

## CHAPTER 10

### DEVELOPING APPRENTICE LEADERS

When Christ sought to develop leaders, He did not begin an institute or school. He gathered apprentices. The disciples were apprentice-learners who developed as they heard, observed and partnered with Jesus as He went about his work and life.

The gospels reveal this camaraderie especially in one of Christ's miracles. When the fish and bread multiplied, the disciples did not stand by passively watching. They were completely involved. Jesus had told them to feed the people (Matt. 14:16; Mark 6:37). Philip protested, but Andrew brought a boy with a few loaves and some fish (John 6:5-9). Once Jesus broke the bread and fish, it was given to the disciples to distribute (Matt. 14:19-20; Mark 6:41-43). It appears that the bread and fish multiplied mostly in the hands of the disciples as they distributed it, for the enormity of this miracle was not readily seen. Only after Jesus instructed the disciples to collect the leftovers did they, looking at the baskets, realize what happened (John 6:12-13). Thus, the disciples were participants and partners with Jesus in the miracle rather than mere observers.

Additionally, the Bible shows Jesus in a supervisory role when a destructive, evil spirit troubled a young boy. After Christ's disciples failed to heal the boy, the father appealed to Jesus (Matt. 17:14-16; Luke 9:37-40). Jesus both reproved his followers and later explained what was necessary to be more successful (Matt. 17:17-20; Mark 9:19, 28-29). This pattern of interaction between a master and his apprentices is seen also in discussions Jesus and His disciples held on prayer (Luke 11:1-13), faith (Luke 17:5-6) and prophecy (Mark 13:1-4), and in the language they use that depicts their relationship: Lord, Master, Teacher, students and disciple (Matt. 10:24-25; Luke 9:49; Mark 9:38; Matt. 14:28 and John 15:8).

Furthermore, the Greek term for disciple *mathetes* reveals a great deal. Dietrich Mueller notes that, in Greek usage before the New Testament was written, a man was called a "disciple" when he bound himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. This was equally true for an apprentice in a trade, a student of

medicine, or a member of a philosophical school (though some philosophers shied away from this).<sup>1</sup> A few centuries before Christ, Greek translators of the Old Testament deemphasized that nuance in “disciple;” but in the Rabbinic Judaism of Jesus’ era, the teacher-pupil relationship once again was accentuated.<sup>2</sup> Mueller asserts that in all 264 New Testament appearances of the noun *mathetes*, “total attachment to someone in discipleship” is emphasized.<sup>3</sup> He notes that with Jesus the demands of discipleship are much steeper and the attachment much deeper than the teacher-pupil apprenticeships of the rabbis and philosophers.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, that is reflected in Jesus’ call to discipleship that bids followers to forsake all (Luke 14:33) and take up their cross (Luke 9:23) in following him. However, apprenticeship is not absent in such a call; instead, it is an integral part of such devotion and attachment.

Moreover, Jesus makes it amply clear that his aim is not merely the devotion and adoration of his followers but their partnership in his work. Jesus wants believers to be disciples who do the things He does (John 13:15-17, Matt. 28:19-20); and He sends them just as He was sent (John 20:21). This same dynamic of apprenticeship is implicit in the admonitions of the apostles who exhort both leaders to model the faith and believers to imitate their leaders (1 Tim. 4:12, 1 Cor. 4:15-17, 11:1, Heb. 13:7). Such exhortation is senseless unless there is a living arrangement where one can closely observe the manner of life of another.

What is implicit in those passages becomes quite explicit in the writing of the Apostle Paul. His epistles to Titus and Timothy expressly focus on leadership development. Especially telling are these words to Timothy.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Tim. 2:1-2)

“Son” is a key word for Paul. It speaks of an intimate, mentoring friendship. Timothy commanded Paul’s trust because they formed a relationship where they worked together, shared together, suffered together and succeeded together. Timothy rose to

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Mueller, “Disciple,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 484.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 484-486.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 486-490.

leadership through an apprenticeship with Paul. Timothy was not the product of seminars, schools, correspondence courses or conferences. He was developed through shared ministry and life experiences with Paul.

