

The REFORMATION of CHURCH LEADERSHIP

*A Biblical Blueprint for the Five-Fold
Ministry in the Local Church*



BYRON
HAMILTON

Endorsement

The Reformation of Church Leadership is a timely and powerful clarion call and invaluable guidebook for making local churches operate according to biblical principles. All church leaders should prayerfully read this book and seriously consider implementing its recommendations.

—DR. DEAN R. SPITZER, award-winning author
of *Transforming Performance Measurement*,
management consultant, and Bible teacher.

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REFORMATION
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to two people. The first, Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory. A decade ago He placed the truth of the five-fold ministry in my heart. The Bible says that He is the Lord of these ministries (1 Cor. 12:5). Today, after methodically joining the dots of Scripture, sharing these truths and teaching whenever and wherever I had the opportunity, it has become a reality. He has kept this message as, “burning fire shut up in my bones” (Jer. 20:9). Now is His time for His bride to step into her destiny and mature into this present move of the Holy Spirit.

The second dedication goes to Robert Sparks, a dear brother in the Lord and friend for over three decades. Robert has a unique calling of God to change nations. He does this without a ministry bureaucracy, without a board of directors, without a committee, and without a title. Robert operates offstage, out of the limelight, and off the grid. He likes it this way. Tens of thousands are in the Kingdom, and hundreds of pastors have been raised up in numerous villages across the globe because of Robert’s gifts, calling, and obedience. He is not known to many, but he is known to God.

Forward

The purpose of *The Reformation of Church Leadership* to present a detailed study of the role and function of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, elder, and deacon as members of a ministering leadership team in the early church and lay out a roadmap for its adoption in today's church. Through investigating a forty-year history of the New Testament church, this book outlines the qualification, selection, and job description for each of these ministry positions and analyses how they function together. By examining this data, a blueprint is presented for understanding God's original intent for a successful, thriving church that will protect against the spiritual, mental, and physical burnout of senior leadership. The presentation seeks to draw a contrast between the leadership model of the New Testament church and the church of today.

Although primarily dealing with church leadership, an *Application* section is included in each chapter that enables all Christian readers to identify with the challenges in every church organization that fails to line up with the New Testament blueprint for church leadership.

An online Workbook is available that enables Bible study groups and leadership groups to work through the details of this church leadership model and chart a course for alignment into this biblical pattern.

All dating of biblical events is taken from *The Reese Chronological Bible* © 1977 by Edward Reese, published by Bethany Fellowship, Inc. 1980.

Preface

The church leadership style that incorporates the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and the teacher is reformational. The word *reformation* immediately brings to mind the great European Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther in the early 1500s. Luther, a Roman Catholic German monk and theologian, challenged several established religious dogmas of medieval Europe. Among these were the teaching and practices of *indulgences* (the monetary purchase of complete justification), *sacerdotalism* (propitiation of sin requiring the intervention of a priest), and *purgatorium* (soul purification in a temporary state after death). He vigorously contested that church doctrines and creeds be held to the light of Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*) and that all authorities and church tradition be subordinated to the written Word of God. Luther stated, “A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it.” Also, “The true rule is this: God’s Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so.”ⁱ His refusal to retract all his writings and verbal affirmations at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 resulted in Luther and his followers’ excommunication from the church and Luther’s condemnation as an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in the *Edict of Worms* in 1521.ⁱⁱ Thus, the edifice of the Protestant Reformation broke ground with *Sola Scriptura* as its cornerstone.

Reformation is the “act of reforming” or the “state of being reformed.” It implies bringing about a continual improvement or correction. The Protestant Reformation that Luther sparked when nailing his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in 1517ⁱⁱⁱ is still in the state of reform today. Church practice and doctrine continue to be refined in the light of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church of the late Middle Ages had become so corrupt in its dogmas, traditions, and clerical structure that it would take more than one paradigm act of *protesting* to thoroughly reform the church. Luther retained many of the liturgical practices and sacramental teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that the later Reformed Churches denounced and further modified toward a biblical pattern.

