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LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH: THE CASE OF CHUCK SMITH

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Abstract

How can we understand church growth in a way that is healthy and doesn't lead pastors to exhaustion? This article answers this question by looking at the experience of the late Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel movement. It also explores some of the characteristics of the early church and compares Smith's approach with church growth advocates. The observation and analysis bring about a better understanding of the role of the pastor and his mindset regarding church growth and a recognition of who is really responsible for growth.

INTRODUCTION

"I think churches need to realize that the growth they have been wanting, hoping for and even praying for in a vague way, is theirs if they will only

do the right things.”¹ Donald McGavran made this statement as he was being interviewed by Win Arn, who then asked, “What do you mean by right things?” McGavran answered: “[M]ost of all, it is recognizing that God wants the church to grow; that the church was made for growth; that it’s normal for the church to grow and increase, and to bring people to a knowledge of salvation.”²

Most church growth advocates would agree with this statement. But the truth is there are significant differences on how they believe church growth is to be pursued. For example, the founder of the Calvary Chapel movement, Chuck Smith, had convictions that were not always well accepted in the church growth movement. He was asked one day to speak at a leadership seminar to a group that developed plans to grow the church. He said, “I have this philosophy, ‘If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it.’ God continues to bless the teaching of His Word, the church continues to grow, the Lord continues to add daily, and He honors His Word like He said He would. I’m satisfied that as long as God is blessing the Word, I will keep teaching the Word. Why should I change? Why should I try to remodel it when it’s still working?”³ The moderator became very upset; interestingly enough, Smith says, “I’ve never been asked to speak again at those wonderful conferences.” Smith was very distrustful of growth programs that had been created to fan “the lust for novel, bizarre, and different kinds of experiences that will continue to give the same kind of spiritual rush people have come to desire and long for.”⁴ This approach to church growth, he believed, was the best way to lead pastors to exhaustion.

So how can we understand church growth in a way that is healthy and does not lead pastors to exhaustion? This article answers this question by looking at the experience of Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel movement. In the first part, we look at Smith’s views as expressed in his book *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*. This answers questions such as these:

1 Donald A. McGavran and Win C. Arn, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 12.

2 Ibid.

3 Chuck Smith, *Calvary Chapel Distinctives* (Costa Mesa, CA: Word for Today, 2017), 43.

4 Ibid., 43. Chuck Smith speaks several times about church growth programs in his writings, but he does not specify which ones. He simply writes that these are programs “devised by men to build a church’s attendance.” (Smith, *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, 132.)

Should pastors be concerned about growth? Who is responsible for growth? What frame of mind does God desire from pastors? It also explores some of the characteristics of the early church and compares Smith's approach with church growth advocates. The observation and analysis bring about a better understanding of the role of the pastor and his mindset regarding church growth.

PASTOR CHUCK SMITH AND CHURCH GROWTH

In 1965, Chuck Smith became the pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, a church of only 25 people. Over the years, his ministry grew into an international network of over 1,800 churches drawing 25,000 people weekly. From the beginning, his church was known for its "come as you are" dress code and was a forerunner in contemporary music services. It reached out to hippies, drug addicts, and young adults. In *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, Smith writes about how he believes pastors should lead and grow their church.

Despite the extraordinary growth of his ministry, Smith believes the size of a church should *not* be the pastor's concern, "nor should it ever be."⁵ Pastors ought never to forget that it is not their job to add to the church: that is God's job.⁶ He considers counting heads a trap and "a terrible snare to fall into."⁷ Pastors should trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and trust that Jesus Christ is building His church as He said He would.⁸

Smith considers that the pastor's job is "to feed the flock, tend to the flock, love the flock, and see to it that they're cared for."⁹ Pastors should look after those who are there and realize that these are the ones the Lord has brought for them to minister to.¹⁰ The Lord will not make them

5 Ibid., 16.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 17.

8 Ibid., 37.

9 Ibid., 16

10 Ibid., 17.

shepherd over many until they've been faithful with a few.¹¹ It is the pastor's responsibility to get the people into the Word, into prayer, into fellowship and the breaking of bread.¹² The pastor should give the people their best and minister to them diligently and from the heart.¹³ This is the kind of faithfulness the Lord is looking for. And if they prove themselves faithful in doing so, the Lord will bring them more people to watch over, to care for and minister to: "The Lord will add daily, as He sees fit, those that should be saved."¹⁴

