

### Deacons in Today's Church; Assistants in Church Growth

"...Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business"

(Acts 6:3).



eacons can be instrumental and helpful in relieving the pastor of many responsibilities in running a church. They can also assist with the establishment and oversight of preaching points and churches.

God has a plan for the Deacons in today's Church. As with any job you need a Job Description. The first Deacons had to demonstrate that they lived continuously under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as a Christian.

According to Willmington's Guide to the Bible the Job Description for Deacons is as follows:

- They must be men.
- They must be saved.
- They must be reputable.
- They must be spiritual.
- They must possess wisdom.

Deacons must have the spirit and anointing along with the pastors. Anyone who has responsibility in the House of God must move in the Spirit.

In Acts 6, deacons existed because of church growth. The Church had grown so rapidly that there was a shortage of people available to perform the necessary leadership tasks. Instead of pastors praying and preaching they were performing other functions. The church had grown to the point that there were many needs; both spiritual and material. The Deacons were called upon to share the work load. They assisted the pastor. These men were chosen by the people and were to be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (Acts 6:3).

The Deacons were to love the truth and God. They were people in the church who could be trusted. They knew their place and did not try to overstep it or run the spiritual affairs of the church. They existed to help, be a blessing, be trustworthy, and to do good things for the Church. Deacons must love souls more than position and seek God for souls to come into the Kingdom. If Deacons will seek God then something will happen. They won't be ordinary saints anymore.

Deacons need to be used in the Spirit like Stephen and Philip. You can become a Book of Acts man! Stephen was a Deacon; full of faith and the Holy Ghost. He had faith in and with God. He

©2010 James G. Poitras

assisted in increasing the Church. When you do things God's way, His blessings will be upon the Church.

Stephen, in Acts 6:8 was full of faith and power. He did great wonders and miracles. In Acts 6:10 they were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which he spoke to them.

Study Questions
Why are Deacons necessary in the Church today?
,
2. What is the Job Description for a Deacon?
3. Who are two examples of Spiritual Deacons in Acts?
Additional Notes
Additional / Notes

### Neighbourhood Evangelism Centers

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"

Acts 5:42.

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house"

Acts 20:20.

#### **Church Born At Home**

ave you ever considered where the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Day of Pentecost? It was an "upper room." "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room..." (Acts 1:13). This was a room traditionally set aside by rich people to entertain their visitors. The Holy Ghost was not poured out in the temple or chapel but in someone's home. With three thousand added to the church on the first day, where do you think they continued to worship? They continued in fellowship both in the temple, on Solomon's porch, and in their houses. After all Jesus had promised:

#### How Big is a Church?

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

When the Gentiles started coming into the church they were not even able to go to the Jewish temple. That was okay because they knew that the building is not the church. People are the church. We can't hide behind the four walls of our churches but we must get out to where the people are. We must carry out the Great Commission. Telling people to "come to our church and grow with us" does not do this. Rather we must "Go."

Reinhard Bonnke wrote an article entitled, Observance of the Apostolic Ministry. In it he states, "the apostolic ministry can be summed up in one word: 'Go!' Our task is no smaller than that of the first apostles nor is it any different. Indeed, we can be sure of one thing: If we go as they went we shall get what they got. The task remains unchanged, and neither has God changed in the slightest degree. God will do for us what He did for the apostles if we do for God what the apostles did, because God never changes."

We have the apostolic message of salvation contained in Acts 2:38, but many times we don't use the apostolic methods of spreading the gospel. What would happen if we started to do what the Apostles did? How did they go about evangelizing the known world? They did it from house to house.

Houses in the New Testament were a place where people could gather to hear the Word, pray, and have fellowship. The church existed for three hundred years without a building, yet they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine and turned the world upside down.

"And DAILY in the TEMPLE and in EVERY HOUSE, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

If this was the Apostolic plan, why is it that we only meet in church buildings on certain days of the week? Why is it that we now feel that we must have a church building before we can have a church? We that live our lives according to the Bible, need to let the Bible methods become our model, pattern, and way of life.

Anthony Tamel reports that when people were asked, "What or who was responsible for your coming to Christ or church?" that the people responded with the following percentages:

1.	A special need	1%
2.	Walked in to the church	2-3%
3.	Pastor	1-2%
4.	Visitation	1-2%
5.	Sunday School	4-5%
6.	Evangelistic Crusade	.05%
7.	Church Programs	2-3%
8.	A Friend or Relative	75-90%

(Note: Much of Anthony Tamel's materials on the Cell Ministry were studied in preparation for this lesson. He has an excellent cell ministry in his local church and travels around the world promoting this vital ministry.)