The word *reform* means to *form again*. In the sense that we use it in the context of this book, it carries the connotation *to restore*, that is, to bring back to a former, original condition. And like Luther, the clarion cry remains: “Sola Scriptura!” The Scriptures alone contain all knowledge necessary for salvation, life, and godliness.¹ This includes church structure, organization, and leadership, which this book will address based on the revelation and instruction of Scripture. Over 600 Scriptures have been used throughout this book to underpin the authority of its proposition that the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and the teacher form the leadership team of the New Covenant church.

Luther, in one short lifetime, could not reform every clerical error. His focus was the reformation of doctrine, specifically, justification, i.e., by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone: “Sola gratia, Sola fide, Solus Christus.” However, many dysfunctional, even erroneous church traditions, structure, and leadership styles were passed on into the Protestant Reformation. These ecclesiastical faux pillars have been challenged to varying degrees, bolstered up, and redesigned as the church moved through many succeeding reforms: the Reformed Movement led by John Calvin; the English Reformation of Henry VIII; the Holiness Movement of John and Charles Wesley; the Puritan Reformers of North America; the Great Awakenings of the 1700s and the 1800s; the Restoration Movement; the Welsh and Pentecostal Revivals of the early 20th century; the Charismatic Movement of the mid-1900s; the Faith Movement of the later 1900s; and to the more finely-tuned Reformation of Grace and Faith in the early 21st century.

And so, the reformation continues to this day: *Sola gratia, Sola fide, Solus Christus*, and *Sola Scriptura*, nailed back to the door of the New Covenant church, founded on Paul’s direct revelation from Jesus Christ with Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone.^{2,3}

1 **2 Peter 1:3** – ... as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

2 **Galatians 1:11-12** – But I make known to you, brethren that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

3 **Ephesians 2:20** – having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

Each of these movements and denominations manifested as a counter-reform to the prior reformation, each time moving the universal body of Christ into closer alignment with New Testament theology. And as the word *reform* implies, a move back to the original dogma and practice of the New Covenant church. In truth, God has been the originator of these church reforms as He matured His bride over the centuries through the word of truth with the ultimate goal of presenting her to Himself without the blemishes of error and false doctrine.⁴

We do not look for revival, but reformation. Merriam-Webster defines *revival* as, “a period of renewed religious interest, an often highly emotional evangelistic meeting or series of meetings.”⁵ Although revivals or great spiritual awakenings have impacted church history, ushering many thousands into the Kingdom and reversing the sway of a morally declining society, they typically have had little effect on reforming the church. Revival stories make for great tributes by denominations who long for a return to the golden years of their movements, and the accounts serve to motivate the current, more apathetic generation. But they don’t advance reformation.

The Holy Spirit is once again seeking reformation in the body of Christ, the church; a reform that will create a seismic shift in the foundation of the church enabling her to sit more fully and squarely on her foundation; a reformation that brings a lasting maturity to church leadership which in turn will mature the bride of Christ.

This book sends out an urgent call for an about-face positioning of ecclesiastical management in both the structure and authority of church leadership. It examines *The Acts of the Apostles* and the apostolic epistles to determine the prescribed pattern and the governance that emerged in the 1st Century church, specifically, the function for the five-fold ministry as it relates to the local church. And like every other reform of the past 2,000 years, it will have its nay-sayers and its adherents. But praise God, we have moved beyond burning reformers at the stake!

4 **Ephesians 5:25-27** – ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemis

5 **Revival** – <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/revival>.

Acknowledgments

Wow, where to start? God knows them all. Notable of all is my wife, Leesa, who never stopped encouraging me to get the fire in my bones out into printed form. She has stood with me as I have shared this leadership vision with many pastors around the world. All have agreed with the truth, but none were willing to implement it. She is my number one fan; her cheerleading has kept me on track. This book is a result of her hours of reading, editing, and dogged inspiration.

Many pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists, laypeople, and professionals have read through the manuscript and given constructive feedback that has helped shape this final publication. Among them is Mike Hubbard, my brother-in-law, and brother-in-Lord who has continued to encourage me with prophetic words. Also, Dean Spitzer, Don Hutchison, Jim Homes, Mark Harrison, Margaret Darch, and Jill Tomlinson who made up my inspirational team of early editors. Thank you, team!