Smith observed that unfortunately, many pastors strive to gain new members and then have to struggle to maintain what they've gained.¹⁵ They try to come up with new programs to create the spiritual hype that people have learned to long for. They push and stress to increase their numbers, putting pressure on themselves to keep it going, which means they continually have to do something different. This constant striving can destroy pastors: "There are a lot of super churches today, but there are also a lot of tired leaders because they are striving to maintain what they've built. ... It's that striving to maintain that creates ministerial burnout or will run you into the ground or will lead you into all kinds of aberrant practices."¹⁶

Smith sees the early church as the ideal model for pastors.¹⁷ The church of the New Testament was "filled with the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ It was a church where the Holy Spirit was the One directing its operation.¹⁹ It was a church that taught the Word, developed oneness or fellowship (*koinonia*), broke bread together, and prayed together. The rest was God's work.²⁰ When it is the Lord's work, pastors don't have to strive to keep it going.

11 Ibid., 16.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 17.

14 Ibid., 16.

15 Ibid., 41.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 14.

18 Ibid., 15.

19 Ibid., 15.

20 Ibid., 19.

God's plan is that all Christians be overflowed by the Spirit and allow the Spirit to flow forth out of their lives. In that way, they become His instruments through which He can reach the world. God can choose and likes to choose totally unqualified people for His work so He can "fill them with His Spirit, and then do a mighty work through them that astounds and baffles the world."²¹

Smith considers that to avoid exhaustion or burnout, pastors must decide that if the work is going to be done, it should be done by the Lord²² and be done for His glory only: "The kind of men God used in the church in Acts were men who were totally surrendered to Jesus Christ, not seeking their own glory but only seeking to bring glory unto Jesus."²³ The purpose of the early church was to give glory to God²⁴: "God wants to work, but God wants the glory for the work that He does."²⁵

The Lord allowed Chuck Smith himself to spend the prime years of his life failing until God finally got him to a place where he realized he had nothing to offer. God brought him to the cross and emptied him of himself and his ambitions. This brought him to lean solely on the Spirit, depend upon Him, and finally see God work.²⁶

According to Smith, the Bible shows that God brought Moses to this same place of surrender. Moses first endeavored to do God's work with the energies of his flesh. The pastor explains with humor that by his own power, Moses could not successfully bury one Egyptian, but when directed by the Spirit, Israel succeeded in burying the whole Egyptian army.²⁷ And God used Gideon, who knew he did not have the ability to accomplish the deliverance of a nation; he needed to rely upon the Lord if anything was to be done: "God will go to tremendous lengths to make certain that His chosen leaders rely on the Spirit and not on their own power and

21 Ibid., 105.

22 Ibid., 99.

23 Ibid., 18.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 104.

26 Ibid., 100.

27 Ibid., 97.

wisdom.”²⁸

To let the Holy Spirit lead the church, explains Smith, pastors and church members need to be like Moses and the first Christians, in touch with God and receiving His direction and guidance.²⁹ Their frame of mind and heart should be to make themselves available, to give themselves over as instruments through which God can do what He desires.³⁰ Once they receive a sense of direction, they are to venture in faith, to adopt a mindset that says, “Let’s jump into it. Let’s find out. Let’s give God a chance.”³¹ They step out in faith; they try it and see.³² If it succeeds, they can rejoice and say, “Great! The Lord led us.” If it does not succeed, they step back and say, “We thought it was a good idea, but since it doesn’t work, let’s not push it.”³³

Chuck Smith believes it is essential to maintain that flexibility: going forward as long as the Lord opens doors and being able to walk away from a project that is obviously not working.³⁴ According to Smith, pastors also need to keep the mental attitude of doing everything as unto the Lord and not see the ministry as an opportunity to be served. They should serve others remembering that they are Jesus’ servants; He is their Master who will reward them for their service.³⁵ And because God loves to take, develop, remold, and rebuild lives that are a real wreck, pastors must seek to restore those who have fallen.³⁶ Having been forgiven themselves, they should show forgiveness and mercy and grace.³⁷

In brief, Smith does not advocate being concerned about numbers. His main point is that pastors take the New Testament church as their model: a church led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a church that seeks to give

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 15, 23.

