministry that is preaching the gospel, helping the needy or doing godly deeds. In no way is this statement to belittle their labors of love.

The Assembled Church

“Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12 KJV). “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23 KJV). We are not the church until we are assembled. You are not the church alone in your house listening to an audiotape or watching a program on TV or video. God calls His people out of the world and together into His church. So if you are not a part of a local church you need to seek God’s direction and find the local church you are to be serving in.

The dignity of the local church

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25-26 NRS). God has invested incredible dignity upon the local church. Jesus said, “Where two or more gather, I am in the midst” and “I give you the keys to the Kingdom.”

Truth is made light through the church. “So that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11 NRS). When we convey upon the local church the dignity that belongs to it. That church begins to rise and find that dignity and releases gifts within the congregation. “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15 NKJ).

The Supernatural Church

“And then he told them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe’” (Mark 16:15-18 NLT). If we don't contend to see God move then we will merely lapse into the long line of dead denominations who have form without reality. At a real church gathering Jesus said, "I am in the midst." If He is in our midst then something is happening.

The Indigenous Local Church

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’” (Genesis 1:11 NKJ). Everything God created has life in it’s self. That is basically what indigenous means.

The local church is self-propagating: The seed has the ability to grow and to propagate the good news. “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 NKJ).

In the soil of the local church as it grows and matures, it rises up and releases leadership. Paul told Titus, “I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you” (Titus 1:5 NLT). Where was Titus to find these elders? Within each local church. “Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business” (Acts 6:3 NLT).

The local church is to be self-governing: This does not mean independent, but able to govern and to solve its problems.

The local church is to be self-supporting: From within generates that which causes all the programs God places within your hands to find fulfillment.

“Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food” (Matthew 10:9-10 NKJV). All that Jesus has planned and was going to do in world evangelism depended upon the disciples learning the lesson He is giving here. That the church was to support itself, sustain itself, propagate and govern or discipline itself. This is the beauty of the local church. In this life flow of the indigenous church it can live and grow and multiply in any culture or economic environment. The church could go into any culture and survive and reproduce itself. The truth given by our Lord here is critical to all God will do in the earth.

The local church must become self-supporting. In every economic situation converts must be taught the full truths of God’s word and this includes tithing and giving. When a church is dependent upon financial support from outside of itself for an extended period of time it will never reach the level of reproduction that results in church multiplication and world evangelism.

The Gospel we preach will support itself. Every church must be self-supporting and if they preach the true gospel they will be. When this truth is violated the Gospel is hindered. This is why the devil fights giving and promotes the idea especially in a poor country of letting someone else who has more money support the church.

Jesus said, "The workman is worthy of his hire." Those who preach the Gospel are to be supported by the Gospel. “Then Jesus asked them, ‘When I sent you out to preach the Good News and you did not have money, a traveler’s bag, or extra clothing, did you lack anything?’ ‘No,’ they replied. ‘But now,’ he said, ‘take your money and a traveler’s bag. And if you don’t have a sword, sell your clothes and buy one! For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled: ‘He was counted among those who were rebels.’ ‘Yes, everything written about me by the prophets will come true’” (Luke 22:35-37 NLT). Their training is almost complete. Jesus is preparing to send them out into the harvest field. So he asked then, “When I sent you without purse bag or sandals did you lack anything?” “Now if you have a purse take it and also a bag...” They had learned the lesson. Now they were to go fully equipped.

A correct valuation of ministry

“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only” (Philippians 4:15 NKJV). Paul is commending the Philippians because they valued the ministry and gave to the support of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is telling the Philippians that other churches lacked this correct value of the ministry.

”And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NKJV). “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.’” (1 Timothy 5:17-18 NLJV). Paul is giving an understanding of how precious ministry is. It is to be valued. Those who minister are worthy of double honor. Another interpretation says, "Twice what a normal wage is." The minister of the gospel is not to be ashamed of being supported by the Gospel he preaches. “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14 NKJV).

Acquiring Financial Resources

Some churches and ministries will do almost anything to raise money for the work of God. Often these tactics have brought reproach against the church. God does not need beggars or some kind of promotion to support His work. All God needs is a group of people who have had the power of sin broken in their lives. People who have been transformed by the Holy Ghost washed in the blood of Jesus and delivered from the power of covetousness.

