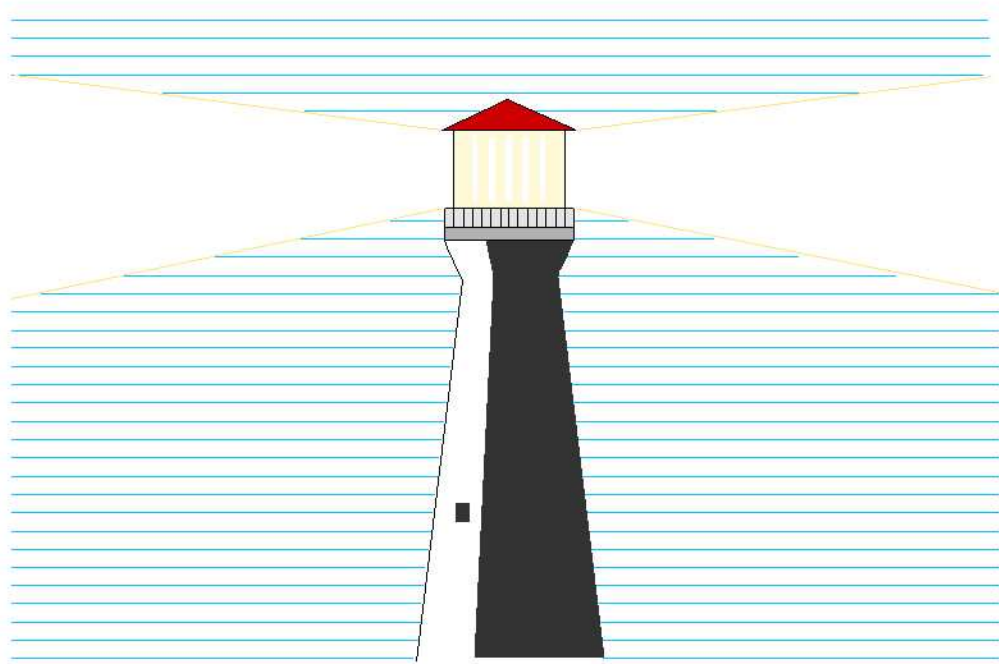


Living
it
Out

LOVE IS ACTION



MATTHEW 5:16

Living it out...

Marg Pollon

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LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:18

CAN YOU SLEEP WHILE THE WIND BLOWS?

YEARS AGO, A FARMER OWNED LAND ALONG THE ATLANTIC SEACOAST.
HE CONSTANTLY ADVERTISED FOR HIRED HANDS. MOST PEOPLE WERE
RELUCTANT TO WORK ON FARMS ALONG THE ATLANTIC. THEY DREADED THE
AWFUL STORMS THAT RAGED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC,
WREAKING HAVOC ON THE BUILDINGS AND CROPS.
AS THE FARMER INTERVIEWED APPLICANTS FOR THE JOB,
HE RECEIVED A STEADY STREAM OF REFUSALS.

FINALLY, A SHORT, THIN MAN, WELL PAST MIDDLE AGE, APPROACHED THE FARMER.

"ARE YOU A GOOD FARM HAND?" THE FARMER ASKED HIM.

"WELL, I CAN SLEEP WHEN THE WIND BLOWS," ANSWERED THE LITTLE MAN.

ALTHOUGH PUZZLED BY THIS ANSWER, THE FARMER, DESPERATE FOR HELP,
HIRED HIM. THE LITTLE MAN WORKED WELL AROUND THE FARM, BUSY FROM
DAWN TO DUSK, AND THE FARMER FELT SATISFIED WITH THE MAN'S WORK.

THEN ONE NIGHT THE WIND HOWLED LOUDLY IN FROM OFFSHORE.
JUMPING OUT OF BED, THE FARMER GRABBED A LANTERN AND RUSHED
NEXT DOOR TO THE HIRED HAND'S SLEEPING QUARTERS. HE SHOOK THE
LITTLE MAN AND YELLED, "GET UP! A STORM IS COMING!

TIE THINGS DOWN BEFORE THEY BLOW AWAY!"

THE LITTLE MAN ROLLED OVER IN BED AND SAID FIRMLY,

"NO SIR. I TOLD YOU, I CAN SLEEP WHEN THE WIND BLOWS."

ENRAGED BY THE RESPONSE, THE FARMER WAS TEMPTED TO FIRE HIM ON
THE SPOT. INSTEAD, HE HURRIED OUTSIDE TO PREPARE FOR THE STORM.

TO HIS AMAZEMENT, HE DISCOVERED THAT ALL OF THE HAYSTACKS HAD
BEEN COVERED WITH TARPULINS. THE COWS WERE IN THE BARN, THE CHICKENS
WERE IN THE COOPS, AND THE DOORS WERE BARRED.

THE SHUTTERS WERE TIGHTLY SECURED. EVERYTHING WAS TIED DOWN.

NOTHING COULD BLOW AWAY. THE FARMER THEN UNDERSTOOD WHAT HIS
HIRED HAND MEANT, SO HE RETURNED TO HIS BED TO ALSO SLEEP
WHILE THE WIND BLEW.

WHEN YOU'RE PREPARED, SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, AND PHYSICALLY,
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.

CAN YOU SLEEP WHEN THE WIND BLOWS THROUGH YOUR LIFE?

THE HIRED HAND IN THE STORY WAS ABLE TO SLEEP BECAUSE HE
HAD SECURED THE FARM AGAINST THE STORM.

LET US FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE, BY BEING PREPARED
SO WE, TOO, WILL HAVE PEACE IN THE MIDST OF THE STORMS.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

LIVING IT OUT

Bridges of Love

It is easy for us to imagine that we will suddenly come to a point in our lives where we are fully prepared, but preparation is not suddenly accomplished. In fact, it is a process that must be steadily maintained. It is dangerous to become settled and complacent in our present level of experience. The Christian life requires preparation and more preparation.
Oswald Chambers

"Where do people go if you can't go to a hospital, if you can't get 911 to answer? They go to their faith facility. There is apathy out there, however, to a pandemic," Bishop Kirk Stevan Smith said. "Experts will tell you if a pandemic hits full bore, more people would die within the first year than have died, to date, from AIDS."

With continued talk of an Influenza Pandemic becoming a reality, Christians have an 'open door' of opportunity to provide a living demonstration that the Christian message is genuine. In a world lacking in integrity and character, the post-modern generation is searching desperately for something real and authentic. They will not take Christians seriously unless churches and para-church organizations demonstrate an authentic way of life—being communities that model the character of God in their relationships and mode of living.

The church's manner of speaking the truth must not be aligned to the techniques of modern propaganda," write Newbigin, "but must have the modesty, the sobriety, and the realism which are proper to a disciple of Jesus." The church is called to be a witness to the gospel through an authentic demonstration of love and unity.

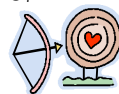
In the days of the early church, the thing that most impressed their neighbours in the Roman Empire was the community of love they witnessed among believers. In every age, the most persuasive evidence for the gospel is not words or arguments but a living demonstration of God's character through Christians' love for one another, expressed in both their words and their actions. The gospel is not meant to be "a disembodied message," Newbigin writes. It is meant to be fleshed out in "a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it" – who exhibit in their relationships the beauty of God's character."

Whether a Pandemic comes or not is not the issue. We have before us an opportunity to engage in an activity that will not only strengthen our faith but will be a authentic witness of God's existence, building lives and communities before a watching world.

Thank you for joining God's Work as we narrow the gap between our religious life and our ordinary life being 'salt' & 'light' as we build Bridges of Love.

Warmly in Christ's Love,

Marg



Marg Pollon
Bridges of Love Ministry

Christian Biblical Worldview for the Whole of Creation

(WORKSHOP # 1)

The TRUTH about all reality...

The great historian of religion Martin Marty said that every religion serves two functions: First, it is a message of personal salvation, telling us how to get right with God; and second, it is a lens for interpreting the world. How well have Christians been at helping others interpret the world around them—at providing a set of interrelated concepts that function as a lens to give a biblical view of area like science, politics, economics, or bioethics.

Questions

1. Have we typically focused on individual salvation, leaving men to their own devices to interpret the world around them?
2. Has our Christianity been boxed into the private sector leaving the public sphere to go its own way?
3. Has this resulted in our faith being firmly locked into the private realm of church and family, and us rarely having influence in the public realm?

Section A

The Bible has told us to be 'salt' and 'light' but how would this play out in our normal day to day activities and how best could we attain this Biblical 'reality'. God's agenda for His World includes healing and restoration of all things that He created. It includes the physical—redemption of the creation. It includes the social—the healing of the societal ills of our lands. It includes the spiritual—the personal redemption of our spirits. The Bible is clear that God not only loves the people He created, but His agenda includes the healing of all creation. (Col. 1:20)

'The problem is not only to win souls but to save minds. If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world.

Charles Mali

The pervasiveness of the secular/sacred split is less surprising when we realize that most Christians are concerned about being a Christian in their work, but they don't think in terms of having a biblical framework on the work itself. Being a Christian we often keep our faith and profession in separate, parallel tracks—running along side by side like train rails that never touch or intersect. Clearly, developing a Christian mind powered by God's Word would build the City of God when our actions are directed by the love of God, offered up to His service.¹ **Even though Christians know Christ the mind has not been transformed for Christ.**

Being justified and right with God is the important starting point, but how we live after conversion – growing in our love for the Lord and maturing and being equipped to carry out the mission God has given each of us for a just and humane society, is how we participate in God's work. God is not only engaged in the work of salvation but also in the work of preserving and maintaining His creation.

