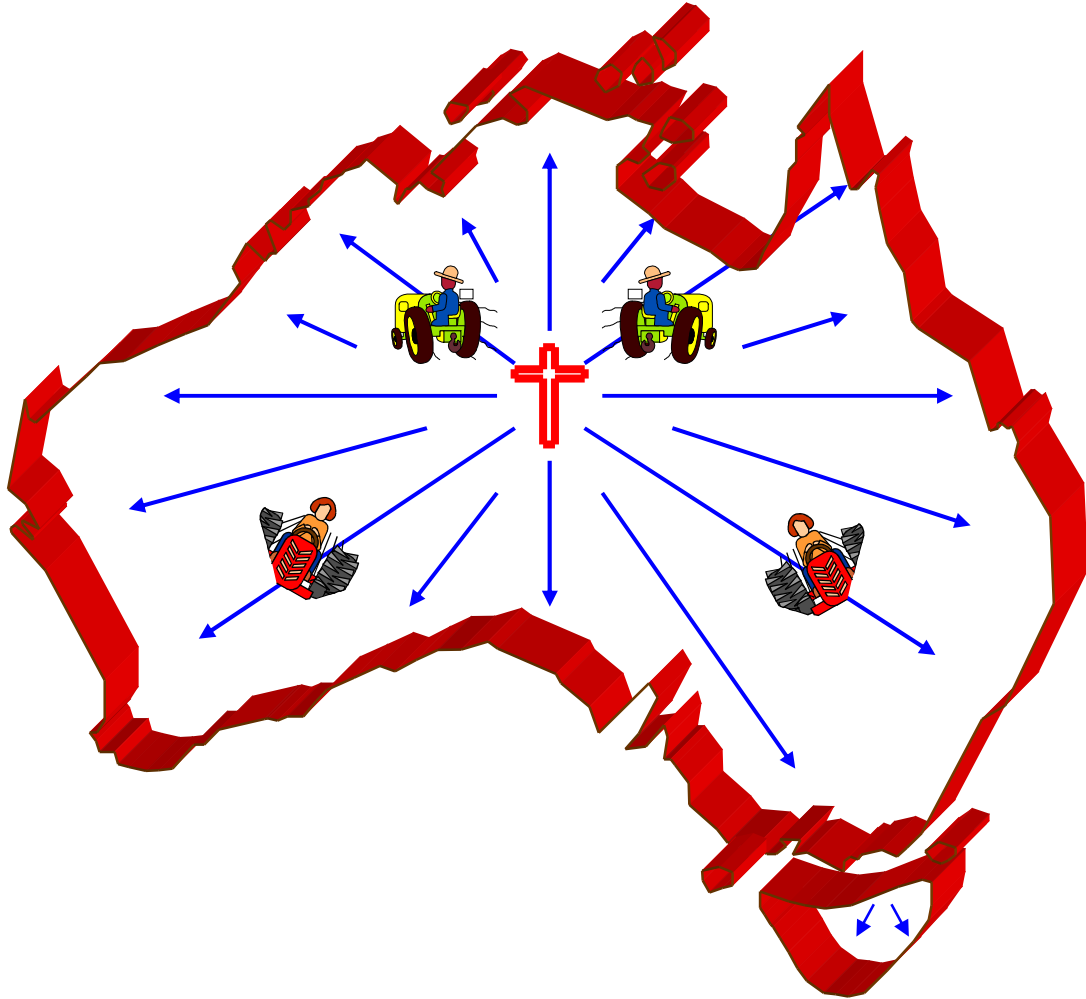


Revival Ministries Australia

presents



**A STRATEGY
TO REACH
THE NATION**

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INTRODUCTION

In this manual we present current understanding of the strategy in this nation of Australia to fulfil the Great Commission, and current teaching emphases from the Word of God. We recognise we only see in part but we are committed being faithful to all the LORD reveals and commands. In November 1998, we were profoundly challenged to listen to the LORD concerning a strategy to reach this nation. Since then, a strategy has taken shape and we have spent time listening, studying, sharing, travelling, in ministry, receiving from others and witnessing first hand what the LORD is doing in a number of places in Australia, in Myanmar and the Philippines.

We realised we had become clear as to the vision the LORD has given to His church, encapsulated in the Great Commission in its full Scriptural ramifications but we were not aware of a specific strategy and therefore not accountable to achieve or be fruitful according to any particular plan.

Sadly, some of God's people have not yet caught the vision of what God wants, and **intends**, and **commands**, and very few have discovered a strategy or a plan that they can commit themselves to, and actively work in.

The release of meaningful strategy and effective work is dependant upon the restoration of the five-fold ministry gift of **Ephesians 4:7-16**, as well as a commitment to return to our first love and "do the first works" of the first church (**Acts 2:42-47**). It is to the apostles that Jesus gives the blueprint for the "master plan" (**1 Corinthians 3:10**). To this end we were told through a prophet that we needed to go aside to seek the LORD. We have called the saints together for days of "seeking the LORD" where we have met without agendas and spent the day waiting on God, opening up the Word, listening to the Holy Spirit and prophetic utterance. **Acts 13:1-3** has been a rhema word to us as a guide for these days.

As we present this manual of six sessions, we are aware of how incomplete our understanding is of the LORD'S strategies for this nation. However, we are blessed and encouraged to find **He** is doing the work, preparing His people and allowing us to play a part in His great work which is happening according to His plan and strategy.

A prophetic ministry came among us in July, 1999, soon after we had released this manual and said the word of the Lord for 1999 was "The Lord is preparing and positioning His people to possess His promises". As I review the sessions in this manual in October, 2000, I am aware we are still in the preparation stage, although I have witnessed the positioning of many saints over the last two years. A number of saints have gone to Bible schools for training and preparation; others are purposely becoming debt-free so they are ready to obey the call of God; others are selling properties to be more available for ministry. As yet there has been no major church-planting move, although there is a growing house church development that is difficult to measure. Mass evangelism is not known in Australia yet but we believe it is coming. Hence the preparation and positioning of the Lord's people!

A STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter one

GROUNDWORK

GOD'S PLAN

GO FORTH

GROUNDWORK: GOD'S PLAN: GO FORTH!

VISION STATEMENT

The Lord Jesus Christ has clearly given to the church the great commission and it is our conviction that we are to fulfil the great commission as our primary focus and "reason for being".

The great commission in **Matthew 28:18-20**:

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Jesus sends us to the nations, to the people groups, to make disciples. This includes evangelism, winning people to the LORD, *"baptising them into the name..."* and training them as disciples, *"teaching ... all I have commanded you"*.

The great commission in **Mark 16:15-16**:

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’” Jesus commands us to go to every creature, i.e., every person, with the gospel. People are saved or condemned on the basis of what they do with the gospel once they have heard it.

The great commission in **Luke 24:46-49**:

Verse 47: *"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* Jesus tells us what the heart of the Gospel is: **repentance and forgiveness of sins**. The gospel is powerful to change people and heal them, bringing them into wholeness.

**We are commissioned to go to every nation
to every person
with the message of repentance and forgiveness**

This is what Jesus has commanded us to do. This is what He expects us to do. This is what will happen because the Word of the Lord will not fail but will achieve God's intention and purpose.

GOAL/ PURPOSE

To plant a church right where you live, to be a witness to the power of God.

There needs to be an active, bible-based, soul-winning church characterised by the power of God manifest in the midst, in every locality so that every soul is contacted and impacted by the gospel. Then each person has to make a choice for Christ or otherwise.

What is a church plant? When a family or a small group (two or more) start to meet together with Jesus (**Matthew 18: 18-20**) and seek the salvation of the lost. The church grows as people are saved and joined to the community of believers, not as people transfer from other church fellowships.

What constitutes a church in the New Testament?

The simplest model is in **Acts 2:42-47**. The new believers along with the apostles and others who already were Christians devoted themselves continually to four things, i.e.;

- they were involved in sharing the word of God [the apostles' doctrine],
- fellowship,
- the breaking of bread [which is communion] and
- prayer.

These four things can all happen in a home or anywhere (in a car! In an aeroplane!).

They can begin with two or more people who devote themselves to sharing the Word together, praying, breaking bread and entering into a real partnership (fellowship). In **Acts 2:43**, this led to "*great fear coming upon every soul*", and "*many signs and wonders...*"

Believe the Lord for signs and wonders: signs of His Presence in the midst. The Lord uses signs and wonders to attract people to hear the gospel. It is His way!

In **verses 44-45**, a depth of sharing in practical ways (fellowship) is demonstrated. The church is to continue daily in these things (**verse 46**). The result is a praising people, switched on and tuned into the Lord and His purposes, and He adds daily those who are being saved (**verse 47**).

STRATEGY

To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, throughout the nation, town by town, suburb by suburb, street area by street area, country locality by country locality, until every soul has heard.

This is the clear command of the Lord and the mandate He has given to the church.

It is time to plan, to strategise and act! The strategy will encompass travelling ministry teams and people on the ground in every place "doing the stuff".

THE FIRE IS BURNING: THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS MOTIVATES US !!!

It is time! There is a fire burning in our bellies. We have dreamed of this time we live in when God, the great God, is moving throughout the nations, fulfilling that which He has promised. Can you imagine the feeling that the Jews had as they started to come back to the land? For years they had said at the annual Passover, "Next year, Jerusalem!" And suddenly some of them were in the land, celebrating Passover. It is like that for God's people who have caught the vision of the Great Commission being fulfilled in our lifetime; maybe even in the next few, or couple of, years.

Can you imagine the "*joy that was set before Jesus*" that enabled Him to endure the cross? (**Hebrews 12:2**) Is He getting excited now as He directs His church into the last days' great revival that will bring in the long-awaited harvest? How many of the world's 6.4 billion souls will believe the gospel when they see it witnessed before their eyes?

The question often on my heart is: "if not me and us, then who will respond and obey the Lord to go?" Will you become obedient to the call of Jesus to follow Him into preaching the gospel to every person in every tribe and nation, in every town and suburb? **WHO WILL GO? SEND ME LORD!**

HOW DO WE OBEY THE CALL? THE WAY FORWARD...

