

ABSTRACT

TO STUDY THE CHURCH GROWTH OF THE HONG KONG EVANGELICAL CHURCH FROM 2003 TO 2012

By

Lai Shui Lam

This research paper studied the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church (HKEC) from 2003 to 2012. The HKEC had twenty churches in Hong Kong, including both independent and dependent churches. Almost half of the churches were congregations under 100 people and some were 50 or less. In 2014, the HKEC celebrated its 60th Anniversary, and at this time we asked ourselves, “Have we been faithful stewards in developing His church?” “How can we further develop our churches?”

After reviewing the Biblical and Theological literature, two of the overarching themes of 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 were the Sovereignty of God and the Efforts of Man. Both of these factors are essential for the growth of a church. This growth is absolutely produced by God because He is the One who brings growth (v.6). But, on the other hand, the people of God putting effort into building the church of God is also a crucial factor for a growing church (v.10). Furthermore, through the review of literature, we find the factors of leadership, evangelism, discipleship, small group ministry and lay ministry are the foundation for a church to develop, especially for small churches.

Through the data collection from annual reports and one-on-one interviews with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of five selected churches, seven transferable principles and practices were discovered. These principles included (1) a stable and committed pastor, (2) building trust among leaders, (3) having plans to reach out to people, (4) small

groups and warm relationships, (5) leadership development, (6) encourage the laypeople to serve, (7) The Holy Spirit and His works.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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CHAPTER ONE

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This research project concerned the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church (HKEC) from 2003 to 2012. The Hong Kong Evangelical Church was a small denomination which had twenty churches in Hong Kong. In 2014, the HKEC celebrated its 60th Anniversary, and wished to have an overview picture of the worship service attendance. Were the churches experiencing growth or not? What kinds of factors influenced the growth of the church? Through this research project, we searched for ways to further the development of HKEC in contemporary Hong Kong. This project involved the literature review, data collection, interviewing local pastors and deacons, data analysis, the findings of the study, the practical applications of the conclusion, the further study possibilities.

Autobiographical Introduction

I have been a pastor in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church for about 25 years. I studied the development of the denomination through a survey of the past ten years. Through this study, I developed a picture of this denomination in terms of church growth. I also identified some practical ways for it to further develop.

According to the HKEC 2012 annual report, the worship attendance for the entire denomination was about 2,769 people. Admittedly, among these twenty churches, half of them were under 100 people in attendance, with a few of them below 50 (p.118). Of course, this

phenomenon has a historical background which is part of our legacy. Our faithful ancestors set up a wonderful tradition in serving the poor.

According to *The Brief Fifty-Five Years History of Hong Kong Evangelical Church* (pp.8-19; 25-32), the HKEC was founded by Mrs. Florence Munroe, who was a missionary sent by Overseas Mission Society (OMS) (p.8). She started a church with five Chinese co-workers on February 27, 1954 in the Sham Shi Po district of Kowloon, where many poor people were living at that time. Actually, at the very beginning, called the first phase, they provided elementary level education for the children. From 1954 to 1960, they set up four elementary schools to provide an opportunity for street children to study. Through these schools, the ministers could reach out to poor families and let them know about Jesus Christ. Thankfully, during that period of time, they established five churches in different districts of Hong Kong. Not surprisingly, most of the churchgoers came mainly from the schools and the students' families.

From 1961 to 1976, the second phase, the missionaries and the Chinese co-workers began traveling to the countryside of Hong Kong to do evangelism. The people living in the villages were poor and uneducated, and most of them were illiterate. They had eager hearts to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, but maturing spiritually was a slow process. There were only two churches established during this period of time. In the book mentioned above, the author said the evangelistic teams faced many difficulties in running the churches and two temporary worship places were eventually closed (p.19).

These two early phases of establishing churches resulted in composition of the HKEC congregations mainly from the low-income and less educated people. In the later times, even

though the strategies of the following phases were shifted, the focal point of serving the poor was not changed. For instance, HKEC through its social services (1974-1991) reached out to the poor people; and then through church planting (1991-1996) set up connecting points in poor areas. In short, the HKEC had had a vision and heart to serve the poor. I was an example of this legacy. After completing my M.Div. studies in Denver Seminary, my wife and I returned to Hong Kong in 1995 with an evangelistic team to start a new church. The area where the church located had a high population of low-income people. Our neighbors and the people on the street had the same background. Over eighteen years, many of the people served came from broken or single parent families. Some of them were even slow learners and mentally challenged. It was our legacy to touch people in need.

I believe this emphasis may have limited the development of our denomination. For example, most of the HKEC churches lacked the financial resources and education needed to advance more quickly. Under these circumstances, the HKEC would be restricted in having sustained and accelerated growth. This might be one of the reasons that the HKEC was still small. This was our history and legacy.

What was the reality of church growth of the HKEC in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012? I want to get an overview picture of the HKEC and then suggest a new direction. For instance, in comparing the worship attendance of 2003 with 2012, we can see a numerical growth from 2028 to 2769 people, respectively (2004 data report p.2 and 2013 Annual Reports p.118). How do we interpret these figures? Is the growth fast or slow? Why does the HKEC have this growth? What kinds of factors are influencing the growth?

During the past few years, I served as the chairman of the HKEC. I can see some churches have grown, some have not, and some have plateau. But what are their real situations? Can we get a clear picture of the churches from the data? I also serve on a committee for Church Long-Term Development for studying strategies and devising our future plan to help the churches in the HKEC to grow.

Statement of the Problem

In the past ten years, from 2003 to 2012, what is the picture of church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church? Specifically, what is the trend of the worship service attendance? Through studying this particular item and personal interviews with selected pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the churches, I want to get an overview picture of the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2003 to 2012. Moreover, we seek to discover what steps we can take to improve the churches of the HKEC.

Purpose of the Project

To Study the Church Growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church From 2003 to 2012.

Research Questions

Research Question # 1:

What is the overall growth of Hong Kong Evangelical Church as reflected in the worship service attendance from 2003 to 2012?

According to the Annual Reports of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2004 to 2013, I will collect the data of the worship service attendance of each church in the HKEC. Then I will make a chart to show all the figures and calculate the growth rate of each church.

Research Question #2:

Why do some churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church grow? What are the factors influencing the growth of these churches?

Based on the data collected in Research Question #1, we see some HKEC churches have experienced significant growth. I will choose five of these churches and research the factors behind this growth by interviewing the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons using a list of questions.

Research Question #3:

What do the research findings indicate that will help us improve the churches of the HKEC in the future?

Through the personal interviews with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the five selected churches, we hope to discover the strengths of these churches and make some transferable and practical principles for other churches in the HKEC. These principles may help us improve the churches in the future.

Rationale for the Project

Biblical and Theological Foundations

The Sovereignty of God

The Apostle Paul reminded us, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3:6-7). God is the life force who produces the harvest. Paul uses the aorist tense to sum up the work of the planter and the waterer, but he uses the imperfect (euxanen) to imply that God is giving growth throughout the planting and watering. He emphasizes that success is not dependent on those who preach, but on God. Leon Morris also points out that laborers will be rewarded not according to their success, but according to their work (1958, 66). Yinger picks up this point and says, “Paul’s intention here is to make clear that the one who hires the laborers, God, determines and distributes the rewards, and not the field, the Corinthians” (Yinger 215). Garland further comments on the image of planter and waterer: The value of the labor of one worker cannot be hailed as more important than that of another. What is important is that God is able to make use of their labor (Garland 112).

What is a faithful church? McIntosh answers that it is one that is loyal to God and his work in the world (2003, 19). A church’s source of faithfulness arises out of the very nature of God himself. It is not because of human effort, as God revealed through the prophet Zechariah by saying, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech. 4:6). Warren affirms what the Bible says, “Our job as church leaders, like experienced surfers, is to recognize a wave of God’s Spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to make waves, but to recognize how God is working

in the world and join him in the endeavor” (Warren 14). Thus, when we are talking about church growth, we need to depend on the power of God and his guidance.

The Effort of Man

The Apostle Paul also reminded us, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds” (1 Cor. 3:9-10). In these two verses 9-10, Gordon Fee gives us some considerable ideas. First, the church in Corinth, not the individual Christian, is the building, and second, God is the owner (v.9). Third, Paul again is presented as the founder of the church. He laid a foundation as an expert builder (Fee 137).

Furthermore, what is the point of comparison that Paul wishes the reader to catch from the list of building materials? The underlying issue may be, “What will survive fire?” The first three, “gold, silver, precious stones” (most likely a reference to jewels) are inflammable; the second three, “wood, hay, straw,” are highly flammable (Garland 116). Kuck thinks that Paul has no particular building in mind. The materials represent the quality going into the construction of the building. Some are excellent builders, using materials of exceptional quality; others are less so, using materials of inferior quality. Some materials will endure; others will not (Kuck 177-178). What makes for imperishable building materials for building the church? The wise master-builder laid a solid foundation, and his message of Christ crucified is the standard by which to evaluate all other builders and their materials (Yinger 216-17).

Warren clearly pointed out that churches grow by the power of God though the skilled effort must be present. We cannot do it without God, but he has decided not to do it without

us (Warren 60)! That is a striking interpretation of the verses mentioned above. Wagner also said, “While God ripens the harvest, He does not reap the harvest. He expects us to be His agents in reaping” (1984a, 19).

Jesus also encouraged us to do “the greater things” in Him. He said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:12-13). Hemphill comments on these verses and says that the “and” of John 14:13 may be one of the most important linking words in the New Testament. God is not concerned about one’s ability to grow the church, but in one’s availability (Hemphill 33). Servants of God should prepare themselves to join him, and be willing to utilize the opportunities God gives us (Hemphill 24).

The Practical Foundations

The first reason for this study was the timing for the Hong Kong Evangelical Church to review the denomination as a whole. The HKEC marked its 60th anniversary in 2014, we not only wanted to celebrate our history but asked ourselves, “Are we being faithful stewards in developing the Hong Kong Evangelical Church? What kinds of things should we appreciate or celebrate in the past ten years, from 2003 to 2012? What kinds of things should we be alert to avoid doing?” At the denominational level, learning from the past is very important. As mentioned before, the HKEC has a good tradition and legacy in serving people in need. This legacy reminds us the focal point of the HKEC; but, at the same time, it may be a hindrance for church growth. Learning from the past is our stepping stone to build a better future.

The second reason for this study is for the benefit of the local churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. When they see an overview picture of the HKEC, they will realize the strengths and the weaknesses of our denomination. It will remind us what kinds of things we should do or avoid doing. When each local church makes a comparison with the trend in the specific areas mentioned before, they will better understand our church situation. That may be a good motivation for us to grow. At the denominational level, we will provide seminars or pastoral meetings for the ministers to provide feedback or discuss the surveys in order to deepen this study.

This is also an opportunity for the local churches, especially the healthier churches, to consider how to contribute their strengths to support the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. Through the research, they will find that some churches may be declining. What could the other sister churches do for the churches in need? Could we share our resources in helping others?

The third reason for this study is to provide some data for the Church Long Term Development Committee to think about future plans. Through the research, they will know the strengths and the weaknesses of the HKEC. As they plan for the further development of HKEC, this study may be one valuable resource for their reference.

Definitions of Key Terms

The Church Growth: Church growth is the increase of the average number in attending the worship services in the church.

The Sovereignty of God: To confess God's sovereignty is to view him as the absolute and sole ruler in all the universe. He possesses absolute power and complete knowledge. He is in control; He also has the freedom to do whatever He wills (Ligtner).

The Effort of Man: God has created us with the characteristic of being responsible for our actions and also ordained that our actions do have effects (Wayne Grudem).

Delimitations

Firstly, this research focused on the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church in terms of the worship service attendance from 2003 to 2012. Although the research did not provide a perfect perspective to understand the whole picture of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church, the research will reflect the reality of the HKEC in terms of this specific area. The data collected from the annual reports of the HKEC from 2004 to 2013. Then, we will do a personal interview with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the five selected churches.

Second, there are other factors that need to be considered. The HKEC has twenty churches in Hong Kong divided into five regions for mutual care and support. Each region may have their own specific situations and geographic variety. For example, one of our churches is located in a commercial district and because the offices are closed on Sunday, people would not have the tendency to come back again. Because of this, the church has a limitation in developing the Sunday service there. Another example is the different combinations of church staff team. One church in the HKEC has no full-time pastoral staff. The minister in that church is

only part-time and has his own job to do in the day time. This pastoral structure may limit the church's development. How can it fit in this research?

Thirdly, this study focuses on the churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. The study and the questions are designed for this particular group. We will not consider any other church outside of the HKEC. However, the result of the research and the practical application may be valuable for other churches of similar background and situations.

Data Collection Method

Participants

The participants for this study were a selected sample of five growing churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. Through the data collected from the annual reports of the HKEC from 2004 to 2013, we identified which churches were growing in terms of the worship service attendance. These five sample churches were located in different regions in Hong Kong. We would make a personal interview with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of these five growing churches.

Type of Research

This study examined the experiences of five growing churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church in the area of church growth as a means for church development. This research contributed to the understanding of the process of church growth—the essential characteristics, including transferable principles and practices—in order to design a church

growth strategy for the churches in the HKEC. This study was designed using qualitative research, through open-ended questions and personal interviews.

Data Collection

The instruments were divided into two parts. Part one was the data collection by the denomination and the other was doing the personal interview with the local pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons using a list of questions. At the very beginning, I used the annual reports of Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2004 to 2013 as the basic data for this study. The data mainly focused on the area of worship service attendance to reflect the situation of the HKEC. Based on the data, we calculated the church growth of each church in the HKEC.

After that, we asked for permission of the Executive Board of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church to conduct a personal interview with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of five selected growing churches. In the personal interview with open-ended questions, we collected the data directly from these five selected growing churches.

Data Analysis

The data of annual reports from 2004 to 2013 was analyzed to find out the main reasons for growth in churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. Then, I coded and analyzed the interviews of the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of five growing churches for themes and patterns. Comparing these themes and patterns across these churches identified the transferrable principles and practices in the growth of the church.

Generalizability

This study was conducted among five selected growing churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. Most of them were small to medium size. If other churches were of similar size as these five churches, they could apply the findings of this study to their situations. But if the sizes of the churches were larger or the structures or the culture were so different from the Hong Kong Evangelical Church, the findings might not be applied to their situations.

Overview of Dissertation

Chapter two reviews literature associated with biblical and theological foundations of the Sovereignty of God and the Efforts of Man; leadership, the character of the leader, prayer, vision, evangelism, discipleship, small group and lay ministry for church growth. Chapter three includes problem and purpose, research questions, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter four contains the details of the findings of the study. Chapter five provides a summary of the conclusions derived from interpretation of the data, as well as practical applications of the conclusions and further study possibilities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE

Introduction

The focus of this research paper is to investigate the development of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2003 to 2012. I compile an overview picture of the HKEC in terms of the worship service attendance. Based on the data collected from the annual reports and personal interviews with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of selected churches, it can be determined if the churches in Hong Kong Evangelical Church have grown. Why do some churches experience growth and what are the factors that influence this growth?

As the HKEC celebrated the sixtieth anniversary, the church asked, “Are we faithful stewards in developing His church?” There were twenty churches in Hong Kong Evangelical Church at the time of this study, including independent and dependent churches. Almost half of the churches were congregations of under 100 people and some of them are 50 or less. Considering our tradition and legacy, what should be done to further develop our churches?

Prior to making any conclusions about these questions, I first reflected on the biblical and theological concepts of church development. I then discussed the areas of leadership, the character of the leader, prayer, vision, evangelism, discipleship, small group and lay ministry for church growth to find ways to be a faithful steward to develop our churches.

Biblical Foundations

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

1 Corinthians 3:5-17 is a key passage in the area of church development. This passage seems to tell that God is the key factor to make the church grow, regardless of what the leaders of the church do (v.6). But on the other hand, our labors and efforts also contribute to the outcome of church growth (v.8). Furthermore, this passage clearly tells us that as God's fellow workers, we should be careful how to build the church as a whole. The various raw materials of gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw indicate different qualities of life or church (v.12). We, the servants of God, should be careful in selecting the raw materials to build the temple of God.

Gordon Fee makes a comment on this when he says, "this is one of the few texts in the New Testament where we are exposed both to an understanding of the nature of the local church (God's temple indwelt by his Spirit) and where the warning of v.17 makes it clear how important the local church is to God himself" (Fee 149). Thus, we can't ignore what God says and must recapture the vision of what God intends the church to be by his grace.

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is

burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶ Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. (1 Cor. 3:5-17)

In the book of 1 Corinthians

This passage, 3:5-17 is connected to 2:14-3:4 and 3:18-23. The first section, 2:14-3:4, is about three kinds of people, including the man without the Spirit (unbeliever), the spiritual man and the man of the flesh. In the eyes of Apostle Paul, these three kinds of people have different perspectives in understanding spiritual things. The first group of people, the “man without the Spirit”, does not accept spiritual things, for they do not have the Spirit in their lives. They treat spiritual things as foolish and cannot understand.

The second group is spiritual people who can understand spiritual things for the Spirit reveals the things of God to them. Although this group of people can discern all spiritual things through the Holy Spirit, they can't understand the mind of our Lord. On the other hand, Paul also said that spiritual people have the mind of Christ, so that they can eat solid spiritual food and not be easily influenced by the flesh.

The third group of people is the people of the flesh. What is the character of this group of people? They can only drink milk and not eat solid food. Even though Apostle Paul called them “brother,” their behaviors seem to be those of unregenerate people, for they are easily influenced by the flesh.