¹ Nancy Pearcey, Total Truth – Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity; Crossway Books, 2005

Once we discover that the Christian worldview is really true, then living it out means offering up to God our entire powers— practical, intellectual, emotional, artistic—to live for Him in every area of life. As it captures our entire being and redirects our every thought, the notion of a secular/sacred split becomes unthinkable. By God's grace, we can make a significant difference within our sphere of influence—but only as we 'crucify' our craving for success, power and public acclaim. We can expect the process of developing a Christian worldview to be a difficult and painful struggle—first inwardly, as we uproot the idols in our own thought life, and then outwardly, as we face the hostility of a fallen and unbelieving world. Our strength for the task must come from spiritual union with Christ, recognizing that suffering is the route to being confirmed to Him and remade into His image.

Living in out...

Jim Phillips was watching a basketball game when it hit him. "My faith is a spectator sport; I watch it more than I live it." A successful CPA, Jim was involved in his church and had a wonderful family, but he felt restless. The most important thing was missing—**PASSION**. He talked to his wife and together they agreed it was time to step off the sidelines and into the painful reality of the world.²

Jim discovered that it was time to integrate his Christian faith with his professional life. Can you imagine how our churches would be transformed if we truly regarded laypeople as frontline troops in the spiritual battle?

As we tackle the process of becoming the compassionate people that God calls us to be, we need agreement on the true nature of compassion. Is compassion through individual spiritual challenge the way to touch others with the Love of Christ?

Our compassion and concern must drive us back to a fresh view of God, a clear view of ourselves, and a new view of others. Learning what it takes and actually making a difference for God each require a different pace. You can sprint to the knowing, but the doing is a marathon.

When He saw the crowd, He was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and He began feeding the hungry - - healing the sick - - and teaching them how to live. Mark 6:34-56

Section B

A Working Definition of Compassion

In Webster's dictionary, compassion is defined as a 'deep feeling for and understanding of misery or suffering and the accompanying desire to promote its alleviation.' If we go to the Bible, the meaning of 'compassion' becomes clear. Hebrew and Greek words commonly translated as 'compassion' are used over eighty times in the Bible. Their most frequent use is not as an isolated noun but as the culmination of a process. Biblical compassion means refusing to settle for the feed-and-forget principle or it's equally depersonalizing but harsher opposite, the forget-and-don't-feed standard. It means paying attention to the literal meaning of compassion, as given in the Oxford English Dictionary: "suffering together with another, **participation** in suffering." The

² Servant Magazine, A Ministry of Prairie Bible Institute; "Bridge Builders, Practical Steps to Impacting Your Community for Christ, Issue 66

emphasis, as the word itself shows – “com” (with), and ‘Passion’ from the Latin pati (to suffer) – having personal involvement with the needy, suffering with them, not just giving to them.

A societal definition of compassion has become common: “The feeling, or emotion, when a person is moved by the suffering or distress of another, with a desire to relieve it.” We are often moved with emotion by a need but how we address a need is quite different when we are ‘suffering together’ and not just feeling the emotion of sadness: One demands personal action; the other, emotion that can be relieved by sending a check or passing a piece of legislation. The road to effective compassionate service cannot be paved with more well-intended legislation.

Instead, we need to look at ourselves and our society more honestly and strive to offer our time and love to those who need a touch from the Lord. Our willingness to engage personally and in tangible ways will show whether we care for hearts, minds, and souls and not just physical bodies. Sacrificial giving in a personal and tangible way will not only be beneficial to those on the receiving end but the giver becomes a little more Christ-like in the process.

Section C

A Working Definition of LOVE

***“LOVE IS THE HARDEST LESSON IN CHRISTIANITY BUT FOR THAT REASON
IT SHOULD BE OUR MOST CARE TO LEARN IT.” WILLIAM PENN***

As we take a look at a working definition of LOVE, we see that it is ... ***“intentionally doing something caring or helpful for another person, in Jesus’ name, regardless of the cost or consequence to oneself.”*** Intentionally” means that love does not happen by accident. Love happens because it is planned and premeditated. Love is determining to act in a particular way.³

“Doing something”...means Love is ACTION. When the Lord teaches us about love, He refers us to the covenant relationship He has so graciously come into with us when we are born again. Every time we think of the love of God and don’t remember the covenant relationship, we will try to *‘feel it’* because human love is based on feeling. The love of God is not based on feeling. Covenant love compels us to give of ourselves when deep inside everything says, “I don’t want to do what I am doing. Because ones love for God is greater than our own desires, it compels us to move forward and let go of our own agenda. It is not love by feeling, but love by **will**. We will obey because God has called us to follow His command to love our neighbour.”⁴

It is only as we come into covenant love, that we can love our neighbour as our self. It is only with that covenant relationship working in us, that we can bring our nation into covenant with God. Only covenant people can create the environment needed for nations to return into covenant with God, and thus only covenant people can disciple nations. The Covenant relationship is what fuels our drive for the great commission.

Love is being in touch with God...opening up and reaching out to others...so they, too, can touch God. As we serve as channels through which people experience God’s love,

³ Win/Charles, Arn, Carroll Nyquist, “Who Cares About Love”; Church Growth Press, 1988

⁴ John Mulinde, “The Covenant Love of God” – Set Apart Workbook 3; A Trumpet Media Pub. 2004

we will be on our way to the fulfillment of God's greatest commandment from Matthew 22:39.

As we humbly lay down our lives for the sake of others and set ourselves apart for the Lord, the world will step back in wonder...

Without love, we can do many great things, demonstrate the gifts of the Spirit and exercise all the disciplines in the will of God; but it will all be in vain. We must recognize that God is love, and love is the foundation that will sustain an authentic and satisfying life clearly demonstrating Christ's love for us. They will know we are His Disciples by our LOVE...

Reflections:

- *Is it possible to love more fully?*
- *Is it possible to love others as we, ourselves, would like to be loved? To love the way Christ showed us to love?*
- *Is it possible for our churches to love more fully? To really practice Christ-like love?...to 'love one another'? ...to 'love our neighbours'?*

Discussion Questions:

1. Is the church, the church, if it does not exist for others?
2. How do we move our theology into action?
3. How can love and service to God become living sparks that light up our whole lives?
4. How do we break free from the dichotomies that limit God's power in our lives?

The centrality of love to Christianity does not begin with Jesus and His teaching. Love has its origins in the character of the triune God, where perfect love is shared within a sacred community of three. And love, by its very nature, always reaches out. Rather than be content with the circle of love within the Godhead, God reaches out to create so that others could enter this sphere of intimacy and be warmed by divine love.⁵

Prayer:

"This, then, is what I pray for you. I ask that the Spirit of God give you the power for your spirit to grow strong and that rooted and grounded in love, you will be able to understand the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of Christ's everlasting love for you".
Ephesians 3:16,19

⁵ David G. Benner, "Surrender to Love", Intervarsity Press, 2003

A Love Covenant

Dear Lord,

I thank you that you love me. I thank you for showing me that love has no conditions...no strings attached. You don't love me to get something from me, or to use me, or to take away my will. You love me unconditionally.

I thank you for not just saying you love me. You really proved it. I know you love me...because you died for me! Talk about commitment... there isn't any greater love than that.

I also thank you for accepting me...the way I am. I know I could do better in certain areas. Certainly you know it, too. But that doesn't mean you love me any less. Or that you will love me any more when I improve. You accept me... and love me just the way I am. I don't have to be anything different, or prove anything You just love me.

I think of what you said to me: "love each other as I have loved you."
I want to do that. I want to reflect your love in me. I want to learn to love in a way that will really affect those around me. In the process, I want to become the most loving person you created me capable of becoming.

Lord, I covenant with you to make love a priority in my life. I ask for your help.⁶

In Christ _____ Date _____

"Love must not be a matter of words or talk, it must be genuine and show itself in action."

1 John 3:18

⁶ Charles Arn, "Growing in Love" Planning Guide,

Worldview in the Context of Secular Humanism (WORKSHOP # 1 - B)

People will only follow God to the degree that room for spiritual freedom has been won within their world system. God is looking for men and women who will create this spiritual space for His people. John Mulinde

People are the products of their society and live according to the dictates and expectations of their society. They are constrained and limited by the world system in that society. The world and its systems have been changing and will continue to change. People are increasingly being driven by the events around them and these will drive them further and further away from the gospel.⁷

Reflection:

- *Has the Church today lost its impact as compared to the early Church due to the lack of commitment to follow Christ and*
- *Have many Christians allowed themselves to fall into the ranks of the world?*

Section A **God's Call: Set Yourself Apart for Me! Do We Hear God's Call?**

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. John 12:24-26

God is seeking a vessel set apart for Him, separated totally from the allurements of the world around, and fully yielded to His Will. It is a call to a long-term sowing into a new lifestyle. It is a call out of one lifestyle, which looks so logical and right to other people, into another lifestyle programmed for victory and the ability to stand where others would fall or turn and run.

What the nation needs today is a new breed of God's people that live their lives above the constraints that hold others back. People who have allowed themselves to have a dynamic encounter with God through which the Lord Himself made them vessels of honour. Individuals who have a cause to believe in: The Great Commandment and Great Commission. This is a cause of transforming nations and cities with the power of God; opening up the spiritual atmosphere and bringing God's kingdom into communities.

We want to transform our communities for Jesus, but we are part of the very fabric we want to do away with. If we are going to make a real difference, we are going to have to rise above the impediments of our communities and cultures. We are going to have to shed a lot of things we cherish. Our priorities will have to change and so will our discipline. But in exchange, we stand to get into a place of confidence with God that opens up a whole new range of godly exploits. In the process of being set apart, the Lord will do exceedingly, abundantly above what we can ask or even imagine.⁸

When the church proclaims and is a sign of the reign of God – whether by loving enemies or tending to the sick – it will be a contrast community in the eyes of the world.