When the Apostle Paul wrote Timothy about establishing leaders, he did not tell Timothy to start a school. He told Timothy to entrust the ministry to reliable men able to teach others. Timothy could not do that without a relationship where he could assess both the ability and the reliability of future leaders.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the individuals selected for leadership had to have an association with Timothy in his ministry. There had to be time spent together in the field where Timothy both observed the ability and reliability of individuals and imparted the expectations and skills necessary for leadership.

This same focus on apprenticeship was an important facet of the rapid growth of the Vineyard movement in North America and around the world. Its founder, John Wimber explained how he acquired this practice. When Wimber was young, he occasionally visited a horse farm where his grandfather worked. During one visit, he saw his grandfather cure the problem gait of a horse by hitching it to one with flawless form. “My grandfather explained,” wrote Wimber, “that when a horse cannot do its job, if you connect it to one that can, soon both do the job correctly.”<sup>6</sup> Wimber asserts that the secret of success with people is the same as with horses: “hitch a person who cannot do a job with one who can, and soon both will know how.”<sup>7</sup> For Wimber, apprenticeship was the primary means of developing people and leaders in local church ministry.

### **Growing a Vision**

The most vital gift of apprenticeship is vision. When an individual becomes an apprentice of another, the two do not go off into a classroom. Instead, the apprentice joins the journeyman in his or her course of work. The journeyman determines the heading for their efforts, the focus for both individuals’ attention and activity. In other words, the journeyman provides for the apprentice a picture of what they want to accomplish and how

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<sup>5</sup> Theological schools and ordination boards may claim that they employ Paul’s counsel in the psychological assessments, reference checks, school transcripts and application questions and process. In truth, all of those instruments are circumstantial and “hear-say.” Only apprentice relationships offer first hand observation of one’s conduct in the actual setting in which they are being considered for leadership.

<sup>6</sup> Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

they are going to do it. That vision is communicated not only with words, but also by the very approach the journeyman takes in the work.

In the church, journeyman leaders of congregations that grow and multiply in number approach their work entirely different than those who lead stagnant or declining fellowships. The growth leaders promote and cultivate an “outward orientation” in their congregations. Goerge Barna observes: “A church will remain in its weakened condition until it becomes outreach-oriented.” He believes that without that switch in vision, churches are fatally diseased.<sup>8</sup> Kirk Hadaway and David Roozen agree that churches are unlikely to grow when they are primarily concerned with existing members. They write that outward orientation is “the key.”<sup>9</sup> Leaders of growing churches somehow get their congregations to focus their efforts on ministering to people who are not currently members. For example, 38 percent of The Community Church of Joy’s 6,000 members were totally unchurched, and 60 percent had not belonged to any church for at least five years before they connected with the congregation.<sup>10</sup> These people did not stumble, wander or mindlessly migrate into the fellowship. One survey revealed that 81 percent of the church’s members had invited at least one person in the past year. Some 18 percent had invited seven or more persons.<sup>11</sup> Somehow Community of Joy imparted an outreach vision to its members. Consequently, people with little or no connection to organized Christianity were receiving invitations, visiting and then joining this congregation.

George Hunter writes:

Every apostolic congregation *sees* [italics mine] itself essentially as a “church for the unchurched,” and their mission is to make faith and new life possible for people who do not yet believe or even know what we are talking about. . . . A traditional congregation’s main business, by contrast, is to nurture and care for its members and their children. Most traditional congregations hope for growth—largely through biological and transfer growth. They have no plans or expectations for reaching pagans and would be astounded if it ever happened! Though they hope for membership growth, eight or nine out of ten traditional congregations are experiencing membership stagnation or decline. However, the apostolic congregation’s main business is outreach to

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<sup>8</sup> Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 98.