“This Shelomith and his brethren *were* over all the treasuries of the dedicated things which King David and the heads of fathers’ *houses*, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the army, had dedicated. Some of the spoils won in battles they dedicated to maintain the house of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 26:26-27 NKJV). In this reference there has been a military conquest. They have taken a portion of the spoils of war and dedicated them to the treasure of the house of God. The dedicated things came from the victories and conquest in the kingdom of God. This was the way the work of God was maintained. Here is the principle for the building and maintaining of the work of God. The Kingdom always has and always will be built by exploits (evangelism). Conquest in the spiritual realm and it is the spoils of those activities of ministry that supply the house of God. That is evangelism. The overthrowing of the devil's strongholds. Kingdom victories are what sustain the work of God.

When the Children of Israel were to come out of Egypt, Pharaoh said, "You're not going to take anything with you." Moses responded by saying, ‘Young and old, all of us will go,’ Moses

replied. ‘We will take our sons and daughters and our flocks and herds’” (Exodus 10:9 NLT). The Children of Israel left with the wealth of Egypt. This was the wealth they built the tabernacle with.

It is God’s intention that going forth and doing exploits sustain the church. Taking back the captives from the devil and bringing deliverance to them. Sinners spend their money on the devil, drugs, cigarettes, prostitutes and who knows what else. When they get saved they need to be taught to tithe and support the church. God will supply for Himself that His work might go forward. He will supply the need of any ministry He is the head of. All you have to do is present it to His people and say this is what God needs. His people will give it.

“Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy man and stay in his home until you leave for the next town. When you are invited into someone’s home, give it your blessing. If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing” (Matthew 10:11-13 NLT). Jesus is instructing them to establish a place to preach. If the house be worthy, they will support the gospel as they come to hear. If they support the preaching of the Gospel then they are worthy to hear the gospel. A sign that people have received the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not church attendance only but also in their financial support. A clear indication they are hearing the message is that they will support the gospel. He is also instructing them not to go from house to house. You do not beg people to support the gospel - the gospel will support itself.

If the Gospel we preach does not produce self-supporting churches then there is something wrong either with us the gospel, or the people hearing it. The Lord makes it very clear that God does not waste workers on non-supporters. A group of people who do not support the gospel are not to have a long-term ministry. If we do not support the gospel then we will not have the gospel to support.

The Bible says nothing about the economic situation of the people. It is not an issue. Anyone and everyone who receive the gospel are to support it. If we do not support the gospel then we really are not believers in the true sense of the word. The Corinthian church told Paul, "We are going to give" but they did not give. They did not value ministry or the gospel. This same church has major problems.

Jesus said, "Your peace shall come upon those who are worthy." A supporting church is a church that is going to be blessed. There is a dimension of experience that does not come any other way except that we value the Gospel and support it. “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:41-42 NKJV). This is the promise of our Lord to those who will support the gospel. This is a reality. A spiritual grace that is upon the giver and a dimension of

the Spirit that is released. Paul writes to the Philippian church telling that they have a special blessing because they gave to send him to preach the gospel. He also said, "My God shall supply all your needs."

The pioneer church.

I believe in supporting churches. All over the world we support workers and pioneer churches. We expect them to become self supporting so in every place during the period of their support they receive financial cut backs in their support from us at various intervals of time. The pioneering missionary should endeavor to do the same with any church he starts or supports. It is important that he takes it off support and see that it functions at the local income. This should be done within a reasonable amount of time. Only then can we reproduce the church multiplication process of world evangelism.

The Reproducing Local Church

“One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them.’ So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way” (Acts 13:2-3 NLT). Here is the responsibility for church planting along with the responsibility for the raising and distribution of finances for this purpose. Church planting is the most difficult part of world evangelism. It costs the most and requires the most commitment. Is the hardest ministry to get workers willing to fulfill. But there is no easy alternative. We must challenge couples to go. We must send them. We must put our families, our lives, our future, and our money on the line. We must risk. If we fail somewhere we must try again.