⁷ John Mulinde, "Transforming Your World"; Progressive Vision Publishing, 2005

⁸ John Mulinde, "Set Apart for God"; Sovereign World, 2005

As we demonstrate full engagement in witness to the world but in a way that is different from the world, that witness is grounded in Jesus Christ, who calls us to be 'in the world...but not of it'. John 17:14-16

Section B

A Call to a Surrendered Life

"No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskin *Luke 5:36-37*

God seeks a people who will disentangle themselves from the system of their day and consecrate themselves to Him. When He finds them He prepares them to be vehicles of change. Through them He initiates transformation of whole communities and nations. The Lord is interested in how we live our life for Him on a daily basis, not on what we do in ministry for Him. Anything that competes with God for the love and control of our hearts is an idol. Most of the time, those idols are 'innocent excuses', 'valid reasons', or 'harmless amusements'. But they have one thing in common: they will always provide us with a good excuse for failing to live up to the requirements of God.

Are we being our best for the Lord? More importantly than doing our best is being our best by how we live our life on a daily basis. Are we more concerned about our image before people or about our image before God? If we want to see results we have to offer our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) to be set apart for God. If we are to set ourselves apart for God, let us rethink our priorities. Every person who has been used in revival has had to break free from the world around them, so that they could be yoked to God, and deeply committed to His purposes.

The journey of being set apart is possible only as we begin to make God our total focus; only as we allow God Himself to become, not just in word but also in reality, the foundation of our lives. If God is going to help us, and if our sole purpose in life is to be set apart for Him, then our relationship with God must be the focal point of our lives as we seek Him with all of our heart.

Section C

Set Apart for God...

Only people set apart for God are able to overcome and make a difference in the societies in which we live. The call to be set apart is not one to argue about. We must either respond 'yes' or 'no'. We must lay down our lives and surrender to God's love. Surrender to God's love involves confession, repentance, obedience and service. For surrender to be transformational, however, it must be a total surrender to love – a covenant love with God.

In Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus summarizes God's intentions for humanity in one simple sentence: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment." Our challenge is to recapture a pure spirit and as we put Christ on display, others will react based on what they see of Him as we are His ambassadors. They will know Christ by our LOVE.

Reflection:

1. *Discipline is necessary for growth.*
2. *Love is an 'action' not a feeling – intentionally sacrificially caring for another person regardless of the cost to oneself.*
3. *Compassion is 'suffering together with another'.*
4. *Discipline requires the exercise of our will though our covenant love for God.*
5. *Spiritual discipline requires the indwelling of God's Spirit.*
6. *God is more interested in how we are 'being' each day than 'doing' activity for Him.*
7. *Only people who are set apart for Christ can make an impact in our society today.*
8. *Servant hood is the highest reflection of the image of God in humankind.*
9. *God's love is demonstrated through **service**.*

Discussion Questions:

1. How does one train to be godly? 1 Timothy 4:7b-8
2. Why do you think God wants His children to be conformed to Christ's likeness? Romans 8:29
3. What aspect of the image of God and Christ, who perfectly reflected His Father's image, should be reflected in us? Matthew 20:28, Romans 15:8-9, Philippians 2:5-8
4. What is the relationship between service and love? 1 John 3:16-18

ANYWAY

Some people are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.

Love them anyway,

When you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway,

When you succeed, you may win some false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness will make you vulnerable.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building might be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People need help but may attack you when you try to help them.

Help them anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God...

It was never between you and them anyway.⁹

⁹ Adapted from a poem from Mother Teresa

Bridging Exercise #1

Entry No: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What was the need? How did you meet it?

2. How did you spiritually prepare for the exercise?

3. Did this exercise help the people you served move toward God's intentions? How?

4. Did this exercise help you move toward God's intentions? How?

5. What you have learned from this exercise?

6. Did you grow in maturity and love for Christ because of this activity?

7. Were the personal rewards received through your service worth the effort expended?

Workshop 1 - Exercise for Reflection

→ How does God want you to put His Love into Action in your community?

→ What would move your heart to become more centered on God's Agenda?

→ God is seeking a vessel that is set apart for Him – totally separated from the allurements and dictates of the world around. I am ready to turn my life over to Him by surrendering...

→ Prayer

Bridging the Great Chasm (WORKSHOP 2)

Relationships as God Intended

We seek bridges from our isolation through people, possessions and accomplishment. But none of these are ever quite capable of satisfying the restlessness of the human heart. Our yearning for connection is spiritual and our needs for love, connection and surrender form the spiritual core of who we are.

In this lesson we will look at Jesus' development through the eyes of Luke. As we study Luke 2:52, and Luke's description of Jesus' growth, we will use it as a model of development for our families, churches and communities.

Key Verse: Luke 2:52

1. What four ways did Jesus grow?
2. What common terms describe these four kinds of growth?
3. Did Jesus' growth happen immediately, or was it a process over time?
4. What were the physical/material living conditions in which Jesus grew?
5. Did Jesus have the resources necessary to fulfill God's purpose for Him? Why for why Not?

Jesus is our model. He grew in four areas—wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. In common terms, we can say that Jesus grew physically, spiritually, socially and in wisdom. These four areas are useful for planning development in our families, churches and communities.¹⁰

Section A

Spiritual: All areas of our life which relate directly to our relationship with God and the spiritual world.

- ✓ Fellowship with God
- ✓ Worshipping God, alone and together
- ✓ Talking to God, alone and together
- ✓ Listening to God, alone and together
- ✓ Hearing about God's Love
- ✓ Sharing God's love with others
- ✓ Obeying God

Section B

Social: All areas of our life which relate directly to our relationship with each other.

- ✓ Friendship/fellowship
- ✓ Loyalty
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Play/Celebrations
- ✓ Shared work

¹⁰ Samaritan Strategy Handbook, "Food for the Hungry" and Harvest Foundation

Section C

Physical: All areas of our life which relate directly with the rest of creation.

- ✓ Adequate nutrition
- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Shelter/home
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Clean water
- ✓ Clean Sanitary environment

Application:

Sample Matrix

Category of Need -->	Wisdom	Physical	Spiritual	Social
Level of Response				
Family	Discuss one Proverb and how to apply it during family devotions each day this week.	Wash dishes after evening meal three times this week.	Ask different child to lead family prayer each day this week.	Go with my spouse on a date without the children.
Church	Focus my devotions this week on applying this week's sermon.	Volunteer to help in the church office on the weekend.	Spend 15 focused minutes every day this week praying for our pastor and elders	Take a child of one of our single parents on an outing.
Local Community Work, School, Neighbours, City, Environment, Enemies	Visit with elected local leader to learn about the needs in our community and ask how I can help.	Pick up trash on the streets each day this week as I walk.	Ask my neighbour what needs they have for which I can pray and then intercede for them.	Play soccer with neighbourhood kids.

→ Carefully and prayerfully observe development needs in your family, church, and community. Look for small ways you could help others move toward God's intentions in each area.

→ The ideal human development can be described as 'Moving toward God's intentions in ALL areas of life.'

Bridges of Love Journal Record

Category of Need --> Level of Response	Wisdom	Physical	Spiritual	Social
Family	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:
Church	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:
Local Community Work, School, Neighbours, City, Environment, Enemies	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:	Date: _____ Description:

The Greatest Mystery of All

(WORKSHOP 2 - B)

As the church engages a third millennium, it too looks across a terrifying—and every-widening—chasm.

- ♥ Between first century authority and post-modern scepticism;
- ♥ Between a bold proclamation of God's love and unmet human needs;
- ♥ Between the selfless vision of Christ and the self-obsessed reality of our world;
- ♥ Between the truth of God's laws and the moral compromise of our culture;
- ♥ Between those who believe and those who don't.

At the bottom of the chasm rages the white water of popular sentiment, which increasingly views the church as inconsequential, a sideshow along the interstate of the world's real traffic. Today, 'numerous studies confirm that the public, especially media and intellectual leaders, do not see Christianity as a dominant social force.' In fact, only one out of three pastors—pastors—believes the church is making a positive impact on the culture.¹¹

How will the world ever discover church again if what they see across the Great Chasm is, in reality, people no different than themselves? "Our gospel is cancelled by the way we live".

Dr. Henry Blackaby

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of impact do you believe today's church is having on our culture/community?
2. How does the community around you "know" your church? Do they feel a positive connection with it?
3. What kinds of "living proof" has the community around you experienced of your church's Christianity?
4. How would the call of "living proof" in the community challenge the way your church presently operates?
5. What practical steps could you take this next year to improve your church's name in the community?

***"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people".
Galatians 6:9-10***

The church must rediscover its essential role and discover that the great chasm can be bridged as we reconnect with our communities and experience the
'Impact of Church as a Faith Community'

¹¹ Robert Lewis, "The Church of Irresistible Influence"; Zondervan Publishing House, 2001

How the mystery was made known to me by revelation. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ. (Ephesians 3:3-4)

Paul reveals the biblical mystery of how “building community” is the “work of the cross”. He challenges believers to create an authentic Christian community-of-faith, wherever one lives, works, and journeys. The “mission” of a Christian community is to reconcile differences and present a unity of vision. Through history, “communities of faith” have demonstrated a “belongingness” that brought hope during times of uncertainty. Accordingly, a vibrant faith-based community appears attractive to outsiders, because many of them are looking for a new “family” where belonging embodies certainty, midst their life-experience of injustice, suffering, and loneliness.

God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, instructs us to become ambassadors of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18). It is only through the transforming work of Christ on the cross that reconciliation makes community possible - - and only through the church on earth, is God able to demonstrate His grace and wisdom. From Jesus’ words in John 12:24, “unless a kernel of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it will not bring forth fruit” we learn that the cross is the method of missions: accordingly, if a believer does not make choices for death, they will not bring forth life.

God has called us to be on mission with Him redeeming and reconciling a lost and broken world to Him. As we follow Christ, He sets the direction and we are to follow as His servants. We are, therefore, part of His mission – experiencing His glory as we accompany Him and forever are changed in the process.