Why did the Corinthian church have division among them? In Paul's understanding, the people in this church were people of the flesh. There was much jealousy and quarreling among

them and they could not fully understand the mind of the Lord. From this perspective, we can better understand Paul's teaching in the following section of 3:5-17. If we are not careful in building up our spiritual life in God, we will be people of the flesh and will suffer loss when the testing of the Day comes. The people of the flesh may be saved, but only as those escaping through the flames. The people of God need to be alert to the fleshly example demonstrated by the Corinthian church.

In the section 3:18-23, the theme returns to the discussion of chapter two. Paul asserted that the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. If we follow the so-called wise men, such as Apollos, Paul, Peter and so on, we are also foolish because thoughts of the wise are futile. So then, no more boasting about men! This passage teaches us that the wisdom of man in spiritual things is futile without the guidance and protection of God.

What is the connection between 3:5-17 to the whole book of 1 Corinthians? The main theme of the passage is building up the life of God's people which obviously follows the flow of the book. At the very beginning, the Apostle Paul has already dealt with the problem of division among them. The Bible says, "One of you says, 'I follow Paul', another, 'I follow Apollos', another, 'I follow Cephas', still another, 'I follow Christ'" (1:12). This thought has been repeated in 3:4-5. Furthermore, Paul emphasized that all of them were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, all of them belong to one family with no division, no separate groups (1:13). In 3:11, Paul repeated that Jesus Christ was the one and only foundation and based on this foundation, the people of God can build up their lives. Some of them may plant and some of them may water in the church development.

At the end of the book, Paul repeated the idea of the foundation laid by Jesus Christ, especially in chapter 15, which talks about the resurrection of the body. The Bible says, "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (15:3-4). In this short paragraph, we see two important things. First, the foundation was laid by Jesus Christ. All Christians have the same conviction and experience that Jesus died for us and our sins are cleansed. Second, we will be resurrected after death. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (15:22). The resurrection will happen on the Day of the Lord and all our labors will be tested by fire; some will receive rewards and some will suffer loss (3:14). According to this analysis, we see the thoughts mentioned in the passage in 3:5-17 developed from the beginning to the end of the book.

Furthermore, we know that there were many problems in the church at Corinth, including such things as divisions in the church, sexual immorality, and lawsuits among believers. These problems are issues that only occurred in this church. We do not see these issues addressed in the other New Testament churches. Why did this church have these problems? Obviously, they did not pay attention to the development of their own spiritual life and chose "wood, hay or straw" in building their lives. Thus, in chapter 3:5-17, the Apostle Paul spent time teaching them how to carefully build up their lives. He hoped they would not be destroyed by these controversial issues, but rather that they lived out their lives as spiritual people.

In the second part of the book, from chapter 7 to 15, we know that the Apostle Paul replied to the questions raised by the church. The issues he addressed are related to different

areas: marriage, food sacrificed to idols, propriety in worship, spiritual gifts, the resurrection body. According to this list, we know what issues were touching daily Christian life in the church or society. Hence, Paul answered their questions in depth to give them principles for life in a complicated context. Through his answers, Paul actually showed them how to do the ministries of planting and watering the seed and how to do them carefully. In summary, the teachings of chapter 7 to 15 are the demonstration of the thoughts in the passage of 3:5-17.

If we read the book more carefully, we see that 3:5-17 also responds to one of the basic problems of the church. In 1:5-7, the Apostle Paul said, "For in him you have been enriched in every way--in all your speaking and in all your knowledge--....Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift." In the Corinthian church, the people were proud of what they had. They emphasized the wisdom of the world (1:20) and they loved to debate with eloquence or superior wisdom (2:1). Because of their gifts, they would take pride in one man over another (4:6). They wanted to become kings without others (4:8). According to the flow mentioned above, we will see that 3:5-17 plays a role in teaching them that man can only labor in the areas of planting and watering. The growth in a life or the church is produced only by God.

On the other hand, Paul also wanted them to know their basic problem of emphasizing the wisdom of the world would destroy their spiritual lives. Their worldly wisdom made them divide into different groups and hindered their unity in God. They became people of the flesh and did not know the spiritual things of God, and as such people, they only followed the rulers of their age. The values of the world would destroy their temples of God. Thus, the message of 3:5-17 is given to alert them to these problems and encourage them in how to build up their

lives or the church. According to the analysis mentioned above, the message in 3:5-17 is very important for the people of God to become mature Christians.

In the Old and New Testaments

When we read through the Bible, we find a similar topic repeated in different books of the Bible. The “Day of the Lord” is the main theme of the Bible, from the Old through the New Testament. In Isaiah 2:12, “The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled).” Amos also declared, “Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light” (5:18). This day will be darkness because the people of God had sinned; they did not pay attention to how to build a right relationship with God and God would now come in judgment on them.

In the Gospels, Jesus Christ always reminded his followers, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt.24:36). Therefore, we need to keep watch and prepare ourselves to meet the bridegroom (Matt.25:1-13). Otherwise, we will be one of the two men left in the field or one of two women left in the mill (Matt.24:40-41). In the light of the Day to come, much of Jesus’ teaching was directed to showing us how to prepare for that coming hour. For example, the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and the parable of the sheep and the goats have the same purpose in encouraging us to pay attention to the development of our spiritual life.

In the books of 2 Peter and Revelation, the day of the Lord is described as the wrath of God. For instance, in 2 Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything

in it will be laid bare.” In Revelation 6:16-17, “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’” These passages tell us we cannot ignore the day of the Lord. In that day, no one can stand before God. Yet, Joel holds a promise that on the day of the Lord, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved” (2:32).

According to this promise, we should establish a right relationship with God. The term “right relationship” with God represents the life that pleases God is characterized by following the instructions of God. This theme is easily found in the Bible. In the Old Testament, right relationship with God is a main theme in the kingdom of Israel. If the kings did the right things in the eyes of the Lord, they would be blessed. Otherwise, they would be cursed. When the people of God did not follow the instructions or the laws of God and worshipped idols, the whole country was destroyed and they were captive to other countries.

In the New Testament there are also some passages which emphasize the building of a spiritual life. Jesus said, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt.7:19-20). The fire as a test verifies the fruit borne in the life of God’s people. Jesus continued to say, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt.7:21). Then, Jesus used a parable of the wise and foolish builders to elaborate the idea how to build up a spiritual life. He said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house;

yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock” (Matt.7:24-25). The theme of 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 is almost a duplicate of the message in Matthew chapter 7.

When we go through the whole Bible, we see that the themes of the day of the Lord, the test, and the building of life have mutual relationships among them. From the beginning to the end of time, they are parallel to each other and at the end of time they come to a climax. The labors of the people of God will be revealed, some of them will receive rewards and some will suffer loss. Thankfully, the people of God who have the same foundation laid by Jesus Christ will pass the test even if their house is built on the sand. Furthermore, we need to thank God for he keeps his promise to pour out the Holy Spirit in the New Age. In Acts 2:17-21, Peter quoted the words of the prophet Joel, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams....”

In the Book of Acts, it is reported that the power of the Holy Spirit made the people and the church of God grow across the entire world at that day. This supports what Paul said in 1 Cor.3:6, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” Why did God prophesy the coming of the Spirit? Why did the Spirit come after Jesus Christ’s ministry on the earth? Because God loves us and wants us to be built up within the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “When he (the Counselor) comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” (Jn.16:8). The Holy Spirit will guide people into all truth because he is the Spirit of truth. With help from the Spirit, we can grow in the truth and live to please to God.

The Sovereignty of God

The apostle Paul says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Cor.3:6-7). Regarding the image of agriculture, Fee says, “With the farming metaphor of vv.5-9 he takes up the question of how they are to regard their teachers, since their slogans are out. Apostles are servants, each with his own task and reward; but everything is God’s—farm, workers, and the growth of crops. By implication, boasting in ‘mere servants of the farm’ is folly in its own right” (Fee 128). David Garland also comments on this passage. The image of planter and waterer makes several points. First, the labor of one without the other would be useless; they are interdependent and complementary, contributing ‘to the same goal’ of producing a crop. Second, though both roles are essential to the task, the laborers are interchangeable. The value of the labor of one worker cannot be hailed as more important than that of another. What is important is that God is able to make use of their labor (Garland 112).

Actually, God is the life force who produces the harvest. Paul here uses the aorist tense to sum up the work of the planter and the waterer, but he uses the imperfect (euxanen) to imply that God is giving growth throughout the planting and watering. The point is that success does not depend on those who preach, but on God. Leon Morris also points out that laborers will be rewarded not according to their success but according to their work (1958, 66). Yinger picks up this point and says, “Paul’s intention here is to make clear that the one who hires the laborers, God, determines and distributes the rewards, and not the field, the Corinthians” (Yinger 215). This is just what Paul continues to say, “The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor.3:8-9).

In his book, McIntosh clearly points out, “What is a faithful church? A faithful church is one that is loyal to God and his work in the world. A church’s source of faithfulness arises out of the very nature of God himself.” (2003, 19) It is not because of human effort, as God revealed through the prophet Zechariah by saying, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech.4:6). Warren affirms what the Bible says, “Our job as church leaders, like experienced surfers, is to recognize a wave of God’s Spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to make waves but to recognize how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavor” (Warren 14).

While Snyder investigates a range of renewal movements in church history, he has observed eight characteristics that seem in varying degrees to be common to all such movements. The first one he mentions is, “A rediscovery of the heart of the gospel experience of Jesus Christ or of the Holy Spirit” (Towns 219). He points out that the experience of God becomes central rather than secondary or absent. It is a vision for the recovery of the dynamic of the early church. Thus, Snyder urges us to have openness to the Holy Spirit to do “new things” in birthing and rebirthing the church in diverse cultures and societies (Towns 226). The founder of the Church Growth Movement, Donald McGavran concludes, “The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. As in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, converts, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields. The concern of Christians today must be to understand the workings of the Holy Spirit and to be open to His leading” (McGavran 55). Linus Morris applies this principle in the church and comments, “A church becomes vital when members appropriate the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives” (1993, 72).

The Holy Spirit is the life force of the church. Jesus instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit which the Father had promised. We see the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the book of Acts. Through the Holy Spirit, the disciples healed many people and performed miraculous signs. Sometimes, the disciples were led through trials and supernaturally delivered. The disciples cast out evil spirits, brought pagan groups to faith in Christ and started new churches—all through the power of the Holy Spirit (Morris, 1993, 72).

The Efforts of Man

In this passage, 1 Cor. 3:5-17, we also see the efforts of Man. The apostle Paul says, “The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor” (v.8). He continues to say, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care” (v.10). In these two verses, Paul reminds us that we can’t ignore our responsibilities in producing the crop or building the temple of God. We will get our rewards according to our labors.

Using the image of the builder, Paul urges us to be wise builders and build the temple of God carefully. What is the point of comparison that Paul wishes the reader to catch from the list of building materials? Kuck thinks that Paul has no particular building in mind. The materials represent the quality going into the construction of the building. Some are excellent builders, using materials of exceptional quality; others are less so, using materials of inferior quality. Some materials will endure; others will not (Kuck 177-178). But Garland guesses there will be an underlying issue. It may be, “What will survive fire?” The first three, “gold, silver, precious

stones” (most likely a reference to jewels) are inflammable; the second three, “wood, hay, straw,” are highly flammable (Garland 116). What makes for imperishable building materials for building the church? The wise master-builder laid a solid foundation, and his message of Christ crucified is the standard by which to evaluate all other builders and their materials (Yinger 216-17). Those attempting to build with human wisdom construct a flimsy house of straw.

In verses 13-15, Paul reminds us of “the Day” coming to test the quality of each man’s work. According to *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, it says, “The biblical portrayal of final judgment that has exercised the most influence on the popular imagination is probably that found in Rev.20:11-15, in which the dead are brought before ‘the great white throne’ of God. ‘And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books’ (v.12). The idea that the works of believers will themselves be judged is found in 1 Cor.3:11-15” (Vol.2, 46). Garland also says, “The supreme test for a building in a Hellenistic city was fire; the same is true for ministry, except that the fire is a divine fire of eschatological judgment (Garland 118). Its purpose in this context is not to punish (Jude 7; Rev.18:8), or to destroy (Matt.3:10; 13:40), or to refine (Zech.13:9; 1 Pet.1:7), but to disclose the quality of the work of Christians (Lanci 67). The phrase “to receive a reward” (v.14) means to receive wages for work done (Lanci 65). Paul is not referring to salvation, as if it were a reward proportional to the work. The loss suffered is not the loss of salvation but the loss of a reward (2 John 8), which, in the context, is simply defined as “praise from God” (4:5). Brilliant work does not earn salvation; lackluster work does not lose it (Garland 118).

The laborer who used cheap materials and took shortcuts will be pulled out of the flames and the rubble heap in the nick of time (Barrett 89), like a brand snatched from the fire (Amos

4:11; Zech.3:2). But inept builders are not just pulled from the ashes; “being saved” points to their eternal salvation (1:18, 21; 5:5). Even failures will be included in salvation, but they will enter salvation “smelling of smoke,” their labor gone up in flames (Fisk 20).

In summary, the whole passage is talking about how to build up the church of God on earth which witnesses what God is. Thus, on one hand, God takes his responsibility in building it up and making it grow. On the other hand, he invites us to be involved in this amazing job of developing his church. We are nothing, but amazingly by his grace can do all the planting, watering and building works in the process of developing the church. At this point, as his fellow workers, we should be careful how we build up the temple of God. In the Day of the Lord, all Christians will be tested by fire. If our works are imperishable, we will receive praise from God in terms of wages or the crown of life. But if we use flammable materials to build up the church and our works cannot pass the test, we will suffer loss from God. We may be saved, but only as one smelling like smoke from the flames.

Thus, we can't ignore our responsibility in building the temple of God. The apostle Paul says, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care” (v.10). Warren comments on prayer and the effort of man, “Of course, prayer is absolutely essential. Every step of Saddleback's development has been bathed in prayer....A prayerless ministry is a powerless ministry. But it takes far more than prayer to grow a church” (Warren 58). He continues to say, “Churches grow by the power of God, though the skilled effort must be present. We cannot do it without God, but he has decided not to do it without us” (Warren 60)! That is a wonderful interpretation of the verses mentioned above.

Jesus also encouraged us to do “the greater things” in Him, he said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:12-13). Hemphill comments on these verses and says, “The ‘and’ of John 14:13 may be one of the most important linking words in the New Testament...God is not concerned about your ability to grow the church, but in your availability” (Hemphill 33). As the servants of God, we should prepare ourselves to join Him, and be willing to utilize the opportunities God gives us (Hemphill 24).

Thus, what should we do to prepare ourselves to be involved in the development the church? One of the important factors is preparing to be a good spiritual leader. Barna says, “The American church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented opportunity and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is the lack of leadership. Nothing is more important than leadership” (1997, 18). Later, he concludes, “Leaders are the missing link to the health of the church” (1997, 29). Even at the beginning of 20 century, Mott had already said, “Wherever the Church has proved inadequate it has been due to inadequate leadership. If the Church is to grow, so as to meet the growing needs of the age, it must have able men in its ministry” (Mott 4).

Theological Foundations

The Sovereignty of God

Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) gave a clear definition of the sovereignty of God, “The Sovereignty of God consists in his being above all obligation to his creatures and so infinitely

above any direction, influence, and control from them in anything that he does. In this sense, God is an infinite sovereign; he does just as he pleases, not being influenced by any obligation he is under to any one, any further than he has been pleased to oblige himself by promise or some other way” (Rushdoony 209). In this definition, we can see God’s sovereignty includes absolute freedom to do whatever he wills. He has no limitations or restrictions from anything or anyone he created.

Lightner continues on the same path and says, “To confess God’s sovereignty is to view him as the absolute and sole ruler in all the universe” (Lightner 53). In his understanding, God possesses absolute power and complete knowledge. He is in control; He also has the freedom to do whatever He wills (Lightner 54). Kendall also states obviously, “God is sovereign: he has the right and the power to do whatever he pleases. He is in control of all that happens and has happened, both for nations and individuals” (Kendall 54).

In the Bible, it is easy to find the theme of the sovereignty of God. For instance, He has absolute power (Dan. 4:35), the heaven and the earth belong to God (1 Chron. 29:11), all souls belong to God (Ezek. 18:4), we can say nothing to the Creator (Isa. 45:9). In the Psalms, this sovereignty is repeatedly affirmed as universal (Ps. 103:19). He rules over all the earth (Ps. 47:2, 7; 97:9), over the kings of the earth (Ps. 47:9; 97:1, 5), and over the nations (Ps. 96:10; 99:1-2). He foils the plans and purposes of peoples and nations (Ps. 33:10-11), and His rulership is eternal (Ps. 66:7). In the New Testament, the theme is also repeated in different areas. All things belong to God (Matt. 20:15), He works all things according to His will (Eph. 1:11), for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things (Rom. 11:36).

Thus, Hodge makes the following conclusion about how God exercises His sovereignty. His sovereignty is exercised (1) in establishing laws, physical and moral, by which all creatures are to be governed; (2) in determining the nature and powers of the different orders of created beings, and in assigning each its appropriate sphere; (3) in appointing to each individual his position and lot. It is the Lord who fixes the bounds of our habitation. Our times are in His hands. He determines when, where, and under what circumstances each individual of our race is to be born, live, and die. Nations, no less than individuals, are thus in the hands of God, who assigns them their heritage in the earth and controls their destiny. (4) God is no less sovereign in the distribution of His favours. He does what He wills with His own (Hodge 163).

Boice comments further on this doctrine when he claims, "The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is no mere philosophical dogma devoid of practical value. Rather it is the doctrine that gives meaning and substance to all other doctrines" (1986, 117). For example, God might love, but if He were not sovereign, circumstances could thwart His love. It is the same with God's justice. God may desire to establish justice among human beings, but if He were not sovereign, justice could be frustrated and injustice prevail. We see that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is the foundation of our belief. It shows us that our God is a living and powerful God. He can guide us and give comfort in the midst of trials, temptations or sorrows. If we look to ourselves, we have no security at all. The lust of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life, are stronger than we are. Yet, when we look to the strength of our God, we can be confident (Rom. 8:31, 35, 37-39).