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!

From the above list we can see that 75 to 90 per cent of all people coming to Christ or coming to church have come because of a friend or a relative.

With house to house evangelism and cell groups we can take the gospel to where the people are and provide more points of entry (soul saving stations) into the Kingdom of God. Houses can become evangelism centers. Home churches provide for a dynamic neighbourhood evangelism method. Here we can penetrate Satan's kingdom and bring the light of the gospel into the darkness. Cell groups would cause us to always be looking at meeting the needs of people and reaching out. Through this method you can share Christ with a lost world. In many countries people are not motivated to pay high transport costs to attend churches. They tend to go to the church that is nearest to them; the community church. With the cell church people will not have to travel but they can come to a "neighbourhood evangelism center." People are more apt to open up and share their lives with small groups of people they count as their

friends. After all, the church is the new extended family of the newly converted believer. The cell church is like an extension cord. When plugged into the power source (mother church) it can be extended to a far distance.

Deacons have been described as men who are responsible for the hands-on ministry of the church. Some pastors require their deacons to plant a new church in order to maintain being a deacon. Deacons and local church leaders can be used in establishing neighbourhood evangelism centers.

## The Key To Growth: Multiplication

Addition is something that we learned when we were small children. The next step in mathematical learning is multiplication. In church life, few believers or churches go beyond addition to multiplication.

"But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24).

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly..." (Acts 6:7).

God has promised us a great outpouring in the last days and the small church buildings that we now have will not be able to hold the outpouring that God wants to send to us. It is not time for us to think in terms of adding to the church but rather in terms of multiplication.

James Rutz said that, "the heart of the traditional church is the Sunday service." We go to church on Sunday morning as a spectator and we leave and forget about church until the next Sunday morning. The traditional church does not provide appropriate care for its entire people; doesn't build people in their own ministry; and does not do a lot to provide fellowship. It has been often said, "home is where your heart is." This is a good reason why the gospel should be taken into the homes, where the hearts of the people are.

A home is a more personal or private place to meet than a church building. Like Cornelius in Acts 10 we can invite our friends and relatives and they can hear the words of salvation and church growth can take place.

"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:14-15).

"And on the morrow after they had entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends" (Acts 10:24).

Look at some other Scriptures that point to cell groups, house to house evangelism, and small groups as being a Biblical method of evangelism.

### Neighbourhood Evangelism Centers in Acts and the Epistles

- □ "Likewise greet the church that is in their HOUSE" (Romans 16:5).
- "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquilla and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their HOUSE" (1 Corinthians 16:19).
- □ "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his HOUSE" (Colossians 4:15).
- □ "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy HOUSE" (Philemon 1:2).
- "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy HOUSE" (Acts 16:31).
- "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the HOUSE of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12).
- "...There came many to him into his LODGING; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus...from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).
- "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired HOUSE, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Have you ever noticed that the Acts of the Apostles closes with Paul preaching the gospel in his own Neighbourhood Evangelism Center?

Cell groups are also called home fellowship groups or care fellowship groups. In a broader sense they could be considered as preaching points, church plants, or satellite works. They meet once a week, usually at a time when church is not scheduled. You can make up Bible

Studies of your own, or use Portable Bible School lessons, or small group lessons are available. Besides teaching the Word of God you would

The Principle of the Neighborhood Evangelism Center: "...As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

have fellowship, and a time of praises, worship, and prayer.

Study	Questions
1. What did Jesus promise in Matthew 18:20?	
·	

2. Who is the church?
3. What do some pastors require their deacons to do?
4. How long did the church exist before they started having church buildings?
5. What were houses used for in the New Testament church?
6. What was the Apostolic (Biblical) plan for evangelizing the world?
7. Where is the Apostolic (Biblical) plan of salvation located?
8. How does the largest percentage of people come into the church?
9. How does the lowest percentage of people come into the church?
10. People don't care how much you know until what happens?
11. What is the key to growth?
12. Give two Scriptures that speak about churches being in houses
13. Why are cell groups or neighbourhood evangelism centers considered to be a good effective ministry?
14. How many people does it take before Jesus promises that He will be in the midst of them?
15. How many people do you think you must have before you can start a church?