Introduction

God has always worked in patterns, plans, and prototypes. Because He declares the end from the beginning,⁶ He never finds Himself wishing He had designed things differently because He discovers, at some later time, a better way of doing things. You will never hear God saying, “God, I wish I knew *that* was going to happen! I would have planned things differently.” God always creates and designs the first of its kind. He is the prince archetype of all things. “In the beginning, God...” We can only model after God’s prototype. We cannot cast His model aside and come up with a new, improved model because *we* discovered something that He didn’t know at the time. We are not living in a smarter, more sophisticated world than what God could have possibly imagined. Thinking that is sheer arrogance! When mankind (Christian or non-Christian) thinks he has just one-upped God, He merely replies:

I have chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and I have chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised I have chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in My presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

The great patriarch Noah discovered that God knew quite a bit about shipbuilding. All Noah had to do was follow His detailed pattern. Noah did not think for one minute that God’s design should be modified to fit the accepted configuration of the day. Noah even had to use a tape measure to fulfill God’s plan precisely!

And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits (450 ft/140 m), its width fifty cubits (75 ft/23 m), and its height thirty cubits (45 ft/13.5 m). You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks (Genesis 6:15-16).

6 **Isaiah 46:9-10** – ⁹ “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.’”

Likewise, Moses was given comprehensive instructions for the building of the tabernacle. It was critical that Moses got the specifications correct because the earthly tabernacle was being patterned after the tabernacle that God Himself had constructed in another dimension. That's right; God created the first tabernacle then gave the measurements to man to follow so we would have a replica on the earth! It was to this heavenly tabernacle that the Lord Jesus ascended as the great High Priest to offer His unblemished blood as atonement for man's sin.

Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man (Hebrews 8:1-2).

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12).

God instructed Moses to ascend Mount Sinai and receive instructions for this tabernacle in which He would dwell among His people. It was to be a pattern. The Hebrew word for “pattern” comes from a root word to mean: *likeness, resemblance, or similitude*.⁷ Although “pattern” in our current vernacular has more to do with being a *standard* for imitation, the word at the time of the English Renaissance, when the King James Bible was in the process of being translated, had a more precise meaning: *to imitate, to attempt to match or duplicate*.⁸ Thus, Moses patterned an earthly tabernacle precisely after the details of a heavenly tabernacle. God instructed Moses:

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. And see to it that you make them

7 **Tabnit** – Structure; by implication a model, resemblance: – figure, form, likeness, pattern, similitude. (*Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary, #8403*).

8 **Pattern** – Douglas Harper, Historian. n.d. *Online Etymology Dictionary*.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pattern>.

according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain (Exodus 25:8-9, 40).

The tabernacle itself and all its furnishings were but replicas of a design, model, and an archetype that God had already created. The priestly office, tabernacle gifts, and sacrifices were copies and shadows of the authentic sacrifice that would be offered in the heavenly tabernacle.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore, it is necessary that this One (the Christ) also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." ... Therefore, it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 8:3-5; 9:23-24).

King David went through a traumatic experience to learn that God has an order when it comes to how the things of the Kingdom are supposed to operate. The Philistines had seized the Ark of the Covenant in a battle against the Israelites. The Ark contained the stone testimonies signifying that Israel was God's covenant people, along with a bowl of manna and Aaron's rod that had budded, indicating that he was the divine choice for the initial high priest. But more than this, it represented the dwelling place of God amongst His people. The Ark was supposed to be housed permanently in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, but God's people had once again lost their spiritual moorings and had foolishly taken the Ark of His Presence into battle against the Philistines, hoping to guarantee a victory. In the ensuing struggle, not only was the Ark captured by the Philistines, but Israel lost roughly 30,000 men in battle along with the two sons of the prophet Eli: Hophni, and Phinehas. The news of all this triggered Eli's death.⁹

The Ark remained with the Philistines for seven months causing all manner of curses on their people. So they decided to send it back to Israel after consulting with the heathen priests and diviners. God had specific instructions on how to transport the Ark, but these non-covenant people had no idea what that was. Their priests and diviners came up with the novel idea of making a new cart pulled by two cows and setting them down the road that led to Israel. When the cow-cart procession arrived in Israel, the men of that area, God's covenant people, took it upon themselves to remove the mercy-seat lid and look in the Ark. God destroyed 50,070 Israelite men that day for violating the instructions that He had laid down and for treating the holy as secular!¹⁰ The Ark remained at Kirjath Jearim, nine miles from Jerusalem, untouched for twenty long years through the days of Samson, Samuel, King Saul, and King David.