How do we respond to the call of God to fulfill the Great Commission? The Great Commission is all about souls coming to know Christ, and growing up in Him. **The purpose of the church is to fulfil the great commission.** All of our planning, effort, and finance need to reflect the serious response we are making to Jesus' clear commands. Many seem to have thought in the past that the great commission is optional and as long as some evangelistic types get on with their ministries, the rest of us can do everything else we want to do.

"The times they are a'changing!" The time of the harvest is upon us. There is an urgency that we have not felt before with such intensity. It does not abate but increases. We have been impacted deeply by the study of Gideon in **Judges 6-8**, to see how 300 were chosen out of 32,000 to be a vanguard army who delivered a whole nation bringing peace for forty years. How many does God need to bring His purpose about in this nation and then to other nations through folks from Australia?

God's Secret Plan For Australia, Openly Revealed

It is possible for the present church in Australia to effectively reach the whole nation in a very short period of time. However it is unlikely that the major portion of church people will be interested in doing this. So how many people does God need and what should we be doing? It is the Lord's clear command that His disciples are to go forth with the gospel.

It is a gospel of power (Romans 1:16), and the Lord guarantees a demonstration of His power to confirm His gospel as we preach it (**Mark 16:17-20**). The Lord is calling for labourers in Australia: men and women and young people who will go out and preach a gospel with power throughout this land. As well the call is to people who will start a church right where you are or wherever the Lord directs you to go. This gospel must be preached as a witness to every people group (**Matthew 24:14**).

What is a nation? Who makes up a people group?

In the Hebrew (S.C.1471) the word "*goy*" generally means a foreign nation and refers to the Gentiles; it means non-covenantal people, people who do not know God. Jesus was clear in speaking to His disciples in **Matthew 24:14**, that the gospel must be preached as a witness to every nation. The Greek word "*ethnos*" (S.C.1482,1484) can simply mean a large group of people, an ethnic group, not always referring to a specific political national group. Certainly Jesus was referring to all non-Jewish people. This gospel must be preached to every people group; that is what Jesus said!

How do we effectively reach a people group? and how do we put Mark 16:15 together with reaching nations? In **Mark** we are commanded to preach the gospel to each individual. We all know salvation is personal and individual. Each person must be born again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (**John 3:5**).

Reaching every people group in Australia

How does a town of 750 people in the centre of a rural locality of another 670 farming people get to see and hear the gospel? What about a town of 6000 people in a shire area of 11000 people? What about a suburb of 14,000 people? How do they get to hear the gospel? Is what the churches are currently doing reaching these micro people groups? What about the 3,000 Aboriginal folk living in a city of 90,000 with one small Aboriginal-led church in the city? How will they hear a powerful life-changing gospel? How do a family in a country area reach their neighbours with the gospel? And so on across this nation of 18,000,000 of which less than ten per cent have anything to do with church regularly. The situation in your nation will be similar: **the challenge of the Great Commission is to reach everyone in every people group.**

Jesus spoke of the harvest many times. He said the fields are already ripe in **John 4:35**. He told us to pray for labourers to be sent out in **Matthew 9:37-38** and in **Luke 10:2**. Jesus makes it clear that it is "the Lord of the harvest" who will take responsibility for the raising up of labourers and all other aspects of the harvest. **Matthew 13:49** and **Revelation 4:6-7** suggest that the Lord will send powerful angels at the end of the age to help complete the great harvest which is signalled by the end-time preaching of the gospel to every person in every people group.

The Lord has Australia in His mind. [He has your nation in mind too in the same way] He has decreed that everyone in Australia is to hear the gospel so that every person can decide for Jesus or against Him. The Lord wants to bring you in on this secret of His. He will not fail in His purpose.

Will you be one of the Lord's army that delivers the gospel to this nation?

RESTORATION OF THE APOSTOLIC

In our team we have felt to write down some of the understanding and strategy we believe the Lord has made clear to us over recent times. We believe we are in the time when God is restoring the apostolic ministry gift to the **church (1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11)**. The key understanding of the actual meaning of this word, apostle, is "a sent one", or delegate; thus, an ambassador for the gospel (S.C.652). It comes from another Greek word (S.C.649) which means, set apart, i.e., to send out (on a mission) and is translated in the KJV: - put in, send forth, send out (or away), set (at liberty). This freedom aspect in the background of the word, apostle, is interesting. It seems that until the apostolic is restored there is lacking a degree of freedom and release in the church!

The **Word Wealth in the Spirit Filled Life Bible** (p.1738) says an apostle is one commissioned for a particular task or role, one who is sent with a message. Someone has suggested that an apostle is characterised by the following:

- i. one who has had a visible encounter with the risen Christ;
- ii. one who plants churches;
- iii. one who functions in the ministry with signs, wonders and miracles.

In these times of restoration, the apostolic ministry is also concerned about foundations, both in the individual Christian life (**Hebrews 6:1-2**) and the church (**Ephesians 2:20**). The LORD is calling us to check our foundations. One of the manifestations of this is that many believers are being baptised in water (baptism = immersion). As the

revelation of the five-fold ministry gift of **Ephesians 4:11** is being understood, as churches, we need to open up to the apostolic and prophetic ministries. Until we do this we will not experience the full expression of ministry with signs and wonders and the teaching of God's word in the spirit of revelation. It is to the apostles that Jesus gives the keys of the kingdom, in other words, apostolic authority releases the kingdom of God, displacing the principalities and powers.

The church of the New Testament is apostolic basically because it is "sent" into the world by Jesus, the great apostle and high priest of our calling (**Hebrews 3:1**), to all the nations, with the gospel. The Great Commission commands us to go!

In **Ephesians 4:7**, Paul clearly says that **each one** has a portion in the ministry gifts that Christ has given the church. As this is accepted by the ministry leadership of the church then more and more saints will be raised up, being equipped to do the work of the ministry, including all the ministry gifts given by the ascended Christ to the church in **Ephesians 4**.

In **1 Corinthians 12:28**, Paul speaks of "*appointments*" in the church: **God "has appointed"**. Some individual saints are appointed by God to function in an apostolic ministry. Similarly others are appointed by God to function in other giftings and ministries including "*workers of miracles*". Those with specific appointment are able to take the ministry forward and to train and equip others to function in the ministry.

STEPS TO FRUITFULNESS

There are obvious scriptural steps that lead to effective service, i.e., fruitfulness. We can also draw on the experiences of others whom God has called to pioneering works in these days of restoration and the raising up of labourers for the harvest.

Seven Steps of Ministry in Obeying The Great Commission and Establishing New Testament Churches:

STEP 1: PRAYER Two or three or more gathering together is the place to begin and must be entered into consistently until the Lord returns;

Hebrews 11:6 promises rewards for those who diligently seek the Lord.

Matthew 18:18-20 when we agree together concerning the will of the Lord, that is, to preach the gospel to the people that live around us, the Father will act on our behalf.

So what are we agreeing to do?

- i. to obey Jesus' command to share the gospel;
- ii. to ask God for souls;
- iii. to pray for them by name as God gives the contacts.

[See session 2 (two) in this manual for detailed teaching on prayer]

STEP 2: EVANGELISM the action that comes out of prayer; the Lord will direct! The Great Commission is His command. He wills for every person to be evangelised (**2 Pet.3:9 & 1Tim.2:4**). In many cases evangelistic outreach will lead to a new church being planted. Out of the prayer, God will lead you to people. The goal is to share Christ with them. If we are faithful in prayer then this strategy will not fail. God will give "divine appointments" that are exciting, meaningful and fruitful. It is time to witness! The people of this nation are being

prepared by God. It is time to win souls! God has released the resources to train the saints in soul-winning.

[See session 4 (four), “Bringing in the Harvest”, in this manual , for teaching on evangelism]

STEP 3: NURTURE Nurturing is looking after baby Christians. The Apostle John addresses new Christians as little children, and in **1Jn.2:12-14**, he notes two key facts about them:

1. their sins are forgiven for His name's sake and
2. they have come to know the Father.

When a person is born again (**Jn.3:3-6**) they become a member of God's family, "***Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***" (**Jn.1:13**) The Holy Spirit enters in to the spirit of the person and He gives to the new believer "***the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father***" (**Rom.8:15** KJV). "***The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God***" (v.16).

How do we Nurture Babes in Christ?

By feeding them: Jesus commanded Peter "***feed my lambs***" (**Jn.21:15**) and "***feed My sheep***" (v.17). Babes need milk so we must feed them **the milk of God's word**. Sheep need **solid food**. **1 Pet.2:2** "***as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby.***" This is the good news of salvation: as the apostle John said, knowing your sins are forgiven.

In **Hebrews 5:12**, the Apostle says "***the first principles of the oracles of God***", that is, "***the principles of the doctrines of Christ***", or the foundations (**Heb.6:1-2**) are the milk of God's word. He is exhorting the Hebrew believers to go on to maturity, not having to lay again the six foundations. So it is clear from **Heb.5:12 - 6:3** that the **teaching of the foundational principles is feeding the milk of the Word of God**. The **solid food is the word of righteousness (Heb.6:13)** and the solid food is for the mature.

“By this time you ought to be teachers” (Heb.5:12)

These Christians that the writer to Hebrews is addressing should have grown up, but they have not; they are still needing to be fed on milk. Milk is for the immature. The Apostle wants them to have solid food. The proof that they haven't grown up is that they are not able to teach others the foundations. Everyone needs to be well taught in the foundations so we can teach others. Some Christians have never been taught the first principles of God's word, so they are still needing milk. Once you have been given the milk you begin to grow, and then are able to teach others and to recognise false doctrine.

2 Tim.2:2 The goal that the Lord has for us is that we grow up in the Lord so we can teach others: "***The things you have heard, commit to faithful men so that they might be able to teach also***".

Heb.5:13 talks about the one who "***is unskilled in the word of righteousness***"; this one is still considered a babe. The word of righteousness is the solid food. Being able to understand and to preach and teach and live by the word of righteousness is to be a mature Christian.

Eph.4:14 "***no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine***"; no longer following after some man and his teaching, but being a **disciple of the Word yourself**. Checking the scripture for yourself to know whether what you are hearing is true or not.

"Solid food belongs to those who are of full age" (Heb.5:14). Those who can discern between God and the devil are those who have the Holy Spirit and especially those who have become mature in the word of God.