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:8-9

Fellowship of the mystery: We should carefully consider what this phrase means. It demonstrates that these are not only facts to know but also a life to live, united in Jesus with other believers, without any separation such as existed between Jew and Gentile.

Which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God: This great truth - the fellowship of the mystery - was hidden before it was revealed after the finished work of Jesus on the cross. This reinforces the idea that there is genuinely something *new* in the New Covenant, and that it is wrong to consider Israel simply the Old Testament Church and the Church the New Testament Israel.

We are called for something far greater than our own individual salvation and sanctification. We are called to be the means by which God bids us to trust fully in his perfect love.¹²

¹² Wayne Elford, “Devotional on the Mystery of Community”

Section B

Two perspectives to consider:

1. What the world allows and expects of the church within modern secular society
- 2 The biblical vision of the church as the people of God.

Are we being pulled by the tension between these two perspectives? Church transformation is about enabling new ways of thinking, understanding and behaving to occur in the church. In becoming more faithful to the churches calling, it is helpful to examine the expectations, resistances, and forces that define a tension between competing perceptions of the mission of the church.

Section C

Reflection: as a believer:

- ✓ Have I ever been part of a counter-culture movement?
- ✓ What unique opportunities and responsibilities, does living in Calgary present?
- ✓ When was the last time I prayed? “ Father God, guide me today, as I journey through the city of Calgary, and interact with others along my way”

As the city goes, so goes the culture. Cultural trends tend to be generated in the city and flow outward to the rest of society. People, who live in large urban centers, occupying jobs in the arts, business, academia, helping professions, and the media, tend to have a disproportionate impact on how things are done in our culture.

Jesus words suggest that His disciples, who live in cities, model a particular kind of a community-life: they should be a dynamic counterculture. It is not enough for them to live as individuals in the city: Christians are called to be an alternate city, an alternative culture that shows how sex, money, and power can be used in non-destructive ways.

Rev.21-22 makes it clear that the ultimate purpose of redemption is not to escape the material world, but to renew it. The Christian community should be radically committed to the good of the city as a whole. Accordingly, Christians work for peace, security, justice, and prosperity of their city and neighbours; loving them in word and deed, whether they believe what we do or not.

Every non-Christian culture has enough common grace to recognize some of the work of God in their midst and be attracted to it, even while Christianity in other ways will offend the prevailing culture. So we must neither just denounce the culture nor adopt it. We must sacrificially serve the common good, expecting to be constantly misunderstood and sometimes attacked; walking in the steps of the One who laid down his life for his opponents.¹³ It involves being yourself and focusing on others. It's based on everyday things, such as asking questions, listening, giving away your attention, and praying behind people's backs. Each of these perfectly sane activities helps communicate the gospel.¹⁴

In his counterintuitive book 'Leading Quietly, Harvard Professor Joseph Badaracco steers us away from the well-worn leaders-as-heroes path and onto the road less traveled, where ordinary people get things done. The most effective leaders are rarely public heroes, these men and women aren't high profile champions of causes and don't

¹³ Christianity Today, May 2006

¹⁴ Jim Henderson, “a.k.a. Lost”; Discovering ways to connect with the People Jesus Misses Most, Waterbrook Press, 2005

want to be. Finding and connecting with others is not about boldness it is about **LOVE**. The suffering of Christ sets the standard for the suffering of Christians. When we pay attention to people we nudge them towards Jesus to become the connecting bridge between them and God. In essence, we become builders of the Christian community. A “community builder” is recognizable by a number of characteristics:

- Has experienced vulnerability and brokenness - avoids power...
- Attitude of servant-hood - - comfortable standing at end of the procession.
- Views each individual, through God’s eyes, as having a treasure within.
- Celebrates, with stories, what God has done in other peoples’ lives.
- Exhibits sacrificial giving and suffers for Jesus –

Section D

Reflection - You and Your Church

The Holy Spirit renews people and creates a new and diverse community. The Spirit of the Lord liberates human beings from all the fears and forces that destroy life in community as God intended. In the Spirit of Christ we are transformed. The purpose is to shape the church’s identity and vision as that body of people in the world called to participate in God’s redemptive mission

♥ **Are you catching a vision for the world, your community and your church?**

No one accomplishes anything significant alone. We need a community of believers to make a difference. If renewal in leadership is going to take place, leaders must rally around something in which they believe.

♥ **Is there a way to not only turn churches outward but also to *join them together in unity of purpose?***

Nothing brings churches together in a city better than prayer and good works. Suspended by these two towers, a broader and more powerful bridge of spiritual influence is being constructed to the glory of God. As different as many of us are, these two components develop a spiritual authentic common ground.

♥ **So how does a church reach out, not only to its community, but to the whole city?**

The answer is, **NOT ALONE!** No matter how large and influential a church might be in a local community, that church represents only a small part of the body of Christ. And as good as its bridge-building efforts may be, its impact will be, at best, limited. No one church can effectively reach a city! The city is too large, too diverse, and too complex, for any one ember from Christ’s redemptive fire to light the way.

Section E **Reflection: God’s grand purpose will be carried out through the church!**

- All things are placed under Christ.
- Christ is head of all—for the church.
- The church is Christ’s body.
- The church is the fullness of Christ.
- Former enemies are united.
- The church is to administer the mystery.
- The church is to reveal God’s manifold wisdom.

- . The church is to make God's plan known to rulers and authorities.
- . The overall job description of all local church leaders is to equip and disciple the local church members for service.

Section F **The Church is Dynamically Related to God's Big Agenda!**

- . God's overarching purpose is to restore all things under Christ.
- . The task of the church is to carry out God's great agenda.
- . The church is the body of Christ and the fullness of Christ.
- . God's plan to place all things under Christ is done 'for the church.'
- . We—the followers of Christ—are the church.
- . We play a role in this purpose—a role so grand it is called an 'inheritance.'
- . Christ shed His blood in order that all things would be restored, first by reconciling the breach between God and mankind.
- . The work of restoration begins by bringing people who were 'far away' back into relationship with God through Christ.
- . As restored people take on the image of Christ, they reflect His concern in every dimension of the creation—especially in the spheres they influence. As they do God's big agenda—the transformation and restoration of creation—is advanced.
- . Full restoration will follow Christ's return. Now, God's people are changed with the responsibility to extend His rule and 'occupy' the territory until He returns.
- . God's people are once again being given the privilege of being His vice-regents.¹⁵

A Prayer for Our Journey Together

Holy Father, teach us to burn white hot with ambition and great dreams
that are God-given and grace-induced. Make us ambitious for
Your agenda and Your glory. Use us to bring hope and life and relief from
suffering in ways beyond our wildest dreams.
And yet, throughout this journey, do an even deeper work within our hearts.
Sanctify us. Grant us pure motives.
And help us, every step of the journey,
to long to please You more than impress people.
O Holy Father, give us holy ambition!

Lord, we want to change our world and honour You, but we fear we
will do it in our own strength, in our own flesh, and do it to meet our personal needs.
O Holy Father, give us holy ambition!

Even as we long to make an impact, we also long for comfort and peace. We're tempted to stay
where it seems safe even though we know that our only real security comes only from You. We
long for significance, but we fear stepping out to make a difference.
O Holy Father, give us holy ambition.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bob Moffit, "If Jesus Were Mayor"; Harvest Publishers, 2004

¹⁶ Chip Ingram, "Holy Ambition" What it takes to make a difference for God; Yates & Yates, 2002

Workshop 2 - Exercise for Reflection

→ God has challenged me to show 'living proof' of His Love in my community by

→ This verse has touched my heart. Please meditate on it and see where God wants you to apply the principle.

→ God has revealed that we need to work on changing our church structure by

→ Prayer

IS CHURCH A RELEVANT INSTITUTION? (Workshop #3)

Section A **Ministers of Reconciliation Everywhere – 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

One of the enemies most deadly and deceptive traps which imprison countless Christians are broken relationships that have not been restored. An unforgiving spirit is a barrier between us and God and so often in church settings; members are in conflict one with another causing pain and suffering that is a poor witness to the watching world.

As we seek the truths from the Word of God, we will learn the principles and action necessary to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation and the joy in serving others in love as God intended.¹⁷

Section B **Jesus' Resurrection Life Gives Us New Life.**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor. 5:17

a. **If anyone:** This is a promise for anyone. Anyone! It doesn't matter what class, what race, what nationality, what language, or what level of intelligence. Anyone can be a new creation in Jesus Christ!

b. **Is in Christ:** This is a promise for anyone who is in Christ. This is not a promise for those who are in themselves, or in the religion of men, or in someone or something else. This is for those in Christ!

c. **He is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** Paul here teaches the great principle of *regeneration*. Jesus Christ changes those who come to Him by faith, and who are in Christ. The saved are not “just forgiven.” They are changed into a new creation.

d. **Who makes us a new creation?** This is something God alone can do in us. This isn't just “turning over a new leaf” or “getting your act together.” But the life of a new creation is not something God does *for us*, but *in us*. So, we are told to *put off . . . the old man*, and to *put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

e. All things have become new is the language of God's perfect, recreated work (Revelation 21:5). God wants to do a new thing in our life!