<sup>9</sup> Hadaway and Roozen, *Rerouting the Protestant Mainstream*, 67

<sup>10</sup> Hunter, *Church for the Unchurched*, 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

pre-Christian people. That mission takes priority over ministry to the members.<sup>12</sup>

Hunter notes that believers in these type of congregations are 10 to 15 times more likely to engage in witnessing than Christians in traditional congregations. One of the reasons is that they “have a *vision* [italics mine] of what people can become that goes deeper than accepting our beliefs, obeying our rules, or conforming to our style.” Another is that the congregation has developed culturally relevant worship that their unbelieving friends would most likely enjoy.<sup>13</sup>

Bill Easum notes that congregations designed and structured with the vision of introducing people to Christ are culturally sensitive so that people can understand and respond to the gospel with integrity. He observes that these congregations use the tools and vehicles offered by culture to pass on the new life in Christ. He further believes that most congregations will have to discontinue or radically alter what they are doing today if they are to accomplish such a mission.<sup>14</sup>

Although many churches are beginning to adopt more indigenous forms of worship, the greatest hurdle and most critical skill is changing the operating vision and priority of a congregation from ministering to the needs of its members to outreach to pre-Christian people. How do church leaders both develop the conviction and convince their parishioners that “new life comes to us on its way to someone else,”<sup>15</sup> that we only walk with Jesus and become his disciples as we hit the road with him in his outreach to those estranged from God?

Barring a close association with someone who demonstrates the validity of that truth, it will be difficult to develop a personal vision and conviction that is outreach-oriented. Moreover, it will be even more daunting to impart that vision without a mentor who models the skills, recognizes the pitfalls and encourages the leader in the process of transformation.

Lyle Schaller tells the story of two churches whose divergent visions and recent fortunes became apparent as he walked through a corridor of their facilities. One church had prominently hung the portraits of men elected to bishop while serving as their senior

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>14</sup> Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

minister. The other church had colored photographs of new congregations it created on one wall and houses the congregation constructed in partnership with Habitat for Humanity on another. The church with portraits of bishops had dropped 40 percent in worship attendance during the same 30-year period that the other, with mission photographs, tripled.<sup>16</sup> Schaller's inference is that something as innocuous as a picture on a wall can both reveal and form a congregation's vision and priority.

Among the most important tools in fostering vision is a mission statement. Will Willimon and Andy Langford state:

Each congregation ought to have a mission statement to guide its mission, its giving, and its internal structure. This statement of purpose and mission should be a concise picture of where this congregation intends to go in its life together. It should be its theological guide and benchmark in congregational planning, budgeting, and mission.<sup>17</sup>

Willimon wrote years earlier with Robert Wilson that this statement must be indigenous:

Every United Methodist congregation would do well to spend time composing a "Statement of Purpose" for itself. This would be a purpose that the local people would own, not simply a statement handed down from a distant agency. All programs, budget items, leadership, and parish activities should then be judged on the basis of this statement of purpose.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, many congregations have done exactly this with little fruit. One reason is that the pastor is the critical voice in both forming and fostering vision. A mission statement will make little difference if it does not reflect God's mandate in the pastor's heart.

Wagner observes:

Unlike traditional pastors who consider themselves "enablers," most new apostolic pastors would never think of approaching the members of the congregation to ask them the direction they think the church should go. Instead, they begin by asking God where He thinks the church should go. They fully expect God to answer their prayer and to impart to their minds the vision for the church He has called them to lead. To make sure they have accurately heard from God, the pastors will, of course, test their ideas along with certain selected individuals, usually the elders, before announcing the vision to the whole congregation. Once they have the degree of consensus they believe they need, they boldly cast the vision, and that is it.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Schaller, *Tattered Trust*, 62-63.

<sup>17</sup> Lanford and Willimon, *A New Connection*, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Willimon and Wilson, *Rekindling the Flame*, 33-34.

<sup>19</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 86-87.