How do we nurture the young Christian?

We feed them the word of God. The word concerning **salvation**, the word concerning **healing**, the word concerning **restoration**. When the day of Pentecost came and the Holy Spirit was poured out and 3000 men were converted, the new believers continued in 4 things: **the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:41-42)**. Herein we have the perfect prescription for nurturing new believers, that they may grow and be established in the faith.

New Christians need a lot of care and attention like any babe does. There is little difference between natural babies and baby Christians. They can still come under attack from the old nature and not be strong enough to deal with it on their own. So they might ring any time of the day or night needing help. Young Christians need to be trained even as young children need to be trained and disciplined; sometimes correction is needed. It is the teaching of the Word of God that teaches, trains, corrects and reproves the believer (**2Ti.3:16**). Nurturing is a full time commitment; we need to learn to be discerning in how we nurture the new Christians.

Heb.6:1-2, lists the 6 foundations, and says that until we have these foundations properly laid we cannot go on to **perfection/maturity**. These foundations are: **repentance from dead works, faith toward God, doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement**. We get baptised, we get filled with the Holy Spirit, we start to walk in resurrection power and we understand that our citizenship is in heaven above; then we really start to grow up into maturity. Nurturing means leading the new Christian through these foundations ensuring that each one is properly laid. When new believers are well grounded in their faith and well grounded in the word of God they will grow. This will lay a proper foundation for the whole church to grow into maturity.

STEP 4: DISCIPLING Matt.28:20 The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to teach everything that He commanded us. We are to teach the new Christians, those who have just been saved, those who have just been baptised.

The goal of discipling is:

- i. to have each new Christian discipled to the word of God**, not to a person or a great leader, but to the word of God.
- ii. teach every believer the precepts and principles of the word of God**, that they may grow thereby.
- iii. to teach the disciples how to do basic Bible studies**
- iv. to teach the disciple to hear the 'rhema' word of God (Rom.10:17)**
- v. to set the disciple basic assignments of Bible reading and study, prayer and witnessing.**

Disciple comes from the same Latin root word as discipline, both coming from the Latin word meaning to speak or to teach, in the sense of instruction. So discipling is a teaching form of ministry. It fulfils that part of the commission, to teach the new Christians the word of God.

A Basic Plan for Discipling

A. Ask young Christians, those who are young in the Lord to **commit to reading Scripture every day**, three to five chapters each day on a committed basis. The goal is

to permeate, that is, soak yourself with the Word of God – the washing of the water of the word (**Eph.5:26**); to have the Word of God inside of you so the Holy Spirit can quicken that word whenever He needs to. It is much easier for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you once you become a person of the word, because it is His word and He turns the ‘*logos*’ [the written word] into the ‘*rhema*’ [the quickened word]. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding as you read the Word.

B. The disciple is asked to keep a journal, writing down the chapters read each day, making a summary of what they have read, the main theme or character and what is happening.

C. Ask the Lord what He wants to say to them from the chapters read, allowing Him to speak to them from His word. Write down what the Lord is saying. This encourages new Christians to expect God to speak to them through the word, and to give them understanding of the word as they read it.

D. Learn three verses of scripture off by heart each week. Commit to learning and memorising some verses each week. This gets the word inside of the disciple and enables them to quote scripture from memory. The more scripture we know the easier it is to teach the scripture, the easier it is to share the word of God with others and to pray the word of God. If you have been a diligent reader of scripture then the Holy Spirit has something to remind you of and to bring to your remembrance.

E. Share your faith with at least 2 people each week. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you opportunities to share your faith with someone who doesn't know Jesus. Look for those opportunities. Take up the challenge to share the gospel of Jesus with the lost.

F. Pray for the lost by name, keep their name in your journal. Write down who you are praying for. Pray for them by name, be specific, ask the Lord who He wants you to pray for. Keep records of His answers.

G. Meet in a small group each week for one hour with others who are also being disciplined, usually no more than 4-5 people. If numbers increase divide and gather others. This is a way of bringing new Christians into discipleship. It is an **accountability group**, to feed back and share what God has shown and to ask questions. This is a focused time for one hour. Each group has a facilitator. Ask people to share what they have been reading, what the Lord has been saying, what opportunities have opened up for sharing their faith.

These discipling groups are for a season, usually about 6 months. By this time people have become disciplined about studying the word and will be ready to take on a group of new Christians to encourage them to become disciples.

Discipling is a specific discipline to lead people to be disciples of the Word;

***"teach them to do all that I have taught you!"* Matthew 28:20**

***"Let the word of Christ dwell in you ..."* Colossians 3:16**

STEP 5: TRAINING and EQUIPPING fulfilling the role of the ministry by bringing all the new members into effective ministry (**Ephesians 4:12**) from being little children in the Lord to mature functioning adults. Once a new believer has been

nurtured and disciplined, they are to be trained and equipped for the ministry calling on their life. This includes experience on ministry teams both within Australia and overseas [Paul took Timothy on team]. The emphasis is "on the job" training. Various seminars and courses are available - ministries have been raised up to meet this need. Short-term training schools are now available.

[See Session 3 (three) in this manual for further teaching on “training and equipping”]

STEP 6: CHURCH PLANTING Sending out the trained and equipped; **we are not here to grow churches but to plant new ones as a result of preaching the gospel to the lost.** This may mean starting or hosting an Alpha course, coordinating a prayer fellowship that will lead into winning the lost, facilitating an outreach where the lost and the broken are gathered in and ministered to, planting a housechurch among new converts.

[See Session 3 & 4 in this manual for further teaching on church-planting and evangelism]

STEP 7: EMERGENCE OF NEW MINISTRIES recognising and releasing the new ministries that the Lord is raising up. As the church functions in New Testament ministries, abiding in first love and doing the first works, the Lord will add to such a church those who are being saved. Every saint, new and old, will naturally/supernaturally, in the Lord, grow and function. Some will emerge as ascension gift ministers (*Ephesians 4:11*), others in various other gifts and ministries such as those listed in **1Cor.12:28**.

A key role of the emerging apostolic ministries in the church is to recognise the emergence of new ministries and raise them up, working with the local eldership to release and set these new ministries in place in the Body of Christ.

A STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter Two

P R A Y E R

The essential element

In Preparation and Planting

PRAYER

DISCOVERING GOD'S STRATEGY FOR REACHING THE LOST

Prayer is the power house or engine room of the church, some say. It is true. For five years now we have benefited from being part of coordinating weekly prayer meetings (between 2to5 meetings per week), as well as early morning prayer. We have experienced from the beginning of this era in our life the power of the prayer meeting; the group-seeking of God, the revelation, confirmation, visions etc that have come to inspire and empower ministry, both within the prayer meeting and in public preaching, the conduct of seminars and other ministries.

We have witnessed the emergence of committed daily prayer groups in Albion, Brisbane and the longer term prayer of members, especially ladies, in Dysart, six mornings per week, and the resultant signs, wonders and manifestations of the Spirit of God.

Out of this example, a family in Toowoomba were provoked to godly jealousy and in early December, 1998, they opened their home six mornings a week for prayer, the breaking of bread and fellowship breakfast. The Word of God is always open and central to the prayer fellowship. In other words this morning prayer group is beginning to function as a New Testament housechurch (**Acts 2:42**) and can legitimately be called a prayer house. Out of the prayer base, active evangelism is arising, including neighbourhood prayer walks, contacts with neighbours, and input into a Friday night fellowship that reaches the lost, the needy and the broken.

As well, the prayer meetings have been used in the Holy Spirit to send teams out to minister in other towns and commission members to local evangelism.

This one particular prayer house regularly prayed for the lost, prayed for contacts by name, asking for divine appointments and requesting the Lord to add to our number daily those who are being saved. New ones are coming to the Friday night outreach, and recently a young male drug addict was brought to the house for counsel and ministry. One could say, "it is all happening!" simply because a few (2-13) people gather each morning to pray.

**Prayer is the place to wait on God,
the place where the vision is received and prayed into place.
Prayers of agreement are happily answered by God.**

There has come a change in how prayer is working. For many, prayer has been a vital part of, like a support base to, ministry and preaching, public services, seminars etc. Pray much and all these things will go well. This is true and God will honour all praying people with real answers.

**The change is this: when people simply come together to pray,
break bread, consider the Scriptures and fellowship together
in the things of the Lord, they become the church in action.**

It actually works! Something happens! We enter in to being the church in action. All the vital components of the church are expressed in the daily gathering to seek the Lord.

And the Lord directs, energises, comforts, counsels, encourages,

**motivates, gives divine appointments,
brings the lost into contact with members of the prayer fellowships**

So much of the success of the prayer fellowship is dependent upon the focus of the prayer fellowship.

What Is The Focus Of The Prayer Fellowship?

- Being the church that meets in fellowship for prayer, seeking to fulfil the Great Commission, to seek for the lost.
- With a focus on Jesus and the Scriptures, a sharing of needs and aspirations, prayers of agreement.

As a result of this focus come answers to prayers, an increase of the tangible presence of God and we all go on encouraged as was the church in **Acts 2:42-47** with

- *"great fear"*
- *"signs and wonders"*
- *"praise and worship"*
- *"fellowship, sharing, mutual concern"*
- *"souls being saved"*

God has given us prayer as a means of communicating with Him, to discover His will, to wait upon Him for direction. **Committed, consistent prayer is essential** if the church is to grow. If we are to obey the Lord's command to make disciples (**Matt. 28:19**) and to preach the gospel to every creature, (**Mark 16:15**) we must be seeking the Lord in prayer to know His plans and to be doing things His way.

COMMITTED, CONSISTENT PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

**The saints prayer → praise → petition → give thanks → intercede!
God responds → answers → gives direction → empowers the saints!**

Jesus has promised to build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (**Matthew 16:18**). We need to be in constant touch with the Master builder to know His plans. As the writer of **Psalm 127:1** says: *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it."* From the Scriptures we know that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. That was God's purpose in coming to earth in His Son. **John 12:47** *"I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."*

Jesus showed His disciples the fields ready for harvest (**John 4:35**). We are continually seeing people lost for eternity - on TV, in the newspapers, on the beaches, in the shopping centres, in our neighbours' yards, within our own families. It was to these people that Jesus said **GO!**

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." **Matt.28:19**

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." **Mk 16:15**

We begin to fulfil these commands in prayer.