30 Ibid., 123.

31 Ibid., 128.

32 Ibid., 126.

33 Ibid., 132.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 12.

36 Ibid., 47.

37 Ibid., 46.

glory to God only and to restore people who are lost and who have fallen.

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Are there other characteristics of the New Testament church that were not mentioned by Smith and that give insight to its growth? What do church growth advocates see in the early church that can be of assistance to pastors?

Surely the first disciples and leaders had a definite communion with the Holy Spirit. When asked to decide on the matter of circumcision of the Gentiles, the apostles sent their answer in a letter: “*It is the decision of the holy Spirit* and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right.” (Acts 15:28-29, emphasis ours).³⁸ They did not say that the group had made the decision alone; they decided with the Holy Spirit.³⁹

John Wimber points out that “the church was led by supernatural means: that is, visions, visitations, and prophecies.”⁴⁰ With humor, Nell L. Kennedy explains that when the early church had a business meeting, they wrote into their minutes, “Holy Spirit constrained us” or “Holy Spirit bade us do so-and-so.” Hence the first disciples felt that they were “not to put the Holy Spirit in a closet somewhere merely because He was unseen, but to call upon Him, to verbalize His name and lift Him to the position of authority and leadership.”⁴¹

The Holy Spirit not only led the church but also accompanied the disciples as they preached the kingdom of God. Even before the death and resurrection of Jesus, signs and wonders were manifest as the disciples

38 All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (2010).

39 David Yonggi Cho and Harold Hostetler, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1981), 126.

40 C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn, and Elmer L. Towns, *Church Growth: State of the Art* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1989), 215.

41 Nell L. Kennedy, *Dream Your Way to Success: The Story of Dr. Yonggi Cho and Korea* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 194.

were sent on mission: “But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20). Peter Wagner notes that “the disciples had a supernatural anointing upon their lives which gave them great power to preach, to witness, and to overcome the barriers that stood in their way.”⁴² They were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). They were launching an assault on the kingdom of Satan: “Darkness was dispelled, demons were defeated, diseases were healed, prisoners of sin were delivered, and the church was established.”⁴³

The embryonic church was empowered to work the same ministry that Jesus worked. John Wimber says that there is a close relationship between the manifestations of signs and wonders and the growth of the early church⁴⁴: “The early church was effective because it understood evangelism from this perspective of *power demonstrations!*”⁴⁵ These manifestations were able to attract the attention of unbelievers and break the prejudices of the early church.⁴⁶

The Holy Spirit also touched the heart of those hearing the Good News and helped them open their lives to the Gospel.

God prepared Cornelius to receive the ministry of Peter. The same thing happened with the conversion of Lydia. Scripture says: “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us.” (Acts 16:14-15)⁴⁷

42 Wagner, *Church Growth*, 207.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 218.

45 Ibid., 224.

46 David Yonggi Cho and R. Whitney Manzano, *More than Numbers* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 95.

47 Joel Comiskey, *Planting Churches that Reproduce: Starting a Network of Simple Churches* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2008), 102.

Elmer L. Towns considers that the early church was growing because it was a praying church.⁴⁸ The believers met often for prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4; 12:5; 16:13) and “after praying, those early believers were empowered by the Spirit, and people were saved.”⁴⁹ Prayer was how the early church received its power (Acts 4:23-32; Eph 6:18-19; etc.)⁵⁰: “The prayers of the early church unleashed the power of God to add thousands to the church.”⁵¹ As Thom Rainer says it: “Prayer was not an add-on to give them permission to eat a meal. It was serious stuff for a serious group of church members. Prayer was the lifeblood of the early church.”⁵²

The first disciples understood their situation and their mission as a spiritual battle. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens” (Eph 6:11-12).

The early church was also totally committed to one purpose: making disciples (Matt 28:18-20).⁵³ David Goodhew observes that Acts 1:8⁵⁴ can be taken as “a key programmatic statement for the whole book.”⁵⁵ Jesus commissioned his disciples to be witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. They proclaimed Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah.

Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im explain that it was excitement and passion for the salvation of souls that drove them to evangelize. Luke’s Gospel

48 Elmer L. Towns, John N. Vaughan, and David J. Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 268.

49 Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 70.

50 Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 111.

51 Towns, *The Complete Book*, 183.

52 Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 67.