Now that David is residing in Jerusalem as king, he desires to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the capital city. He enquires, not of the Lord, but of his leaders. They planned to copy what they had seen done by the non-covenant people and put the Ark on a new cart to transport it into Jerusalem with two men driving the wagon. It had worked for the unbelievers. David arranged for *all* of Israel to play music and celebrate as the cart came into Jerusalem. At first glance, we wouldn't have a problem with this scene. It appears innocent enough and motivated by good intentions. However, we know better because we've read the end of the story. God was fuming. He laid out very explicit instructions of how His covenant people were to convey the Ark of the Covenant. There were reasons and purposes for all the blueprints that God laid out. Ignoring these heavenly designs and coming up with some other creative, secular idea would cause havoc with God's people and ultimately affect their readiness to receive the promised Messiah. All the types, shadows, and instructions of the Old Testament pointed to the reality of the Christ who was to come.¹¹ One of the drivers, Uzza, leaned back to steady the Ark and was smitten dead by God. David was beside himself with anger. He assessed his good intentions in light of God's actions. And God

10 **1 Samuel 6**

11 **Colossians 2:16-17** – ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

came up guilty in his assessment. David would not bring the Ark into Jerusalem. It was laid aside once again and left with Obed-Edom, not far from Jerusalem.

David should have known better than this. Each king of Israel was required to rewrite a copy of the Law for himself, so he could read it all the days of his reign and observe to do it.¹² He had read the details of the Levites' involvement in the transportation of the Ark and their role in the required praise and worship. He had also read that the Ark of the Covenant resided in the Holy of Holies, not in a shelter created by man's convenience. But David had a lapse in judgment, borrowed the world's model and hoped everything would be okay. It took David three months to get over his outburst, repent, and search out the protocol that God had previously revealed. David tried again. This time the Levites carried the Ark, and they did it as was prescribed, with the use of poles on their shoulders.¹³ The Bible even records that God somehow assisted the Levites.¹⁴ This time the Levites formed the praise and worship team, as was prescribed, not the general public.¹⁵ This time David added many animal sacrifices along the way, just in case he had missed something! This time David constructed a tabernacle in Jerusalem for the Ark.¹⁶ This time David was successful, and there was rejoicing and a grand

12 **Deuteronomy 17:18-19** – ¹⁸ Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes.

13 **1 Chronicles 15:2, 15** – ² Then David said, “No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.” ¹⁵ And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

14 **1 Chronicles 15:26** – And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.

15 **1 Chronicles 15:16** – Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy.

16 **1 Chronicles 15:1** – David built houses for himself in the City of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent (*tabernacle*) for it. (*Parentheses mine*).

celebration in Jerusalem.¹⁷ David learned that God was serious about the order of things and the blueprint that He clearly detailed to His people. David gave this conclusion to the Levites, “For because you did not do it (right) the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us because we did not consult Him about the proper order” (1 Chronicles 15:13, parenthesis mine).

David went on to plan the construction of the permanent temple that Solomon would build. Its multiple chambers, vestibule, treasuries, and other magnificent features were not part of the original tabernacle design; however, David was given these plans and designs “by the Spirit” and “from the hand of the Lord.”¹⁸ Noah, Moses, and David all had to learn the same thing about God: He has set the pattern, and He does things decently and in order.¹⁹

Why am I belaboring the issue of patterning after God’s original intent? That concept is the key point of this book; to pattern ourselves after God’s archetype (the original model) regarding church leadership. God has not left us in the dark. He has not left us to come up with some nifty way of bringing guidance to His New Covenant church. He does not expect us to default to a worldly business model of the corporate West or a military leadership model. However, by-and-large, denominational Christianity has precisely done this. We have copied and borrowed church leadership models that have been passed down for almost 1,800 years through various church reforms and revivals. We have moved so far away from the prototype, pattern, and template, given to us in the New Testament, that what we see today is but a shadow of what God has planned for the church. We read the New Testament epistles and the history of the early church in *Acts* and wonder how we got where we are today.