Jesus quoted from the book of **Isaiah** saying, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"* (**Isaiah 56:7**).

In this study we are looking at the role of prayer in fulfilling the Great Commission.

WHY PRAY?

Jesus set an example

1. His ministry came out of His times of intimate fellowship with the Father.
John 5:19 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*
John 5:30 *"I can of Myself do nothing...I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."*
Signs and miracles followed times spent in prayer. He named His twelve disciples after a night spent in prayer (**Luke 6:12-13**). We can assume that much of that night was spent seeking guidance from God as to who would be chosen to be trained to know the mysteries of God and to learn from the way Jesus responded to the needs of the lost, the hurting, the sick, the demonised...
2. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray (**Matt.6:5-13**).
3. He took them apart to pray, withdrawing them from the crowds, and from active ministry to the people (**Luke 9:18**).
4. He asked them to travail in prayer with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and exhorted them: *"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."* (**Lu.22:39-46**)
5. Jesus has promised us that the Holy Spirit will *"take of what is Mine and declare it to you"* (**John 16:13**).

He said that the Holy Spirit would reveal the things of God to those who are the friends of Jesus. Friendship is built out of times spent in relationship with another person, communicating with that other person, listening to that other person. If we are to know God's ways we are to spend time with Him listening to Him. John the Baptist said, *"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven"* (**John 3:27**). We need guidance from heaven.

The Fruit of Prayer

1. On the day of Pentecost we see the believers in a prayer meeting (**Acts 2:1**). When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them that day, God released gifts and joy that resulted in 3000 souls being added to them! (**Acts 2:41**)

[believers + prayer] + [Holy Spirit + gifts] = JOY + SOULS SAVED

Acts 2:42-47 reveals to us what the early church was doing to cause the Lord to add to the church daily those who were being saved.

Verse 42: They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. There was a persistence (continuing daily) and a determination (steadfastly), a meeting together, an acknowledgment of God in their midst, and a waiting on God for guidance (prayers).

Verse 43: Fear came upon the people because they saw God's power released in their midst. Whenever we see the wonder of God's power released in our midst there is an increased awareness of our need to be obedient to God.

Verse 44: There was togetherness - fellowship - and obviously agreement.

Verse 46: They were in one accord - agreement

They were committed - continuing daily

Verse 47: Their meetings were joyful meetings - praising God

Verse 47: All this resulted in God adding many souls to their number daily.

These disciples had the teachings of Jesus fresh in their hearts and minds and were being obedient to His words. There was an urgency to get the job done so that Jesus would return and they were filled with the expectation that He was returning soon. They were acknowledging the Lord in their midst as they broke bread together. Obviously they had been obedient to the Lord's command to wait till they were clothed with power from on high (*Acts 1:8*) for many signs and wonders were done among them. They were seeking first the kingdom of God. As they abided in the word of God - the apostles' doctrine - they prayed the will of God into place. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

2. When Peter and John were released after being examined for healing the lame man, (*Acts 3:6*) they immediately went to their companions and prayed.

Acts 4:31 "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word with boldness."

In v. 33 we read of the great power with which the apostles testified.

It was from the prayer meeting that the believers were released with power to minister and speak.

EVANGELISM was the ACTION that followed PRAYER

3. When Peter was in prison "*constant prayer was offered to God for him by the saints*" (*Acts 12:5*). Peter must have been expecting the saints to be praying because on his miraculous release from prison he went directly to the house where they were gathered in prayer. *Acts 12:12: "He came to the house of Mary ... where many were gathered together praying."*

4. *Acts 13:2-4* and *Acts 15:40* show the prayer group praying and fasting for the team going out and then **becoming the sending body**.

5. *Acts 14:23* records the **apostles appointing elders** after meeting with others in prayer. Out of this prayer meeting we see them **leaving an established order** for the new church.

6. *Acts 16:6-7* The believers **receive directions from the Holy Spirit**. v.9 Paul received a vision from which he concluded "*that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them*". v. 10 "*after he had received the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia*." Paul joined with others to pray the vision into place. ("he" received; "we" sought)

This obedience to God's guidance revealed to Paul in a vision, led to:

- an encounter with Lydia at a prayer meeting at the riverside (**Verse 13**)
- the consequent baptism of Lydia and her household (**Verse 15**)
- a housechurch was established (**Verse 15**)
- the deliverance of a girl possessed with a spirit of divination (following prayer) (**Verse 18**)

- Paul and Silas miraculously released from their prison chains as they witnessed through prayer and praise to the other prisoners (**Verse 25**)
- an opportunity to preach the word to the keeper of the prison and his household (**Verse 32**)
- a whole family received baptism into the kingdom of God (**Verse 33**)

WHERE ARE WE TO BEGIN?

Gathering in His Name:

How many we need to begin?

Matt.18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Jesus promised to be present whenever two or three are gathered in His name. This gathering of two or three people in His name is the place to begin to pray, and must be entered into consistently until the Lord returns.

Where do we gather in His name?

We can gather anywhere to seek Him but a home is preferable because there we are able to most easily fulfil all the needs of breaking of bread, fellowship, teaching and prayer.

People need to know where to come to find the church praying.

How often do we gather?

As often as possible - the early church met daily (**Acts 2:46**).

Hebrews 11:6 promises that He will reward those who seek Him.

How long do we pray for?

If we are meeting daily, a half-hour to one hour is probably long enough. Those meeting this regularly learn very quickly how to enter into the Lord's presence.

When we are gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, He is present in the midst of His people. The gifts of the Spirit flow freely. Words of knowledge, words of prophecy, visions are released and from these we see God's will and His plans and are able to pray accordingly and act accordingly.

It is exciting to share what God has done as He has heard and answered our prayers - to become the church in action. People go out from the prayer meeting to witness, seeing the gospel at work, and come back rejoicing. There is fruit which is faith building, which leads to more fruit and gives all present a powerful and up-to-date testimony to share with others.

HOW TO PRAY

Agreeing with His word

Matt.18:19:"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning any thing that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."

The Scriptures are open in the prayer meeting

Much of the direction, inspiration, praise comes directly from the Scriptures as the Word Himself is honoured in the midst.

The actual prayer goals

We are gathered in His name to agree concerning the will of God ie. to preach the gospel to those around us (**Matt.18:18-20**). The Father will act on our behalf.

So what are we agreeing to do?

1. The Lord clearly commands us to preach the gospel and make disciples.
The Lord expresses His will: **Matt.28:19; Mk 16:15; Lu. 24:47; Jn. 21:17**
We are clearly told to ask for labourers to go out to preach the gospel. **Matt.9:38;**
Lu.10:2

2. We pray for souls. The Lord's desire is that none should perish. **1 Pet. 3:9; 1Tim.2:4**

3. We pray for them by name as God gives the contacts. **"None can come unless the Father draws them" Jn 6:44.** Ask the Father that God will grant them to come to Jesus (**Jn 6:55**).

Jesus has clearly told us to preach the gospel to every nation. This can refer to groups of people with some common interest or allegiance, not only nation states. Pray for people by groups: family members, friends, neighbours, districts, nations, every people group.
Ps. 2:8 "Ask of Me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession."

Jesus said, **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" Matt.7:7.**

As we obey the Lord, He will reveal and open up His strategy to us. After all it was the Lord who said, **"I will make you fishers of men" Matt. 4:19** and He has promised to make known to us what is yet to be (**Jn 16:13**).

SO WE BEGIN:

- with 2 or 3 people gathering together - in a house, on a walk, in a car
- acknowledging God in their midst
- with the Bible open to pray the will of God into place: **"Thy kingdom come."**
- asking for a passion for the lost
- prayer warfare - denying satan the right to hold people in bondage by - acknowledging the power of God and recognising the Lord's desire to see all men saved (**1 Tim. 2:1-4**)
- asking for people by name
- praying for districts, people groups, nations
- asking the Lord of the harvest for labourers
- expecting God to do what He has promised He would do
- giving thanks for what He will do and is already doing

As the regular (daily) prayer meeting continues, God answers the above prayers. Contacts are made through divine appointments.

OUT OF THE PRAYER COMES THE ACTION.

So what is this prayer meeting? Some have called it a prayer house and the resultant action prayer evangelism. **AND IT WORKS ! ! ! !**

**Regular committed prayer based on the Word of God leads to fruitfulness,
the salvation of many souls,
the encouragement of many saints to become fruitful.**

THE CONTINUING PRAYER BASE

We have looked at the reports in the book of **Acts** to see the believers meeting regularly together for prayer and the resultant salvation of many as they saw the signs and wonders that God performed through the believers.

We lay the foundations of all that we do in prayer and build upon these foundations as God directs and empowers.

The prayer house gathering becomes the sending body. The labourers go out into the harvest empowered from their meeting with the Lord in the prayer meeting. So the praying goes on until the task is complete. And finally the Lord will come when the task of personal worldwide evangelism is complete.

PRAYING IN THE VISION

Habakkuk 2:1-3 exemplifies what we are to do in prayer.

- v. 1 Watching and waiting on the Lord to speak, listening to Him
- v. 2 Recording the vision that the Lord shows - the will of God
- v. 3 Waiting for the fulfilment of the vision - the praying in of the will of God - praying the vision into being. *“Though it tarries, wait for it.” “Because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”* It won't fail because it is the will of God.

1Jn 5:14-15: *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”*

The prayer base undergirds every segment of the work and every stage of growth.

The prayer dynamic works in such a way that as the people involved continue in prayer, there is always confirmation and affirmation of the direction, and redirection when necessary. The grace of God is such that if, in the planning of an initiative of outreach, a wrong decision is made, His correction will come through the prayer meeting. Because the Lord is the focus and the seeking of His will is the goal, the gifts of the Spirit will be flowing freely in the meeting and there will be much confirmation of what God is showing. The Lord will be watching to see that **His will** is done.

The action of evangelism comes out of the prayer fellowship because in the prayer fellowship we are seeking to pray the will of God as demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus and the early church. Even as we have seen that the actions of ministry came out of the prayer life of Jesus and the early church, we are experiencing the same in our ministry.

A STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter Three

**VISION,
STRATEGY
And WORK**

ALL REACHED MANY SAVED

VISION, STRATEGY AND WORK

INTRODUCTION:

Over the time of RMA's existence, the LORD has led us in a growth and development in ministry and in the understanding of His Word, of the times we live, and the waves of His Spirit that continually come. We have learnt from many others, including from the four ministers on our board of reference. We have also experienced much in travelling, as well as in prayer and ministry here in Toowoomba. The February (1999) trip to Myanmar [Burma] and the April trip south to Batemans Bay, Leeton and Young [towns in southern New South Wales, Australia] have been most instructive and formative for us as God has taught and shown us many confirming things and opened up new dimensions of apostolic ministry.

The LORD has spoken to us to reach the nation of Australia, as well as continue to minister into other nations. Our recent trip to Mogo [Batemans Bay], Young and Leeton strengthened the call of God and our resolve to fulfil the call. In Mogo and Young and Leeton (each in different ways) we were received apostolically: that means the ministry leadership received us and accepted an expression of ministry that is the ministry of the apostle.

THE VISION:

In simple, we receive the vision from the Great Commission: **Gen.1:28, Matt.28:18-20, Mk. 16-15-20, Lu.24:44-49, Jn.21:15-19**. (We have written and spoken of this elsewhere, but acknowledge that the LORD is ever increasing the revelation of how *“His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea”*.) Our vision and mission is simply to play our part in fulfilling the Great Commission – we don't have any other agenda. We believe the Great Commission is the mission the LORD Jesus gives to His church: that is our “reason for being”.

THE GREAT COMMISSION: ALL REACHED, MANY SAVED!

THE TASK is two fold:

- 1. Raising up workers for the harvest – training and equipping, releasing and ordaining.**

TRAINING:

Once a new Christian has been nurtured (all the foundations properly laid, **Heb. 6:1-2**) and discipled (adequately taught and related to the WORD, **Mt.28:20**) there is a time of teaching and training that leads to maturity. The Christian is **weaned from the milk** (**Heb.12, 1 Pet.2:2**) and **introduced to the meat**, the solid food (**Heb. 5:12-14**), **the deeper wisdom** (**1 Cor. 2:6-16**), being **trained in the ways of righteousness**. The first level of training is for each saint to be able to “teach the first principles of the oracles of God” (**Heb. 5:12**). From there the trainee needs to understand the “deeper wisdom” (**1 Cor. 2:6**) concerning God's eternal purpose (**Eph. 3:8-11**); having been taught to interpret the law, the prophets and the writings (**Lu. 24:44-45**) and growing in prophetic understanding of the tabernacle of Moses (**Heb. 9:1-5**), the feasts of Israel, the order of Melchizedek and all other things taught in the book of Hebrews. Paul said to Timothy,

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others” 2Tim.2:2.

*Training is being taught the word until the trainee is studied in the word
and able to teach others!*

EQUIPPING:

Refers to training in ministry; understanding and exercising ministry in the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:2-6) and moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.12:4-11), the grace gifts of Rom. 12:4-8 and the five-fold ministry gift of Eph. 4:7-12.

**Equipping is being able to know and understand and move
in the ways of God in the Spirit; to minister in the power of the Spirit!**

Training and Equipping includes teaching, practice and experience which includes specific seminars and teaching courses, being on ministry teams, learning to “do the stuff”. When I was a young disciple I asked a senior man of God, ‘How does one become a minister?’ He answered, ‘By experience!’ There is no alternative to actually doing “*the work of the ministry*” (Eph.4:12).

RELEASING: or commissioning:

There comes a time when a person is ready to “do the stuff”. A person may receive the laying on of hands at this point and be set apart for a specific ministry expression; or they may simply begin to minister and in due course, recognition comes.

ORDINATION:

Is the authorisation of a person to minister. Ordination should come as the public acknowledgment of ministry already being exercised: where a person demonstrates gifts and abilities that effect worthwhile ministry; where the person acknowledges the clear calling of God on their lives to be His minister; and their lifestyle qualifies them to be ordained (1 Tim. 3: 1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

2. Doing the work of evangelism – reaching the lost.

We are exercised to do the work of the evangelist (literally, the messenger going out to the lost with the message of salvation). The evangelist gathers new souls.

Every disciple of Jesus is to witness, having received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, Lu. 24: 48-49). Witnessing includes a demonstration of His power and leads to souls being saved. In the Scripture souls were added to the church [the redeemed or saved congregation]

by responding to the word preached, Acts 2:37;

or a manifestation of God’s power, Acts 8:5-8, 12; 1 Cor. 2:4-5;

or being drawn to a church that is fully into the first works, Acts 2:42-47.

The **birthing process** clearly presented in the New Testament needs to be adhered to. In Matt. 28:19 and Mk 16:16 Jesus clearly commands water baptism as a vital part of the salvation experience. New converts are water baptised (immersed) on the day they believe (Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:36-38, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 19:1-6). As well, new converts are meant to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, Acts 8:14-17, Acts 10:44, Acts 19:6). It is time to question our practice of “saving souls” by only “leading

them to Christ” and not leading them into water baptism and being baptised (filled) with the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine how much stronger new Christians will be immediately if they are offered full Scriptural new birth: repentance, faith, baptisms.

Evangelism is the action that comes out of prayer: prayer evangelism. The way of evangelism is through prayer, and we learn much from the churches in South America. The goal is souls saved [thousands] and this is happening in Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala and other nations.

The strategy is church plants, where the lost can be added. We have caught the vision of the Dawn 2000 Strategy, which is to have a **witnessing, soul-winning church visibly in the midst of every people group**. A people group can be a few hundred and generally never more than a few thousand souls with some recognisable factor that binds them together, e.g. ethnicity, a small local town, a retirement village.

THE STRATEGY:

1. to establish Prayer houses **Matt. 18:20-18**
House churches **Acts 2:42-47**
2. to provide teaching - the Word of God (**Matt. 28:20**)
training - in the ways of the LORD (**2 Cor. 3:2-6**)
ministry - in the power of the Spirit with signs/
wonders accompanying (**1 Cor. 2:1-5**)

3. raising up workers - Soul winners’ course: A twelve (12) lesson teaching program with practical training assignments. Gerald Rowlands has been both an effective soul winner, evangelist and church planter for over 40 years. In this excellent course, he shares in a down-to-earth, very anointed way. We have seen people released into soul-winning during this course. This course is found in Volume 1 of the Workers Training Manual [3 volumes] produced by Church Planting International, Author: Rev. Gerald Rowlands.

The strategy has three stages:

All the stages are operating together, even as in a family where there are infants, youth and parents.

STAGE I

The Church of Jesus Christ is planted according to **Matt. 18:20**. This is the INFANT_Church where God Himself, “I AM”, is present.

Gen.1:28 – “*be fruitful*”. As two or three gather with Jesus and pray according to His will in agreement, fruit will come. The LORD will give contacts, draw people to you. He will lead you into effective outreach.

The infant church is the Prayer house

Matt. 18 :20 2 or 3 gathered in His Name – “I AM” with you (**Jn. 8:58**)
:19 praying in agreement with the great commission (**Isa.62:6-7 & Isa. 56:7b**)
:18 authority and power - binding and loosing (untie/destroy **1Jn 3:8**)
Pray – Lord’s Prayer “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth”

STAGE II

The Prayer House grows (is fruitful) into the house church of **Acts 2:42-47**, the ADOLESCENT Church

Gen. 1:28 - “*and multiply*” The LORD added daily those who were being saved. Once we have functioning house churches in place multiplication will occur. The Alpha course is a God-given tool and very effective when presented in the home. This is a “natural way” to grow a house church as the Alpha graduates will generally choose to continue meeting as well as help with further Alpha courses that will engender further house churches.

House churches: the church of **Acts 2: 42-27**

- v.42 four expressions of life: teaching the Word of God, fellowship, Breaking bread, prayer.
- v.43 fear of God / signs and wonders
- v.44-45 practical fellowship, sharing
- v.46 daily, in houses, breaking bread
- v.47 praising God, favour with people, **many saved.**

STAGE III

Paul presents the ADULT / MATURE Church in **Eph. 4:7-16** that will “*fill the earth*” **Gen.1:28**. “*All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*” **Num. 14:21**. Without a mature body, the earth cannot be filled with the glory of the Lord. This is the LORD’s eternal purpose, first enunciated in **Gen. 1:28**.

Mature church of **Eph. 4:7-16**

Verses 7-12 each one trained to function

- v.7 “each one” receives grace according to Christ’s gift.
- v.8-10 He who descended, ascended and gave gifts
- v.11 apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher
- v.12 to equip the saints for ministry by doing the work of ministry, build up the body

Verses 13-16 growing into maturity – **the signs of maturity.**

- v.13 unity of faith, knowledge of Son of God, perfect man, fullness of Christ
- v.14 no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine
- v.15 speaking the truth in love - growing up in all things into Christ.
- v.16 the whole body fully functioning, built up in love

As the five-fold ministry gift is released every saint is able to be equipped (raised up into ministry). The Scripture teaches (**Eph. 2:20**) that the church is built upon the foundations of the apostolic and prophetic. Most contemporary churches lack such foundations and therefore are inevitably ineffectual to some degree. However there is a move of God in His church by which He is raising up modern day apostles and prophets and they are being sent forth. As churches receive them, the restoration of Biblical foundations is happening very quickly.

A Scriptural Reference to Infancy, Adolescence and Adulthood

1Jn. 2:12-14

I. Infants/little children know their **sins are forgiven** in Jesus; so we gather in Jesus' name (**v.12**) and little children **know the Father** (**v.13**); new Christians are born into the family of God. New Christians are often very fruitful in bringing others to Christ.

II. Adolescents/Youth/"*young men*" have **overcome the wicked one** (**v.13**); refer **Lu. 10:19** (the overcomer) and youth are strong because the **word of God abides in them** and they have overcome the wicked one (**v.14**); the adolescent church overcomes, and boldly witnesses – multiplication.

III. Mature/Fathers **know Him Who is from the beginning** (**v.13,14**); those who have walked with God and grown into maturity know and understand the Father's purpose, so they are able to lead and guide the saints into perfection.