Whether one agrees with this model of leadership or not, Wagner's observation does reflect the truth that the leader, not a mission statement, slogan or anything extraneous to the leader, is responsible for the picture that people see, indeed, the vision that people pursue. Accordingly, there is much more involved in communicating and fostering vision than series of sermons, bulletin boards, planning retreats, workshops, seminars, slogans and mission statements. Every one of those things can be helpful, even vital; but they are no substitute for an apprentice relationship with a church leader who is passionate, successfully imparting vision and mobilizing people to carry it out. The reason such a relationship is so important is that priorities are communicated by one's life rather than speech. It is the nature of leadership, as Bishop Wilkie notes, to pay attention to some things and to ignore others; and those very choices express the leader's priorities.<sup>20</sup> When one works closely with a successful leader, one discovers those priorities. Additionally, one learns firsthand what pays off and what does not. Indeed, Wilkie notes that successful leaders focus the attention of everyone in the organization on the issues that are important. They remind the people what the collective goals are. "The task of leadership is to center in on that which is vital."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, in an apprentice relationship with a successful leader, one both develops a vision because of that leader and learns the ins and outs of helping people both embrace it and mobilize for it. They, therefore, are better prepared to grow and share a vision wherever God leads them.

The benefit for church leaders who take on apprentices is that they gain comrades dedicated to pursuing their vision and mission. With apprentices, journeyman leaders expand their influence, multiply their gifts and enhance their effectiveness in mobilizing people in their mission. The time, energy, skills and creativity spent in mentoring apprentices is a terrific investment because those are the very dynamics that the journeymen leaders must further develop to achieve greater objectives. An apprenticeship offers bidirectional benefit. It develops people and their competence on both sides of the equation.

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<sup>20</sup> Wilkie, *And Are We Yet Alive*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

### **Developing People through Networking**

The purpose of apprenticeship is not to clone followers but to develop leaders. For that to take place, the apprentices must develop a significant relationship with more than journeyman leaders. They must grow and develop because of a network of important relationships. King Solomon noted that there is a large benefit in rubbing shoulders with others. “As iron sharpens iron,” Solomon observed, “so one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17). Imagine the sharpening that occurs when one receives the benefit of multiple, significant relationships. That seemed to be the pattern of the earliest forms of Christianity. Jesus called the Twelve to be with him (Mark 3:13-19). He sent them and others to minister in pairs (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1). The Jerusalem church met every day in home groupings (Acts 2:46).

Contemporary forms of this type of ministry and development structure are *ministry teams* and *small groups*. According to Wagner, these are the two major structures organizing lay ministry in the mushrooming new apostolic church movement.<sup>22</sup> Bill Easum believes that this is the most important distinction evident in churches that grow today. He writes, “The one overshadowing practice of paradigm communities in America is their emphasis on small-group ministries.”<sup>23</sup> He notes that small groups are critical for building people and the church.<sup>24</sup>

A corollary is that small groups develop leaders. Leaders develop in small groups for at least three reasons. First, people participating in small groups where the Bible is studied become more confident of what they believe and are more likely to act on it.<sup>25</sup> Second, small groups are relationship laboratories where people develop and hone their relationship skills. People practice and grow in the skills of listening, speaking, acceptance, prayer, forgiveness, confrontation, gentleness, perseverance and so on. Third, people who share their faith in small groups are more likely to discuss these matters in their other relationships.<sup>26</sup> Robert Wuthnow confirmed this correlation between small groups and witness. He found that

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<sup>22</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 218.

<sup>23</sup> Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hunter, *Church for the Unchurched*, 116.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 16.

about 55 percent of group members in his sampling reported that their group involvement enabled them to share their faith.<sup>27</sup>

These findings commend small groups as an important means of leadership development. Easum believes congregational leaders must make small groups the basic structure and work of their churches. He writes: “The transition from the program-based congregation to the small group-based congregation is the most fundamental paradigm shift in the history of North American Christianity.”<sup>28</sup> It is a profound and difficult change that must be managed because the predominant pattern of church life, which is program-oriented and committee-led, is crippling the Christian community. Easum continues:

Program-based congregations will decline for several reasons: (1) the sheer cost of planting and staffing the church; (2) the brokenness of our world requires a solid community life of fellowship which is found in only a few program-based congregations; (3) program-based churches have a way of isolating their members so far from those outside the church that evangelism is forced, and unnatural; (4) the 40 to 50 percent of inactives in the typical program-based church will continue to be siphoned away by the cell-based communities that reach out to them with caring ministries; (5) history has proven that program-based churches do not result in disciplined, healthy, Christians.<sup>29</sup>

Easum notes several contrasts between the program and cell-structured church. Program churches depend upon their pastors and staff to minister while in cell-based churches pastors and staff equip laity to minister. The growth of program-based congregations depend upon the population of Christians increasing in their area while the growth of cell-based congregations depends upon on the effectiveness both of those equipping the laity and of the witness of the laity. Program-based churches easily overlook people and can become “cold and fragile.” Cell-based congregations inherently develop a warmth and a connective strength. In cell-based congregations laity rather than clergy serve as theologian and priest.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the step to congregational leader is quite short.

Believers that have developed their vision, skills and character in small groups and ministry teams are not so much considering a new career in becoming pastors or ordained elders; instead they are taking a further step of responsibility and time in equipping others.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>28</sup> Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, 60.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 60.

This may explain why cell-based congregations often develop and employ homegrown staff. The in-house staff shares their leader's vision, friendship, motivation and philosophy of ministry, and they have already shown themselves effective ministry leaders in the current setting.<sup>31</sup>

As leaders arise from apprenticeship and networking in a cell-based congregation and then are transplanted into traditional churches, they face a daunting challenge. Cell-based congregations that were formerly program-oriented have taken about five to seven years to make the transition according to Ralph Neighbor. He observes that there are six pivotal changes that characterize successful transitions. They have redefined how laity and pastors understand and do ministry. They have negotiated profound changes in their organizational structure. They have adopted a new set of values that guide their work. They have embraced a different vision or understanding of their ministry. They have focused on cultivating relational skills, and they have mobilized people in prayer and placed importance on discovering spiritual gifts and the direction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Both the vision and skills in bringing these changes to traditional congregations can be acquired from experience with cell-based churches. Furthermore, the friendships developed with leaders in a cell-based congregation can continue to encourage, resource and support the leader who is transplanted into a traditional congregation.

### **Encouraging Free-Market Ministry**

It is the thesis of this chapter that people best develop as leaders when they work with effective leaders. Jesus chose to develop his leaders in the setting of his field ministry. He established an apprentice relationship with them, developed their vision, networked them with other followers, commissioned them in ministry and turned them loose. He promised that they would still have a guide following his departure from earth (John 14:16-21, 16:12-15). Jesus depends upon that guide rather than a committee or a council to help his followers continue his work. Even in John 17, when Jesus prays for his followers, he asks God to protect or keep his followers from the evil one not by a human committee but by a divine power (John 17:11-15). There is no mention of a watchdog organization. Jesus does not envision a central human command post on earth directing his ministry following his

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<sup>31</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 220.

<sup>32</sup> Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, 69.

departure.<sup>33</sup> He depends upon the Holy Spirit at work in individual lives. This expectation is seen in Acts 8 when persecution drives many Christian leaders out of Jerusalem. The Bible says that those who had been scattered preached wherever they went (Acts 8:4). The believers felt a freedom to minister wherever they traveled and wherever they located without permission or approval from a central authority. If there was a master plan to these believers' work, it was divine not human.