17 **1 Chronicles 16:2-3** – ² And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. ³ Then he distributed to everyone in Israel, both man and woman, a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins.

18 **1 Chronicles 28:12, 19** – ¹² and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; ... ¹⁹ “All this,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”

19 **1 Corinthians 14:40** – Let all things be done decently and in order.

Where are the apostles, prophets, and evangelists operating in the local church? If they exist today, should we recognize them? How can we have a church that reflects the functionality and operation of the five-fold ministry as outlined in Paul's instructions to a local church almost two millennium ago?²⁰ What happens to the pastor when this pattern is activated? How do we discover the blueprint that God intended for the New Covenant church? These are some of the great questions that we explore in this book. But first, let us start by examining how we got to where we are today.

20 **Ephesians 4:11-12** – ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

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CHAPTER 1:

Church Splits and Denominations

A pastor once explained to me that God likes variety and that is why we have so many different denominations! “It’s like a flower garden,” he explained, “There’s enough variety to cater for everyone’s taste.” Well, however plausible, that’s certainly not biblical.

Do you know there are over 47,000 different denominations in the world today, as reported by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity?^{iv} At the turn of the 20th century, there were only 1,600! That’s quite the flower garden! Maybe it’s more like a weed patch: little unity of faith and doctrine, and little unity of spirit.

Church Splits

You may be surprised to know that denominations are mentioned in the Bible. In fact, an entire four chapters of the New Testament are devoted to the analysis of sects and sectarianism. Denominations started in the early church less than thirty years after the Day of Pentecost!

Luke, the historian, records in the early part of the fifth decade that the apostle Paul visited the Greek city of Corinth on his second missionary journey throughout Asia Minor (Acts 18:1-17). It was there that he met Aquila and Priscilla, refugees who had fled the persecution in Rome. This little team, along with Silas and Timothy, preached the Gospel in the Corinthian synagogue which was comprised of Jews and devout Greeks. And so, with new converts in tow, the first home church in Corinth was established in A.D. 52. After the typical opposition and mistreatment from jealous, religious Jews, Paul and team were ready to move on. The Lord, however, spoke to Paul in a dream and encouraged him, assuring him that he would not be attacked or hurt in Corinth. Paul

remained in Corinth for eighteen months teaching the Word of God to the fledgling church. From there, Paul and his companions traveled east across the Aegean Sea to Ephesus where he left Aquila and Priscilla and journeyed on to Jerusalem. This husband and wife team started the historic church of Ephesus (Acts 18:18-23). It was here that Aquila and Priscilla met Apollos, disciplined him, then sent him back to Corinth with an accompanying letter of introduction to the young disciples there (Acts 18:24-28). Apollos was a great teacher of the Word²¹ and further built the Corinthian church.

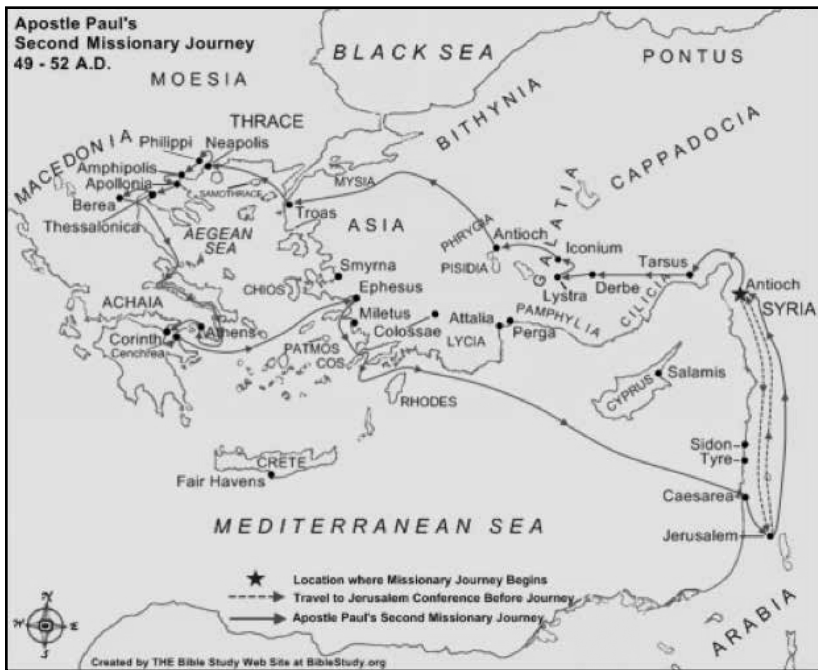


Figure 1 – Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (Courtesy of BibleStudy.org)

Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (A.D. 54) to assist Aquila and Priscilla²² and remained there for two years teaching

21 Acts 18:24 – Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

22 1 Corinthians 16:19 – The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

the believers daily in the school of Tyrannus.²³ This is the first record of a local church Bible school! It was during this ministry time in Ephesus that Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian church and addressed the issue of denominations. The young believers had initially received the Gospel from Paul but had been further influenced by Apollos and even by Peter. We're not sure if Peter (or Cephas as the Lord called him)²⁴ had traveled and ministered in Corinth after Paul had launched the church there or whether there were disciples in Corinth who had been influenced by Peter on the Day of Pentecost several decades earlier. What we do know is that there was a group of believers in Corinth who held to Peter's teachings and saw themselves as Peter's disciples. However, this was also true of Paul and Apollos; they both had groups of believers who classified themselves as disciples of these men and held to their particular teachings, over the instructions of other ministers. Still, others found their affinity with Christ and not the preachers who had declared Christ to them.

During Paul's first year in Ephesus, he had written a letter back to the Corinthian church bringing instruction and correction.²⁵ (We don't have a copy of that letter.) The Corinthian elders responded in writing to Paul's message and sent Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus²⁶ over to Ephesus to meet with Paul and probably bring back Paul's response to the Corinthian church in a letter we know today as *1 Corinthians*. Not only did Paul have the written concerns and issues from the Corinthians, but he also had the verbal report of the church's condition from these three men and from Apollos who had left Corinth and traveled over to Ephesus to spend some time with Paul. This visit was probably the first time these two met.

23 **Acts 19:9-10** – ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for two years so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

24 **John 1:42** – And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

25 **1 Corinthians 5:9** – I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

26 **1 Corinthians 16:17** – I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.

So, here's what Paul had to say to the Corinthians about denominations:

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:11-13).

The believers in Corinth had divided themselves according to influential leaders. It's how they identified themselves. Paul's pleading with the believers was that, "you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). This is still the pleading of God's Spirit today! Paul went on to explain what brought about these divisions of denominations:

...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? (1 Cor. 3:3-4).

The word "carnal" that Paul called the Corinthian believers means: *of the natural realm*.²⁷ This is why Paul told them they, "walked as men" (KJV); or as the NKJV translates above, they were, "behaving like mere men." Because of these divisions and allegiance to specific leaders, they were acting like they were unregenerate, acting like the world, acting like they weren't even born again.

What causes believers to act that way? Envy and strife. And what comes along with envy and strife? Every evil thing.

James says that when judgments and choices are made out of envy and strife that the decisions are, "earthly, sensual, *and* devilish."²⁸ Strife always produces division. It's a natural by-product. And what is strife? The NKJV translates the Greek word as "self-seeking;" the NIV translates it

27 **Sarkikos** – *Pertaining to flesh*, i.e. (by extension) *bodily, temporal*, or (by implication) *animal, unregenerate*: – carnal, fleshly. (*Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary, #4559*).

28 **James 3:14-15** – ¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish (*KJV*).

as “selfish ambition.” You get the picture – self-centeredness! That’s what caused the divisions within the church in Corinth and the beginnings of denominationalism. James further says that when you have envy and strife working together then, “confusion and every evil thing are there.”²⁹ So the birth of church splits comes out of envy and selfish ambition, and they produce confusion and every evil thing. Far from a pretty flower garden!

Now we know what causes a church split, but what is a denomination?

Denominations

A denomination is a group of believers who congregate around particular teachings, a belief system and practices. Usually, it is centered on a specific historical church leader who had those teachings, belief systems, and practices. It’s what helps to distinguish that group from other groups who are also congregating around particular teachings, a belief system and practices of their leader! Sometimes the denominational identity even involves race or ethnicity. It only helps to divide the body of Christ further.