How is a church planted? When two or three gather in His Name and begin to seek the Lord for the lost. He will add to them those who are being saved. The experience of the **Ephesian** church being planted in **Acts 19** is very instructive. A group of disciples were already meeting together; they had to come to faith in the true God through the teaching and baptism of John the Baptist. An apostle came to them in the purpose of God; God saw these men who were gathering together to seek Him. God sent the apostle to them who taught the apostle's doctrine concerning the Messiah. They believed and were baptised in the name of Jesus [Christian baptism] and received the Holy Spirit [through the laying on of hands]. These twelve disciples became the foundation of the Ephesian church.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MINISTRY AT PRESENT:

1. Prophetic teaching of the Word of God.
2. Strong on foundations (**Hebrews 6:1-2**)
Reality of water baptism: the call to water baptism continues as the LORD is checking our foundations. Many people have asked for full immersion in recent months as we have travelled and ministered in churches around the country.
3. Growing understanding of "church" – the way it fits together, meets "house to house" and so we minister "house to house"; church is a "daily" involvement. This is the New Testament way.
4. Growing understanding of gifts and ministries,
ability to discern and recognise those with gifts and ministries,
ability to encourage people into gifts and ministries; ability to train and equip the saints for the ministry.

Further insights on the apostolic:

- i. Fathers: apostles are fathers, many teachers [maybe] but few fathers; as we care for the saints, love them, accept them, encourage them, and correct them, to go on for God, remember them, keep in contact with them, we are growing in fathering them.
- ii. Characterised by signs and wonders
healing, sometimes quite profound, such as: healed from 10 years of migraines,

eye restored and verified by specialist, man in his late 50's with birth defect (short leg) fully restored, couples who were not able to have children now having babies.

Delivered from witchcraft, from demonic oppression causing fits, from shame.

iii. Re Finance: there is provision for His mission!

We are to get on with the ministry; “the money will be there as we need it” (R. Joyner, *Morning Star Journal*, Vol. 9, No.1, p72).

Vision of many regular supporters giving as the Lord enables. As a ministry we are dependent upon tithes and offerings. The Lord has fully provided for us to date.

iv. Develop evangelism:

Ask the LORD to release evangelists to work in fivefold ministry team: It is time for harvest; there is a need for saturation evangelism; the LORD is raising up evangelists now in Australia.

v. Church planting happens as new folk are gathered and pastors, backed by apostolic ministry, form a church (**Acts 2:42-47, Acts 8:4-40**).

What is the gift of Ephesians 4:7?

It is fivefold: the apostle and the prophet are the foundational ministries who also carry the vision for the church, understanding the mystery of God's eternal purpose.

The evangelist gathers souls by preaching the gospel. The evangelist goes out with the message but also has a role in the church to equip the saints for the work of evangelism.

The pastor and the teacher are responsible for nurturing and discipling the believers, bringing them up in the faith.

STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter four

EVANGELISM

Bringing

in the

Harvest

EVANGELISM BRINGING IN THE HARVEST

The evangelist is listed as an ascension gift ministry in **Eph.4:11**. Philip is called “the evangelist” in **Acts 21:8** and in **2 Tim. 4:5**, Timothy, who is a pastor, delegated by the apostle Paul, is exhorted to “do the work of an evangelist”. Linked closely to the ministry of evangelism is Jesus’ command to “wait ... until you are endued with power from on high (**Luke 24:49**) *“and you shall be My witnesses ... to the end of the earth”* (**Acts 1:8**).

THE EVANGELIST – a ministry gift (Eph. 4:11)

An evangelist is literally:

one who is sent out with a message, or the messenger going out.

In **Acts 8:4** *“those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”*. They were doing the work of evangelism. And Philip went to Samaria – it is interesting that the disciples had not voluntarily gone to Samaria, even as later (**Acts 10**) Peter needed divine intervention to get him to go to the Gentiles. Jesus had commanded the disciples to witness in Samaria in **Acts 1:8**. Philip preached and miracles took place (**Acts 8:6**), evil spirits were cast out and powerful healings took place (**Acts 8:7**).

There was great joy in that city (**Acts 8:8**) and (**Acts 8: 9-13**) the fruit of Philip’s preaching and ministry in signs and wonders is the total overthrow of the anti-Christ demonic stronghold in the city, with the human strong man, Simon the sorcerer, losing his power over the city.

Acts 8: 14-17: The apostles, Peter and John, were sent from Jerusalem when the Jerusalem church heard of the breakthrough in Samaria. Peter and John were used to impart the Holy Spirit’s power to the new converts. Notice that the evangelist was not able to fully found the new church; apostles were sent.

The Evangelist moves on, preaching:

Acts 8:26 Then Philip was called out of Samaria by the LORD – to leave a mass revival to preach to one man! Obedience to the LORD is the key to all fruitful ministry.

Acts 8:40 and Philip, *“passing through, preached in all the cities...”*

The evangelist moves on to other places. He goes out with the message to the places and people where the LORD leads.

Evangelists are soul-winners; evangelists are harvesters. The preaching of the evangelist leads to faith and baptism (**Acts 8:12, 36-37**).

IT IS HARVEST TIME!

It is time to reap souls! Many have been content to “sow the seed”, trusting that someone else will reap. The LORD is calling for workers for the harvest because it is reaping time (**Luke 10:2**). Harvest means bringing in the *“sheaves”* (**Psalms 126:5-6**). Harvest means separating the tares from the wheat (**Matt.13:30**).

The LORD sends forth labourers into the harvest: it is His harvest (**Lu.10:2**). He has overseen the planting and growth of the crop. Ask Him to lead you to the ones prepared!

Listen to the teaching of God: in **Isaiah 28:23-29**, the word of God tells us that God will instruct us in ploughing, planting and reaping.

In Ruth 2 we see Boaz, a type of Christ, overseeing the harvest.

There is much activity in harvest time: the grain must be brought in. There is work for everyone!

v.4 Boaz, the lord of the harvest, a type of Christ, came from Bethlehem.

He and his reapers were in the LORD together.

v.5 The lord of the harvest notices the new one among the gleaners.

v.6 The chief servant testifies as to who she is.

v.7 She has already been working hard and has already entered the house.

v.8 Boaz welcomes the stranger to glean in his fields, and to fellowship with the young women.

v.9 There is safety in this place of fellowship and water to drink in the harvest.

v.10-12 The LORD blesses faithfulness; the LORD sees all our works and will reward accordingly; so Ruth is rewarded by Boaz. Her testimony had gone before her.

v.14 Boaz offers her bread and vinegar: is this a form of communion? Boaz confirms her place in fellowship.

v.16 Boaz purposefully pours out blessings on Ruth and she gleans much grain! He provided the grain for her. The LORD brings the souls into contact with us when we are willing to work in the harvest. He does not require that we be qualified, official reapers!

Ruth ch. 3-4 Notice that after the harvest was complete, there was a **wedding**.

There is a harvest at the end of the age: a great ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God. Ruth is a stranger, a Gentile, someone who was born into a despised tribe. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot by his own daughter. But Ruth has become a true believer. She is fully accepted by the Lord; so much so that He desires to marry her. After the great harvest at the end of the age, the wedding supper hall will be full. Jesus and His bride will be wed!

Further teaching from the Scripture concerning the harvest:

Prov. has some important instructions concerning the conduct of harvesters:

Prov. 6:8 The diligent ant gathers her food in the harvest, whereas the sluggard [person] is asleep.

Prov. 10:5 Again, the person is asleep during harvest, but the wise son is gathering (compare with **Prov. 11:30**).

Prov. 20:4 The lazy man has not done the preparation; so there is no harvest for that one.

In the **Prophets** there are some clear references to the harvest:

Isa. 9:3 There is great joy in the harvest! How we rejoice when souls come to the LORD.

Jer. 5:24 *“The LORD gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”* Even as the people did not acknowledge the LORD of the harvest in that day, so many today are sitting by asleep or listless, not willing to go into the fields at the LORD’s command.

Jer. 8:20 *“The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved!”* What a tragedy: to miss the harvest! to miss salvation.

- Hosea 6:11** *“Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives of My people.”* It is the *“appointed harvest”* that we are called into! The captives are being released.
- Joel 2:23-24** The LORD promises the *“former and the latter rain”* together and a double harvest results; wheat (the cereal harvest) and new wine and oil (the fruit harvest). Pentecost and Tabernacles together: one great ingathering. This is the *“appointed harvest”* at the end of the age. (cf. **James 5:7-8**)
- Joel 3:13** suggests that there is a harvest of wickedness coincidental with the harvest of righteousness. This is confirmed in the parable of the wheat and the tares (**Matt.13:24-30**).

ALL HANDS for the Harvest:

- Amos 9:11-12** is the prophecy James quotes from in **Acts 15** when he interprets the ingathering of the Gentiles into the kingdom as the fulfilment of God’s promise to *“raise up the tabernacle of David”*. The LORD is still fulfilling this promise today.
- Amos 9:13** speaks of *“the plowman overtaking the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed”*. The cycle of ploughing, sowing and reaping is happening concurrently and overlapping each other in the last days’ great harvest.
- John 4:36** Jesus said *“he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together”*.
- John 4:38** *“I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured and you have entered into their labours.”*

It is time for reaping; it is time to be trained to be labourers for the harvest. Evangelism is reaping souls unto eternal life! Jesus is raising up labourers (reapers) for His last days’ great harvest.

GOING OUT pronouncing the LORD’s coming:

Lu. 10:1 *“The LORD appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.”* A wonderful summation of the role of the evangelist: A John the Baptist type of ministry – going before the LORD to prepare for His coming, going equipped to heal the sick and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God (**v. 9**) and to cast out devils (**v.17**).

The evangelists are sent before the apostolic team comes, representing more of the LORD’s fivefold ministry. They go to a friendly house (**Lu.10:5-7**). In Australia we have friendly houses in many areas: sometimes it is literally a house (the home of a Christian family) and sometimes it is the local church that will welcome the team of evangelists coming into saturate an area with the gospel. This will be done in various ways: house to house ministry, (visitation and praying for the sick, sharing the gospel), tract distribution; invites to special events such as a children’s program or a family rally on the weekend; etc.