53 McGavran, *How to Grow a Church*, 19.

54 Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

55 David Goodhew, *Towards a Theology of Church Growth* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 67.

“emphasizes heaven’s joy at the conversion of lost ones.”⁵⁶ Reporting on Paul’s missions, the Acts of the Apostles highlights the early church’s joy over the conversion of the Gentiles⁵⁷: “They were sent on their journey by the church, and passed through Phoenicia and Samaria telling of the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers” (Acts 15:3).

Another characteristic of the early church is that baptisms were done almost immediately. Most baptisms on record in the New Testament were conducted right after the proclamation of the Gospel. People were not planning it or doing it on the front end. They heard the Gospel and spontaneously decided to be baptized. Many such examples can be found in the Bible: the jailer who was about to kill himself after an earthquake rattled the prison; the thousands who heard Peter preach at Pentecost; and Saul, who was baptized three days after he met Jesus (Acts 9). Lydia in Acts 16:15 is another example: “Yet Lydia and her household were baptized immediately on hearing the Word.”⁵⁸

In the early church, there is no case to be made for months of catechesis that should precede baptism. After his first conversation with Philip, the Ethiopian eunuch understood the importance of baptism and asked, “Is there any reason I can’t be baptized here and now?” “No reason at all,” Philip answered.

After Pentecost, it seemed that all Christians naturally spread the message of the Good News. Lay persons performed mass evangelism (8:5-6, 12) as well as village evangelism (8:25).⁵⁹ Everyone went everywhere “evangelizing.”⁶⁰ The Christian faith spread across the social networks of these active and credible Christians. “The eventual centralization of the roles of bishop and presbyter, and the expansion of consecrated religious life, seems to have absorbed much of the ministry in a way that was not

56 Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches that Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 35.

57 Ibid.

58 Donald A. McGavran, *The Bridges of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 29.

59 Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 40.

60 Towns, *The Complete Book*, 321.

seen in the New Testament church.”⁶¹ Even leadership in the newly planted churches was assumed by laypersons: “For these early churches there was no professional clergy to assume their leadership. Consequently, the pattern of the Jewish synagogues seems to have been followed by appointing a group of lay elders to shepherd the flock.”⁶²

The Holy Spirit transformed the people who received the Gospel. Lives were changed; according to Goodhew, this is a key element to understand the growth of the early church.⁶³ Yes, there were accounts of huge conversions like the Day of Pentecost, but the early church spread and was planted mostly person by person, “as one person invested in the life of another who invested in the life of another.”⁶⁴ The early churches also had a particular connection with those in greatest need, the vulnerable and the lowly, and all those whom the wider culture looked down upon.⁶⁵

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need. (Acts 4:32-35)

In the book of Acts, we also read that the church met in large and small gatherings of people: “Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46-47). The apostles taught and proclaimed the Good News in the Temple and in the home (Acts 5:42). The home gatherings multiplied

61 Michael J. White, *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 192.

62 Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 65.

63 Goodhew, *Towards a Theology*, 69.

64 Comiskey, *Planting Churches*, 16.

65 Goodhew, *Towards a Theology*, 22.

as members converted others in new villages and towns.⁶⁶ Both types of gathering helped carry out the basic functions of the church and contain the expanding kingdom of Jesus Christ: “Small groups were essential in meeting people’s needs, drawing them to worship together as believers, praying for God’s power to be unleashed, evangelizing the lost, encouraging the persecuted, and discipling new believers.”⁶⁷ When people gathered in homes, they would devote themselves to “the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). As the Gospel was received by more and more people, home groups spread and multiplied.

The growth of the early church was not only spontaneous but also deliberate. Paul and other early Christians engaged in missionary trips to intentionally plant churches: starting churches, explains Stetzer, “was the normal expression of New Testament *missiology*. Intentional church planting, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the method of the early churches. Church planting explains how the early church exploded across the Roman Empire during the decades following the resurrection of Jesus.”⁶⁸

And as the apostles and other disciples encountered new cultures, they *adapted their message*. When talking with Jews who knew the Scriptures, the apostles would directly present Christ as the awaited Messiah. But when speaking to the Greeks, who had no prior knowledge of Scripture, they would find a starting point that was familiar to them. A classic example is Paul’s speech on Mars Hill in Athens (see Acts 17:16-33).⁶⁹

66 Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 143.

67 Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 153.

68 Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 42.