How can we recognize the sovereignty of God in our daily life?" Through the creation and the providence of God (Lightner 54; Rushdoony 209; Barackman 81; Kendall 50-51). Garrett simply defines Providence as "the attainment of God's telos. Indeed, 'to him [God] are all things' (Rom. 11:36). He is 'Omega' as well as 'Alpha' (Rev. 1:17)" (Garrett 327). Boice also says, "Providence means that God has not abandoned the world that he created, but rather works within that creation to manage all things according to the immutable counsel of His own will" (1986, 176). Barackman gives more details, "Providence concerns God's directing everything to its divinely appointed goal. By His providence God works out His decree for all actual things" (81). But at the same time, God maintains the existence of what He has made and His care of these things (Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:3). He faithfully provides for the needs of the universe according to His purpose for these creatures and things (Barackman 81).

Sometimes, these two terms "sovereignty" and "providence" are interchangeable (Garrett 326), but most of time, providence is the way to reveal the sovereignty of God in nature, in human beings and in history (Kelly 316-317; Boice, 1986, 176-182). By the providence of God, God actualizes His lordship in the universe and also provides wonderful protection among His creatures and in the flow of history. As mentioned before regarding the sovereignty of God, while we trust in God we need not have fear in our lives. He will protect us.

The Efforts of Man

While the Scriptures teach that God is sovereign, exercising absolute rule over the universe to do what He wills and directing all things to their appointed end, what then would be the efforts of man? Do our efforts have real results and change the course of events? Nicole

states, “If we assert that God is sovereign, freedom will be impossible. Man will lose his power of making choices and his sense of responsibility before God. If God has decided everything, man is reduced to the level of a puppet or a robot” (Boice, 1977, 172).

Rushdoony also states clearly that under the sovereignty of God, in every area of life, he must assert the crown rights of Christ the King and bring all things into captivity to Him (211). Arrington, on the other hand, declares a different point of view, “The Scriptures place human freedom and responsibility alongside the absolute rule of God. God limits Himself to make room for our freedom and responsibility. Even when individuals misuse freedom and do wrong, God has a way of using it to accomplish His plan for this world”(119). Why do they have different points of view? Grudem points out that how we interpret the term “free will” is the key factor in this issue (151). He asserts, “An absolute ‘freedom,’ totally free of God’s control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God Himself.” But, on the other hand, he also points out that we are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make decisions, and we act in accord with our own desires; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism (Grudem 151).

J. I. Packer had a similar comment when he said, “This view of God’s relation to the world must be distinguished from *determinism*, which posits a control of a kind that destroys man’s moral responsibility” (Barackman 81). He continued to say, “God’s control is absolute, in the sense that men do only that which He has ordained that they should do; yet they are truly free agents, in the sense that their decisions are their own, and they are morally responsible for them (Deut. 30: 15ff)” (Barackman 82).

How can we deal with the tension between the sovereignty of God and human freedom? John Frame, in his recent works, has tried to shed some light on this issue. He suggests the following proposals to understand how God and man can both play significant roles in the course of nature and history (Frame 837-842):

- Pilot and Copilot: The pilot and copilot both play roles in bringing the plane to its destination. But this is not a good picture of divine and human agency. Because when the copilot is flying the plane, the pilot is not doing so. But in Scripture, God's control and man's action are both involved in bringing about the same historical results. For instance, recall God's action and the action of Joseph's brothers in sending Joseph to Egypt (Gen. 45:1-15).

- Teacher and Classroom: A good schoolteacher is in control of his class, but he does not necessarily cause every action of every student. He only sets the boundaries for the students. This model attempts to reconcile libertarianism with a significant form of divine sovereignty.

Certainly in scripture, God does set boundaries. For instance, with the king of Assyria in Isaiah 10 or the devil himself in the book of Job, God permits his creatures to do certain evil things, but He sets limits. God, however, is different from even the best human teacher. He has control over His creatures under His lordship. So, when God permits creatures to do things contrary to His will, it is because He intends for them to do those things. According to this analysis, the teacher-classroom model is misleading as a picture of divine sovereignty and human freedom.

- Primary and Secondary Cause: we may picture the relationships on a billiard table. The

motion of one ball causes the motion of a second, and of a third, and so on. We sometimes describe A as the primary or remote cause of C, and B as the secondary or proximate cause of C. This model focuses on the lordship attribute of control.

- This model has been common in Reformed thought. For instance, Calvin defended God against the charge of being the author of sin by pointing out that God was not the proximate, but only the remote, cause of human sin (Frame 838). In legal contexts, we hold a gang leader guilty for the crimes that he orders his subordinates to commit, even though the leader does not personally commit them. It is also a Biblical principal (Ex. 21:28-36). The model is not wrong in saying that God often works through secondary causes. It is wrong, however, in suggesting that God does not also work directly, in and with his creation. While we discuss the providence of God, God's involvement with creation is, in some senses, always direct.
- The Commander and His Troops: This model brings out the fact that God exercises his control particularly through His word, illustrating the unity of His control with His authority. God is like a general or a father who accomplishes his purposes by speaking in creation, providence, judgment and redemption. This model needs to be generalized, however, to include forms of the word of God other than commands. For instance, God also accomplishes His purposes by promising, by expressing love and so on.
- Author and Characters in a Story: In this model, the author, of course, has complete control over his character. He seeks to make the characters and events fit together in a coherent and artistic way. Once he conceives of a character, that character "takes on a life

of its own,” and the author takes responsibility to shape the events of the story in light of the integrity of the character. And of course, the reverse is also true: he shapes the character to fit with complete integrity into the story.

Furthermore, this model also reflects the third lordship attribute: covenant presence. The author is always present in the drama, arranging the whole drama to fit the characters and the characters to fit the drama. His characters take on lives of their own and the author does not treat them as robots, even though he has complete control over them. This model emphasizes that God interacts with human beings as person to persons and they do influence His plan. So between God and human beings, there is a certain give-and-take, as is characteristic of personal relationships.

Among these five analogies, Frame prefers the last one to solve the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. But as he further says, “No analogy is a perfect description of the Creator-creature relationship, because that relationship is unique” (839). Maybe Barackman is right, the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom is a mystery and defies our understanding. We must accept this truth by faith and wait for His answer later (1 Cor. 13:11-12) (83).

At this point, we may conclude that we are still responsible for our actions, which have real results and can change the course of events. Kendall says, “Human responsibility always comes into the picture; we must act and work as though everything depends on our efforts” (Kendall 55). Thus, we must act! In the history of the church, we see that the efforts of man have made radical changes in the flow of history.

Roger Nicole in his article mentioned two historical events in which the Church was threatened. At the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries, pelagianism reasserted the claims of man—man capable, sufficient, able to help himself, from whom God could not require anything more than He was able to accomplish. But at that point God raised His servant, Augustine of Hippo, for the defense of the truth. Nicole said, “The appearance of Augustine did not dispel all clouds; it did not avert all the shipwrecks of individuals or even of churches; but in the presence of the monstrous threats of humanism, even within the church, it safeguarded the truth of the gospel centered in the grace of God and His sovereignty” (Boice, 1977, 174).

In the sixteenth century, once again the church had succumbed to deep corruption. It was corrupt in its head and members. People did not know how to remedy the situation. They tried councils, internal purges, monastic orders. None of these things seemed to work. But God again raised up His servants, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, who proclaimed the truth of His sovereignty, the truth of God’s grace. Nicole claimed, “In proclaiming this truth they brought a multitude of the children of God into a new sense of their dependence upon and relationship to Christ. In proclaiming this truth they benefited even the very people who opposed them in the tradition of the church” (Boice, 1977, 174-175). In these two events, we see that by the grace of God and the efforts of man, the crisis was solved and history was moved into new direction.

In another situation, we also see that by the grace of God and the efforts of man, an evangelical movement was developed. Kenneth Wilson wrote a volume on Methodist Theology

in which he talked about its historical development. He mentions in his book, “Methodist theology is far from being a private ‘thought-experiment’; Methodists have followed John Wesley’s example in wanting to and actually trying to change the world” (ix). Further, he said, “For Wesley exploration implied a personal risk which arose from taking the gospel out into the unknown world of faithlessness and despair, in order to spread scriptural holiness across the land” (Wilson 17). By the grace of God and his efforts, Wesley’s mission was not confined to England, but included Wales and the state of Georgia in North America. This case further affirms the value of the efforts of man.

The Sovereignty of God and Church Growth

In his book about church growth, Peter Wagner raised a question about the relationship between church growth and the Sovereignty of God. He said, “Is church growth theory incompatible with belief in the sovereignty of God? Does adherence to church growth principles leave out dependency upon the work of the Holy Spirit?” (1987, 17) Rainer clearly answers that God’s sovereign decree does not violate the free will of human beings. Through human efforts to best communicate the gospel, God’s church may grow (99). In another of his books, Wagner used 1 Cor. 3:6 to declare that while God ripens the harvest, He does not reap the harvest. He expects us to be his agents in reaping (1984a, 19). Of course, God could devise ways and means of bringing people to himself completely bypassing any human efforts, but He has chosen to use human beings as his agents. This is affirmed in Romans 10:13-14, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how

can they hear without someone preaching to them?” Thus, Wagner concluded that because no human being could regenerate another person, we would give the glory to God. Only God can bring a person from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18), but He sends people like the Apostle Paul as his means of making it happen (Acts 26:17) (1987, 20).

While talking about the pastor as agent in church growth, Taylor pointed out the assumption of Arminianism is that people are free to accept or reject the gospel. Not only are they influenced by the Holy Spirit, but also by evangelistic enterprises (45). For instance, a sermon, a song, a simple invitation or even a smile—these small things may tip the scales in influencing a personal decision for Christ.

How can the divine and human elements work together in the area of church growth? We see this in the case of Lydia receiving Christ as her Saviour. It is clear the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message (Acts 16:14). But at the same time, we see Paul took the human part in the whole event. Paul went where she was, a place of prayer, and he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel. After discussing the example of Lydia, Taylor comments on the two elements of church growth and says there are three conditions that must be met (60):

- Our plans, schemes, systems, methods, and policy must be such that the Spirit can and does work through them and is not hindered by them.
 - Even more important is the moral and spiritual state of the church. They will have more to do with the Spirit’s redemptive activity than will the particular methods and systems used.
- For example, the Israelites were humiliated by Ai. When the sin was removed from the Israelites, and God’s strategy employed, the victory was won easily.

- The kingpins in all of this are the pastors. The Spirit must be able to work through them. Their hearts must be pure and their lives unblemished. E. M. Bounds expresses, “The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men” (5).

The Efforts of Man and Church Growth

Leadership and Church Growth

The Pastor as Leader

Wagner also boldly proclaimed a central church growth principle is the pastor of the local church. He or she is a key person whom God is using to make the church grow (1984b, 60). Even though factors such as demographics and the history and age of the church will affect growth potential, pastoral leadership may prove decisive in moving a church from non-growth to growth (Rainer 186). Nevertheless, the more the pastor can devote time and energy to being a leader, the more growth potential (Wagner, 1984a, 101).

The Definition of Leadership

Different people have different definitions of the term leadership. After his long-term study, Sweet asserts that there are more than 10,000 books in print that have “leadership” in the title. More than one hundred and ten different definitions of leadership have been compiled (2004, 16). The conclusion is, “attempts to define leadership have been confusing, varied, disorganized, idiosyncratic, muddled, and according to conventional wisdom, quite unrewarding.” (Sweet, 2004, 18) Barna gives a simple answer for this phenomenon, “Leadership

is an art, not a science.” (1997, 11) Without a doubt, each of us may have our own definition of leadership, as the following statements exemplify:

Sloan, “Leadership is the art and practice of exerting an influence on the behavior and beliefs of others.” (Dockery, Kindle Location 325)

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, “Leadership is a process of influence. Anytime you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people toward accomplishing a goal in their personal or professional lives, you are taking on the role of a leader.” (Blanchard 4)

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, “Leadership is....doing the right things.” (Barna, 1997, 21)

After a review of leadership research, Stogdill makes the same observation. Leadership is much like the words democracy, love, and peace. Although each of us intuitively knows what we mean by such words, the words can have different meanings for different people. As soon as we try to define leadership, we discover that leadership has many different meanings (Northouse, Kindle Locations 149-151).

In his scholarly research, Northouse identifies four components central to leadership: (a) Leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals. Based on these components, Northouse gives the following definition of leadership: Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, Kindle Location 161). This brief survey clearly points out that “leader” will include process, influence, people and target. But what will a leader actually do? Thompson clearly states that a leader must do two things: self-define and

stay in touch (24). Self-defining means stating goals, setting standards, naming what the leader will and will not do. According to this definition, what are the crucial factors influencing a leader to set standards, especially a spiritual leader? What makes a leader a good spiritual leader?

The Character of a Spiritual Leader

Answering the questions above, Heraclitus claims, "Character is destiny." He quotes the words from Schwartzkopf, who remarks that leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But, if you must be without one, be without strategy (Dockery, Kindle Location 6816). Getz says that giftedness without character, though, is lethal (Barna, 1997, 84). If a church or any other Christian organization appoints leaders, abilities before character, it will be destroyed (Barna, 1997, 84). As a Christian leader, he needs to have God's call, otherwise, he is merely following his personal inclinations. Barna defines a Christian leader as someone who is called by God to lead; leads with and through Christlike character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place (1997, 25).

Getz uses the two lists of characteristics outlined in 1Tim.3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 to build an outline of references for a spiritual leader. Some of them are as below:

A leader is above reproach; a leader is morally pure, maintaining God's standard of righteousness; a leader walks by faith, demonstrating hope and manifesting true biblical love in relationships; a leader reflects true humility and is disciplined by God's grace to live a godly life and to be a person of prayer; a leader should not be in bondage to any sinful cravings of the flesh; a leader must be free from the love of money (Barna, 1997, 84-103).

After studying the two same passages, Dockery has an insightful conclusion, “This kind of lifestyle comes only by the enablement of the Holy Spirit, which means that leaders must evidence the fruit of regeneration, filled with and controlled by God’s Spirit” (Dockery, Kindle Edition 7957). Hayford summarizes his wisdom in the paper *The Character of a Leader*: a heart of integrity is essential. It involves transformation, transparency before, and accountability to other people (Barna, 1997, 79).

The Discipline of Prayer

How do spiritual leaders prepare themselves for church growth? McIntosh asserts, “Through prayer!” (2003, 86) It is the important way for the church to tap into the Holy Spirit’s infinite supply of strength. Thus, Heward-Mills claims that prayer is not just the foundation for every real ministry. It actually is the ministry. Anyone who discovers this reality will have a great and fruitful ministry (Heward-Mills 69). While talking about the Sovereignty of God, we know that God is the One to make the church grow. God told Solomon that his people should “humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). The Scripture encourages us to seek God’s face and listen to his direction.

Basically, prayer means not trusting in our own wisdom and power to strategize and make things happen, but communing with God until our will becomes his will. When leaders commit their work to the Lord, they are acknowledging that ‘the mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps’ (Prov. 16:9) (McIntosh, 2003, 88). When Slaughter discusses the function of prayer, he uses the word “radical” to describe it. He says, “Radical prayer is the

crucial first step to not only hearing God's direction, but acting on it." (2008b, 69) Through prayer, we will have intimate connectedness with God.

In the book *Spiritual Formation*, Henri Nouwen pointed out, "The discipline of prayer is the intentional, concentrated, and regular effort to create space for God." (Kindle Location 605) This is a great challenge for people today, especially church leaders. The world always gives us value in making good use of our time. But prayer needs our "useless" time with God. Nouwen challenged us to detach ourselves from the idea of the usefulness of prayer and the results of prayer, and only concentrate on being with God. Gradually, we may find that our "useless" time will transform us, and everything around us will be different (Kindle Location 618-622). Thompson asserts without a doubt that the most effective leaders are those who know how to go out into the wilderness, to disconnect, to be away (24).

Jesus also said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). What a promise! What a God! Personally, prayer is the way to learn how to rest in grace (Dawn, Kindle Location 911). Dawn cited Ole Hallesby's words, "Your helplessness is your best prayer" (Kindle Location 973). It calls from your heart to the heart of God with greater effect than all your uttered pleas. God hears it from the very moment that you are seized with helplessness, and He becomes actively engaged at once in hearing and answering the prayer of your helplessness (Dawn, Kindle Locations 973-975).

For the church as a whole, prayer is the foundation for ministry. Sider declares that when it comes to holistic ministry, prayer is not optional. Prayer is at the heart of holistic

ministry (Sider 133). Talking about church growth, Rainer would undoubtedly give this answer: Start a prayer ministry (180). Paul, the apostle urged us, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess.5:17)!

To have Vision from God

In his book *Visionary Leadership*, Nanus claims that vision is the key to leadership. It is the powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success (3). A right vision has the effect of jump-starting the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen. While Maxwell describes who the leaders are, he also says that they are the people who have vision and pursue it and help others see it (1993, 140).

From the Christian point of view, how do we define “vision” and how do we get it? Slaughter asserts that the essence of faith is vision (2008a, 87) and cites the book of Hebrew to support this, “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for” (Heb.11:1-2). While we are living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we will receive vision from God because it is the natural outcome of it. Vision from God will be one of the fundamental factors to make the church grow (Huan 11). A vision for growth is not just spiritual discipline; it requires the endeavor in receiving a ‘conviction’ from God and bringing people into God’s vision of that conviction. Thus, to be a Christian leader, the vision must not be of your own making, but as God gives it to you.