As in **Acts 8**, the evangelist is not called to plant churches, but to win the lost by preaching the gospel in towns and cities. The apostolic team can follow to plant or ground the church.

The role of the evangelist as a fivefold ministry member is two fold – as well as going out to preach and win souls, the evangelist has the task of equipping the saints for the ministry of evangelism (**Eph. 4:11-12**). This is done also in a number of ways such as training seminars, taking trainees on team, ministering in fellowship meetings to motivate the whole church to do the work of evangelism.

EVERY MEMBER EVANGELISM

Every minister and every Christian is to do the work of evangelism. This is the witnessing Jesus has commissioned each of us to do. We are called to *“give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet.3:15).

The Holy Spirit empowers us (**Acts 1:8**) to be a witness. The signs of **Mk 16:17-18** are signs that accompany those who believe. Believers can confidently pray for the sick, cast out devils, speak in new tongues and expect divine protection in the exercise of sharing the gospel.

STEPS IN CHURCH PLANTING

1. Evangelist, working with the apostolic team, sent out, goes to a friendly house. Visitation – house to house – leads to public outreach.
2. Apostolic team comes in, starts to establish the church. Teaching, ministering Holy Spirit, getting foundations correctly laid.
3. Pastoral team raised up to pastor new church. Initial pastoral team may also only be for a season, while others are raised up, trained and equipped in leadership.

HARVEST = FRUITFULNESS

A STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter five

**THE VISION
JESUS HAS FOR
HIS CHURCH**

Revelation 2:1

THE VISION JESUS HAS FOR HIS CHURCH

A profile of the Perfect Church

In the letters to the seven churches in **Rev. 2 and 3**, Jesus clearly expresses what He approves of and endorses, what He disfavors and even hates, and in each letter He makes powerful promises to those who overcome. These promises are to be inherited now. As we study the seven letters we are given a powerful picture of how Jesus views His church and what He expects. He is strong in correction and rebuke and relentless in His demand for change (repentance). If we will heed and obey we will overcome and inherit the LORD'S promises given at the end of each letter.

In each letter the title of the LORD accords with the nature of the address to the particular church, and is mainly taken from the imagery of the vision of **chapter 1**. Five of the churches are strongly corrected, and threatened with dire judgements if they do not change. From these seven letters we are given a powerful, lively, real vision of the perfect (the growing, maturing) church. In this study we will introduce this teaching by looking at the letter to the church in Ephesus, **Rev. 2:1-7**.

Letter to Ephesus

Revelation 2:1

The letter is written to the angel of the church of Ephesus. Angel means messenger. Jesus is sending a message to the church via an angel messenger.

Jesus holds fast the seven stars walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

7 stars = 7 angels, messengers

7 lampstands = 7 churches; the universal complete church.

“Walks” or “Walking” expresses His unwearied activity in the church, guarding and guiding her in and from internal and external evils, as the high priest moved to and fro in the sanctuary. (J.F.B. p1531)

Revelation 2:2

“*I know your works*”; Jesus knows fully and He understands, judges, appraises, weighs up, encourages, rewards, rebukes, threatens, promises. (**2 Tim. 3:16** – Jesus is the Word and in these letters He expresses His Word in all of its application and effects.) Jesus knows each of us intimately and He has the right to judge us and our fellowship. We are fully accountable to Him.

“*your labour*”, ‘labour unto weariness’ in the Greek;.

“*your patience*”,

False brethren: We are to bear one another's burdens, (**Gal.6:2**) in the case of true brethren, but we are not to bear false brethren (evil men).

False apostles: tested, (by experience) those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them to be liars (maybe Judaizers, **Gal. 5:3-4, 3:1-2, 1:7-9**).

Discernment/appraisal is a gift of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor.12:10**) and a fruit of having a spiritual mind, the mind of Christ. (**1 Cor. 2:15-16**)

Paul warns, “if someone comes with another gospel” (**Gal.1:8**).

The people at Berea searched the Scriptures (**Acts 17:11-12**). God's people are to be well grounded in the Word of God. “What is the Gospel?”

Revelation 2:3

“perseverance” cf. **Rom.5:3** - tribulation produces perseverance and patience.

Heb. 6:12 - faith and patience.

“laboured for My Name’s sake” cf. **3 Jn 7** - “*went forth for the sake of His Name*”

“have not become weary” cf. **Gal. 6:9** – “*let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*”

Revelation 2:4-5

The perfect (mature) church does not leave her first love which is expressed and manifest in doing the “first works”.

Eph.1:15 - the faith of the Ephesians and their love for all the saints had been heard abroad.

It has been suggested that the Greek “*agape*”, love, in **Rev.2:4** refers to the love feasts practised in the early church and which included the LORD’S Supper (Communion). There is not strong evidence for this, according to Vines (p 704) who says that only in the plural form does *agape* refer to love feasts as in **Jude 12**. Further, Jesus commands repentance, which is a return to practising (doing) the first works. The question is: What are the first works? In our manual “Steps to Revival” session 2 teaches from **Acts 2:42** that the first works are: the apostles’ doctrine (word of God), fellowship, breaking of bread (communion) and prayer.

Revelation 2:5

If we do not repent and do the first works, Jesus will come quickly and remove the lampstand, His presence, from the midst. This would mean that those who continued in lampless fellowship could truly “*have a form of godliness but denying its power.*” **2**

Tim.3:5

However, the true, faithful, repentant church continues in the first works, living in an intimate, faith-filled, obedient love relationship with Jesus. (**Jn 14:15** - if we love Him, we will keep His commandments.)

As we commit to and continue to do the first works, abiding in Christ (first love) and His word (rhema) abides in us, we will have a fruitful relationship with the LORD in His service (**Jn. 15**).

(For teaching on lampstand, see “Steps to Revival” session 2, page 2)

The Maturing Church

The maturing church is maturing because the saints (the members of the body) are being equipped for the work of ministry and built up and growing in their knowledge of the LORD.

Eph.4:7-16 presents a picture of the mature church, the church that has grown “*up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ*” (v.15) “*according to the effective working by which every part does its share*” (v.16).

There is no clergy/laity division in the church of Christ. The leadership gift ministry of the church of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher is given for the purpose of equipping and edifying the saints, the members of the body, bringing them into the “*work of the ministry*” because “*to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift*” (**Eph.4:7**)

The goal of the ministry is to train and equip many more ministers. Every member of Christ's body is to be equipped to minister. Every member is to be trained, anointed and ordained. We are a kingdom of priests; our only High Priest is Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2:6

Jesus commends those who "***hate the deeds of the Nicolaitions***", because He also hates their deeds. It is not easy to find any definitive description, or historically sound understanding of the Nicolaitians. Views vary and lack authority.

The word "Nicolaitian" means, "conquering the people" and our modern word "laity" simply means "the people". As the church historically moved away from the gospel and teachings and practices of the New Testament, a clergy class developed and became enshrined in the Catholic tradition, wherein the priests of the church were no longer even born again believers, but a few specially ordained men with superior priestly powers and functions. Most Protestant churches have continued in this mode of practice, having a special class of clergy, excluding the rest of the people of God from ministry roles and functions. I believe these practices are the evil deeds of the Nicolaitians.

Essential first works, that is, the teaching of the Word of God, communion and prayer, have in many church situations been taken from the people of God and are not allowed to happen unless an ordained clergyman of the particular denomination is present, presiding at the LORD'S Supper, leading the Bible study, or leading the prayer meeting. The result of the Nicolaitian practices is a permanently immature church.

Revelation 2: 7a

The words of Jesus to His church today are only heard spiritually. He is not here in the flesh and His word in the Scriptures is only discerned spiritually. We are to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Without a real relationship with the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for us to grow and mature.

However as we listen and obey, we overcome and are given "***to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God***".

Revelation 2: 7b

"to him who overcomes"

S.C. 3528 nikao – to subdue:- conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.

Spirit Filled Life Bible p. 1962 "overcomes" is military terminology, suggesting combat against the forces of the evil one. (**Eph.6:10-18**)

All the promises of Jesus to the seven churches are to him (them) who overcomes.

James 1:6-8 tells us that the doubting person can expect to receive nothing from the LORD, but the person who asks in faith.

1 John 5:4-5 says we overcome the world through faith, faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus overcame the world (**John 16:33**).

The world is the cosmic order or system, the secular world alienated from and opposed to God, being in the power of the evil one (**1 John 5:19**).

Rom. 12:21 "***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***"

1 Jn. 2:13-14 Young men have overcome the wicked one because they are strong and the word of God abides in them.

1 Jn. 4:4 We have overcome the spirits of anti-Christ because *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”*.

**AND THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD
– EVEN OUR FAITH. (1 John 5:5)
The Tree of Life**

Revelation 2:7c

“I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

The Tree of Life: **Gen. 2:9b** *“The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden.”*

When Adam and Eve sinned by eating from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat of, they were sent out of the Garden of Eden (**Gen.3:11, 23**).

Gen.3:24b *“He placed Cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”* Sin meant man’s exclusion from the Garden of Eden and access to the tree of life was guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword. In **Rev.2:7**, Jesus promises that the overcomer will eat from the tree of life, which is now in the heavenly Paradise of God (see **Lu. 23:43**).

The flaming sword is now in the eyes [flame of fire] and in the mouth [sharp two-edged sword] of Jesus. He is the way to the tree of life; He is the source of, and giver of eternal life.

Prov.11:30 *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. And he who wins souls is wise.”* The follower of Jesus, who has been made righteous (**2 Cor.5:21, Rom.5:17**) and is now a “tree of life”, the result is souls saved – the gift of eternal life can now be offered to others. (cf. **Dan.12:3**)

The Cherubim

In the Scriptures, the cherubim of **Gen. 3:24** are next mentioned in **Exodus**, where God instructs Moses to build the ark and the tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern. (**Ex.25-27** and **36-37**). *“The cherubim shall stretch out their wings above covering the mercy seat with their wings”* (**Ex.25:20**) and verse 22, *“there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim...”*

The cherubim cover the throne of God, and specifically the mercy seat (**Eze.28:14**). Only once a year could the high priest of Israel approach the throne of God as represented in the ark in the holiest of all and place the atoning blood upon the mercy seat. There was no access to anyone else.