Section C **The Message and Ministry of Reconciliation.**

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
2 Cor. 18-19

a. All things are of God: Paul is soaring high here, and wants the Corinthian Christians to know that he is writing of things that are of God, not of man. This

¹⁷ John Bevere, “The Bait of Satan” Living Free From the Deadly Trap of Offence; Charisma House, 2004

work of *a new creation* and our eternal destiny are works of God, not something we have to earn and achieve.

b. God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ: God has initiated this ministry of reconciliation, even though He is the innocent party. He reconciled us to Himself; we did not reconcile ourselves to Him.

i. Importantly, God did this through Jesus Christ. God did not reconcile us to Himself by neglecting His holy justice, or “giving in” to sinful, rebellious humanity. He did it by an amazing, righteous, sacrifice of love. God demands not one bit less justice and righteousness from man under Jesus, but the demand has been satisfied through Jesus Christ.

c. And has given us the ministry of reconciliation: Having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, now God expects us to take up the ministry of reconciliation, and has therefore committed to us the word of reconciliation.

i. Reconciliation comes by the word of reconciliation. God uses the preached word to reconcile men and women to Himself.

d. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself: Through all the terrors of the cross, God the Father was working in and with God the Son, reconciling the world to Himself. The Father and the Son worked *together* on the cross.

iii. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself is all the more amazing when understood in light of what happened on the cross. At some point before Jesus died, before the veil was torn in two, before Jesus cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. The Father lay upon the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us.

ii. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering – the act of being judged for sin in our place – was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross; this was the *cup* – the cup of God’s righteous wrath – that He trembled at drinking (Luke 22:39-46; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). On the cross, Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s fury, so we would not have to drink that cup.

iii. Yet, at the same time, Paul makes it clear that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. They were working together. Though Jesus was being *treated* as if He were an enemy of God, He was not. Even as Jesus was being punished as if He were a sinner, He was performing the most holy service unto God the Father ever offered. This is why Isaiah can say, *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him* (Isaiah 53:10). In and of itself, the suffering of the Son did not please the Father. But as it accomplished the work of reconciling the world to Himself, it was completely pleasing to God the Father.

Section D

Ambassadors for Christ

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 20

a. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ: Paul sees that he serves in a foreign land as the representative of a King. The King has a message, and Paul is delivering that message as though God were pleading through us.

i. There is so much in the idea of ambassadors! An ambassador does not speak to please his audience, but the King who sent him. An ambassador does not speak on his own authority; his own opinions or demands mean little. He simply says what he has been commissioned to say. But an ambassador is more than a messenger; he is also a representative, and the honor and reputation of his country are in his hands.

b. Ambassador is a glorious title for Paul and the other apostles. But it is not more glorious, or more stunning, than the thought of God, out of love, pleading to man. Why should God plead for us?

c. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God: An ambassador, Paul makes a simple, strong, direct plea: be reconciled to God.

i. This makes it clear that the work of reconciliation mentioned previously in the chapter does not work apart from our will and our choice. Who are the ones reconciled to God? Those who have responded to Jesus' plea, made through His ambassadors, be reconciled to God.

ii. This makes it clear that it is we who must be reconciled to God, not He to us. *We* are the party in the wrong.

iii. Who is Paul imploring? The *you* of *we implore you* was added by the translators. Paul may have been saying "*We implore the whole world on Christ's behalf,*" or he may have been saying, "*We implore you Corinthian Christians on Christ's behalf.*" The thought is valid either way, and both ideas may be in mind.

d. Be reconciled: We are not commanded to do the work of reconciliation between us and God. He has done the work; it is merely ours to embrace and receive. "It is not so much reconcile yourselves as 'be reconciled.' Yield yourselves to him who round you now the bands of a man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because he was given for you . . . Submit yourselves. Yield to the grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you." (Spurgeon)

How God Made Reconciliation Possible

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 21

- a. Him who knew no sin: The idea that any man could be sinless was foreign to Jewish thinking (Ecclesiastes 8:5). But when Jesus claimed to be sinless, no one challenged Him (John 8:46).
- b. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us: Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul carefully chooses his words. He does not say Jesus was made *to be a sinner*. Jesus never became a *sinner*, but He did become sin for us. Even His becoming sin was a righteous act of love, not an act of sin.
 - i. Jesus was not a sinner, even on the cross. But on the cross, the Father treated Him as if He were a sinner. Yet all the while, sin was “outside” of Jesus, not “inside” Him, and a part of His nature (as it is with us).
 - ii. “Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as if he had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin.” (Spurgeon)
 - iii. “I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what he endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of sinners for whom he died.” (Spurgeon)
 - iv. “We obviously stand at the brink of a great mystery and our understanding of it can only be minimal.” (Kruse)
- c. Note well that He made Him. This is the work of God Himself! The Father and the Son (and the Spirit as well) were in perfect cooperation in the work on the cross. This means that the work of atonement on the cross was *the work of God*. “If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God: let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is at. If God himself provided the sacrifice, be you sure that he has accepted it.” (Spurgeon)
- d. That we might become the righteousness of God in Him: Jesus took our sin, but gave us His righteousness. It is a tremendous exchange, all prompted by the love of God for us!
 - i. “Not only does the believer receive from God a right standing before him on the basis of faith in Jesus (Phil 3:9), but here Paul says that ‘in Christ’ the believer in some sense actually shares the righteousness that characterizes God himself.” (Harris)

Reflection:

2 Corinthians 5:17 certainly has ramifications as to how we should live. Reconciliation perspective should dominate our thinking and actions. We should share reconciliation truth regularly as a way of life. We should live like ambassadors of heaven, both in our words and deeds. However, our passage does not assert how we will live. Victory is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, it is possible, indeed assured, if we daily focus on and apply the new world view which is ours by means of our reconciliation in Christ.¹⁸

The word of reconciliation begins on the common ground that we all have sinned against God. We do not desire reconciliation or salvation unless we know there is a separation. God's goodness leads us to repent. He first loved us by sending His Son – to restore, to save.

Since we are to imitate God, (Eph. 5:1) we are to extend reconciliation to a brother who sins against us. Jesus established this pattern: Go to him and show him his sin, not to condemn him but to remove anything that lies between the two of you and therefore be reconciled and restored. The goodness of God within us will draw our brother to repentance and restoration of the relationship.

This bond of peace can be maintained by keeping an attitude of humility, gentleness and long-suffering and by under girding each other's weakness in love. The love of God is the key to overcome all kinds of strife which will allow us to reconcile with others, no matter what the circumstance. Loving others requires that we be willing to forgive. Forgiving others requires that we be willing to love. Both require an ever-deepening relationship with God to make us a reflection of His goodness.

'If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men'. Romans 12:18

Discussion Questions:

1. Does God unconditionally forgive us? (Luke 17)
2. What did Jesus give His disciples as a pattern for forgiving those who sinned against them in Luke 17:3-4?
3. Does God forget sin when He forgives it?
4. What does 'forgiveness' mean?
5. What does 'repentance' mean?
6. Why does it seem easier to extend forgiveness and be reconciled to some people than to others?
7. What has forgiven and reconciliation to do with building community?

Taking Action...

- ♥ *Ask the Holy Spirit to walk with you through your past, bringing before you any people against whom you have held something.*
- ♥ *Release these people from blame for what they have done to you, picture each of them individually. Forgive each one personally. Cancel the debt they owe you.*
- ♥ *Pray as you are lead by the Holy Spirit. Confess your hurt to the Lord. Be open to His correction and direction. Agree to forgive the person who hurt you. Finally, ask the Lord to bless this person and that He will bring complete healing to the relationship.*

¹⁸ Bob Wilkin is the Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society.

BRIDGING EXERCISE 2

"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offices toward God and men".
Acts 24:16

Peacemakers are:

Loving

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Quick to Listen

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Patient

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Slow to Anger

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Forgiving

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Slow to Speak

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Open

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Obedient

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Vulnerable

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Hearing God

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Truthful

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Humble

- ☐ I am
- ☐ I need to be

Now is the time to act! Ask the Lord to remind you of offences you have hidden, forgotten or denied. Ask the Holy Spirit to walk you through your past, bringing to mind the people with whom you have a hurt.¹⁹

Be ready to pray and ask forgiveness. Prepare to go to them in humility to ask forgiveness and to be reconciled.

1. The most important thing I have learned from this lesson

2. One person that I need to immediately ask for forgiveness _____

Write a Prayer...

Asking God to fill you with His love for others—especially for your enemies and for those who could offend you.

¹⁹ John Bevere, "The Bait of Satan"; Charisma House, 2004

Farming Goes Urban: Just Throw Out a Seed (WORKSHOP #3 – B)

"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

John 12:24

1. Summarize this verse in one sentence.
2. State one principle that Jesus is teaching.
3. Give one example of how your church could apply this principle in ministry to your community.

Jesus uses the illustration of a seed to announce His coming death and the fruit that will result from His sacrifice. As a seed that is planted must die before it can multiply into many seeds, we will be fruitful only when we sacrifice.

Three other New Testament passages that talk about seeds:

1. Matthew 13:31-32
2. 1 Corinthians 3:6-9
3. 11 Corinthians 9:6-1

Share individual answers for their summary, Principle and Application.

Section A

Seed Project Definition and Purpose

Definition: A seed project is small, short-term ministry by a local church. It is done with local resources to share God's love to those outside the faith community.

Purpose: The three principle purposes of Seed Projects are-

1. **Wholistic Evangelism:** Seed Projects help churches see the power of wholistic ministry in evangelism and the extension of the Kingdom of God.
2. **Freedom from Dependency:** Seed Projects demonstrate that the local church can do wholistic ministry without being dependent on outside resources.
3. **Experience and Confidence for Larger Activities:** Seed Projects develop experience in project planning and implementation and develop confidence for ongoing wholistic ministry projects. Seed Projects often lead church to larger and more significant demonstrations of God's love.
4. **Learning that Love is the key to a fulfilled life:** Bless others and you are blessed. Give love and it is given back to you many times over. Love—receiving it, and giving it—is the secret to unlocking and experiencing life at its very fullest.

Principles for Ministry

- ♥ Nothing is too small or insignificant.
- ♥ Each 'harvesting' task is important.
- ♥ God brings multiplication.
- ♥ God blesses us so we will minister to others.
- ♥ Our generosity brings thanksgiving to God.
- ♥ The 'giver' becomes a little more Christ-like in the process.

