

ABSTRACT

A Strategy for Overcoming Denominational Factors That Hinder Growth in the Local Church

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It was the goal of this study to both identify denominational factors that hinder growth in the North American church and develop a strategy for local church leaders to overcome them. It is argued that profound cultural changes have radically changed the landscape for ministry in North America and plunged much of the church into a state of precipitous decline. It is furthered argued that denominational attitudes, practices and structures handicap the ability of local church leaders to respond appropriately.

An examination of the Bible offers direction for local church leaders to address the epistemological and other cultural changes that recently have transpired. Additionally, New Testament models of church life reveal amazing flexibility in organizing and pursuing Christ's mission. In view of the biblical witness, personal interaction with leaders in church growth and a generous survey of literature generated by both seasoned observers and leaders of the fastest growing movements in global Christianity, it is set forth that local church leaders must shoulder the responsibility to fulfill Christ's command to make disciples of all nations and carefully consider how they define their denomination, see reality, relate to people, prepare leaders, and deal with the mandates and practices of their specific denomination.

This study draws the conclusion that existing denominational churches can both overcome debilitating factors and effect a major expansion of Christianity. It designs a strategy for local church leaders to overcome debilitating factors by recovering the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, networking with gifted leaders, developing people through apprenticeship, spawning new congregations and creatively addressing the restrictive rules and practices of the denomination.

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