Driver number six: Fellowship

It is difficult to communicate my full feelings about fellowship and connectivity. It is a heart thing. Maybe you need to be without fellowship to really appreciate it. In Praise Chapel Fellowship we have deep roots of friendship, fellowship, and partnership. We have shared the investments of our lives, our time, our giftings, our ministries, and our finances for years. We share commonness thorough out our visions. We share core beliefs. We are connected in fellowship because of a call of God. Jesus said, “You didn’t choose me. I chose you.” (John 15:16 NLT).

I believe it is only through fellowship and partnering that any one of us can make any meaningful impact on this world. But not just us, we want to unite with other networks and fellowships to flow in the mainstream of what God is doing now and in the future. There can be no doubt that it is God's will for ministries to work together. To partner, to associate and connect in relationship.

God groups his people together in families. Israel's twelve tribes were large families. The New Testament churches related to each other. Acts 15 shows that the apostle Paul planted autonomous churches, but he connected them together through his letters, apostolic messengers, and personally visits.

A Family of Fellowships

From the very beginning of our church planting strategy, the vision has always been that “you can reproduce everything we are doing.” We believe the way to fulfill the Great Commission is to reproduce and multiply. For Praise Chapel Fellowship this includes the reproducing of Fellowships. So we have coined the phrase, “A Family of Fellowships.”

We have always worked together for a "bigger purpose." It is around this vision we can commit ourselves to fellowship. It is in the fulfilling of this vision that we can enjoy meaningful fellowship. In this vision of “A Family of Fellowships” is radical release along with connectivity. Each one can discover and fulfill their destiny in Christ while enjoying the blessing of being connected to others of like faith and vision.

Fellowship begins in the Heart.

A heart to want fellowship with people. I can't explain it but I can tell when I am with a man or woman who genuinely wants to be apart of fellowship. People are trying so hard to build something for themselves but these are not fellowship builders. They want fellowship as long as fellowship does not interfere with them or cost them. Or they want a fellowship for their own selfish goals. “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13 NKJ).

You may say, “I got hurt by a pastor or by a fellowship or organization.” The “Pastor made a mistake” so I don't need fellowship. What can I say? Every leader in the Scripture had flaws in their personality. No one in the kingdom of God is perfect except Jesus Christ. By accepting this we can understand that God's perfect is accomplished through imperfect people. If you hang around any group you will find flaws.

Fellowship is Partnership

Paul seemed to understand this more than anyone, “If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 8:23 NLT).

The Power of Fellowship

“Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath the blows of your weapons” (Leviticus 26:8 NLT). “The smallest family will multiply into a large clan. The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will bring it all to pass at the right time” (Isaiah 60:22 NLT).

Fellowship is like-mindedness

“Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2 NKJ). “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state” (Philippians 2:19-20 NKJ).

Fellowship means that we are not singular individuals running through life doing our own thing fulfilling our own ambitions and pleasures. We gain dignity by belonging to great causes, institutions that enable us to reach beyond ourselves.

The Fellowship Game

I don't have time to give myself to people who want to play the Fellowship Game where there is only talk and going through the motions. Superficial attendance of conferences but no real relationships or follow-up. There are many who claim to be connected and a part of the fellowship but you never see them nor hear from them. Fellowship must have meaning to you or it will only be a religious word. It is what you do that makes the difference. For some the reality of fellowship has died. You don't participate or partner. Fellowship has become a dead religious word to you.

Fellowship is serving one another in our need. “Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along. 29 Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger? (2 Corinthians 11:28-29 NLT). The Great challenge in fellowship is for us is to join together in helping the weak, pioneer, or struggling pastor and church. It not to achieve a high profile. Our call is to pool our efforts and resources to serve in love and help. The Kingdom of God is not a position to be attained but a job to be done. We are to share our liabilities and our assets. We don't mind sharing our assets especially if you're sharing yours with me. As God begins to bless us and we begin to have a measure of success and resources - we begin to feel important. This is a dangerous place because it is easy to despise the common folks, the struggling pioneers who need our support. As a church gets larger, it is easy for the pastor to develop this type of attitude. They forget about the pioneer days when they struggled and could have used some help from the more successful guy.