Important Elements for Growth

- ♥ A Covenant LOVE for God and man
- ♥ Sacrifice
- ♥ Humility
- ♥ Obedience
- ♥ Cheerful Generosity

Characteristics

- ♥ **Covered in Prayer** – led & empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- ♥ **Compassion versus Manipulation** – reflects God's heart of compassion for brokenness.
- ♥ **Motivated by God's Intentions** – above human compassion.
- ♥ **Thoughtfully Planned** – preparation, prayer, writing implementation and evaluation.
- ♥ **Simple and Short** – should not take more than one or two days to carry out
- ♥ **Done with Local Resources** – local church learns to sacrificially invest in its own resources in ministry.
- ♥ **Directed Toward those Outside the Church** – we are to be 'salt and light' in the world, not only in the church.
- ♥ **Those Who Benefit Participate** – those who are being helped are involved in the process of planning and helping, which gives them the dignity of participating in their own 'healing'.
- ♥ **Spiritual Impact where appropriate** – essential to incorporate a spiritual impact in each seed project.
- ♥ **Evaluated by Kingdom Standards** – thoughtful evaluation through God's perspective of success.²⁰

²⁰ Samaritan Strategy, Vision Conference Handbook, Pages 165-207

Section D

Application

Check your understanding of these characteristics. Evaluate whether or not the following list of ten projects in List A would qualify. Write 'yes' or 'no' in the blank provided. If they do not qualify, write the number (s) of the characteristic(s) the project does not meet.

Example: 'd' is 'no.' Why? It does not meet Criteria #5 because it is done with outside resources. Therefore, in the blank write 'No, #5.'

- a. _____ A day of games and food for community children as an evangelistic outreach
- b. _____ A picnic for hungry children based on a community needs survey
- c. _____ Repairs to the gymnasium at a local church
- d. _____ A government sponsored literacy program which is bathed in prayer
- e. _____ Community discussion (started with prayer) about a literacy program
- f. _____ A garbage cleanup the day following the decision to do the clean-up
- g. _____ A community seminar on nutrition in which the organizing committee serves so well that the community participants only need to attend
- h. _____ Media coverage for the seed project to get publicity for the church
- i. _____ Development and operation of a child-care centre
- j. _____ Community meeting to discuss the formation of a child-care centre
- k. _____ A tree planting project with no reference to spiritual issues

Section E

Seed Project Planning

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Luke 14:28-30

Planning is important when a church desires to do something big like the construction of a worship building. But it is also important when your church wants to do something as small as a Seed Project. Even though a Seed Project is simple and small, its success requires planning.

The principles and methods presented are guidelines. They are not rules which must be followed in every case. However, the principles are important. Those who plan a Seed Project should consider each principle, and have a reason if they do not use it.

Description of the Seed Project Planning Guide

There are three main divisions to the Seed Project Planning guide. These parts are the Heading, the Plan, and the Footnotes. The three divisions are described below.

The Heading: states the general context of the project.

- a. **Problem**: A description of the problem for which the Seed Project is designed
- b. **God's Intention**: Statement of God's intentions in relation to the problem
- c. **Scripture**: Reference to a passage of Scripture that reflects God's intentions
- d. **Seed Project Title**: Short description of the Seed Project
- e. **Primary Impact**: Indicates the main area of intended impact (wisdom, physical, spiritual, social)
- f. **Secondary Impact**: Indicates other intended areas of impact

The Plan: Lists the project steps and issues related to each step.

- a. **Project Steps**: Chronological list of steps of the Seed Project
- b. **Persons/Institutions we need to consult**: Persons/Institutions which need to be consulted for each step
- c. **Resources Needed**: Resources needed for each step
- d. **Person(s) Responsible**: The person or persons responsible for seeing that this step is carried out
- e. **Completion Day**: Day of completion of a particular step

The Footnotes: Shows how the plan will achieve the intended impact, and it compares the plan with Seed Project Criteria.

1. **Impact Areas Planned**: Shows where the plan will achieve impact in four areas.
Note: The planned impact can be for either project recipients or for the church.
- b. **Seed Project Characteristics in the Plan**: Shows where the plan reflects Seed Project Characteristics.

Section F

Application

Now you are ready to plan your own project. Follow these instructions.

1. **Form a Group**: Arrange yourselves in groups of three to six. Group members should be from one of the following
 - a) The same church
 - b) Churches in a similar context, i.e., urban, rural, etc.
 - c) The same organization – working in as similar a context as possible

Note: If you are not from the same church, choose one local church (real or imaginary) for your seed project.

2. **List Problems**: Make a list of three or four of the major problems in the community where your church ministers.
3. **Pray for Guidance**: Spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking to choose an area of need that God would want you to address for your Seed Project.

4. **Choose a Need:** Choose an area of need that you think reflects the area where God would want you to do your Seed Project.
5. **Plan Your Project:** On the basis of your choices, complete the Project Planning Guide in the next graphic.
6. **Make Your Plan Original:** Don't copy the sample plans. Use the sample plans to help you but don't copy them. For example, the first Sample has seventeen steps. Your plan should have only the number of steps that are needed. Overall, your plan should fit the realities of the context or situation in which your plan will be carried out.
7. **Reflect as many of the Seed Project Characteristics as appropriate.** Use the Footnotes to check where your plan reflects these characteristics.
8. **Share and Evaluate:** Each group shares its project with the other groups. Help evaluate and critique other group's plans. Help other groups to improve their plans and encourage them to help you improve yours.
9. **Apply Your Plan:** As appropriate, apply your plans.
10. **Complete a Seed Project Report**

*** Remember, demonstrations of God's great agenda and love should be part of the ongoing life-style, or the way of ministry, for every local church.**

Section G

SEED PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

Heading

1. Problem: _____
2. God's Intention: _____
3. Scripture: _____
4. Primary Impact: _____ 6. Secondary Impact: _____

The Plan

Project Steps	Persons/Inst. We need to consult	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Day
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

*Add addition rows as needed

Footnotes

Impact Areas Planned:

** List the steps where the following Impact areas are reflected.*

- ♥ _____ Wisdom
- ♥ _____ Physical
- ♥ _____ Spiritual
- ♥ _____ Social

Seed Project Characteristics in the Plan:

** List the steps where the following Characteristics are reflected.*

- ♥ _____ Covered in Prayer
- ♥ _____ Compassion versus Manipulation
- ♥ _____ Motivated by God's Intentions
- ♥ _____ Thoughtfully Planned
- ♥ _____ Simple and Short
- ♥ _____ Done with Local Resources
- ♥ _____ To those Outside the Church
- ♥ _____ Those Who Benefit Participate
- ♥ _____ Spiritual Impact as Appropriate
- ♥ _____ Evaluated by Kingdom Standards

Reflection:

- *What would happen to us, personally, if we fully obeyed God's intentions for our relationships, the care of our bodies, and our walk with God?*
- *What would happen in our families if all members fully obeyed God's intentions in their relationships to one another?*
- *What would happen in our church and the other churches of our community if all the leaders and members truly loved each other, served one another, advocated for the powerless, and lived in unity?*
- *What would happen in our community if our leaders worked together for the common good, with honesty and integrity?*
- *What would happen if cheating, dishonesty, or corruption were never used in our business community?*
- *What would happen if children respected their parents and learned from them?*
- *What would happen if there were no corruption in our nation—but real justice?²¹*

²¹ Bob Moffitt, "If Jesus Were Mayor" Transformation of the Local Church; Abridged Version, Published by Harvest, 2005

Exercise for Reflection #3

→ God is calling us to reconcile ALL things to Him. What does that mean to you?

→ How do you see building 'Bridges of Love' in your personal life becoming a reality?

→ How do you see Seed Project working in your church?

Prayer

IS IT TIME FOR THE 'PARABOLANI' TO RE-EMERGE? (WORKSHOP #4)

Section A

Christians in Times of Pandemic/Disaster

"In the wake of the First World War a huge influenza pandemic swept the world, and it is estimated to have killed a very conservative 20 million people. 600,000 died in the U.S.A. and another 20,000 in Canada – the co-called Spanish flu often being brought home by soldiers returning from Europe."

Over the past few years we are hearing more and more on the Avian Flu as being the next pandemic. The jury is still out on whether this is the 'big one' that folks have been expecting; but, as researchers say, even if it isn't, it is only a matter of time before influenza or something akin it to mutates, jumps from other species, and begins to wreak havoc. They remind us that it isn't a case of 'if' something like this happens, merely 'when'.

Current best estimates suggest that 4.5 to 10.6 million Canadians will become clinically ill; 2 – 5 million will require out-patient care; 34,000 – 138,000 will require hospitalization; and between 11,000 – 58,000 Canadians will perish. This will not be business as usual.

The scope of a major pandemic will be by definition and historical records alike, unlike any other emergency; it happens, than it happens some more, and it keeps on happening. Just when it looks like it is going to recede, it returns even more severely than before. It happens in virtually all communities, leaving little possibility for outside help; and with it, being a novel infectious disease, comes a fear of infection for self and family.

We have learned from previous influenza pandemics there is compelling evidence that preparation by governments is not enough to completely lessen the impact of a future influenza pandemic without the support of the private sector.

We have an opportunity like never before to put our faith into action. As Christians, are we ready to serve and comfort those afflicted and offer Christ's love to those dying or seriously ill. Are we prepared to give sacrificially and trust God for His protection? Have we considered the consequences, both from God's expectations of His Body, or those who are watching us to see how we respond to such an emergency? What would be the results from Christians taking an active role in showing Christ's Love through their care of others?

The early church was characterized by generosity and sacrifice. Christians were not afraid to die. There was an association of men and women called the '*parabolani*' the gamblers. It was their aim to visit the prisoners and the sick, especially those who were ill with dangerous and infectious diseases. In AD 252, plague broke out in Carthage; the people threw out the bodies of their dead and fled in terror. Cyprian, the Christian bishop, gathered his congregation together and put them to work burying the dead and nursing the sick in that plague-stricken city; and by so doing, at the risk of their lives, they saved the city from destruction and desolation. (Barclay) They knew that death was not the end.