Barna clarifies what vision is: a clear mental portrait of a preferable future. It is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances (1997, 47). Slaughter adds that vision is about formulating, developing, and giving birth to that new reality (2008a, 88).

McIntosh makes it more clear, “One way to understand vision is to see it as the intersection of

the pastor's leadership passion, the passion and gifts of the congregation, and the needs of the community" (2012, 74). Where these concepts intersect is the vision God has for the church. Rainer also carries the same thought in capturing God's vision for the church. He says, "Undoubtedly God will use the personality, the attributes, and the gifts of the pastor in shaping the vision" (187). To know ourselves is the pastor's first step to capture God's vision. Then, the pastor must also know the church he serves and another piece of the vision puzzle is learning the community and ministry environment (Rainer 187).

McIntosh gives the following brief steps to pastors for discerning the vision of God (2012, 75-79):

- Engage in personal Bible reading and prayer

Start by reading the Bible, asking God to show you what he wants for the church. Contemplate God's priorities. In your prayers, ask God specifically to make you alert to what he desires for his church.

- Analyze the church and its community

During the time you are reading God's Word and praying, do some fieldwork concerning the community and the church. For instance, reading local newspapers, talking with leaders, such as church neighbors, policemen, politicians, real estate agents, etc. And of course, the church members are those we should know first.

Sweet encourages us, "Leaders need keenness of vision. The Bible warns that without vision, there is division." (1999, 130) He also says that our ability to "see" and to metaphorize what is seen unites us, gets us somewhere, and releases power in life (1999, 130). Of course,

we do not know the future, even though the best of futurists are making guesses. But as Anderson says, “Vision gives hope and what we can do is anticipate, forecast, pray, and work toward the future we desire” (Anderson 191-2).

Evangelism and Church Growth

What are the keys to effective church ministry to the unchurched? After his study, Barna concludes that one of the keys is to love people into the kingdom of God (2002, 142). As a rule, Easum asserts that growing churches are more open to and passionate about outreach ministries (1990, 39). Easum and Tenny-Brittian also say that absolutely everything about growing a church depends on developing strategies for bringing people to Christ and the kingdom (2012, 35). Based on this assumption, they believe the lead pastor must be the chief practitioner of bringing people into the kingdom of God. The congregation will then follow the leaders in reaching out to unbelievers. Hunter claims that the church’s main business is to communicate the Christian faith to the growing numbers of people who do not yet believe or follow Christ (152). In short, the church should prepare its people to have compassion for the unchurched. In his early discussion about the mission of the church, Wagner emphasizes the evangelistic mandate is the first priority. He quotes the Lausanne Covenant and says that in the church’s mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary (1987, 113).

What is Evangelism?

Dr. Coleman gave a simple definition of evangelism, “To fulfill the great commission of Christ” (13). While Malphurs talks about training people to do evangelism, he encourages churches to arrive at a simple definition of evangelism. He says that evangelism is presenting Christ to people with the intent that they accept him as Savior (192). Jesus Christ said,

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). According to the Great Commission of Christ, John Stott proposed a more detailed definition of evangelism as follows: The nature of evangelization is the communication of the Good News. The purpose of evangelization is to give individuals a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. The goal of evangelization is the persuading of men and women to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and serve Him in the fellowship of His Church (Wagner, 1987, 130). Based on Wagner’s analysis, this definition seems to satisfy the concerns of both 2-P and 3-P advocates.

Wagner proposed three views of evangelism, including presence, proclamation and persuasion as well (1987, 117-122):

- Presence Evangelism (1-P): holds that our primary relationship to those outside the faith should be to do good works and help them with any needs they might have. Giving a cup of cold water is the objective. For instance, in ministry to Muslims, missionaries don’t force people to believe in Jesus.
- Proclamation Evangelism (2-P): says there is more than doing good works. An essential ingredient in evangelism is verbalizing the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is making the good news known in such a way that people will hear and understand it.
- Persuasion Evangelism (3-P): says that a person is not regarded as evangelized unless and until he or she becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ and a responsible member of a local church.

Wagner claims that 3-P is the best definition for understanding the Great Commission. Thus, he agrees with “the archbishops’ definition of evangelism” of 1918 which states: to evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men and women shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church (1987, 128).

Sider has the same thought and says that the ultimate goal of evangelism is not to win converts but to make disciples. By discipleship, Jesus meant a life of total, unconditional submission to him as Master (65). In his understanding, conversion is a lifelong process and not just an initial decision. It is “a once-in-a-lifetime choice that takes a lifetime to do” (Sider 65). But Sider emphasizes that evangelism should be in a holistic way, including all the three Ps. He defines evangelism in this way, “Sharing Jesus’ gospel by word and deed with non-Christians with the intention and hope that they will embrace the message and repent, accept and follow Christ, and join a Christian church community for ongoing discipleship” (Sider 64). In this definition, we see that evangelism will include both word and deed through which people receive Jesus Christ as their Lord.

How Do We Do Evangelism?

In his classic book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Coleman asked a question, “What was Christ’s strategy of evangelism?” Based on his biblical studies, Coleman provided some principles for doing evangelistic outreach. He followed Jesus’ strategy to focus on a group of a few people and trained them to witness Jesus Christ as Savior (7). Today, many churches do surveys to answer the following questions: “Who is the community?” and “How will church

reach the community” (Malphurs 176)? After doing the survey and analysis, Malphurs suggests the following things will be done for evangelism, including: offer evangelistic training course(s); help people discover their style of evangelism and develop a simple, easy-to-use gospel presentation (192-193).

But Spader admits frankly that even if evangelism is important, people would rather avoid it (156). In his study, Schwarz affirms that the gift of evangelism applies to no more than 10 percent of all Christians (34). This seems to imply that the demands on the 90 percent without the gift would be too great. But the Great Commission is indeed a mandate for all Christians. How can we help the congregation to reach out to unbelievers? Spader promotes the concept that evangelism is a team sport (157). As the Body of Christ we ought to be functioning as a team. We should be providing opportunities and personal assistance to one another in our efforts to reach out to unbelieving friends. Secondly, Easum and Tenny-Brittian emphasize the key leader of the church, such as the lead pastor, should demonstrate how to do evangelism. They claim that the smaller the church, the more time the pastor should spend in the community (2012, 36). In his survey, Wyrostek affirms this idea. He points out, “97% of all Christians believe that if the church leadership had a greater conviction and involvement in evangelism, it would be an example for them to follow” (Kindle Location 980-981). Easum and Tenny-Brittian also suggest the church should create and maintain an inviting culture. In this atmosphere, church members easily invite people to join in the church’s activities (2012, 38).

Barna believes there is not a one-size-fits-all strategy that will unlock the gates to reaching the unchurched. But he agrees that unchurched people are more likely to respond to a

personal invitation to come to the church (2002, 25). Wagner, on the other hand, suggested that we should target outreach on the responsive (1984a, 204):

- Start with friends and relatives of church members, especially friends and relatives of new converts. New members are likely to have more relationships with unchurched people than long-term members (Easum, 2012, 36).
- Start with new arrivals in the community. It may take some persistent research to discover how you can identify these people, but the efforts will pay handsomely. Easum and Tenny-Brittian are more aggressive by planning weekly practical ministry out in the community. They emphasize four things: bless the people you're helping, bless the city, bless those who are doing practical deeds, and provide visibility for the church (2012, 37).
- Start with visitors to your church. Give high priority to making contact, within a day or so, with all those who live in your ministry area and visit your church or Sunday school.
- Start with people who are passing through a critical period in their lives and who need a special touch of love and concern. Taylor said, "When people are overwhelmed, beyond their ability to cope, they will welcome an extended hand" (Taylor 81). Those in need are glad for the preacher to involve himself, for in him (and in his people) they see hope.

While talking about developing holistic relational evangelism, Sider suggests the following three key steps: pray, listen and look (78-81):

- Pray . . . before Anything Else

Prayer is the key to unlock relationships. It is what will draw, change and cause people to be committed in their relationship with the Lord. Because salvation is God's work, we must permeate all our evangelistic activity with prayer.

- Listen . . . Really Listen

Remember, “Evangelism takes place best when the target community is treated not as a project, but as a people who have dignity and deserve respect.” People can sense when they are being used to satisfy your agenda.

- Look . . . for a Way to Serve, Connect, Invite, and Fellowship

- Look for a way to serve.

Imagine yourself in that person’s shoes, and see if there is a practical way that you can touch his or her life.

- Look for a way to connect.

No two people are alike—which means that no two “gospel presentations” should be alike.

- Look for a way to invite.

Remember that the journey from unbelief (whether atheism, agnosticism, rebellion, or other faiths) is a long one. Each invitation to make a small decision is but one of a series of steps a person takes on the pilgrimage to faith.

- Look for a way to fellowship.

Follow-up is essential. Don’t use hit-and-run tactics. People rightly expect that if we truly care about them we will come through for them.

Poole makes a good comment on effective evangelism. He points out that effective evangelism often necessitates a two-step process (218). First, there has to be a definite acceptance of Jesus Christ before one can be called his follower. Second, is helping people understand what the Bible teaches about being in a right relationship with God through Christ.

No matter what kinds of methods are used to reach out to the unchurched, the hope in all these efforts is to articulate and assist unbelievers across the line of faith.

Discipleship and Church Growth

What is a Disciple?

The word “disciple” is translated from the Greek word, *mathetes*. In the New Testament this word means, “To be a follower or student of Jesus Christ” (Wyrostek, Kindle Locations 110-111). The New Bible Dictionary says, “The most common use of *mathetes* was in denoting adherents of Jesus...believers, those who confess Jesus as the Christ” (p.277). *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* says, “The term ‘disciple’ designates an adherent of Jesus. They are examples, and sometimes even representatives, of Christians in general” (p.129). The term occurs roughly 260 times in the NT, exclusively within the Gospels and Acts, and once in the OT (Isa 8:16) (*Interpreter* 128). Thus, disciples are basically people who have been born again by the Spirit of God (Wagner, 1987, 52). Furthermore, McIntosh says that the word disciple implies not only acquiring knowledge but living out what one learns. He or she is personally involved in carrying out the will of the master (2003, 65). Wagner emphasized the fruits of life (1987, 54). A true disciple should be characterized by many spiritual fruits. How do we measure the church’s effectiveness? Slaughter suggests the ratio of answering the call of God through service (2010, 51). Not only are true disciples attending or active in discipleship cells, they also have hearts to serve God.

The Need for Discipleship

George Barna, well-known Christian researcher, has spent years studying the decay of the modern church. Here are just some of his findings (Wyrostek, Kindle Location 154-157):

- Over 53% of all Christians do not believe homosexuality is a sin.
- Over 60% of all Christians believe as long as a person does good things in life they can go to heaven.
- Over 70% of young adults raised in church do not attend church every week.
- Over 78% of all Christians do not believe the devil is real; he is just a “force.”
- Over 31% divorce rate in the church compared to 33% outside of the church.

Concerning this survey, Wyrostek comments that the leadership of the church needs to bring discipleship back to the forefront of the church and teach God’s people all the things Jesus taught so they can live the kind of lives Jesus commanded (175-176).

How to be a Disciple?

McIntosh states that life-giving churches make disciples by finding the lost, folding them into the body, and building them up in the faith (2003, 63). Huan emphasizes, “True discipleship has life-change” (31)! He offers four stages of spiritual growth: pre-believer, new believer, growing believer and Christ-Centered believer. Tony and Felicity Dale also say, “Discipleship describes the process of growth in our life with God” (157). When we disciple new believers, we are helping them to live as followers of Jesus, transformed into his likeness (159).

While talking about how to make mature disciples, Malphurs asks a functional question, “Does your church have a clear, simple, memorable pathway for making disciples, a pathway

that most understand and know where they are along it” (195)? He suggests the following five steps as the best approach for such a strategy (195-196):

- Develop a mission for the church—how you will make mature disciples.
- Identify the characteristics of mature disciples so that you will know what they look like when they get there.
- Determine the primary ministries that will ingrain these characteristics in people’s lives, that is, a way to get these characteristics from the blueprints or navigational charts into the lives of the people.
- Connect the appropriate primary ministries with the maturity characteristics.
- Determine how you will measure spiritual progress.

Malphurs emphasizes the church provides the context where God works directly or indirectly to transform lives through different kinds of ministries. All of a church’s ministries can be subdivided into primary and secondary (200). As a church, we need to identify how many primary ministries are needed to help people into maturity. For instance, the church embraces worship, preaching and small groups as the primary ministries. Then, the church further identifies what kinds of secondary ministries support the congregation in embracing the characteristics of maturity, such as men’s and women’s meetings and counseling ministries (201).

For Slaughter, the first task of disciple-making is an awakening process. He helps disciples identify God’s unique mission for his or her life (2010, 55). This unique mission is their

life purpose. When people are on the path of discipleship, they will ask “How can I discover my life purpose?” Slaughter suggests a simple tool to identify the purpose of life (2010, 57-8):

- Love: What do you love? What can you live and die for?
- Influences: Who are the key influencers and influences in your life that have helped shape your understanding of who and whose you are?
- Faith: What do you have at your center: the core reality, the core truth that becomes the determining factor in all of your life priorities and decisions.
- Experience: What are you really good at? God uses all of your life experiences, influences, passions, and skills to fulfill his mission in your life.

The four aspects mentioned above will help people to discern his or her life purpose and make a contribution for the kingdom of God. But Huan argues that to be a Christ-Centered believer has tough issues to deal with. These include unresolved past hurts, wrong root motivations and wrong attitudes toward possessions. All of these cause people to fail in growing into Christ-Centeredness. Huan frankly states that all kinds of these things represent issues of the heart (32). How do we handle heart issues? Huan says that three components should be addressed: inspiring authenticity and honesty, caring and available mentors, modeling by key leaders (35).

Slaughter has the same idea for making mature disciples. He uses a psychological term “imprinting” to urge local churches to make sure that leaders are models of dedicated, healthy discipleship (2010, 59). Furthermore, Slaughter uses the five classic disciplines of the Christian faith for a disciple’s daily practice (2010, 62-63): daily scripture reading, prayer and meditation,

life transformation in small groups, identifying the gifts and passions to serve the kingdom of God, being a good steward. Tony and Felicity Dale focus on the same pattern for discipleship: reading Scripture, praying for friends, committing to group sharing (162).

Of course, in any discussion of discipleship, we must also consider Coleman's classic book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. After studying of example set by Jesus Christ, Coleman identified the following steps to make disciples. They are: selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision and reproduction (7). These principles beckon us to disciple-winning that works through small groups and builds toward congregational witness. Rees says, "All of it calculated to demonstrate the connection between the gospel to which we bear testimony and the life which that gospel enables us to live" (Coleman 12). As Easum and Tenny-Brittian say, "The truth is, you are the curriculum" (2012, 59). The role of every Christian is to hang out with people and let them see Jesus in each of us.

Small Groups and Church Growth

The Importance of Small Groups

The "small group movement" has its roots both in the early church of Acts and in today's fastest growing churches around the world. Some of the key figures in the last 250 years have been John Wesley and the Methodist movement in the late 1700's and today's Pastor Yonggi Cho, in South Korea, who pastors the largest church in the world with over 750,000 members. Plus, there has been an explosion of discipleship small groups in the last 25 years. Such countries as El Salvador, Columbia, Brazil, and China have discipleship groups

numbered in the thousands and church attendance in the tens of thousands (Wyrostek, Kindle Location 718-722).

Carl George has already mentioned that the smaller group within the whole—called by dozens of terms, including the small group or the cell group—is a crucial but underdeveloped resource in most churches (41). In his study, Schwarz affirms the point that continuous multiplication of small groups is a universal church growth principle (32). While Morris talks about cell-structured church, he has no doubt in saying “Cell groups are absolutely essential to the high-impact church” (1993, 152).

In churches characterized by small groups, these groups are even more important in their identity as a church than the large worship service (Hunter 82). Hunter says, “The small group was an essential structure for early Christianity” (83). Acts 2:42-47 is often cited as an example of a healthy church (Rainer 297; Spader 87-88). Its characteristics include teaching, fellowship, prayer, miracles, giving, meeting needs, praise, evangelism, and assimilation (Rainer 297). Spader concludes that the people of the early church had the following features (Spader 88):

- They were devoted.
- They were together with oneness.
- There was a sense of gladness.
- They enjoyed the favor of all the people.

He comments further that the higher the image people have of the group, the more willing they will be to bring others (Spader 89).

The Functions of Small Group

Findley B. Edge frankly speaks of the function of a small group, “it provides a setting in which I can be a human being in a relationship and not merely an animal who simply exists. I can know and be known. I can love and be loved” (Rainer 297). Actually, it is the way to express the organic nature of the church. Small groups are a visible microcosm of the church as the body of Christ, sharing life and ministry together in face-to-face relationships (Ogden, *Kindle Locations* 331-334). Schwarz uses the term “holistic” to identify the function. He mentions that in these groups, besides Bible study, members are able to bring up their issues and questions and receive immediate personal concern (32). Actually, in church life, a small group or cell group is treated as the most strategically significant foundation for spiritual formation and assimilation, for evangelism and leadership development, and for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church (George 41). In recent research, Egli and Wang survey 1,140 small group leaders in 47 churches, and find that four factors make the small group growth: a praying leader, an outward focus, loving relationships, and the empowering of group members (150).

Rainer says that small groups are a “point of entry” to “win a hearing” first. It is “side-door evangelism” (295). He quotes New Hope Community Church as an example and says that only after the group has won the trust and perhaps met a need of the individual, the presentation of the gospel can take place. In Saddleback church, not only do the small groups function as a “side door,” they also perform a very important role in relation to the church’s “back door.” The small groups close the back door for people who become involved in a group.