“May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ” (Romans 15:5-6 NLT). “But whatever happens to me, you must live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing side by side, fighting together for the Good News” (Philippians 1:27 NLT). “Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose” (Philippians 2:2).

How do we connect? God has put it in our hearts to share together in the fellowship of Christ. He must join our hearts and minds. The big question is not, “what does it cost?” but “what does it do.”

Mission Global Harvest

“For ‘Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?” (Romans 10:13-15 NLT).

Missions have been the passion of my Christian life. Janet and I made our first mission trip to India in 1973. From that time of our lives were forever changed. In 1982 we moved to Manila Philippines to join Sammy and Nomi Mores in pioneering a church in Mandaluyong, Metro Manila. Then in 1989 we moved to Singapore. We have been involved in church planting into many nations and have seen the power of this vision reproduced over and over again. Churches and fellowships are reproducing themselves and multiplying in cities, villages and remote places we may never get to visit.

From the very beginning of Praise Chapel we have encouraged pastors to minister in the nations of the world. We have had the privilege of taking men and women into nations, who had never been out of their neighborhood. Now teams are continually traveling throughout the world preaching the gospel and planting new works.

Our call to world missions

Mission, missions, missionary all sounds religious. Missions means sending. Our entire inheritance as people of God and the Christian church can only be understood in the context of world evangelism. The church exists by missions just as fire exists by burning. Where there is no flame there is no fire. Where there is no missions, no sending, there is no church. Every church in the world is the fruit of missions. Every Christian is fruit of mission. Someone left their home, family and went to preach somewhere and you are saved today.

“Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession” (Psalm 2:8 NLT). God has always had a world wide design and plan. Never a little

Garden of Eden. “God blessed them and told them, ‘Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1:28 KJV). Inside every human heart is a God given quality, the ability to rise to a challenge. God wants the church to rise to the challenge of world mission. Mission is God’s vision. Whatever the price God is willing to pay. God says I have given nations for you. The accomplishment of mission is the destiny of the Church.

The spirit of the Apostle Paul

“After some time Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let’s return to each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are getting along’” (Acts 15:36). Paul has been on a mission journey where churches had been established so now they could rest? Not Paul!

Special value attached to the “sent ones.”

The bible is book about sending. People who went and people who sent. If they didn’t go or send God had little to say about them. Paul lists gifts to church and the first is apostles, which means, “sent ones.” To be involved in the task of missions is to be at the center of God’s heart and purpose. God’s word gives dignity to adventurers, pioneers, and pilgrims. To Abraham God said, “Go to the land.” To Moses, “I send you.” The Bible says Joseph was, “Sent by God.”

Jesus was a missionary.

He left His home in glory taking the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men. Missions is about people deliberately going into places of the world with the purpose of preaching. The book of acts is the story of the sent ones. “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns” (Isaiah 52:7 NLT).

The commission has never been changed. We do not need anything else. No special summons. No handwriting on the wall. You don’t need to hear any voice. This is the commission. Our command and responsibility. If you’re waiting upon some powerful manifestation from heaven, I doubt if you will see it. We have many who have went out from our congregations and you could not even they were called; yet they responded to the call to go. We have gone by acting on the Great Commission. No believer or church can say, “this commission is for others not us we have other priorities.” The gospel has been handed down from generation to generation. It is a sacred trust. The question is, “What are you going to do?”

We think Jesus said to go into all the world, but first build beautiful buildings for the people in Jerusalem, provide day care for their children, establish schools and social programs for them. The problem is that as every generation builds the facilities needed to house “their” church. The facilities needed for their generation to satisfy and gratify the pride and desires of the current

congregation with the best, while the world's lost wait and wait and wait for what? Another generation? Because it takes each one most of their generation to build the facility needed. Yet when that generation is gone, the souls are lost for their generation while the building stands as a monument to the forsaken Commission. Today real estate is one of the main issues in the church. We are told our facilities are of up most importance if we are going to reach our generation. It's about time the church comes to understand what God's real estate is. It is you - people. God has not called us into real estate development. God did not call us to social programs or education. God called us to preach the gospel and to win souls. "Don't fail to rescue those who are doomed to die. Don't say, "I didn't know it!" God can read your mind. He watches each of us and knows our thoughts. And God will pay us back for what we do" (Proverbs 24:11-12 CEV). "For the love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14 NKJ).