Ted Haggard capitalizes on this notion. He believes it is counterproductive to coordinate and authorize every ministry within a congregation. He suggests that there is a parallel between flourishing free-market economies and flourishing spiritual ministries. He writes that where the government allows a free-market economy, people produce goods and services that make prosperity possible. He notes that where central-command economies are dictated from a central office, the result is always poor quality, poor service, outdated products and unhappy people. He declares:

Free market ministries always produce creative and innovative ministry methods... When we allow the Holy Spirit to work within people to create effective ministries, we have an abundant supply. If, on the other hand, we want to monitor every ministry from our central office, then the ministries of the church will eventually lack creativity and fail to adequately meet the needs of the congregation.<sup>34</sup>

Haggard believes that it is the church's responsibility to enable people to birth ministry. He does not believe the church must make their ministries failure proof. He is convinced that church leaders must design systems that help people develop their ministries. He believes that the "cell system" or small group is especially beneficial because it allows people to creatively minister to others without having to initiate a program within the church. He writes:

Rather than having the church leadership team create a ministry and enlist people to participate in it, cell churches allow the needs of people to create the ministries. As we teach people to spot needs and fill them as servants, effective ministries are constantly birthing within our churches.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Reinforcing the view that a single human command structure is unnecessary and not part of God's will is church history. Despite all the pitfalls and problems, the rise of the Orthodox Church and Protestantism has served, in the end, to spread Christianity and remove many shackles hindering its expansion.

<sup>34</sup> Haggard, *The Life-giving Church*, 125.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Haggard notes that they make certain that all ministry programs center on taking care of people, not people taking care of the programs. He reports that this free-market ministry style is used to one degree or another through every “super-megachurch” in the world.<sup>36</sup>

Others certainly reinforce these observations by Haggard. Wagner notes that a weakness in traditional churches is that their centrally planned ministries rely on leaders selected by a nominating committee. As a result, leaders frequently rise to their position because of their “*availability* rather than *giftedness*” [italics his].<sup>37</sup> William Willimon and Robert Wilson chafe over the administrative or command structures of the traditional church that involve laity primarily in carrying out institutional chores rather than “releasing them to be about their ministry in the world.”<sup>38</sup> Rick Warren warns of the choking bureaucratic command structure of traditional churches that accomplishes little. He writes:

What do the words *committees, elections, majority rule, boards, board members, parliamentary procedures, voting* and *vote* have in common [italics his]? None of these words is found in the New Testament! We have imposed an American form of government on the church and, as a result, most churches are as bogged down in bureaucracy as our government is. It takes forever to get anything done.<sup>39</sup>

Schaller notes that churches attracting a huge number of newcomers display a great level of trust in their laity’s ability to minister and that they challenge their people to create (rather than enlist them in) innovative new ministries.<sup>40</sup> Don Miller is impressed with how rapidly ministries develop in churches that do not use the traditional committee structure to develop and oversee church ministry. He writes:

What is remarkable in new paradigm churches is not only the variety of different groups and programs, but also the rapidity with which they are started. In large part, this is due to the flat structure of the organization. In interviews with clergy and laity alike, I heard numerous derisive jokes and comments about committees—that they guarantee that nothing will get done, or that if a committee does finally agree on a program, the need will have changed and the program will be outmoded. Instead of forming committees, new paradigm churches try to honor lay initiative, take risks with people who

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 218.

<sup>38</sup> Willimon & Wilson, 104.

<sup>39</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1995), 377.

<sup>40</sup> Schaller, *Tattered Trust*, 54.

have a vision, and offer these individuals clergy support as needed, without overregulating and thereby denting enthusiasm for a project.<sup>41</sup>

Miller observes trust both flourishing in these new paradigm communities of believers and unleashing creative and diverse ministries. Consequently, he offers this advice to traditional churches:

Clergy should abolish at least 80 percent of the committee meetings that currently occur, thereby freeing up people to join small group home fellowships. The fastest-growing and largest churches in the world are cell based, with all of the church ministry flowing out of small groupings of people who meet weekly, worshiping together, studying together, praying together, and often engaging in highly imaginative service to people in their neighborhoods. Pastoral care, evangelism, and cross-generational interaction all occur within these groups, which are led and organized by laypeople.<sup>42</sup>

Miller notes that this decentralization of ministry does not mean disorganization. Often there is a corporate climate of excellence that fosters first-rate planning.<sup>43</sup>