They effectively assimilate and include people so they do not look for the back door (Hunter 92). Easum agrees with this point and says, “Small groups are essential to a low drop-out rate” (1990, 37). The larger the church, the more intentional it must be to form small groups for further growth (“The Church Growth Handbook” 38; Schwarz 33; Hunter 91). Starting small groups supports both church and personal growth and gives members a sense of belonging (Hunter 91).

In the “Meta-Church”, the cell group provides a loving environment with an inward focus (mutual care, education, edification and discipline); an upward focus (worship, adoration, praise and intercession); and an outward focus (evangelism and service). They declare that the result is qualitative and quantitative growth of the Body of Christ (Morris, 1993, 155). Thus, all the cell groups have four essential goals: edification, leadership development, evangelism and multiplication (Morris, 1993, 156-157). Willow Creek Community Church, one of the meta-churches, defines what its groups do together in terms of four verbs: Love, Learn, Decide, Do (Hunter 94):

- Love: Group members caring for one another, and sharing in each other’s lives through accountability, prayer, and intentional acts of service to one another.
- Learn: Group members experiencing a growing knowledge of God and themselves.
- Decide: Group members making decisions about curriculum, activities, and schedule.
- Do: Group members participating in an activity, or serving in a task together.

Schwarz concludes that much of the essence of true church life is worked out in small groups. Through the small group setting, many church growth principles can be implemented and find actual value (33).

Small Group Models

Visionary leaders such as Ralph Neighbour, Carl George, Lyman Coleman, Roberta Hestenes, and Gareth Icenogle have provided ideas for building transformational community through small groups. Their ideas then comprise a continuum of small group models (Donahue 20). It includes the church *with* small groups, the church *of* small groups and the church *is* small groups (Donahue 23-4):

- Church *with* Small Groups

In the church with small group model, everyone sees the purpose of small groups as one way for an interested person to connect with others. Other ministries are seen as equally valid ways to connect.

- Church *of* Small Groups

The purpose of this model is to build the church as community. It sees the larger community as a network of smaller communities that develop people in Christ. It is also called a meta-church model. Ministry leaders and congregation members become accustomed to designing and building ministry around a small group infrastructure.

- Church *is* Small Groups

This model sees small groups as the centerpiece of congregational life. Some advocates teach that “the church is the cell; the cell is the church.” They emphasize that evangelism, worship, communion, and Bible study all take place in the group.

Regardless of the model we choose, we should be clear what kind of theology of the church is influencing our decision (Donahue 24). For instance, some believe a small group represents all the fullness of the bride of Christ. Others, however, would argue that small groups must be tied to a larger congregation for deeper life in the church (Donahue 24).

Small Groups for Seekers

These groups are designed to provide a positive experience for seekers who are at various stages of investigating Christianity (Hunter 99). The leader of a Seeker Small Group needs to be an open, honest, vulnerable role model for the seekers in his or her group. In his book, *Seeker Small Groups*, Poole emphasizes that the group gathering is not just a meeting, but a dynamic, caring community (208). In this caring community, seekers need to be accepted as they are, and not judged; free to identify and investigate the faith, primarily with other seekers; listened to and understood and drawn out patiently (Hunter 99). There are some rules to establish a caring community (Poole 208-211):

- Commit to each individual

It is crucial to be with the members of the group. For instance, to connect with seeking friends outside the group is the way to influence them spiritually.

- Cast a vision, set a goal

The leaders may invite the group to consider setting a few simple goals. This activity will generate a high level of ownership and commitment from the members of the group.

- Fill the open chair

The leaders should have a mind-set to keep their groups open to include additional, interested seekers. This creates the potential for explosive growth.

Lay Ministry and Church Growth

The Priesthood of all Believers

One of the most exciting principles of church growth is unleashing laity to do the work of ministry (Rainer 203). Rainer asserts that implementing this principle means returning to New Testament basics where the dichotomy between clergy and laity does not exist. This requires affirming the priesthood of all believers (203). This is affirmed by Hunter who says, “Early Christianity was lay movement” (120)! According to Paul, the Holy Spirit gifted some people to be apostles, and others prophets, teachers, healers, helpers, administrators, evangelists, pastors, and so on to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Jesus also said that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). At the very beginning of his book *Pastoral Ministry*, Heward-Mills affirms this observation, “The lay ministry is the key to church growth.” He says it is the key to fulfilling the Great Commission. There is no way we are going to win this world with a few priests and pastors. Everyone must get involved (1).

Unfortunately, in many churches today, 10-20 percent of the people do 80-90 percent of the work (Morris, 1993, 168). Warren agrees with this figure, “Only 10 percent is currently serving in the church” (366). He further points out that 40 percent of all members have expressed an interest in having a ministry, but they have never been asked or they don’t know how (366). Laypeople, with training, can do 90 percent of what an ordained pastor does (Hunter 134). Thus, we need to emphasize the teaching of the priesthood of all believers again and encourage laypeople to serve God and serve each other according to their spiritual gifts from God.

In the issue of the priesthood of all believers, not only are all believers priests before God, but we are also priests to one another and to the world. Ogden claims, “Ministry is not to be equated with what professional leaders do; ministry has been given to all God’s people. Therefore, the pastor’s role is not to guard ministry jealously for him or herself, but instead to turn the spotlight on this multigifted body” (Kindle Locations 403-405). Warren affirms this idea and says that every believer isn’t a pastor, but every believer is called into ministry (368). God is calling all believers to minister to the world and to each other.

To Minister to Each Other

The fact is that most people in most churches do not, and cannot, get adequate ongoing pastoral care from their pastor; crisis care yes, but ongoing care no. Laypeople in great numbers can contact and encourage their people, love and care for them, listen to and empathize with them, engage in spiritual conversation with them, pray by their bed in the hospital, support

them in loss and grief, and be generally watchful and available as a shepherd to the sheep (Hunter 134).

In the book *Guides to the Reformed Tradition: The Church*, Wallace Alston captured our priestly role of representing God to each other:

The priesthood of all believers, therefore, does not only mean that each person is his or her priest ...In very personal terms, it means that the minister is your priest and that you are the minister's priest; that you are my priest and I am your priest; that we are God's representatives to each other, and that we are each other's representatives before God. It means that we are to speak to each other about God, calling each other to repentance and faith. It means that we are to speak to God about each other, interceding before God for each other, and seeking God's guidance and blessing. It means that we should try to become increasingly responsive to one another, tending to each other in God's name and offering each other practical and constructive help for Christ's sake (47).

Churches today need to encourage ministry opportunities for all believers and let them have the chance to minister to each other. This is the calling from God (1 Pet. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 4:10; Matt. 20:26-28). God wants to use all believers to edify one another and to reach out to the unchurched (Eph. 4:11-12; Matt. 28:19-20). Morris clearly states that pastors need to recruit, equip and mobilize people in the church to do ministry, instead of burning out by trying to do it all themselves (1993, 169). While pastors unleash the laity to do the work of ministry, they must change their emotional reward system. Ogden affirms, "Instead of finding their fulfillment in their own doing of ministry, the satisfaction must come in assisting others to blossom to their ministry potential" (Kindle Locations 1820-1821). Of course, it requires that pastors must be secure in their positions in order to encourage the laypeople to get involved (Heward-Mills 2).

The Lay Ministry of the Church

Ogden proposes three strategies that will transform a church culture into an every-member ministry: build community and accomplish ministry through small groups; multiply reproducing disciples by investing in a few; mobilize for ministry around people's gifts and call (Kindle Location 2715-2716). While discussing how to mobilize laypeople for ministry, Ogden quotes the words of Gordon Cosby who believes the church is to be "a gift-evoking and a gift-bearing community" (Kindle Locations 2808-2809). The phrase "gift-evoking" suggests that a regular part of the church's ministry is calling forth gifts of the Spirit from the members of the body and challenging them to be stewards of those gifts on behalf of the body. The phrase "gift-bearing" implies that when gifts are recognized, the community must make room for them to operate.

Charles Arn delivers the same concept and says that the laypeople approach to ministry will seek to identify the special gifts, skills, background, and concerns of the members and match them with appropriate ministry positions in the church (Wagner, 1986, 111). Rick Warren first discovers how people are "shaped," and then helps place them into a ministry or role that is right for their "shape." SHAPE is an acronym to explain the five elements (spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences) that determine what a layperson's ministry should be (369).

Traditionally, ministries in churches are synonymous with programs. If we think we need a more evangelistic thrust, we institute an evangelism program. If we perceive the need for greater discipleship, we start a discipleship program. A few leaders in the church therefore

organize the programs for the year and wait for people to fill the slots. But under the teaching of the priesthood of all believers, churches should allow laypersons to begin or engage in ministries according to their spiritual gifts and burdens. Rainer confidently says, "Such an approach carries risk, but it is compatible with the growth of the early church" (202).

Research Design

In order to provide the necessary data concerning the worship service attendance within the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2003 to 2012, I asked for permission of the Executive Board of Directors to use the annual reports in this period of time (Creswell 147). The data could provide open, objective and neutral phenomenon of worship service (Sensing 79). According to the record of worship service attendance, I would find the pastors and deacons of selected five growing churches to be interviewed. Interviews would be one-on-one which would allow each pastor and deacon to describe their church situation and put words to their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions, and experiences (Sensing 103). In this situation, they would have no hesitation to speak and share comfortably (Creswell 218). The interview would be in-depth and open-ended to collect the data. Thus, the research would be qualitative research to describe the phenomenon of the growth of the church in words (Wiersma 11, Yang 9).

Data collection was a critical issue for the research (Sensing 90). But, in qualitative research, it occurred in the natural setting. It was extremely difficult to replicate this type of study (Wiersma 211). Thus, the interviews needed to be well-organized, recorded and careful notes taken during the conversation.

Summary

After reviewing the Biblical literature, one of the overarching themes of 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 is the Sovereignty of God and the Efforts of Man. The growth of a church is absolutely made by God because He is the One who makes it grow (v.6). But, on the other hand, the people of God putting effort into building the church of God is also a crucial factor for a growing church. We are requested to be clever builders. Otherwise, we can't pass the test of fire in the Day of the Lord (v.13). Both of these factors are essential. Furthermore, through the review of theological literature, we also find that the tension between God's Sovereignty and Man's Efforts is one of the main themes in the church history. In the concept of God's Sovereignty, He has absolute power to control everything. In His providence, He can make and protect his creatures according to his own will. But at the same time, the efforts of man can influence the course of events. Thus, we can't ignore the human side of making an effort in building the church of God.

While talking about church growth, we have no doubt that the pastor is the key leader to guide the church in a path of growth. They should prepare themselves for leadership. Building Christlike character and a rigorous prayer life are the ways for pastors to have vision from God. The closer the pastor's relationship to God, the clearer will be his God-given vision and power. In addition to the factor of leadership, evangelism, discipleship, small group ministry and lay ministry are the foundation for a church to develop, especially for small churches. The pastor may not have enough energy to do everything, but these are the areas the pastor must make an effort to do.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commands us to reach out to people and make them to be disciples of God (Matt. 28:19-20). Thus, evangelism and discipleship are two components of this mandate. As the church of God, we should focus our efforts toward these priorities. Furthermore, through small groups, we can create a sense of belonging for newcomers and reach out to them with the Gospel. Within different group settings, we can further our ministries, such as discipleship training, teaching, serving, etc. Lay people will be trained up and share the responsibilities of the pastor. Such churches will be blessed and we will be good stewards of God.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

This research paper concerned the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church (HKEC) from 2003 to 2012. At the time of this research, the HKEC had twenty churches in Hong Kong, including both independent and dependent churches. Almost half of the churches were congregations under 100 people and some are 50 or less. In 2014, the HKEC celebrated its 60th Anniversary, and at this time we asked ourselves, "Have we been faithful stewards in developing His church? How can we further develop our churches?"

I compiled an overview picture of the HKEC in terms of the worship service attendance. Based on the data I collected from the annual reports and personal interviewed with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of selected five churches, I wanted to find out

if the churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church have grown. Why did some churches experience growth and what are the factors that influence this growth? Through this research project, I was searching for ways to further the development of the HKEC.

Research Questions

The following research questions acted as primary tools throughout this research paper. They served to maintain a clear focus and achieved the desired purpose established at the beginning of the process. The ultimate goal was to contribute to the understanding of the process of church growth—the essential characteristics, including transferable principles and practices—in order to design a church growth strategy for the HKEC churches.

Research Question # 1:

What is the overall growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church as reflected in the worship service attendance from 2003 to 2012?

The Hong Kong Evangelical Church requested each of its churches to annually provide data to be included in the HKEC annual report. One of the purposes of this report was to reflect the worship service attendance in each church. This report was therefore a reliable resource for this research project. I collected data from the annual reports of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2004 to 2013, and made a chart to reflect the overall growth of the HKEC in terms of worship service attendance.

Research Question #2:

Why do some churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church grow? What are the factors influencing the growth of these churches?

Based on the data collected in Research Question #1, we could identify which the HKEC churches had experienced significant growth. I chose five of these churches and researched the factors contributing to the growth by interviewing the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons with a list of questions. The questions focused on several areas in terms of church growth:

- What are the most important factors that you believe the church has grown over the past ten years? (give many as you can)
- What do you believe are three main reasons that people are attracted to come to your church? How do they work? Could you share each of them in detail?
- What do think are the two or three main things your church can do to keep people at your church? How do they work? Could you share each of them in detail?
- Does your church have discipleship training? How does your church make disciples? Could you share it in detail?
- Besides the discipleship training, what kinds of things does your church do to identify and build leaders? How does your church encourage laypeople to serve God? What is the plan?

Research Question #3:

What do the research findings indicate that will help us improve the churches of the HKEC in the future?

Through the interviews with the five selected churches, we had the research findings from the questions. Based on Research Question #2, I categorized the findings into five areas related to church growth, including leadership, evangelism, small groups, discipleship training and lay ministry. By focusing on these five areas, we understood the characteristics of church growth of the HKEC. Then, I identified some transferable principles and practices in order to design a church growth strategy for the churches in the HKEC.

Population and Participants

The target population was the congregations of Hong Kong Evangelical Church. I used the annual reports of the churches of the HKEC to check out church growth in terms of worship service attendance. Then, I chose five growing churches for the interview process. Thus, the participants for this study would be a selected sample of five churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. These five churches were selected based on several criteria. First, these churches had significant growth in terms of worship service attendance in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012. Second, each of these churches was located different region of Hong Kong. Third, these churches came from two categories, with and without social services. It is the HKEC tradition to build up these two types of churches.

Design of the Study

This study sought to obtain interview feedback from the five selected local church pastors and deacons with a goal of ascertaining the principles and practices of church growth strategy. These five selected churches were similar in that they had significant growth in terms of worship service attendance. Interviews would be one-on-one semi-structured interviews which allowed interviewees to describe their church situations and put words to their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions, and experiences (Sensing 103). Under these circumstances, they would have less hesitation to speak and share comfortably (Creswell 218).

Using semi-structured interviewing, I would follow specified questions with a predetermined sequence to interview with local pastors and deacons of the five selected churches. This type of interview allowed me freedom to pursue matters as situations dictate (Sensing 107). The specified questions would be in-depth, open-ended questions which would follow a sequence in terms of church growth, including leadership, evangelism, small groups, discipleship training and lay ministry.

Instrumentation

I used two instruments to launch this research project: the annual reports of the churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2004 to 2013 and the local church pastors and deacons interview. The annual reports provided objective and neutral data of the churches in terms of worship service attendance. I collected these data from the reports and used Excel to make a chart to get an overview picture of the churches from 2003 to 2012. Then, I used

Excel to make another chart to determine the church growth rate of the churches from 2003 to 2012.

The local church pastors and deacons interview would be a semi-structured interview format. Based on the principle of respect for persons, the participants would be asked to give informed consent to participate in this research project. Their participation was all voluntary and they would have an understanding of this research project. I would disclose the following things to them:

1. The purpose of the study.
2. Any reasonably foreseeable risks to the individual.
3. Potential benefits to the individual or others.
4. The extent of confidentiality protections for the individual.
5. Contact information for questions regarding the study, participants' rights, and in case of injury.
6. The conditions of participation, including the right to refuse or withdraw without penalty.

Due to the natural setting of the interview, it is extremely difficult to replicate this study (Wiersma 211). Thus, the interviews need to be well-organized, recorded and careful notes taken during the conversation.

Variables

The variables of this study were the demographic factors of the five selected churches and the two groups of participants (i.e., the five local church pastors and deacons), as well as the church development practices of the five churches. These variables, including both personal and church demographics, might in one way or another influence the results of the study.

Personal demographics factors included the educational background and prior training experience of the participants. Their willingness to be authentic was also considered. The church demographics included the history and culture of each of the five selected churches, the tenure of the pastors, and the previous church experiences, both positive and negative. These intervening variables were mitigated through the interviews, the time limits imposed, and the reassurance of the research confidentiality.

Reliability and Validity

Establishing the reliability of interviews as qualitative research presents a challenge. William Wiersma wrote, "Because qualitative research occurs in a natural setting it is extremely difficult to replicate studies. Nevertheless, a well-organized, complete persuasive presentation of procedures and results enhances external reliability" (211). In pursuit of reliability, the interview questions were developed in direct relation to the research questions, and I would endeavor to use simple language and structure for these questions to avoid inconsistencies among the interviews. Each of the interviews would be well-organized, recorded and noted during the conversation. And I would limit the interviews to a maximum of two hours per interview (Sensing 111).