Empower
The Christian & Church Growth Tools – Part 2

(C)	20	<b>)</b> 1	0	James	G.	<b>Poitras</b>

16. Reinhard Bonnke claims that the apostolic ministry can be summed up in one word. What is it?
17. What needs to take place in order for God to do for us what He did for the Apostles?
Additional Notes

### Paul's Method of Church Planting

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house"

(Acts 20:20).

he Revell Bible Dictionary quotes a second-century writing that describes Paul as "a man of small stature, with bald head and crooked legs...with eyebrows meeting and a nose somewhat hooked." Many scholars feel that on top of that, his thorn in the flesh was very poor eyesight. Despite physical limitations he developed an effective strategy for church planting that can still be used today. He started more than fifty of the first churches in history and wrote more than one half of the New Testament. Paul the Apostle was a tremendous missionary who made three different missionary journeys in the Book of Acts.

His strategy of evangelism and church planting involved taking a partner or a small group of people and traveling to major cities to establish churches.

Paul was a man that understood the plan of God for his life. He understood the purpose that God had for him. When Paul was knocked down on the road to Damascus he asked two questions:

# Who are you, Lord? What do you want me to do?

Once he truly knew the Lord he was in the proper position to know the will of God for his life.

In Acts 26:16-19 he relates his conversion experience to Agrippa. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness...Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Paul understood God's vision for ministry in his life. He knew what God wanted him to do and that was why he was able to conclude in the end, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course..." (2 Timothy 4:7)

### I Have Kept the Faith

Once he had the vision he became a man of action. Wherever he went he preached or taught the Word of God. Evangelism and teaching the Word of God must go hand in hand in order to

produce a healthy church. Church planting will only be accomplished when we receive the vision, go forth, and become hard workers.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6).



One important factor in church growth is concerning the leadership. It has been found that churches grow most when the pastor invests time in developing the lay leadership of the church. He also must spend time in prayer and fasting. He must spend time in preparation. All of these involve hard work and discipline. Paul was not only a zealous man but also very hard working.

Because it was very important to preach the gospel to every creature he made it his priority to take the gospel to the cities.

We presently live in a world of cities. According to Mission Today 95, 80 percent of the world's population will live in cities by the year 2000. People reached in the cities can be responsible for taking the gospel back to their villages and towns.

Ed Roebert in Mastering Management in the Church relates Paul's strategy in each city where he established the church.

- 1. He always started in the synagogue where he did two things:
  - A. Preached the Gospel (Acts 19:8)
  - B. Performed miracles (Acts 19:11)
- 2. He then gathered a leadership group and gave them special attention (Acts 19:10).
- 3. He would leave behind a special person who would serve as the leader.
- 4. He would encourage them by visits and letters.
- 5. His plan included strategic cities. These cities were either capital cities or on major trade routes. It was from these key cities that the gospel would spread quickly.

When Paul started to open a church he would not start by looking for a building. He was not a building oriented person who waited for a church building before he could begin his outreach to the lost. From this we learn:

- 1. Start where you are.
- 2. Use what you have.
- 3. Give the best you have.
- 4. God will give you His help.

Because Paul was a man of vision, who had a desire and willingness to sacrifice and work hard for God in the places where God wanted him to be, souls were won and churches were brought into existence.

We need not expect this to all happen overnight. In many parts of the world we have what we call "mushroom churches." They spring up overnight and also fade away just as fast. Church Growth is usually slow and steady. This allows for the church to develop into a strong tree.

Richard Allmon in his article, "Church Planting Through Satellite Church Model" tells us that the mandate for world evangelism is sometimes hindered by not having enough money, no building, or even by language barriers. The establishment of preaching points assists us in overcoming these obstacles. It is still believed that planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic method available.

Allmon defines church planting as "a preaching point designed to grow a new church." We know that not every plant will actually grow but surely some will.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

The Apostle Paul was actively involved in church planting. He was sent out by the mother church at Antioch. He started many preaching points that grew into churches. Many of them started from synagogues, market places, schools, etc. They did not have buildings, trained pastors, or a lot of money.

Yet, the seeds planted, germinated, and grew into churches.

In the course of these lessons we will be looking more closely at some of the churches that Paul established.

	Study Questions
1.	What two questions were asked by Paul on the road to Damascus?
2.	Why is it important to preach in cities?
 3.	What was Paul's strategy of Church planting?

4. What is the most effective evangelism method available?
5. What can we learn from Paul's strategy?
·
6. What is a preaching point?
7. What is the formula for accomplishing the mission?
Additional Notes

### Five Ingredients of Revival Churches

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy"

(Acts 2:16-18).

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

## Revival Churches Are Churches with a VISION

"And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

elen Keller was both blind and deaf. She overcame these handicaps and raised money for the blind through the sale of her books and her lectures. She was once asked, "What is worse than being blind?" She quickly responded, "Having sight, but not being able to see."

As Peter, on the Day of Pentecost repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God's Spirit upon all flesh, he reiterated that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The wise man wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). One writer rearranged the words in the positive; "Where there is a vision, the people flourish."

