

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

There is an old story about when Jesus ascended to heaven and was met by all the angels and all the saints. They were extolling His victory and cheering His return. After things settled down they asked Him, “So what is your plan? What’s next?” Jesus parted the heavens and they could all see the disciples. Jesus simply said, “They are the plan.” At that point, the company of heaven gasped. They remembered Peter’s denying Jesus three times. They remembered the arrogance of the “son’s of thunder” fighting over who would sit at the right hand and who would be at the left. They recalled the unbelief and the many times the disciples were “afraid.” Certainly there was a better plan.

As we all know, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and everything changed. Peter became fearless, the disciples walked in power, there was boldness and confidence the Jesus was the savior of the world and everybody was invited to receive Him as savior. Salvation was the message. The cross removed all barriers between sinful humanity and a Holy God. The price was paid. The debt cancelled. IT IS FINISHED.

Jesus has entrusted the church with the eternal message of salvation and it is through the church – God’s people – that this message is proclaimed. It is the privilege and responsibility of each follower of Jesus Christ to bear witness to His love, His redemption, His forgiveness and His salvation. No matter what else we do in the church, Salvation is the PRIMARY PURPOSE for our existence.

### **If this is so important, why do we struggle as a church to “lead people to Christ”?**

Some people think it is only the job for the pastor. Some people fear rejection. Some people feel inadequate. Some people don’t want to be pushy. There are many reasons for “why” this is a struggle, but I want to suggest the biggest reason and the most obvious: Most do not know how. Most Christians have had very little training and even less experience in leading people to Christ. They are intimidated and awkward when it comes to sharing their faith with others.

But that is not the only problem. The second reason we struggle is we have not received the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told the disciples,

*“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have*

*heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:4-8*

Jesus told them to WAIT for the Promise of the Father, which is the power of the HOLY SPIRIT. It was only after they received the power of the Holy Spirit that they became powerful witnesses. It was the Holy Spirit that gave the boldness to the early church to do evangelism. People were led to Christ by the “sign’s and wonders” by the miracles and by the testimony of those filled with the Holy Spirit. It has been my experience that people with the Holy Spirit are much more likely to witness to others and be directly involved with the work of evangelism.

A third reality is that many churches do not have a real BURDEN FOR THE LOST. Somehow the urgency of telling others is more of a smoldering wick than a roaring bon fire. People without Jesus are eternally separated from God. They are destined to a lake of fire and eternal torment. Jesus spoke more about hell than any other person in the bible. Without Christ people are LOST, SPIRITUALLY DEAD, ALIENATED FROM GOD, HOSTILE TO GOD, and REBELLIOUS AND UNDER GOD’S JUDGMENT AND WRATH. Look at this amazing passage from St. Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus:

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that*

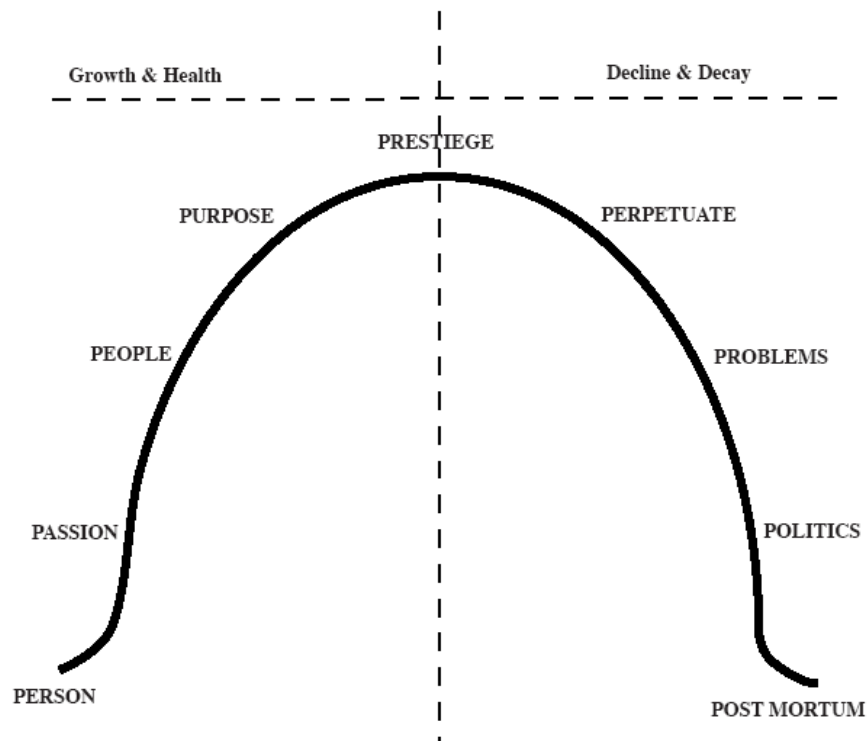
*at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:1-3; 11-12*

A church without a burden for the lost is basically dead. In *Revelation 3:2* such a church is described, **“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”** This church had a name, some good works that looked like Christianity, but in Jesus’ eyes they were DEAD.

Jesus had a similar critique toward the Church at Ephesus when He said, **“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works”** (*Rev 2:4-5*). The Church at Ephesus was begun by St. Paul and was known for its evangelical zeal. From this church the gospel went forth throughout Asia Minor. It was a powerful church. However, in less than forty years it had lost its first love.

I want you to look at this graph below. It highlights a progression.

### LIFE CYCLE FOR CONGREGATIONS



When a church forgets the Person (Jesus) everything else will eventually atrophy and decline. They may continue for a season with outward signs of health (activities, resources, programs, etc) however, from a kingdom perspective they are “dead”. If you discover you are on the downward side of the graph (see previous page) then you simply have to go back and refocus on the PERSON – Jesus Christ – and reignite the PASSION.

The purpose of this manual is to “train and equip” the people of God to do the work of Evangelism. It is designed to give you a simple, straightforward and practical game plan to engage in the PRIMARY work of the church – *Leading People to Christ!*

May the Lord bless you in this study.

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