The data collection from the annual reports of Hong Kong Evangelical Church could be replicated. As such, in a similar context, other researchers might approximately replicate the key features of this research. Validation referred to how the researcher was able to ascertain the accuracy and credibility of the findings through strategies such as triangulation (Sensing 72). To achieve triangulation, different data sources—church pastors' interviews and deacons' interviews—helped enhance the accuracy of the study.

Data Collection

In this study, the instruments were divided into two parts. One was the data collection by the HKEC. The data compiled by the HKEC from each church as represented in the HKEC annual report. The other was doing the one-on-one interviews with the local pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the five selected churches. At the very beginning of this research project, I asked for the permission of the Executive Board of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church to use the annual reports from 2004 to 2013 as the basic data for this study and specifically focusing on the area of worship service attendance to reflect the situation of HKEC. Based on this data, I calculated the church growth of each church in the HKEC from 2003 to 2012.

I would further ask for permission of the Executive Board of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church at their meeting on April 23, 2015 to conduct a personal interview with the pastors (Senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of five selected growing churches. After receiving approval of the Executive Board, I would send the consent letters to the pastors and deacons within two weeks and make interview appointments with them. The interviews would be held

within a period of four months from May to August of 2015. During each interview, I would take notes in a field diary and record their voices. The interview would then be transcribed into a Microsoft Word document.

Data Analysis

Once all the data was transcribed, I would sort it according to patterns and trends and then organize it into categories corresponding to principles and practices for church growth. The voice recordings of each pastor interview and deacon interview would be transcribed into a Microsoft Word document and collated. I would also transcribe and collate the field diary interview notes for each interview. I would check these transcripts for consistency and accuracy. Then I would conduct content analysis to check transcripts for common themes and patterns, first between the pastor and deacon within each church, and then among the churches. Further, I would categorize and group these common themes and patterns according to the principles and practices of church growth.

Ethical Procedures

Protecting the confidentiality of the participants was of importance in this study. Participants would be assured of their anonymity when I sought permission for their participation. I would reassure the interviewees of this both before and after the interviews. I would also assure the participants that I would be the only one involved in analyzing the data, and their identities would not be revealed in this study. I would assign the participants each a number and store the transcripts in my computer with password protected. I would be the only

one who could access the computer. After the study was completed, I would store the data in a safe place with protection.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

In 2014, the Hong Kong Evangelical Church celebrated its 60th Anniversary. This was an opportune time for our denomination, not only to reflect on the past but to envision the future. What could we do to further our development? We had a solid tradition and legacy in developing churches. In past years, our forefathers were mainly serving people in need. At the very beginning, they provided primary school education for kids on the streets. They also reached out to people in the countryside. In more recent years, the churches sought opportunities to serve the poor through social services. These types of ministries reflected our rich legacy of helping people in need.

At the same time, we found that our legacy might limit the development of our churches. We had twenty churches in Hong Kong and in almost half of them the congregation was under 100, some less than 50. What was the implication of this phenomenon? Were we being faithful servants for His churches? The purpose of this research project was seeking ways to further our denominational development. Within the same tradition and legacy, we wanted to find out why some churches of the HKEC had more significant growth. What were the factors that bring growth? Could these factors apply to other churches?

Participants

We were using the annual reports of the HKEC from 2004 to 2013 to check the overall growth of the churches in terms of the worship service attendance. The data and compiled chart of church growth rates demonstrated which churches had experienced growth. I selected five churches to be studied based on several criteria. First, these churches had significant growth in terms of worship service attendance in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012. Second, each of these churches was located in a different region of Hong Kong. Third, these churches came from two categories, with and without social services.

Then, I conducted a one-on-one interview with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the five selected churches. The pastor group included two females and three males. The deacon group was all males. The age of these two groups of people was from 40 to 60. In the pastor group, there were three ordained pastors who worked in the same church for 10-15 years. In the deacon group, all the men were deacons over ten years and they formed long-term partnerships with their pastors.

Research Question # 1

What was the overall growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church as reflected in the worship service attendance from 2003 to 2012?

I requested permission of the Executive Board of the HKEC to use the annual reports from 2004 to 2013 to check worship service attendance. I then collected the data of each church from that period of time and used Excel to make a chart to show the figures from 2003

to 2012. The overall figure of the twenty churches of the HKEC in terms of worship service attendance was shown as below:

Table 4.1 The Worship Attendance of Hong Kong Evangelical church from 2003 to 2012

The Worship Attendance of Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2003 to 2012										
Name	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012
Grace Church	506	570	584	567	550	545	534	570	570	580
Yan Yue Church	108	114	113	130	113	103	99	100	114	123
Yan Chiu Church	75	95	102	100	114	117	110	97	104	101
Yan Din Church	219	238	244	225	253	244	234	230	236	255
Yan Chaak Church	39	44	40	40	39	38	42	36	36	38
Zion Church	74	76	70	60	63	65	70	61	61	62
Yan Yau Church	68	96	86	90	99	87	91	101	97	93
Yan Kei Church	241	234	235	230	234	223	225	237	228	230
Yan Ying Church	115	154	162	166	161	167	182	186	190	199
Yan Fook Church	62	72	85	87	77	70	90	90	90	70
Yan Tsuen Church	63	67	67	70	85	123	135	131	132	115
Yan Lam Church	117	118	113	113	113	108	147	122	145	144
Yan Ho Church	36	32	32	30	29	30	57	85	73	68
Yan Kwong Church	96	115	114	109	163	172	198	234	240	260
Yan Tin Church	78	78	86	94	92	89	89	87	83	82
Yan Yat Church	73	105	119	132	128	120	116	110	118	119
Yan Yiu Church	58	63	65	80	76	78	106	98	110	108
Logos Church	Not Existing			37	34	52	54	46	38	38
Incarnational Church	Not Existing				25	24	23	23	26	26
Yan Ching Church	Not Existing					23	31	48	56	58
Total:	2028	2271	2317	2360	2448	2478	2633	2692	2747	2769

According to the overall figures of the churches from 2003 to 2012, I calculated the average annual growth rate and the decadal growth rate of each church during that period of time and the result is shown below:

Table 4.2 The Growth Rate of Hong Kong Evangelical Church from 2003 to 2012

Name	2003	2012	Difference	Annual Growth Rate	The Decadal
					Growth Rate
Grace Church	506	580	74	1.37%	14.60%
Yan Yue Church	108	123	15	1.31%	13.90%
Yan Chiu Church	75	101	26	3.02%	34.70%
Yan Din Church	219	255	36	1.53%	16.40%
Yan Chaak Church	39	38	1	-0.26%	-2.60%
Zion Church	74	62	-12	-1.75%	-16.20%
Yan Yau Church	68	93	25	3.18%	36.80%
Yan Kei Church	241	230	-11	-0.47%	-4.60%
Yan Ying Church	115	199	84	5.64%	73.00%
Yan Fook Church	62	70	8	1.22%	12.90%
Yan Tsuen Church	63	115	52	6.20%	82.50%
Yan Lam Church	117	144	27	2.10%	23.00%
Yan Ho Church	36	68	32	6.57%	88.90%
Yan Kwong Church	96	260	164	10.48%	170.80%
Yan Tin Church	78	82	4	0.50%	5.10%
Yan Yat Church	73	119	46	5.01%	63.00%
Yan Yiu Church	58	108	50	6.41%	86.20%
Logos Church	37	38	1	0.38%(2006)	3.90%(2006)
Incarnational Church	25	26	1	0.66%(2007)	6.70%(2007)
Yan Ching Church	23	58	35	20.32%(2008)	304.3%(2008)

The two charts mentioned above show the overall annual growth rate and the decadal growth of each church in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. Some churches had significant growth; some churches had little growth. Other churches were in plateau or decline stages.

Research Question #2:

Why did some churches in the Hong Kong Evangelical Church grow? What were the factors influencing the growth of these churches?

I used the English letters from A to E to represent each of the five churches where I conducted interviews. According to the five interview questions, the deacons and the pastors of

the selected churches pointed to the following themes and practices that contributed to the growth of their church.

The Themes and Practices of Church A

A stable leading team

Both the deacon and pastor pointed out that the stability of the leading team was a crucial factor for the church to grow. In the past ten years, the senior pastor had not changed his post. In addition, the same deacon team was working with the pastors for a long period of time. Even some deacons would step down after six years of services. Incoming deacons would also have experience serving on the board. In short, the leading team was able to work out their plans.

Furthermore, the stable leading team, especially the pastoral team was a central force in their church growth. Many new people came to the church because of the pastors' shepherding and leadership. The pastors knew them one by one and visited them at home or in the working places. They also cared for new people through cell group activities. This kind of activity contributed to the growth of the church.

A warm and close relationship

The church members had warm and close relationship with each other. The church created an atmosphere that the church was our family. The pastors visited in the market place, homes and hospitals. They visited people one by one. Some family cases were followed by the church for several years. Furthermore, the middle -class background of the congregation

provided a contact point with the same class people because they can share their unique struggles with each other. For example, there are at least three or four families living in a middle class estate nearby the church who attend the service. When people come to the church, they feel comfortable and accepted in the groups and in family gatherings.

A spacious place and different worship services

In the past ten years, the church had twice expanded its place of worship. Each time the church expanded, the congregation grew. When the congregation found the church had space to accommodate more people, they would invite people to come. When those who came felt comfortable and worshipped freely in a spacious place, they would keep coming.

In addition, the church provided different worship services to welcome people. The youth, adults and children had their own worship services. The services were unique, and the messages and worship songs were suited to the needs of each particular group.

Plans to reach out to people

They made plans to reach out to people through their networks, such as teachers reaching out to secondary and primary school students; pastors reaching out to college students. The congregation reached out to their friends and family members through different evangelistic activities, such as Father's day, Mother's day, local and Mainland China tours. The whole church seemed to have a momentum to bring people into the church.

Different functional groups

There were different functional groups incorporated into church activities, such as small groups after the services, Bible study groups, discipleship training groups, women's groups, and elderly groups. These various functional groups kept people coming and built up relationships.

Discipleship training and lay ministry

The church had discipleship training classes led by the pastors. The pastors chose five to six people to join the training for two years. The candidates had to finish foundational classes such as basic Christianity, Christian living, and a baptismal class. All the participants were baptized. The discipleship classes nurtured them spiritually and trained them to be future leaders.

As part of the lay ministry of the church, congregants were encouraged to join different ministries according to their gifts or interests. Through "on-the-job" training, the members could be trained to serve skillfully and knew more about the overall life of the church. These leaders became the future department heads or deacons of the church.

The Themes and Practices of Church B

The Holy Spirit and His works

The whole church emphasized the importance of seeking the face of God. If each Christian was filled with the Holy Spirit, the church would be growing naturally. When the senior pastor began ministry in this church, the whole church experienced revival and miracles. First, God healed their wounded hearts by past church experiences. Second, in a miraculous

way, God provided the resources for them to redecorate the church plus get a new neighborhood social center to reach out to the community. Third, visitors came to the church and experienced the power of God. For instance, the sick were healed and their inner hearts were comforted. These miraculous experiences attracted them to come and stayed at the church.

Worship and prayer

Prayer and worship were natural ways to reflect our heart to seek God. The whole congregation wanted the church to experience change and transformation. They spent time with God praying for the church's revival and growth and for the needs of people and the community. Amazingly, during their worship and prayer, the whole place was filled with the Holy Spirit and the name of God was glorified in the highest place. They felt they had the inner strength necessary to serve God.

In the outreach ministry, they also found that prayer was a powerful way to reach out to people on the street. Many times, when brothers and sisters brought people before God and prayed for them, people experienced God's healing and their burdens were released. This encounter with God's power caused people to want to know God. They not only came to the church, but also wanted to stay there to learn.

Warm and close relationships

In addition, their church lives were very close and warm. The senior pastor related to the people like a spiritual mother who cared for each of the church members. She modeled

how to trust God, how to relate to people, and how to lead the church. Under her leading, the church seemed to be a big family. The older ones took care of the younger ones. Every group took care of its own target group. For example, the family group took care of the children's' group. They wanted to build a legacy of caring for the younger ones. This warm family environment attracted people to come and experienced the love of God.

Small and functional groups

The church had different age groups to care for people and helped newcomers fit in. At the same time, they had functional groups for various ministries and trainings, such as leaders' group, learning group, outreach group, healing group, music group, and so on. These kinds of groups could perform a specific function, and at the same time drew members into closer relationships.

Ministry to serve and transform the community

The church had two outreach centers which connected the church to the community and served people in practical ways. Through its reading center, the church provided a quiet place and classes to help young people study. These classes and the reading center itself were the contact points to attract young people into the church. The second center was a neighborhood social center, which provided different activities and food mainly for the elderly but also for families in the community. These kinds of social services were ways to tangibly express the love of God. Through outreach programs, the church wanted to bless the community and invited people to experience the transformative power of God's ways.

Thankfully, through their witnessing and serving, the community knew the church and regularly came to the church.

Leadership development

The church emphasized leadership training and encouraged the whole congregation to be involved in its training program. This was a full course of training covering four main areas: love God, love self, love people and love the kingdom of God. The section on loving God was the center and foundation of the program. If people had a heart to love God, then they could accept themselves and had the will to witness for God in their workplace, family, school and community.

Throughout the course, the pastors modeled by their lives how to lead, pray, and heal. At the same time, the congregation was requested to serve in different ministry posts according to their gifting. Through this “on-the-job” practice, brothers and sisters could learn how to effectively serve and work together.

Moreover, the senior pastor focused on training key individuals among the staff team and group leaders by spending time with them in order to let them know what she thought and did. They were her disciples and they had established mutual understanding among themselves. She empowered, encouraged and walked with them. This close working team made the ministry of the whole church more effective.

The Themes and Practices of Church C

Stable and committed leaders

This church had experienced steady development due to a core of leaders who were highly involved in the ministries of the church. It was not the pastors who played the lead role, but this core of leaders. They were well-educated professionals in areas such as administration, finance and personnel. All of them kept the church running smoothly and even in a time of crisis, the church could keep going.

These leaders were gifted people who took the initiative to be involved in different ministries. If they found they needed skills or knowledge to serve, they sought opportunities to learn and then joined in the ministry. Furthermore, they committed their lives to the younger generation. When the youth fellowship or worship team needed a mature person to help them, the leaders had no hesitation to join them and be their mentors. The church had some devoted teachers doing student ministry, which facilitated growth in the youth ministry and church. The hands-on participation of these leaders was a powerful momentum for church growth.

Grasping the opportunity to expand

The church was located in an area which was changing rapidly. Due to improvements in the public transportation system, many people had moved into the community. The church had seized this opportunity and provided different social services and learning classes for children and parents, especially for new immigrants who were settling in this area. For instance, a regular Friday night fun show was the contact point for introducing the community to the services and ministries of the church.

The church also offered different programs in the summer season to reach out to people, especially with activities for children. The parents could bring their children into the

church while they were working. When the church attracted the kids to come, their parents would come later.

A spacious worship place and children's service

The church had twice expanded its worship area to give the congregation more space to worship. Each time the church expanded, worship service attendance increased. The congregation was willing to invite people to come because there was more space. At the same time, the children's worship service was a way to keep people. This worship service attracted the children which, in turn, caused the parents to join in.

Close and warm relationships

The church members had close relationships with one another. The core group of people had already established a genuine friendship and sense of community. They also set up different cell groups which kept people coming and provided opportunities to build relationships with one another. Through small groups, members could share and get to know each other. In the youth groups, they used the fellowship time to support one another. The youth pastor took the lead in connecting the young people and training them to take care of each other.

In addition, the pastors and core leaders connected with newcomers. After someone visited the church, the leaders contacted them as soon as possible. Their warm actions usually moved peoples' hearts and broke barriers to friendship. The church arranged sight-seeing and

China trips as a contact point to bring people together, kept them coming, and built relationships.

Leadership training

Actually, the church had no systematic training for leader development. They did not put much effort into training leaders and only provided basic Sunday school courses to the congregation. For the youth, the church had been developing a system to identify their gifts and then channeled them to serve. The leaders were mainly equipped through “on- the- job” training. If they found they lack knowledge or skills, they took courses and learned from outsiders. This training pattern would be changed in the near future as they wanted to set up a system to equip the believers to serve.

The Themes and Practices of Church D

Strong leadership and a committed leading team

The whole church followed the senior pastor’s leadership. She served as a bridge and head over the three parts of this church: the church, the kindergarten and the family center. In actuality, the kindergarten and family center mainly served the church. Furthermore, the relationships among the leaders were very close. The pastoral team and the deacon board supported each other. All of them had committed themselves to the church and both groups were willing to follow the lead of the senior pastor. When they first had a vision to set up a kindergarten about eight years ago, they knew the project would be really tough. They came to one mind and tried their best to deal with the problems and eventually they overcame all the

difficulties. This special experience made the team even closer and more committed. As a result, the school now served as the base for the church to reach out to people and served the community.

The Kindergarten and social work

The kindergarten and the family center were like two legs for the church. They served as bridges to attract people into the church. First, the church established a good quality kindergarten which gave parents confidence to enroll their children for study. The school was now well-known in the community. Every year, through the kindergarten, the church could reach out to many people. Most of the newcomers in the church had come through the school.

Likewise, the family center acted as an assistant to provide various activities and classes for the parents to join, such as an evangelistic group, women's group and parents' group. The center also provided musical drama opportunities and Boys' Brigade (a club similar to Boy Scouts with a Christian emphasis) for the kids. These activities attracted the children to stay at the church which, in turn, brought the parents to the church.

A good church life

The church provided contact points not only to reach out to people but also to keep them coming. First, Sunday and weekend worships services were places for people to experience God. The spacious worship facility, the beautiful songs and good messages helped people feel comfortable and enjoy the worship time. Second, the warm fellowship in the small groups was also an attractive point to keep people coming. They really did enjoy the life of the

church. Third, the children's worship played an important role to keep people coming. The church allocated great effort and resources toward running this program. The kids enjoyed the worship time very much and they learned a lot in the service. For example, the church invited music teachers to teach the kids to perform in a musical drama. It was not only a unique and enjoyable activity for the kids but also attracted the parents to bring their children to participate.