Social scientist Rodney Stark examined the link between social transformation and the early church. He found that this small group of early Christians had introduced a new vision of humanity to the Roman World. Christian religion provided a compelling new

vision of humanity that was observable—not in organized programs of the church but in the lives of its followers, that drew many to the faith. The growth of the church, in part, was due to the **practiced** beliefs of Roman Christians. The hope – and the **real life** evidence that this was no ‘wish theology’ – was compelling and attractive to ‘those without hope.’”

Stark noted:

- 1) The Christian population in Rome, prior to the plagues, was significantly lower than the pagan population.
- 2) The survival rate among Christians was much higher than it was among non-Christians, due simply to the impact of Christian compassion expressed in very elementary forms of nursing.
- 3) Many non-Christians fled when the afflictions came while a larger number of Christians chose to stay, offering care to one another and even to those outside their circle-of-belief. One can see how the Christian demographic would have risen while the pagan population would have decreased.
- 4) When sick non-believers were cared for by Christians, a natural bond of gratitude would be created. The unbelievers who ‘pulled through’ due to Christian love, would want to continue to exist within loving Christian enclaves. But even pagans who did not get sick would have perceived the difference in the way Christians expressed compassion from the self-centered response of those who did not share the Christian’s hope. This would provide an attractive picture of the Christian community that an unbeliever would not likely have previously been aware of.

Stark helps us understand the implications of this by saying, “Another way to look at this is to put oneself in the place of an unbeliever who survived who now faces greatly increased odds of conversion because of their increased attachment to Christians.” Again, it boils down to building loving relationships with those who do not know Christ and let them see Him living through us. They had chosen to make relationships, not programs or paperwork, their strategy. That means that nothing should stand between us and the ability to offer care.²²

William McNeill comments, “When all normal services break down, quite elementary nursing will greatly reduce mortality. Simple provision of food and water, for instance, will allow persons who are temporarily too weak to cope for themselves, to recover instead of perishing miserably. Pagans saw Christians do this for one another and they experienced Christians doing this, even for themselves, as non Christians. They saw Christian care-givers undergo the ‘miracle’ of martyrdom and in this they learned about the One who gave His life for them. Others who were ill experienced the ‘miracle of healing when they got well through the loving touch and drinks of water that accompanied the heart-felt prayers of Christian friends.”²³

God chose the local church for a grand purpose and equipped it with unique strengths: We have learned that when it submits to God’s intentions, it becomes a model of God’s

²² Rodney Stark, “The Rise of Christianity”

²³ William McNeill, “Plaques and Peoples”; 1976

agenda in its society. As it submits to God's intentions, it increasingly reflects His image and character.

Each generation of each local church has a choice; to be an administrator of God's agenda for its community, or not. Throughout history, the church has usually understood social and cultural transformation as an essential part of its task. Jesus' intention was that evangelism and social concern be intimately related to one another, and many periods of church history have reflected His intention. People following Jesus loved God and neighbour and were salt and light in their communities.

Section B

What Can We Do to be Prepared?

The field of "emergency preparedness" is one that is often difficult to recruit people ahead of time. We tend to think of emergencies and natural disasters as happening to others, to someone else and definitely somewhere else!

Ignorance of the unknown is often the greatest hindrance and anxiety and fear cripples effective service. The scope of a pandemic is something that for this generation, we can only imagine or read about from by-gone days. Think of an emergency that affects not only a nearby neighbourhood but a whole city; that lasts not hours or days but weeks or months; that doesn't seem to focus on the elderly but rather on healthy young adults; that incapacitates a quarter or more of those trying to respond to it; that affects all surrounding cities, provinces, and countries such that no outside help can come in...and it continues – stops and continues again...²⁴

Do we know that a pandemic will occur in the next year or two? No... Does it matter? No... Why not? A pandemic is a near certainty and the signs have never been accumulating wider and faster but whether it comes or not is not the defining matter. What should compel our actions is our love for God. The process of becoming more Christ-like as we grow in compassion and love for our neighbour is the gift we give ourselves.

Section C

Spiritual Readiness

A Biblical model of compassion in action is in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah recognized a need, wept and was broken hearted over the situation. He prayed and then took action mobilizing others to be responsible for their own piece of the wall.

Prayer is the callisthenics that get us in shape for the marathon of service. Prayer and action, therefore, can never be seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive. Prayer without action grows into powerless pietism, and action without prayer degenerates into questionable manipulation. If prayer leads us into a deeper unity with the compassionate Christ, it will always give rise to concrete acts of deeper solidarity with the poor, the hungry, the sick and dying, and the oppressed, they will always give rise to prayer. In prayer we meet Christ, and in him all human suffering. In service we meet people, and in them the suffering Christ.

²⁴ Tim Foggin, "Of Churches, Pandemics, and Emergency Preparedness"; Reconnecting the church with the community in which it is found...

Nehemiah related everything whether large or small to the desire to do the will of God, in whose presence he lived and moved. He modeled for us:

- ♥ How to pray when there seems to be no human solution to our problems.
- ♥ How to blend human and divine factors when facing these predicaments.
- ♥ How to keep God's sovereignty and our human responsibility in proper balance.

What problem confronted God's servant when he left the splendour and comfort of the Persian court to return to the city of his fathers? Furthermore, what did he plan to do about it? Little is gained by being exposed to a problem if we are not prepared to seek a solution.

Nehemiah certainly responded to the report he heard. It was not a knee jerk reaction over an overwhelming need. Even though he had a strong emotional response over the bad news, he took time to pray, fast and meet with God. He had a God given concern that propelled him out of his comfort zone. He had a passionate concern for God's people and God's agenda that superseded his own personal comfort and prosperity.

Any intention to sacrificially meet the needs of sick and dying people – should the pandemic become a reality, will be actualized by people who are intimately connected to Jesus. Only those who walk closely with the Lord will have the strength to nurse the dying like the 1st and 2nd century Christians did in Rome. It depends, not so much on how merciful we are, but on how deeply we ourselves love the Lord.

Section D

Physical Readiness

Each church has its unique area of ministry and sphere of service. Let us again take Nehemiah's example and follow his strategy to engage the community to service. God used Nehemiah to gather his people in Jerusalem; not just to start well, but to finish better. The key we're going to see is that every single person that day made a personal commitment. Not to Nehemiah, but to God. Nehemiah set the pace; the people followed. Nehemiah was a master in the art of coordination. He understood that coordinated people can sustain commitments. The combined effort of the group is far greater than the sum of its parts. As people work together and find their niche, the results are exponentially far greater than what we can do working apart. Lots more fun too!!

Nehemiah realized that personal commitment always begins with *leadership*. He modeled it convincingly. He didn't say this is what you ought to do...this is your problem. He knew that motivation is caught much more than taught. So he set the pace. He invited others to join him after they had agreed that it was a common problem that they ALL had to face. Every part of the solution depended on 'WE doing something together.'²⁵

Personal commitments bring awesome power. They are very powerful, not just in the spiritual realm. Genuine commitment focuses and increases our attention on the challenge before us. Making a personal commitment means we sign up in advance and say, 'I pledge by the grace of God to do this'.

²⁵ Chip Ingram, *Holy Ambition...What it takes to make a difference for God*; Moody Press, Chicago, 2002

- ♥ Do we have a solid strategy in place to be ready to respond to a need of national proportion? We need people like Nehemiah that realize that getting others involved and passionate to follow God, always begins with strong Godly leadership.
- ♥ Could a system be in place to be '**On Mission with God**' to network, mobilize and equip brothers and sisters in Christ to be ready as the world becomes increasingly burdened with natural disasters, pandemics, poverty, disease and war.

Section E

Relational Readiness

Do we know our neighbours? Do we have people who do not know Jesus whom we can be prepared to care for? As we have discussed, building relationships is the key so it is critical to be intentional in our efforts to meet others where they are in a real way.

We know the impact of Godly Love. As humans we have all a need to be loved and when we exhibit Christ's presence in our lives as we serve those that do not know Jesus as their Saviour, will be drawn to Him.

Studies affirm that weakening bonds of friendship have far reaching effects. Among them: fewer people to turn to for help in crises, fewer watchdogs to deter neighbourhood crime, fewer visitors for hospital patients and fewer participants in community groups. The decline, which was greatest in estimates of the number of friends outside the family, also put added pressure on spouses, families and counsellors.

We have an opportunity today as never before to practice what we believe. We can allow circumstances to silence us, or we can see the shaking of the nations as an opportunity to put 'feet' to our faith and make a difference for God's Kingdom.

Section F

Mutual Assistance Groups

A church response to a pandemic is a shared commitment from the whole church body, being a visible and tangible witness of the gospel, acting as channels of God's Love. Since Pastors and others ministry leaders in the church will be over-extended it will be necessary to have mature individuals who will be ready to fill in the gap. Lay people will have opportunities to minister in the lives of friends, neighbours and fellow church members.

A major flu pandemic would cause a shift in the way we traditionally gather to worship. Public gatherings (including church assemblies) would likely be closed or banned temporarily due to the fear of contracting the virus. In an environment of 'germ avoidance' gathering in large groups would be an unlikely occurrence. Public health officials call this 'social distancing' so church attendance would be one such activity to be avoided. Many would be reluctant to go out in public, for fear of contracting the flu virus. Due to a high anxiety level, however, Christians would greatly benefit by having an opportunity to meet with others to share, pray, and encourage one another.