An extension of the “free-market ministry” concept is the “free-market cell” system. Many churches have seen the value of small groups but found developing them difficult. Often, only a small percentage of the congregation participates. In many cases, churches get no further than offering small groups as one of their programs. Although they want to be cell-based, they cannot seem to make the transition. Haggard’s New Life Church faced such a dilemma when they recognized they were employing the “central control” process in initiating these groups. Rather than imposing something on their people, they developed the notion of “free-market cells.” In this model, the church imposes no limits on the size or focus of a cell. That is left to the ability of the leader and the interest of the people. Instead, the church emphasizes attracting people to the cell through their felt needs and multiplying the topics available in the groups.<sup>44</sup> When the “free-market cell” was born at New Life Church, there were 80 small groups. Within two months that number grew to 345, and three months later there were 392 cells.<sup>45</sup> Haggard writes:

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<sup>41</sup> Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*, 139.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-189.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>44</sup> Haggard, *The Life-giving Church*, 180-181.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Rather than eliminating any of our existing programs, we decided to transition them into a new structure. . . We didn't impose the transition to cells on the church; we offered it. Our cells were so appealing that the church naturally transitioned. . . We simply gave our old programs opportunity to evolve, and people liked the improvements.<sup>46</sup>

The notion of a free-market cell and free-market ministry are fully consistent. Both the church's ministries and the cell system that foster them recognize a very critical aspect of God's work with individuals. They honor the truth that each individual bears the creative and royal imprint of their heavenly Father, and they actively look to the leadership of the Holy Spirit with individuals rather than following some humanly devised master plan. Leaders, who use the free-market approach, believe in the ability of their people and encourage them to minister and organize. Consequently, in their cell system and ministries, the church multiplies leadership laboratories where ability is spotted and skills are developed. According to Wagner, this very dynamic is the essential key to church growth. Simply put, these churches grow because they multiply ministers.<sup>47</sup>

### **Mentoring Laity in Pastoral Ministry**

It is important to make a distinction between "free-market" ministries that the church encourages rather than controls and "isolated" ministries of which the church has no knowledge or relational connection. Churches that blossom are not composed of isolated groups and rogue leaders, they are characterized by a network of leaders and cells that innovate and create while they share common fellowship and a big picture together.

Even though Ted Haggard relies on a free-market cell system to birth free-market ministries, he does not take a "hands off" approach with his leaders. In New Life Church each cell shares eight common commitments and Haggard along with his staff mentors and trains the leaders of each cell, regardless of its focus.<sup>48</sup> "We call our cell leaders 'life

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 177-178.

<sup>47</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 209.

<sup>48</sup> Here are Haggard's eight requirements from *The Life-giving Church*, 184-186. (1) All cells must engage in at least one or more of the following: prayer, worship, Bible study or testimonies. (2) All cells must welcome new people unless otherwise designated. For example, some of the marriage cells cannot be joined after they have begun. (3) All cells must have life coaches and assistant life coaches committed to providing pastoral-type support, equipping the cell members in spiritual growth, and intentionally empowering the people in their groups to be more successful in every area of their lives. (4) All cells are to develop members into future leaders. (5) All cell members are encouraged to bring unchurched people who have the same interest as the group within the first month of each new semester. The only exceptions are those groups that close to newcomers after the first week because of the nature of the cell. (6) All cells must have completed their study and be ready to either change subjects or receive additional people by the beginning of the next semester. (7) All cell leaders must communicate with their Section leaders weekly so the Section leaders can coach them for increasing effectiveness. (8) All cells

coaches,’” writes Haggard. His cell leaders have great opportunity to coach people in every aspect of life, so Haggard and his staff train all cell leaders to role model, mentor, motivate and multiply themselves in every cell member.<sup>49</sup> There is no leadership development without considerable investment. Therefore, whatever system leaders use to develop people, they must frequently contact, communicate, discern and address the life needs of their lay ministers. They must take a “hands on” approach as spiritual friends and mentors.