In conclusion, the church wanted to provide an energetic, happy and fun environment for people to enjoy their life at the church. The church also provided different activities and classes for people based on their needs or interests. For example, the church offered short-term tours for families and elderly people to different tourist spots; they also offered different interest classes for the kids and youth.

Leadership training

The church had a well-developed system to train up leaders. They provided instruction to lead a non-believer into becoming a believer; from a believer to a Gospel witness; from a witness to a group leader; from a group leader to a disciple. All the steps could be linked up and the training could be started at any point.

Every year, the pastors would choose four to six people to be trained as disciples. Most of them were from the youth groups or young adult groups. They were requested to spend time with the pastors and learned how to witness for Jesus Christ. They were also encouraged to join a short-term mission trip to do overseas ministry. In their point of view, the short-term mission trip was an effective way to train up leaders. During a mission trip, the participants

learned how to work together and through the ministry opportunities each one would be able to identify their spiritual gifts.

Within the church as a whole, the congregation was also encouraged to join in different ministries, such as sharing the Gospel, follow-up of new believers, joining the worship team, leading a small group or fellowship. Some were involved in clerical work or serving as greeters to welcome newcomers. Everyone was given an opportunity to serve and learn.

The Themes and Practices of Church E

An energetic leader

In the past, this church experienced a very tough time with their pastors. Before this pastor came to the church, the whole church was in a dying mood and had no momentum to grow. It was because the church faced the pastoral crisis and many people left the church. This pastor came and opened a new horizon to the church. He was very diligent in reaching out to others. When he first came to the church, he spent time visiting the leaders of the church in their market places or at home. He worked with the deacons and earned their trust.

When the church had an opportunity to connect with a kindergarten, the pastor used this to lead the church to a new level. He took the initiative to help the school to teach parents' classes and worked as a photographer to take photos for families in the school. His involvement and helpful actions earned the trust of the principal and teachers. The principal then welcomed the church to work with them and did ministry in the school. Due to his past experience in

servicing schools (both primary and secondary), the pastor found it easy to be a part of the kindergarten. In some cases, the pastor was even involved in solving school problems.

Interestingly, every time the pastor welcomed the kids at the front door of the kindergarten, the students were so excited and happy to see him there. He played an important role in bringing the kids and their parents from school to the church. The kids were welcomed to join the children's worship service, and at the same time, the parents are attending classes and worship. Through the pastor's diligent work and pastoral ministry, the church experienced significant growth in the past few years.

Good working relationships

The kindergarten was the contact point for the church to reach out to students and their parents. Due to the pastor's consistent interpersonal ministry, the church and the school established a very close relationship. The principal welcomed the church to teach Bible and parents' classes in school. And on the other hand, the principal joined the church as a bridge to welcome students and parents into the church. Every Sunday morning, she stood at the front door of the church to welcome kids. Her active presence gave the parents confidence that the church was a good place to go.

These two parties worked together and supported one another. The church sent people to teach and reached out to students and parents. The school allocated money in its yearly budget to support the outreach ministry of the church. This working pattern had brought growth to the school in terms of student enrollment. The church and school would further their

working pattern through opening a new kindergarten which also allowed the church to plant a new church in another location.

Practical team building

Due to the church's past hurtful experience with its pastors, this pastor made his life and ministry more transparent. He wanted to first earn the trust of the deacon board. He considered team building among these leaders crucial and essential. If there was no trust and respect among the deacons and pastoral staff, any church planning became ineffective. Thus, when this pastor wanted to propose a plan, he first sought permission from the deacon board. After building trust, he then worked toward church growth again.

In considering the work in the school and church, the pastor needed to build up a pastoral team, focused on caring for both the children and their parents. He shared the vision with the deacons and all of them had one heart to do this. This pastoral team needed to have teaching experience in a school setting and a heart to love the students. The pastor spent time with them, coaching them how to connect the church and school. His coaching effort made the team more effective and built a good relationship between the school and the church.

Close personal contact

The pastor and leadership team also created an atmosphere of caring for each of the churchgoers in using close personal contact. They personally knew the school students and their parents. Through the photography activity, the ministers contacted each of the school families and built up a personal relationship. When the families had needs or problems, the

ministers did home visitation and helped them work through their issues, such as how to choose a primary school, how to be good parents, how to care for sick family members.

In the church, the ministers also established a close personal relationship with the congregation. They regularly visited people from the church at their work place or home. The pastors wanted to let the congregation know they were with them regardless of their situations. If church members had the will and time to study the Bible, pastors would lead a Bible study at lunch time or after work. Furthermore, through the small groups and parent classes, the congregation could stay in close contact and supported each other.

Leadership development

When the pastor came to the church, the church was small and the core group of people was busy and not available to be trained. Therefore, the pastor adopted a coaching method to train up leaders. He first put his efforts toward establishing a mutual relationship with his team members. They knew what the vision was and how to work together to get the job done. In addition, the pastor identified potential leaders and spent time with them on a one-to-one basis. Through Bible study, sharing the vision and personal conversation, the pastor hoped to coach them to be future leaders. This person-to-person coaching pattern created more flexible space for the candidates to learn how to be a leader. It was a suitable model for today's busy Christians.

Research Question #3:

What did the research findings indicate that would help us improve the churches of the HKEC in the future?

According to the interviews within the five selected churches, there were some transferable principles and practices that could be applied to other Hong Kong Evangelical churches to facilitate church growth.

A stable and committed pastor

In the Hong Kong Evangelical Church, churches tended to be small or mid-sized. A stable and committed pastor was very important for church development. He or she was the key person of the church. According to four of the five churches interviewed, a stable and committed pastor, especially a senior pastor, was a key factor in helping the church to grow. The exception to this is church C which emphasized the leadership of a core group of leaders. The pastoral character and leadership style caused each church to grow in different ways but stable commitment and a heart for the church were essential factors for the development of the church. Based on the interviews we also found that all of these pastors had a gift of influencing others to follow him or her. It seemed when a pastor was stronger and more energetic, they were more likely to influence others to follow.

Building trust among leaders

Another key factor in helping the church to develop was the leading team, either pastoral or deacons or both. They all served in different posts but all worked together toward

common goals. During the interviews, we found the five churches had the common characteristic of trust among the leaders. The deacons trusted the pastoral team's leadership, especially the senior pastor. They enjoyed their relationship with each other and had mutual understanding. They spent time sharing and consolidating their ideas. After getting the plan or vision for the church, they would work together to get the job done. In short, the deacons or leaders had no significant objection to the leading pastor. They were very supportive of his or her decisions and direction.

For church C, we found the core group of leaders to be very stable and committed to the church. This core group had already built a genuine friendship with one another. They trusted each other and extended their trust and concern to the pastoral team. They provided a stable climate for the church to grow. Although the pastoral team had changed through various periods of time and the church had faced some crises, the presence of these core leaders had brought the church smoothly through these transitions.

Having plans to reach out to people

The five selected churches had experienced growth in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012 because all of them had a heart to reach out to people in different ways. Some of the churches provided social services through specific centers, such as a neighborhood or family center. These centers provided various activities or classes for the elderly or families in the communities near the churches. They also provided food for people in need. Their activities and services provided ways to make connections with people in those communities. They served

people in acceptable ways which created a good impression and attracted people to come to the church.

There were two churches which either operated or were connected to a kindergarten. The kindergartens became the places for the churches to reach out to new people. The church first made an effort to upgrade its children's ministry, including children's worship and classes designed to attract children to the church. At the same time, they provided classes that met the needs of parents. Their efforts brought a significant outcome in terms of church growth. On one hand, the churches had a source for making contact with new people. And on the other hand, the churches helped the kindergartens built up their quality and image which gave parents confidence to enroll their children in the school. This mutual support benefited and grew both the churches and the schools.

For those churches that did not have social services or kindergartens, their evangelism plans created opportunities for people to come into the churches. There were two churches which had similar opportunities to expand their church premises. As these churches increased space, the congregation gained momentum in inviting friends and family members to come. In addition, these churches not only did personal evangelism, but also had plans to reach out to specific target groups, such as primary or secondary school students.

Both of these churches took initiative to reach out to student groups through their teachers. The teachers regularly contacted their students and invited them to come to their churches. Their actions were effective and kept the students coming because the teachers had a good image among their students. One of the churches also provided summer classes and

regular evening activities to attract people in the community to attend the church. These outreach programs were bridges to connect the community and the church. After a period of time, the programs were accepted in the community. To their amazement, the result was beyond their expectation and there was a group of people continually joining these activities.

The small group and warm relationship

All of these five churches asserted that a key factor to attract and keep people in the church was creating an environment where people could get to know each other. Within these churches, the relationships were warm and close and each person could feel the acceptance and support of the congregation. They did this mainly through small groups which were able to give personal care to one another. Also in each church there were core groups of people who had known each other for a long period of time and had established genuine friendships. They were committed to taking care of people so that when the churches developed plans for outreach, they were ready to welcome and include every newcomer.

When visitors were introduced into the church, they were invited to different small groups according to their age and background. The group members would take care of them. Besides regular group gatherings, some churches provided classes and activities for the group members and encouraged them to join in. They came together to achieve goals and had fun. These arrangements provided a way for members to get closer and enjoy small group life. Apart from regular small groups, some churches also had functional groups for specific purposes, such as worship team, short-term mission team, or outreach team. These group involvements also gave a chance for the members to get closer and support each other.

Leadership development

All these five churches pointed out that for the church to grow, leadership development was one of the major factors that could not be omitted. If the church had no leaders to team up with the pastors, the church could not have sustainable growth. Most of the five selected churches had a system to train up leaders. Basically, they all provided a series of courses to train up every believer. From the point of accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior, the believers were taught how to be a Christian and live out a Christian life. In this preliminary stage, some churches would also encourage them to witness about Jesus and follow up the new believers. At the same time, all the churches would give them basic courses in Biblical knowledge. They asserted that a fundamental knowledge of the Bible is the stepping stone for a believer's future development in the faith.

If the pastors identified some potential leaders, they would take the initiative to invite them to join in the discipleship training. The pastors spent time with them and taught them how to be a disciple who was a true follower of Christ. The pastors also shared with them what they thought and how to serve. Through this training, they could build up mutual understanding and team spirit. In some situations, if the potential leaders had no time to attend the discipleship group, the pastors would coach them one by one. Through personal contact, conversation, and working opportunities, the pastors shared their vision, their thoughts, and biblical understanding in order to build up the mentor and mentee relationship. This was also an effective way to train up leaders.

Furthermore, the churches also encouraged people to join different ministry posts for learning how to serve and gain experience. These on-the-job training opportunities were additional ways to promote future leaders.

Encourage the laypeople to serve

All of the five churches had a pastoral team. The senior pastors of each church would try their best to develop their team. But at the same time, they would not ignore the involvement of the lay people. All the churches had a basic principle that the laypeople should participate in the ministries according to their spiritual gifts. "One person, one post" was a motto in some churches. They had different methods to prepare the laypeople for involvement in these ministry posts. Generally, besides the leadership training for potential leaders, the churches would encourage people to participate in different avenues of regular service, such as usher, witnessing, follow-up, home visiting, music, etc. All kinds of these regular jobs could promote them and prepared them to be more mature in Christ.

In addition, their involvement was a great resource to meet the needs of the church. For instance, one of the churches had a core group of people who were the main power that had kept the church running smoothly during times of pastoral change and church crisis. The core people took the major responsibility while the church was in need. Their previous learning, equipping and serving experiences were helpful for the church in these critical times. In short, the laypeople could do a lot of the pastoral work. The church could not ignore this great resource and needed to have plans to mobilize them to serve the Kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit and His Works

In the interviews, the five selected churches had shared a lot about the efforts of man which impacted the churches to grow. But in the conversations, the interviewees also point out, both implicitly and explicitly, that God was the key one who was leading the churches and bringing growth. One of the churches particularly emphasized that their church aimed to seek the face of God. If people experienced the presence of God, they would continue to come. There were a lot of reasons for people to come to the church. It might be the love of God, the acceptance and care by the people. It might be that needs were satisfied or hurts were healed. It might be they could find a meaningful life in God. All of these reasons or needs could be fulfilled without God's intervention. They did believe it was God who made things happen.

Some churches mentioned that the worship service was one of the factors in attracting and keeping people. The relevant messages and the touching songs were channels to lead people to encounter God. God was the ultimate resource and power for the churches to grow.

Summary of Major Findings

Based on interviews of pastors and deacons in each of the five churches included in this study, the major findings relating to the principles and practices of the church growth in terms of worship service attendances were as follows:

- The growing churches had stable and committed leading pastors who worked for the church for a long period of time, from 10 to 15 years. They had a heart to serve the church. They might have different characters or leading styles, but they should have followers to work with them.
- The growing churches had built trust among the leaders. The leading teams, including

the pastoral and deacon teams trusted each other. They all had mutual understanding and would support each other wholeheartedly to achieve common goals.

- The growing churches emphasized the importance of evangelism. They had plans to reach out to people using different methods and contact points.
- The growing churches created an atmosphere of close and warm relationships to attract people to come. Through the small group gatherings, people felt acceptance and support. Group activities also provided opportunities for the members to serve God. As a result, people enjoyed their church lives.
- The growing churches had plans to train up their leaders. The leading pastor would coach the leaders or use a training group to equip potential leaders to be his or her disciples following Christ. At the same time, the leaders were encouraged to be involved in different serving posts to get working experience.
- The growing churches emphasized ministry of the laypeople. From the point of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, the believers were trained and equipped to serve. Some of them were equipped to be future leaders; some of them might prepare to serve in the regular service of the church.
- The growing churches were also concerned with the power of God and His guidance. The Holy Spirit was the ultimate resource for the work of the church. Besides the efforts of man, it was God who made the church grow.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The research was conducted to ascertain the principles and practices of the five study churches that could be transferable to other churches in Hong Kong Evangelical Church. We were using the annual reports of the HKEC from 2004 to 2013 to check the overall growth of the churches in terms of the worship service attendance. Based on the data and compiled chart of church growth rates, we identified five study churches with a significant growth. Then, I conducted a one-on-one interview with the pastors (senior pastor if applicable) and deacons of the five churches. As a result of this research, seven key findings surfaced for discussion.

A stable and committed pastor

The first important principle was the five growing churches had a stable and committed pastor, especially the senior pastor. Because the churches of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church tended to be small or mid-sized, the senior pastor was the key person in helping the church growth. The literature review was consistent with this principle that the pastor was the key person in church growth. Wagner boldly proclaimed a central church growth principle was the pastor of the local church. He or she was a key person whom God was using to make the church grow (Wagner, 1984b, 60). Rainer also said that pastoral leadership might prove decisive in moving a church from non-growth to growth (186). Wagner furthered to point out, "The more the pastor can devote time and energy to being a leader, the more growth potential" (1984a, 101).

We found these pastors had the heart to serve the church and most of them had been committed to these churches at least 10 to 15 years. They worked hard in leading the church to grow. The teaching in the Bible showed us that the efforts of man were important too. The apostle Paul said, "The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor" (v.8). He continued to say, "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care" (v.10). In these two verses, Paul reminded us that we could not ignore our responsibilities in building the temple of God. We would receive our rewards according to our labors. Warren concluded that churches grew by the power of God and that skilled effort should be present as well. We could not do it without God but he had decided not to do it without us (60).

Furthermore, the research revealed that these pastors had the ability to influence others to work with them. In his scholarly research, Northouse identified four components central to leadership: (a) leadership was a process, (b) leadership involved influence, (c) leadership occurred in groups, and (d) leadership involved common goals. Based on these components, Northouse gave the following definition of leadership: Leadership was a process whereby an individual influenced a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Kindle Location 161). Not only did these pastors commit themselves to serving the church, but also encouraged others to work with them to achieve church growth. Through their endeavors, they led the church in growing steadily. Thus, Taylor concluded that the pastors were the kingpins in all of the church works (60).

Building trust among leaders

The research revealed that the growing churches had built trust among the leaders. The leading teams, including the pastoral and deacon teams trusted each other. Trust was a team's most precious commodity. Sweet called it the connective tissue of the body of Christ (198). Reggie McNeal called trust "the currency of teams" (198). Trust was the foundation of leadership. It was an essential to all good relationships (Maxwell 111). After building trust among the team members, everyone's strengths would complement the others' weaknesses (Barna, 1997, 225). The five study churches had built trust among team leaders, especially with the senior pastor. They spent time with each other and freely shared their vision or plans of the church. After discussing their ideas or confirming the vision of the church, these teammates would work together and persisted in getting the job done. This mutual understanding and trust were the foundation for achieving church growth. Dave Doubert said, "It is not the pastor's job to announce the last word (the vision and goals); rather, the pastor is called to announce the first word (God's) and to foster a conversation where people own, process, and apply the word to the lives and mission in which they participate (Van Gelder, *Kindle Locations 1714-1716*)." As a result of the close relationship between team members, each of them contributed what they saw and what they had to the church. By the grace of God and the effort of man, the church could grow steadily.

The research also revealed that even though the pastoral team had changed through various periods of time and the church had faced crises, a core group of leaders who trusted one another could still provide a stable climate for the church to grow. These core leaders trusted each other and extended their trust and concern to the pastoral team as well. Their

actions brought the church smoothly through different kinds of transitions. Sweet mentioned that the future belonged not so much to movers and shakers but to leaders who could work in teams. There were no more clergy and laity. There were only ministers (188). The core leaders who had trust among themselves played a leading role in the church, even though in the absence of a leading pastor. Their hearts, wills and energy were knit together with a common purpose and direction for the benefit of the church. As Tony Dungy said, "Every team member is important to the whole, yet the team can move on without any individual" (154). He then quoted Coach Noll's words, "Important but not indispensable" (154). The core team with trust and commitment to the church was also a momentum of church growth.