Ed Roebert agrees, "Vision is the key to achievement. Without it, confusion reigns. With it, the future is filled with excitement. Many churches have no vision for their future. Many pastors have no vision for their lives. Having no purpose in life results in frustration, lack of motivation and a growing futility."

Casey Treat adds, "It is a purpose for life that is strong enough to motivate you everyday; strong enough to motivate you into action." (Church Management: Leading People in Church Growth)

Vision is derived from a word that means, "see." This is an excellent word to describe seeing or looking forward. Vision suggests a future direction. Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* wrote, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible."

As leaders, we need a mindset that looks forward. It is important for us to continually improve. According to the law of sowing and reaping, we reap today what was sown yesterday.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Our challenge is to develop leaders who are able to facilitate God-given revival. Revival and

"Do not follow where the path may lead . . . Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." (Anonymous) church growth can best be achieved following God's direction. We tend to look at the closest church having revival and copy what they are doing.

#### **Satan Tries to Blind Us**

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18). It is the devil's will to blind us.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

#### **Jesus Came to Open Our Eyes**

Jesus announced His purpose, vision, and direction in coming to the earth.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

Three times Jesus includes preaching in His purpose statement. He came to provide for the recovery of sight for the blind. This includes both physical and spiritual blindness.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

#### What Do You See?

Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2, "What seest thou?" What do you see? Do you see a great end-time revival?

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, <u>I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:</u> and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

You may feel that revival cannot happen in your town or country. The Scripture disagrees. "I will pour out of my Spirit upon ALL flesh." This includes where you are.

You may think, "But this place is full of sin and iniquity. God cannot move here." Again, Scripture disagrees. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

You may ask, "But isn't there going to be a great falling away?" First of all, make up your mind that you will never fall away. You have come too far to quit now. Jesus is coming soon!

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. <u>But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.</u> And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:11-14).

# Revival Churches Focus on JESUS CHRIST

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). For some reason, we find it easy to believe God for revival anywhere but here.

#### **Things That Never Change**

Anything Jesus has ever done, He can do today.
Anything Jesus is doing anywhere else; He can do it where you are
Anything Jesus has done for anyone, He can do for you.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1).

People need to see GOD! They need to put their confidence in the God who does not fail. Man can fail, but God never fails.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

## Revival Churches Are PRAYING CHURCHES

Prayer brings the power of God. It allows people to see God's POWER.

When the church puts emphasis on prayer, revival happens. Prayer is dealt with in other lessons, but let us look at a few of the scriptural promises concerning prayer.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

"And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13).

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalms 2:8).

No Prayer—No Power Little Prayer—Little Power Much Prayer—Much Power

When you arrive for church and a mighty prayer meeting is going on, you know that the service will be filled with the power of God. Much emphasis should be placed on prayer in each service.

### **Revival Churches Are WORSHIPPING CHURCHES**

Worship brings the presence of God. It allows people to feel God's PRESENCE.

When we praise and worship God, He comes to where we are. He is looking for those who worship Him from a pure heart, in spirit and in truth.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3).

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised" (Psalm 113:1-3).

### **Revival Churches PREACH TRUTH and LOVE HOLINESS**

## Holiness allows others to see— GOD IN US.

A church that seeks revival must preach the truth of God's Word. The reference point for revival and an outpouring of the Spirit is found in Acts 2. We must preach the Acts 2:38-39 message if we expect to receive the results evidenced in the Book of Acts.

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

God looks on the heart and sees deep inside a person's life. The only way that people can know that we are truly living for God is by our outward appearance. They judge us based on the fruit we bear.

"O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psalms 96:9). Holiness is beautiful.

The writer of Hebrews advises, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Through the life of holiness that we live, others can see the Lord in us.

Study Questions
1. What is the result of lack of vision?
2. What is meant by "vision"?
3. What is the law of sowing and reaping?
4. Who can best give direction for revival and church growth?
5. How many times was preaching mentioned in Jesus' purpose statement (Luke 4:18-19)?
6. What was promised concerning the end times in Acts 2:17?

7. What answer would you give to someone who says, "This place is so full of sin that God cannot move here"?
8. List three (3) things mentioned in this lesson that never change about Jesus.
9. In Isaiah 6:1 what happened when Uzziah died?
10. Prayer brings the of God.  11. What happens when churches put emphasis on prayer?
12. According to Psalms 2:8, how can we evangelize (receive) the uttermost parts of the earth?
13. Worship brings the of God.
14. Holiness allows others to see in us.  15. What/where is the biblical reference point for revival?
16. How do others judge whether we are living for God?