This is not new. John Wesley and Francis Asbury developed the movement of Methodism by contacting, communicating, mentoring and encouraging a cadre of lay preachers and leaders. Bishop Wilkie observed about them:

I used to think that John Wesley and Francis Asbury rode their horses a quarter of a million miles or so because they loved to preach. Now I realize that, as leaders of the movement, they needed to know what was going on. They rode to observe the vital signs of the movement as well as to censure and encourage the people; it was literally a seat of the pants form of leadership. Today, in a world of instant communications, we are abysmally ignorant of the vitality of our churches. The leaders cannot lead until first they know what is happening.<sup>50</sup>

Wilkie’s remarks challenge both judicatory leaders and local church pastors to know what is going on with those they lead. They must know in order to invest appropriately. Willimon and Wilson make an even more explicit link between the supervisory work of Wesley and Asbury and the ministry of local church pastors. They write:

Apart from service in equipping and upbuilding the laity, clergy have no real function in the church. The purpose of all our preaching, visiting, teaching, evangelization, and healing ministries is the equipment of the “priests.”<sup>51</sup>

If we clergy are not mentoring laity in their priestly and pastoral work, if we are not cultivating apprentices, if we are not multiplying Christian ministers, then we must consider if we are really making Christian disciples or just developing Christian consumers. Moreover, we must ask ourselves, “How far will we go?” What are the priesthood powers that every disciple of Jesus can exercise?

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must honorably reflect the ministry, spirit and theological position of New Life Church. Additionally, cell leaders make five commitments: to serve people, meet weekly with friends, receive initial training, get leadership coaching with the senior pastor and tithe.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 182-183.

<sup>50</sup> Wilkie, *And Are We Yet Alive*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Willimon & Wilson, *Rekindling the Flame*, 104.

In her study of the Assemblies of God denomination, Margaret Poloma noted “the rise of a professional clergy that jeopardizes the priesthood of all believers.” She writes:

The original enthusiasm found in early Pentecostalism, which recognized charisma rather than social status, continues to give way to a priestly clergy with lines drawn between the leaders and the led.<sup>52</sup>

The thickening line between clergy and laity that Poloma observes among the Assemblies of God is disappearing in the fastest growing movements of Christianity. Wagner notes how traditional churches would never permit laypersons to perform the “sacerdotal functions” of the church; yet in a growing number of churches, small group leaders baptize, serve communion, conduct worship, preach and teach, marry, bury and raise needed funds.<sup>53</sup>

For many denominational pastors and leaders, the limits on developing laity as spiritual leaders are more a matter of personal mindset than church law. For example, *The Discipline* of The United Methodist Church does not expressly prohibit its laity from marrying, burying, raising funds, leading worship, preaching, teaching or assisting in communion and baptism. It, however, does not encourage them in these activities. Consequently, United Methodist clergy can go a long ways in empowering and equipping laity before violating church law.<sup>54</sup>

The fruit in mentoring laity in pastoral leadership may have been captured best by Jesus in one of his parables. In his story of the soils (Mark 4:1-8), Jesus spoke about the productiveness of seed sown in good ground. It could yield thirty, sixty, even hundred times more than what was sown. When laity are cultivated well and developed in their spiritual priesthood and ministry, there is a credibility and effectiveness that only they can bring. For example, newcomers in worship are 75 percent more likely to return again if they are visited first by a layperson.<sup>55</sup> What does that suggest about the impact of laity when they engage in other pastoral and spiritual ministries? The greatest value of apprentice leadership development may not be merely in the number of ministers that are multiplied and mobilized to serve in the world. It may come rather in the special fruitfulness lay people

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<sup>52</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 219.

<sup>54</sup> Depending upon the bishop, United Methodist clergy may send laity to distribute communion on behalf of the clergy. Moreover, there is no reason why laity cannot cosign baptismal and membership certificates. Church law may not provide for this, but neither does it prohibit this.

<sup>55</sup> Easum & Bandy, *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*, 161.

have as “indigenous missionaries” who have many more common links with their community.