One life counts for God!

Sometimes it seems insignificant what we are a part of or what we do for God. It seemed insignificant when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on door of the Chapel at Wittenberg Cathedral in Germany but this changed the world forever. May 24, 1738 two brothers went into a Moravian bible study at 8:45 PM, someone was giving a personal testimony - John and Charles Wesley were saved. Two young boys stopped by a tent meeting in North Carolina and were going to leave when an usher encouraged them to stay -- Billy Graham and Cliff Burrows were saved that night.

You don't have to make big waves to make change. The smallest ripple can make the biggest waves. Small inputs can have massive consequences. You can literally change the world. Small companies are changing and recreating the global company. Companies with 19 or fewer employees create 50% of the U.S. exports. Companies with 500 or more employees create 7%. Small players are dominating the 21st century global economy. This should make the small-membership church reconsider its future.

The need for senders

"How will anyone go without be sent?" We put great emphasis upon those pioneers who leave everything and go to the ends of the earth; and we should. They should receive all the honor and backing we can give. But without senders and partners they could not go and would not. With just a causal look in the Bible we can find that the support role holds a very prominent place in Scripture. It carries a prominent place in the teaching and mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Kingdom of God the attitude we convey at home toward the workers we send out is critical. They need to feel and know our support is behind their effort and we are in this thing together. The redemption of the world hinges a lot on the senders. The responsibility does not rest only upon the shoulders of those who leave family, home and go. The responsibility for reaching the world for Christ set equally on all of us.

“Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos with their trip. See that they are given everything they need” (Titus 3:13 TLB). “And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive” (Titus 3:14 NRSV). Paul knew there would be times when Zenas and Apollos would need something so the people back home needed to be ready to meet those demands. This means being in a state of alertness, readiness and sensitivity to the needs of those pioneers of the cross. In our Global Harvest office we have urgent needs arise on a regularly basis. Sometimes the only answer is to go to the congregation I pastor as say, “this missionary needs this and receive a special offering.”

In Romans Paul mentions a person named Gaius who was “his host.” Later John writes to this same man telling him about a group of traveling missionaries that were coming to the fellowship where Gaius was a leader. “For they are traveling for the Lord and accept nothing from those who are not Christians. So we ourselves should support them so that we may become partners with them for the truth” (3 John 7-8 NLT). John is urging him to receive them and give to them every support they need and send them on their way in truly a Christian manner. It appears that Gaius is not acquainted with these folks. John didn’t stop there, “I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority . . . He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church. (3 John 9-10 NLT)

The role of the supporter is just as important as the one who goes. It is very difficult to be willing to take your family and move around the world if you can’t depend upon those who say they are your partners. I used to say, “I’m willing to go if I can depend upon those holding the ropes.” All too often senders do not realize how important they are.

The reward for senders

“Anyone who welcomes you is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me. If you welcome a prophet as one who speaks for God, you will receive the same reward a prophet gets. And if you welcome good and godly people because of their godliness, you will be given a reward like theirs. And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded” (Matthew 10:40-42 NLT).

Where do we go from here

The road ahead

I love to drive from my house to the local mountains resorts. It’s only a hour drive but the changes along the way are beautiful. We go from the palm trees to the pines and the hot smoggy air to the cool mountain air all in a short time. In the winter we can drive up the mountain and experience a snow storm then return home to the sunshine. That is one of the blessing of living in Southern California.

Praise Chapel is on a journey. We are experiencing many changes as we drive along this road of life and ministry. As long as we understand our heritage, value our traditions and move with the flow of God's Spirit, He will continue to lead us. My greatest desire is that we can all travel together in fellowship and end up friends like Jesus and His disciples, "Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me" (John 15:15 NLT).

Enjoy the journey . . .

Larry Neville

Larry@praisechapel.com

About the Author

Larry Neville is the pastor of Praise Chapel in Rancho Cucamonga, California. He and his wife, Janet have been involved in pioneering and planting churches for over 30 years. He is the president of Praise Chapel Christian Fellowship Churches and Ministries International and Mission Global Harvest. Larry and Janet, have 2 children and 6 grandchildren.