69 Chuck Colson, “A Tale of Two Cities,” *Break Point*, August 29, 2018, <http://www.breakpoint.org/1997/08/a-tale-of-two-cities>, accessed April 3, 2019.

CONCLUSION

Pastor Chuck Smith rightly describes some of the characteristics of the early church. He particularly insists that it was a church seeking the glory of God and where the Holy Spirit had a protagonistic role: the Holy Spirit led the church, gave visions, performed signs and wonders, touched the hearts of people listening to the Gospel, and transformed the lives of those who repented and received Christ.

But the New Testament highlights other characteristics, like the fact that the early church was entirely committed to the Great Commission. It was devoted to prayer and saw itself as involved in a spiritual battle. Most baptisms were performed right after the proclamation of the Gospel, and everyone seemed engaged in spreading the Good News. The early church also distinguished herself by authentic love among her members as well as towards the poor. Fellowship and worship were lived out in the homes of the disciples. And although the spread of the Gospel was in large part spontaneous and natural, organized missions in foreign countries brought evangelists to adapt their message to the cultures they encountered.

Smith and church growth advocates will agree on most of the characteristics of the early church, but their interpretation and conclusions are different. For most members of the church growth movement, pastors need to have a *strong desire* for growth and embody a solid vision for an enlarged harvest.⁷⁰ “If secular professions,” explains James Mallon, “can strive for growth and improvement, how much more should we who have been tasked to proclaim the saving message of Jesus strive to improve.”⁷¹ Thom Rainer says that the responsibility for growth falls on the senior pastor of a congregation.⁷² Churches need to be strategic, plan, get organized, and set intentional goals to grow.⁷³ Those that do not plan will

70 Carl F. George, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Revise Your Role, Release Your People, and Capture Overlooked Opportunities for Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 80.

71 James Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2014), 134.

72 Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 186.

73 Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 55.

not grow, warns Peter Wagner.⁷⁴ Also, church leaders are encouraged to have strong *expectations* towards members; they *expect* church members to be involved and to use their God-given gifts, talents, and skills⁷⁵; and they expect small groups to multiply.⁷⁶ This approach to church growth and this understanding of the role of the pastor indubitably gives the impression that *church activities and even members of the church are to be used and instrumentalized for growth.*⁷⁷ Pastors and church members are also made responsible for growth, thus generating stress and guilt and potentially leading to exhaustion or disillusion. As a result, people can also be misled to give the credit for growth to human strategies and plans instead of to God.

Chuck Smith was not against having a vision for growth and pursuing the Great Commission – on the contrary. But he recommended that leaders see church growth above all as God’s responsibility and surrender to the Holy Spirit so that He can lead the church and do the work. The growth of the church is a grace, a gift from God that should be sought by confidently seeking and depending on the works of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the pressure on pastors and church members decreases, and they can then step back and rejoice while watching God work.

If I have complete confidence that it’s His church – He’s going to build it – then all I have to do is be faithful. I simply need to watch His work, and then the pressure isn’t on me. I don’t get all hyped or pressured because the work of God isn’t my responsibility. It’s not my church. It’s His church. I believe that it’s very important to remember this, because if you try to carry the load and bear the burden, you’ll find it’s too great for you. You’ll find yourself under

74 Charles Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 55–56.

75 Stetzer, *Comeback Churches*, 137.

76 Young-Gi Hong, “Models of the Church Growth Movement,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004), 105.

77 There is a dark side to the pursuit of organizational effectiveness when organizations tend to see people like they see capital and machinery, as their parts, as tools or machines. In business circles particularly, people can unfairly be stressed and put pressure on in order to get as much output as possible.

pressure to create schemes and hypes, and then you begin to push and manipulate people.⁷⁸

Indeed, in the Acts of the Apostles, church growth is clearly presented as the result of God's supernatural intervention. The apostles could barely contain the growing numbers of disciples. It was much more like the miraculous catch of fish (John 21:6) than the result of human efforts and schemes. This is not to say that leaders and church members should stay idle and despise plans and human activities; they still have the mission to pursue the Great Commission. But they should above all seek the inspiration and leadership of the Holy Spirit and rely on the Spirit's works. This way, God's massive strength and power will be manifested, pastors and churches will not be brought to exhaustion, and church growth will be to the glory of God alone.

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78 Smith, *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, 37–38.

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