During times of crisis, 'Mutual Assistance Groups' (house churches) would provide a more casual but very meaningful worship/support experience. This would be a time of reaching out with emotional support to offer encouragement, personal one on one listening, being a real friend, counsellor, offer hope, new meaning for life and concrete symbols of love. A time for putting one's faith into action and demonstrating 'living proof

of a loving God' without engaging in religious exploitation. Mutual Assistance Groups would give those grieving a sense of orientation into life...being a true witness for Christ by what is done...as well as by what is said. Strong bonds of friendship resulting in new followers of Christ is often the natural outcome that will extend into eternity...

May we live our life as people who know God is watching, inviting us to invest all that we are and giving all that we have into His Kingdom.

Section G

Discipleship

*"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
Let us not give up meeting together." Hebrews 10:24-25*

In times of crisis, great numbers of individuals often commit their lives to the Lord. Are we ready to 'disciple' new believers and give them a solid foundation to build on?

Not only do we need to impart the scripture but we need to equip new believers for service. Equipping is more than teaching however. It is modeling, training, providing tools, instilling character and attitudes, enhancing vision, providing knowledge and experience, mentoring and discipling. It is broad-scale preparation.

Bob Moffit – "If Jesus Were Mayor"

We need current church leaders who are willing to explore this crucial area of training church members in community spiritual leadership and practical pastoral supportive care. The people of the church are to gather and be instructed and encouraged for compassionate service. As they go 'out' to serve and be Christ's Ambassadors, they will be an expression and fullness of God's love.

'Proclamation' and 'demonstration' are both needed to communicate the Gospel in its fullness. Preaching is essential yet the message is hindered if there is not the reality of God demonstrated.

*'Turning the face of the church outward, giving its resources away, blessing the
community, unleashing the gifts of laypeople to serve -
this is what our living God desires for His Church.'*

Pastor Robert Lewis – 'The Church of Irresistible Influence'

Section H

Partnerships

Health care facilities will be overextended and national and provincial pandemic influenza plans have sites churches as 'non-traditional sites' and congregation members as workers for healthcare delivery. Could you imagine the witness for God's Glory if Christians were actively involved as newly trained volunteers being channels of God's love in their communities? What an opportunity to partner with regional health authorities and to walk in the steps of the Great Physician!

A CHURCH PREPARED (WORKSHOP #4 – B)

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion on him and bandaged his wounds pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him."

Luke 10:33-34

1. **Biblical Response**: During any crisis, many questions arise about God. As such, we need more than ever to be ready with a response for the hope that lies within us.
2. **Prayer Opportunity**: Prayer should be a first response and priority in any situation.
3. **Small Groups**: Will play an integral role in building Neighbourhood Mutual Support Groups (MAGs) which will give prayer support, spiritual guidance, counselling, elementary nursing care, child care, food preparation and delivery, grief counselling, simply...love is ACTION!
4. **Education/Training/Equipping**: The focus of a disaster preparedness plan should be to anticipate what is needed to respond to warnings and to take action during a disaster relief operation.
5. **Training of Trainers**: Courses to prepare local churches and mission organizations in areas of health care, social services and discipleship.
6. **Partnerships**: With neighbouring churches/ministries working in unity for a common purpose, health/social agencies/NGO's will reduce omissions as well as duplicating essential services. An opportunity to build unity within the church, community and health authorities. The church being the 'shining light' of Matthew 5:16.
7. **Communication**: To compile a data base for each communities needs and resources. To have a record of those in your neighbourhood who will need an extra hand – the elderly, those alone, those who have died... Will keep information current and relevant as each day is monitored.
8. **New Sites for Services**: In times of crisis people often seek a church for peace and comfort. Even though the traditional church building may not be operational, there will be sites available to minister to those who are seeking God and His Comfort.

Section A

Reflection

- ♥ *Are we ready to serve and comfort those afflicted and offer Christ's love to those dying or seriously ill?*
- ♥ *How do we engage the local church in such preparation and working together in unity with other denominations in the community?*
- ♥ *How can we give sacrificially and what would that look like in your church?*

- ♥ *What would be the personal benefits from congregation members reaching out service showing God's Love?*
- ♥ *What resources or programs does your church have on the go presently that would fit into pandemic preparedness?*
- ♥ *What steps could be taken right now, for your church to start getting to know your neighbours?*
- ♥ *What qualities would you be looking for in someone to head up a Pandemic Preparedness committee?*
- ♥ *Who in your church fits this profile?*
- ♥ *Does it really matter if a pandemic comes or not?? Why?*
- ♥ *What Bridge Building activity (Seed Projects) can you think of that would connect your church with your community?*

Section B

An Invisible Bridge...

Rami comes from Bhutan, a small country north of India. Several years ago when he was a university student, Rami joined the Bhutanese freedom fighters. The government was corrupt, so students were taking their case to the streets. Rami was arrested, thrown in jail, and tortured. Eventually, his health broke and he was hospitalized. A Swedish nurse began caring for him, and without his permission, she began to pray behind his back. She never preached, but Rami figured out that she was a Christian.

A couple of years went by, and Rami was released from prison. He then received a letter from the nurse. She wrote that she would be happy to cover the costs of his university education. Rami accepted this generous offer and also anticipated a second letter from the nurse in which she would 'preach' to him. But that letter never arrived. The nurse simply sent money. Rami, being a proud young man, decided that later on, when his beneficiary got around to making the tuition money contingent on his conversion to Christianity, he would quit school and pay back every penny.

Rami's friend never got around to preaching. More time passed, and Rami began wondering about life. He made friends with some Youth with a Mission workers who did preach. But by that time he was ready to hear the message. He decided to become a follower of Jesus. All of this was set in motion long before by a Swedish nurse who refused to do the expected and chose instead to do what was doable. She planted a seed. Years later someone else was there for the harvest. Rami's friend built an invisible bridge into his life without his even knowing it.

During World War 11, Russian soldiers at the Rzhev front, working at night in freezing water, built a secret bridge under the river's surface. When darkness covered the moon and snow shrouded the river, strong Russian swimmers silently worked chest-deep in the freezing waters. Their bodies were bloodied by the ice floes.

Then one morning, to the utter shock of the Nazis, Russian tanks, whitened for winter war, came charging down the bank, crashed through the thin ice, and stormed across the river on the hidden bridge built beneath the water. Squadron after squadron roared across toward the stupefied Nazis, opening the Rzheve offensive.

A Swedish nurse built an invisible bridge to Rami, and much later Jesus used that bridge to cross into his life. She couldn't get Rami to listen to the gospel, but he was defenceless against experiencing the gospel through her generosity. She quietly constructed a bridge under the icy floe that separated Rami from God to build a relationship that demonstrated her love for Christ and Christ's love for us.

As individuals and as a society, have we lost track of what really is important. Have we lost our way? Do we need a renewal of our hearts and minds to become a truly just and humane society? We need to define reality in ways that sustain benevolence, justice, kindness and love and then exemplify its meaning in our daily walk. As followers of Christ who have a common vision and purpose model His Love and walk in His Steps the watching world will indeed be drawn to Jesus as we display the 'mark' of a Christian as His Disciples.

Why? *Because we **love** the one who trod the way with groans and tears and sobs of anguish for a lost humanity; who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, who cried out on this unrequited cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Charles Sheldon*

Second C

Application

Please take the time to implement the principles taught in the previous lessons by developing a seed project for your church.

♥ **The PROBLEM: We don't know our Neighbours in our church community...**

Break into groups of 3-4 and come up with a project that will give your church an opportunity to build a loving relationship with those in your community.

When you have completed the chart, please take time to discuss the seed project characteristics and also what impact areas (wisdom, physical, spiritual, social) were reflected by your actions.

BRIDGING EXERCISE #3

Heading

1. Problem: We don't know our neighbours
2. God's Intention:
3. Seed Project Title:
4. Key Verse
5. Primary Impact:
6. Secondary Impact:

The Plan

Project Steps	Persons/Inst. We need to consult	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Day
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				

Impact Areas Planned:

** List the steps where the following Impact areas are reflected.*

- _____ Wisdom
- _____ Physical
- _____ Spiritual
- _____ Social

Seed Project Characteristics in the Plan:

** List the steps where the following Characteristics are reflected.*

- _____ Covered in Prayer
- _____ Compassion versus Manipulation
- _____ Motivated by God's Intentions
- _____ Thoughtfully Planned
- _____ Simple and Short
- _____ Done with Local Resources
- _____ To those Outside the Church
- _____ Those Who Benefit Participate
- _____ Spiritual Impact as Appropriate
- _____ Evaluated by Kingdom Standards

Workshop 4 - Notes for Reflection

- ***Can you imagine*** the community in which you live being genuinely thankful for your church?
- ***Can you imagine*** city leaders valuing your church's friendship and participation in the community—even asking for it?
- ***Can you imagine*** the neighborhoods around your church talking behind your back about 'how good it is' to have your church in the area because of the tangible witness you've offered them of God's love?
- ***Can you imagine*** a large number of your church members actively engaged in, passionate about, community service, using their gifts and abilities in ways and at levels they never thought possible?
- ***Can you imagine*** the community actually changing (Proverbs 11:11) because of the impact of your church's involvement?
- ***Can you imagine*** many in your city, formerly cynical and hostile toward Christianity, actually praising God for your church and the positive contributions your members have made in Jesus' name?
- ***Can you imagine*** the possibilities for local churches reaching out to their communities to prepare in the event of an Influenza Pandemic?
- ***Can you imagine*** the positive relationships that could be formed with health authorities, government officials, communities, strangers and fellow believers?
- ***Can you imagine*** the spiritual harvest that would naturally follow if all this were true?

Prayer

Lord, I pray that the '**Can you Imagines**' would become a reality as we build loving relationships in obedience and love for you? I pray that your people who have been called by your name will humble themselves, pray and truly seek your face to set our-selves apart to serve you with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength. You deserve only our best.

Love in His Service,
Marg Pollon

PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

HOW WILL THE CHURCH 'LIVE IT OUT'?



THE CHOICE IS OURS...