Having plans to reach out to people

The research revealed that the growing churches emphasized the importance of evangelism. They had plans to reach out to people using different methods and contact points. As a rule, Easum asserted that growing churches were more open to and passionate about outreach ministries (1990, 39). Easum and Tenny-Brittian also said that absolutely everything about growing a church depended on developing strategies for bringing people to Christ and the kingdom (2012, 35). Hunter claimed that the church's main business was to communicate the Christian faith to the growing numbers of people who did not yet believe or follow Christ (152). In short, the church should prepare its people to have compassion for the unchurched.

Today, many churches did surveys to answer the following questions: "Who is the community?" and "How will church reach the community" (Malphurs 176)? The research revealed that the five selected churches had different methods and contact points to identify their community and reach out to people. The churches which had social centers provided

various activities and classes for the people in the community. The churches which either operated or were connected to a kindergarten reached out to the students and their parents of these schools. For those churches that did not have social services or kindergartens, their evangelism plans created opportunities for people to come into the churches. Summer classes and regular evening activities attracted people in the community to attend the church.

How could we help the congregation to reach out to people? Spader promoted the concept that evangelism was a team sport (157). As the Body of Christ we ought to be functioning as a team. We should be providing opportunities and personal assistance to one another in our efforts to reach out to people. In his survey, Wyrstek affirmed this idea. He points out, "97% of all Christians believed that if the church leadership had a greater conviction and involvement in evangelism, it would be an example for them to follow" (Kindle Location 980-981). The research showed us that the churches, especially the senior pastor, had hearts to reach out to people. These pastors stood in the front line and demonstrated how to do evangelism. Most of the churches were small and mid-size and, the senior pastors worked hard to bring people to church. Easum and Tenny-Brittian had said, "The key leader of the church, such as the lead pastor, should demonstrate how to do evangelism. The smaller the church, the more time the pastor should spend in the community" (2012, 36). The literature review was consistent with the findings.

Small groups and warm relationships

The research revealed that the growing churches had a good small group ministry. The congregation enjoyed close and warm relationship through which people felt acceptance and support. These findings were highlighted in the literature reviews. Findley B. Edge spoke of the

function of a small group, "it provides a setting in which I can be a human being in a relationship and not merely an animal who simply exists. I can know and be known. I can love and be loved" (Rainer 297). Small groups were a visible microcosm of the church as the body of Christ, sharing life and ministry together in face-to-face relationships (Ogden, *Kindle Locations* 331-334). Schwarz also said that in the small groups, besides Bible study, members were able to bring up their issues and questions and received immediate personal concern (32).

The research also revealed that in each church there were core groups of people who had known each other for a long period of time and had established genuine friendships. They were committed to taking care of people so that when the churches developed plans for outreach, they were ready to welcome and include every newcomer. When visitors were introduced into the church, they were invited to different small groups according to their age and background. The group members would take care of them. In short, the small group gatherings could attract people to come to the church. Rainer said that small groups were a "point of entry" to "win a hearing." It was "side-door evangelism" (295). He quoted New Hope Community Church as an example and said that only after the group had won the trust and perhaps met a need of the individual, the presentation of the gospel could take place (295). The larger the church, the more intentional it should be to form small groups for further growth (Easum, 1990, 38; Schwarz 33; Hunter 91). Starting small groups supported both church and personal growth and gave members a sense of belonging (Hunter 91).

Apart from regular small groups, some churches also had functional groups for specific purposes, such as worship team, short-term mission team, or outreach team. These group involvements provided opportunities for members to serve God and developed personally. In

Acts 2:42-47, the early church members demonstrated a healthy small group life (Rainer 297; Spader 87-88). Its characteristics included teaching, fellowship, prayer, miracles, giving, meeting needs, praise, evangelism, and assimilation (Rainer 297). These small group gatherings were times for us to serve God and develop one another. George said, "Actually, in church life, a small group or cell group is treated as the most strategically significant foundation for spiritual formation and assimilation, for evangelism and leadership development, and for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church" (41).

Leadership Development

The research revealed that the growing churches had plans to train up their leaders to serve the church. Malphurs had asked a question about leadership development, "Does the church have a clear, simple, memorable pathway for making disciples, a pathway that most understand and know where they are along it (195)?" In the case of the five study churches, they had plans to develop their disciples or leaders beginning at the point of receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. The believers were taught how to be a Christian and live out a Christian life. When the pastors identified potential leaders, they trained them up as their disciples. McIntosh said, "Disciple implies not only acquiring knowledge but living out what one learns. He or she is personally involved in carrying out the will of the master" (2003, 65). The churches provided a series of courses to train up believers and encouraged them to witness for Jesus Christ and followed up new believers as well. With potential leaders, the pastors spent time and taught them how to be a disciple who was a true follower of Christ (Wyrostek, Kindle Locations 110-111). The pastors also shared with them what they thought and how to serve. In some

situations, the pastors would coach the potential leaders on a one-on-one basis. Through this coaching and training, they built up mutual understanding and team spirit. These findings were also consistent with the literature reviews. Easum and Tenny-Brittian asserted to say, "You are the curriculum" (2012, 59). The coach or trainer was the curriculum for the followers to learn. Slaughter used a psychological term "imprinting" to urge local churches to make sure that leaders were models of dedicated, healthy discipleship (2010, 59). Could leaders provide a dedicated and healthy model for their disciples?

Answering this question, Heraclitus claimed, "Character is destiny" (Dockery, Kindle Location 6816). Getz said that giftedness without character, though, was lethal (Barna, 1997, 84). If a church or any other Christian organization appointed leaders, abilities before character, it would be destroyed (Barna, 1997, 84). Barna defined a Christian leader as someone who was called by God to lead; led with and through Christlike character; and demonstrated the functional competencies that permitted effective leadership to take place (1997, 25).

Furthermore, the research showed that through personal contact, conversation, and training, the pastors could share their vision and thoughts with the disciples for how to build up the church. Nanus claimed that vision was the key to leadership. It was the powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success (3). Maxwell described leaders were the people who had vision and pursued it and helped others see it (1993, 140). Huan also said, "Vision from God will be one of the fundamental factors to make the church grow" (11). A vision for growth was not just spiritual discipline; it required the endeavor in receiving a 'conviction' from God and bringing people into God's vision of that conviction. Through the mentor and mentee relationship, the disciples could know their pastors: who they

were, how they thought and what they did. It was an effective way to train up leaders and allowed the church to have sustainable growth.

In addition, the churches also encouraged people to join different ministry posts to learn how to serve and gain experience. These on-the-job training opportunities were additional ways to promote future leaders. Malphurs emphasized the church provided the context where God worked directly or indirectly to transform lives through different kinds of ministries (200). He identified the primary and secondary ministries for the congregation to grow into maturity (Malphurs 201). How did we measure the church's effectiveness? Slaughter furthered to suggest the ratio of people answering the call of God to serve in church. Not only were true disciples attending or active in discipleship cells, they also had hearts to serve God (2010, 51). Thus, the ministries themselves were also ways to equip disciples to be future leaders.

Encourage the laypeople to serve

The growing churches emphasized the ministry of laypeople. The research revealed that the five selected churches had different methods to prepare the laypeople for involvement in the ministries of the church. In general, the churches encouraged people to participate in different posts, such as ushering, witnessing, follow-up, home visiting, music, etc. All kinds of regular services and ministries could promote them and prepared them to be more mature in Christ. At the same time, the church could benefit from their involvement and assisted the church in growing. Rainer claimed that one of the most exciting principles of church growth was unleashing laity to do the work of ministry (203). Heward-Mills affirmed this observation, "The

lay ministry is the key to church growth” (1). There is no way we are going to win this world with a few priests and pastors. Everyone must get involved (Heward-Mills 1).

Furthermore, the research also revealed that the laypeople participated in the ministries according to their spiritual gifts. “One person, one post” was a motto in some churches. According to Paul, the Holy Spirit gifted some people to be apostles, and others prophets, teachers, healers, helpers, administrators, evangelists, pastors, and so on to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Thus, we needed to emphasize the teaching of the priesthood of all believers again and encouraged laypeople to serve God and serve each other according to their spiritual gifts from God (Hunter 134, Rainer 203).

In addition, the laypeople could do a lot of pastoral work. For instance, one of the churches had a core group of people who took the major responsibility to keep the church running during times of pastoral change and church crisis. Their previous learning, equipping and serving experiences were helpful for the church in these critical times and helped the church to grow as well. Hunter claimed, “Laypeople, with training, can do 90 percent of what an ordained pastor does” (134). Warren pointed out that 40 percent of all members had expressed an interest in having a ministry, but they had never been asked or they didn’t know how (366). He furthered to say, “Every believer isn’t a pastor, but every believer is called into ministry. God is calling all believers to minister to the world and to each other” (Warren 368).

Churches today need to encourage ministry opportunities for all believers and let them have the chance to minister to each other. This is the calling from God (1 Pet. 2:9-10; 1 Pet.

4:10; Matt. 20:26-28). God wants to use all believers to edify one another and to reach out to people (Eph. 4:11-12; Matt. 28:19-20). Morris clearly stated that pastors needed to recruit, equip and mobilize people in the church to do ministry, instead of burning out by trying to do it all themselves (1993, 169). Thus, the church cannot ignore the laypeople ministry and needs to have plans to mobilize laypeople to serve the Kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit and His Works

The growing churches were led by God and He made the churches grow. The research revealed the fact that besides human efforts, the Holy Spirit was the ultimate resource for the work of the church. Fee commented on 1 Cor. 3:5-17, "Everything is God's—farm, workers, and the growth of crops. By implication, boasting in 'mere servants of the farm' is folly in its own right" (128). While talking about this passage, Garland also said, "What is important is that God is able to make use of their labor" (112). Actually, God is the life force who produces the harvest. Paul here used the aorist tense to sum up the work of the planter and the waterer, but he used the imperfect (euxanen) to imply that God was giving growth throughout the planting and watering (Garland 112). It is not because of human effort, as God revealed through the prophet Zechariah by saying, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zech.4:6). Warren affirmed what the Bible said, "Our job as church leaders, like experienced surfers, is to recognize a wave of God's Spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to make waves but to recognize how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavor" (14). Thus, Snyder urged us to have openness to the Holy Spirit to do "new things" in birthing and rebirthing the

church in diverse cultures and societies (Towns 226). McGavran concluded, "The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit" (55).

The research also showed that one of the churches spent a lot of time before God. They prayed and sought the face of God. They emphasized that the church could be blessed through prayer and time spent with God. If people experienced the presence of God, they would continue to come and have the heart to serve God. How do leaders prepare themselves for church growth? McIntosh asserted, "Through prayer!" It was the important way for the church to tap into the Holy Spirit's infinite supply of strength (2003, 86). When leaders committed their work to the Lord, they were acknowledging that the mind of man planned his way, but the Lord directed his steps (Prov. 16:9) (McIntosh, 2003, 88). When Slaughter discussed the function of prayer, he used the word "radical" to describe it. He said, "Radical prayer is the crucial first step to not only hearing God's direction, but acting on it" (2008, 69). Through prayer, we would have intimate connectedness with God.

The research also showed that in God, people felt acceptance and love. Their needs could be satisfied. Their hurts could be healed. All of these were some of the reasons for people coming to the churches. Without God's intervention, all of these could not happen. They indicated the providence of God in our daily life (Lightner 54; Rushdoony 209; Barackman 81; Kendall 50-51). By the providence of God, God actualized His lordship in the universe and also provided wonderful protection among His creatures. When we trusted in God, we needed not have fear in our lives. He would protect us ((Kelly 316-317; Boice 176-182).

Implications of the Findings

The first implication of the findings was that, as servants of God, we should learn how to do our best and let God take the rest in terms of church growth. Both the efforts of man and the sovereignty of God are crucial factors for a church to grow. While God ripened the harvest, He did not reap the harvest. He expected us to be his agents in reaping (Wagner, 1984a, 19). On the other hand, God could bypass any human efforts and make the church grow. Thus, we should spend time before God and seek his helps in leading the church to grow. At the same time, we also prepared ourselves to do our part to contribute to the growth.

The second implication was to prepare people as God's agents for church growth. This agent might be someone such as the leading pastor or a group of core leaders. The agent should be stable and committed. The agent was the leading pastor, he or she should build trust among the leading team, whether a pastoral or other leaders team. This key person was willing to offer his or her life as a demonstration and model of serving God. Through their lives and teaching, the leading pastors equipped potential leaders to serve God and provide a path for the church to have a sustainable growth. When the growth agent was a core of the leaders, they played a key role, especially during a transition period of the church. They stabilized the church in a difficult time and helped transition to go smoothly. Their involvement also provided a model for others in learning how to serve God.

The third implication was to use different methods to reach out to people, welcome them to the church and assimilate them in small groups. All these procedures were a way to transition. We could not ignore any one of them. The research revealed that all the study

churches put effort into improving these processes in order to help new believers to see the church as their home. In addition, the laypeople's involvement was welcomed. They serve in different posts of the ministries and contributed to the growth of the church.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations of the study. The study was limited to a period of ten years from 2003 to 2012. The length of time might not be long enough to reflect the church growth of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church in terms of worship attendance. Before or after this period of time, there were many factors that might influence the churches to grow, for instance, when the leading pastor retired or resigned. In addition, the study only used the data of the worship attendance to reflect church growth. This data might not give us the whole picture of the churches. For instance, the income of the church might also be a factor to reflect church growth. But this data was not easy to collect because it was a confidential part of the church records and the churches only reported part of their incomes to the Head Office of the HKEC.

The study areas for church growth were limited to several aspects, such as leaders, leadership development, small groups, evangelism and laypeople ministry. All these areas did not comprise a complete list of church growth principles. For instance, the study did not cover the areas of preaching, worship and administration. The churches of the HKEC tended to be small and mid-sized churches and in the interviews, the study churches did not address these areas as much.

The study did not cover the churches which used the church planting model to multiply their congregation. This was because there were only a couple churches that did church planting before the study period. This was not a major trend among the churches in the HKEC. In addition, the leading pastors of these two churches were not on staff, having either passed away or resigned.

Unexpected Observations

The first unexpected observation was that I had the privilege of talking extensively with the pastors and deacons of the five study churches. I did not anticipate how willing pastors and deacons were to initiate conversation concerning the growth of their church. They freely shared their church situations and their every effort to make their church grow. I was so excited to listen to their stories and gave thanks to our Lord for what I was hearing from them.

The second one was the opportunity to become acquainted with these pastors and deacons who demonstrated how to be faithful servants in making the church grow. They tried their best to bring people to God and would not give up in their effort to strengthening the church. In short, I did not expect to know these five study churches so deeply, but God gave me this chance to get to know them.

The third unexpected observation was I came to know more about the churches of the HKEC. Not only did I know about the five study churches, but also I received a bigger picture of the HKEC within the ten years from 2003 to 2012. This was useful data for the long-term development committee to consider in its future plan for the HKEC.

Recommendations

I had the unique opportunity, in my role as the Chairman of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church, to serve as a member of the long-term development committee. The findings of this study would serve as a foundation for the future plan and development of the HKEC. We might prepare a list of guidelines for the churches or head office which included plans to plant churches. In addition, the findings were highly recommended to other churches in the HKEC for application into their own context. We might launch a series of courses and seminars for pastors and deacons to study together and discuss with each other the possibilities of applying the transferable principles in their churches. We would also invite the pastors and deacons of the five study churches to share their own experiences in growing their churches. Their stories might provide a good reference for other churches.

Postscript

Doing research of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church and studying in Asbury Theological Seminary were important parts of my life. It had been a wonderful journey for me to know more about my denomination and the world. As a servant of God working in the HKEC over twenty five years, I had the privilege to study my denomination. As I mentioned before, had we been faithful servants of God in developing our churches? Through the research, I knew more about my denomination, our tradition and legacy, our strengths and weaknesses, our colleagues. I encountered many things beyond my imagination and expectation. I was so thankful for the opportunity to do this project.

In addition, the study in Asbury Theological Seminary widened my horizon of ministry. The courses and the field trip visits had greatly impacted me in how to be a minister of God. For a person working in a church over twenty five years, the study refreshed my mind and thoughts and furthered develops me as a leader in the local church. Without God's intervention, I could not experience this learning opportunity. He had helped me grow even though my efforts were limited.

APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE PASTORS AND DEACONS

1. What are the most important factors that you believe the church has grown over the past ten years? (give many as you can)
2. What do you believe are three main reasons that people are attracted to come to your church? How do they work? Could you share each of them in detail?
3. What do think are the two or three main things your church can do to keep people at your church? How do they work? Could you share each of them in detail?
4. Does your church have discipleship training? How does your church make disciples? Could you share it in detail?
5. Besides the discipleship training, what kinds of things does your church do to identify and build leaders? How does your church encourage laypeople to serve God? What is the plan?

APPENDIX B**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER****STUDY TITLE: TO STUDY THE CHURCH GROWTH OF HONG KONG EVANGELICAL CHURCH FROM 2003 TO 2012**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Lai Shui Lam from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are the one who come from the five selected churches. These five churches are selected based on several criteria. First, these churches had significant growth in terms of worship service attendance in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012. Second, each of these churches is located different region of Hong Kong. Third, these churches come from two categories, with and without social services.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to have an interview within a period of time from May to August of 2015. The interview will be held in your church and limited the time within two hours.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name. If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Lai Shui Lam. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Lai Shui Lam questions any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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