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, ... with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all” (**Heb. 9:11-12**). There is now a *“new and living way”*

(Heb.10:20) *“to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus”* (v.19). Remember, we overcome **(Rev.12:11)** satan by the blood of the Lamb.

Jesus is the way (**John 14:6**) to the Father; in Him, by His blood, we have access to the Father’s presence; we are restored to the tree of life which is in the Father’s paradise, and as a result we become true witnesses to the salvation which is in Jesus Christ; *“Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”* (Acts 3:6).

A STRATEGY TO REACH THE NATION

Chapter six

PROPHECY

**The ministry Gift of the Prophet
and the
Charismatic Gift of Prophecy**

THE MINISTRY GIFT OF THE PROPHET AND THE CHARISMATIC GIFT OF PROPHECY

An Introductory teaching on prophecy and prophetic ministry to help us recognise and receive the gifts the LORD is restoring to His church today.

The Gift of Prophecy is listed in three specific gift areas in the New Testament.

1. Romans 12:6 *“if prophecy, in proportion to your faith”*

There are seven gifts in **Romans 12**, sometimes called creational gifts or the Father’s gifts given at creation. In the context, these gifts are given to members of the body of Christ (v.4-5), and are *“used according to the grace given to us”* (v.6).

However, it is possible to see these gifts as being given to all people at creation through God’s grace, e.g. in any group of people, there are usually those who have a gift of leadership, those who naturally serve, those who are generous givers, those who encourage and so on. These seven gifts differ from the gifts of **1 Corinthians 12** and **Ephesians 4**. Prophecy is the only one mentioned in all three lists of gifts.

So how is this gift of prophecy used?

The note on the text in the Spirit Filled Life Bible (p.1708) says: Prophecy refers to those whose creation gift from the Father enables them to view all of life with special ongoing insight, independent of public office (**Eph. 4:11**), or special use by the Spirit in giving public prophecy, speaking something that God has spontaneously brought to mind (**1 Cor.12:10**).

Perhaps this is a person of insight who operates this gift in their family, their work place and in their involvement in society at large.

How is this gift used in the Body of Christ?

Again it is not the office or ministry of the prophet (**Eph.4:11**), nor is it the gift of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor.12:10**). In any group of God’s people, there will be those who prophesy, who share Godly insight, who have a prophetic understanding of people, events, directions, decisions etc. If Martha’s gift was serving, was Mary’s prophecy, in that she knew how to wait on the Lord? Was Caiaphas prophesying out of this gift when he spoke of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus? (**Jn. 11:50-51**).

2. 1 Corinthians 12:10 “to another prophecy”

v. 4 *“There are diversities (allotments of various kinds) of gifts, but the same Spirit.”*

WORD WEALTH: (S.F.L.B. p 1719)

Gift, “*charisma*” (khar-is-mah); Strong’s #5486: Related to other words derived from the root “*char*”. “*Chara*” is joy, cheerfulness, delight. “*Charis*” is grace, goodwill, undeserved favour. “*Charisma*” is a gift of grace, a free gift, divine gratuity, spiritual endowment, miraculous faculty. It is especially used to designate the gifts of the Spirit. In modern usage, a “charismatic” signifies one who either has one or more of these gifts functioning in his life, or who believes these gifts are for today’s church.

v.7 *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”*

v.11 *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”*

This gift of prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul encourages us to *“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you prophesy”* (1 Cor.14:1).

1Cor.14:3 *“But he who prophesies speaks edification [building up] exhortation [encouragement] and comfort [consolation] to men.”*

The Holy Spirit gift of prophecy is not primarily for prediction, correction, rebuke or judgement. It is to **edify, exhort and comfort**. It can also be for **teaching** (v.31). **1Cor. 14: 4-5** *“Prophecy that the church may be edified.”*

The gifts of tongues and interpretation are very similar to prophesy. Private tongues are to be used to speak to God and to edify oneself (*verses 2 and 4*), but the message God gives in tongues for the assembled body is to be interpreted (*verses 12-13*).

The gift of prophecy released in the meeting can have the effect of **bringing conviction leading to salvation** (v.24-25).

Paul encourages multiple expression of gifts of tongues and interpretation and prophecy (v. 27-29).

v. 31 *“For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.*

v. 39 Paul exhorts us to *“desire earnestly to prophesy”*.

An Illustration of the gift of prophecy:

Luke 1:67 *“Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied.”*

Zacharias was not a prophet. He was a priest and unspiritual in that he did not believe the angel Gabriel. However, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he prophesied. His words are very powerful, very edifying, encouraging and comforting to those who long for the Messiah's' coming. This is a clear example of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit gift.

3. Ephesians 4:11 “He Himself gave ... some to be prophets...”

The ascended LORD (v. 8-10) gave the five gifts listed in v.11 to the church.

v.12 *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”*

v.13 *“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”*

v.14 *“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”*

- v.15 *“but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – “*
- v.16 *“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

It is important to study these Scriptures in detail as they give such a full picture of effective ministry, producing a fully operational, mature body of Christ. It is not the intent of this study to look at the five-fold ministry but rather to gain further understanding of the prophetic ministry specifically.

THE MINISTRY OF THE PROPHET

Luke 2:36-38 tells us Anna was a prophetess. The Scripture gives her genealogy and tribe. She is given stature and importance because she is a prophetess; she has the ministry of the prophet.

The Scripture then gives more personal details about Anna’s status and role: she had been a widow for some decades and had devoted herself to the service of God, *“not departing from the temple”* (v.37); in other words she spent all her time in the place of God’s Presence, serving Him, *“with fastings and prayers night and day.”* She was focused and devoted; she knew the place of prayer and fasting in an intimate relationship; she stayed in His Presence.

v.38 She spoke of the LORD; this was her prophecy, to speak of the LORD and His redemptive purpose. She gives thanks publicly as she recognises the day of visitation: she recognises the MESSIAH. She does not keep quiet but gives glory to the LORD, the God of Israel.

In these days God has restored the ministry of the prophet. Men and women are being raised up with a prophetic understanding of the Scriptures, teaching and preaching *“a word in season”*, opening up the Scriptures (**Luke 24:17**), and reminding God’s people of *“the present truth”* (**2 Pet.1:12**). The Word of God is prophetic (**2 Pet. 1:19-21**), and needs to be taught with prophetic understanding.

Anna recognised the day of visitation: we need the prophetic voice today so that we do not miss the day and times of this visitation. Anna recognised the coming of the Messiah: we need prophets / prophetesses to speak of the LORD and His soon coming return, today.

God has raised up the ministry of the prophet for this purpose: to prepare the church for His return, and to guide the church by revelation from His word through the dark but *“light”* days that precede His coming (**Isa. 60:1-3**).

Agabus was a prophet.

Acts 11:27-30.

v.27 *“prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.”*

Already the ministry of the prophet is recognised in the New Testament church. The prophets came from one church (Jerusalem) to another (Antioch) – they are an accepted and recognised ministry gift to the Body of Christ.

v.28 Agabus is the only one specifically named. He *“showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout the world”*. The prophet is not opening up the

Scriptures here! He is prophesying, foretelling the future, as a warning as something that requires a response.

The prophet is able to foretell according to what the Spirit shows.

Deut. 18:18-22 - the test of a true prophet.

v.18 1. God puts His words in the prophet's mouth;

v.15 2. The prophet's word is to be heeded, as the word of God Himself.

v.20 3. Some prophesy presumptuously, that is, they have not heard from God, or they are inspired by another god.

v.21-22 4. What a true prophet foretells will surely come to pass; otherwise they have spoken presumptuously.

The Scripture tells us that Agabus' word was true; the famine occurred in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Acts 11:29. The disciples respond, having received the prophetic word. ***“Each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Jerusalem.”***

v.30 ***“This they also did”*** - the word was carried, and it was sent via two elders, Barnabas and Saul, to the elders at Jerusalem.

The prophetic ministry is a public ministry, even as the gift of prophecy is a public gift, ie always prophesy in the midst of many witnesses, with elders present if possible, so that the prophecy can be judged/appraised and confirmed (**1 Cor. 14:29**).

Avoid if possible, giving personal words to individuals when no one else is present. Never force the word on anyone. Know the Biblical guidelines and safeguards for the gift and the ministry.

Acts 21:10-14. Agabus, the prophet, again prophesies, foretelling what will happen to Paul.

v. 8 Paul and his company were staying with Philip, the evangelist.

v.9 Philip has four daughters who prophesied. We assume this is the gift of prophecy referred to. The daughters are not referred to as prophetesses.

v.10 Agabus is called a prophet specifically.

v.11 He spoke from the Holy Spirit, ***“Thus says the Holy Spirit.”***

v.12 The assembled company believed the prophetic word, the word of the Holy Spirit through the prophet.

v.13 But Paul already is aware of the dangers in Jerusalem, see **Acts 20:22-23**.

v.14 He affirmed the truth of the word, but it was confirmatory, and did not deter him from his course, and the company in the meeting acquiesced saying, ***“The will of the LORD be done.”***

From this story we can draw some **pointers and safeguards for personal prophecy**:

1. the word was confirmatory not initiatory;
2. the person bringing the word had credibility; Agabus was a noted minister of the gift, proven;
3. personal words are not directive in a controlling sense. Paul did not change his plans;
4. all prophecy is in part only (**1 Cor.13:9**) and generally fits into a bigger plan of God;
5. there were witnesses present to judge the word;
6. acceptance of the veracity of a word does not mean blind or hasty responses to it. (acknowledgment to S.F.L.B. p. 1669 Kingdom Dynamics)

Conclusion

The ministry of the prophet and all five ascension gift ministries given by Jesus to the church are not hierarchical or ecclesiastical in nature; rather they are given to edify (build up) and equip the members (each one has been given grace according to Christ's gift) of the body of Christ (**Eph. 4:7**).

“There is no prescribed formula or ‘gift mix’ for any particular office.” (S.F.L.B. p 1792) and this is particularly true of prophecy, which as we have seen, is mentioned in the three gift lists of the New Testament. It is possible for the same person to have all three gifts of prophecy operating in their lives by the grace of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the same person may be used in various other ‘gift mixes’ to bring glory to the LORD and effectively serve His purposes.

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