If Paul were writing to the church today he would say something like this: “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Some of you say, ‘I am of Luther,’ or ‘I am of Calvin,’ or ‘I am of Wesley,’ or ‘I am of ...’ (you put it in). Is Christ divided? Was Calvin crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Wesley? Are you not carnal, acting like mere men?”

Each denomination has its distinctives³⁰ and reason for being. It’s what defines the movement or organization. It’s what makes the adherents feel special; makes them feel like they belong. It’s what gives them their identity. So whether it’s a *four-square* Gospel, the type of water baptism, the type of evidence for Holy Spirit’s baptism, the type of holiness, the type of church government, the type of historic confessional or the type

29 **James 3:16** – For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

30 **Theological distinctives** – the fixed principles, statements of faith, creeds, and doctrines that define the denomination or other clerical group and identify its historical roots and traditions.

of garb, each group will have its own distinctive and be very proud of what division (distinctive) they bring to the body of Christ.

Most denominations began their genesis out of a reaction to the previous denomination of its day. Although Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) started the Protestant Reformation in Europe, the Reformation didn't stop there. Zwingli (1484 – 1531) rejected Luther's Roman Catholic position on transubstantiation,³¹ among other things. Thus the Reform Churches were birthed through Zwingli. The Anabaptists (Re-Baptized) started in the mid-1500s as a reaction to the Lutherans who still held to the Roman Catholic doctrine of infant baptism and thus birthed the Amish, Mennonites and the Hutterites. John Calvin (1509 – 1564) reacted to the Reformers position on grace and free-will and emphasized predestination and the sovereignty of God as the determiner for salvation and damnation. Calvinism gave birth to the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. The English Reformation in the 1530s (or break from the Roman Catholic Church) was not over doctrinal reformation, instead, the desire for King Henry VIII to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, which required papal sanction. The ensuing dispute forced separation from Rome, and King Henry became head of the English Catholic Church and every British monarchy from that time, the head of the worldwide Anglican Church. Out of this global division came the English Dissenters influenced by the Anabaptists who gave birth to the General Baptist movement in America out of which came the Particular Baptists, Independent Baptists, Free-Will Baptists, Missionary Baptists, and so on, making over 220 different Baptist conventions and unions worldwide today. John Wesley (1703 – 1791), along with his brother Charles, reacted to Calvin's emphasis on predestination and re-emphasized Jacobus Arminius' doctrines of personal conversion and personal holiness within the Anglican Church. After his death, Wesley's disciples formed the Methodist movement based on the rules and "methods" of the Wesley brothers that focused on charity and support for the sick, the poor, and the afflicted. Future groups broke from what they considered the social gospel of the Methodists and re-established Wesley's distinctive on personal and outward holiness, thus spawning all the Wesleyan-holiness

31 **Transubstantiation** – the belief that the sacraments of the wafer and the wine of Holy Communion (or the Eucharist) literally becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ once ingested. This doctrine is taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

denominations. A holiness denomination (specifically a Nazarene prayer group) seeking a greater reality and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, gave birth to the Pentecostal movement in the early 1900s with the emphasis on the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today, over 700 different Pentecostal denominations exist with their unique distinctives. In the 1960s, the Charismatic movement established its own separate identity within mainline denominations breaking with the strict interpretation of speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit's initial physical evidence, held by the traditional Pentecostal denominations. Today, Charismatic groups are identified within the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist denominations which traditionally have taught the doctrine of cessationism.³² And so the story continues until we have the 47,000 denominations of our day. If the body of Christ does not change, it is projected that there will be approximately 70,000 denominations by the year 2050.^v

To be fair, most lay people that I have met care little about the distinctives of the denomination to which they adhere; they care little about the name branded over the church. They are sheep in search of good pasture. It's the leadership of denominations who carry the most significant concern for their distinctives. Often, it's the distinctives that give the leaders their identity. One of the churches I attended growing up in the '80s had the phrase, "A non-charismatic fellowship" emblazoned on the church sign under the church's name. The leadership wanted all to know that we didn't believe in all that spiritual gifts nonsense!

And to be equally fair, most of the founding fathers of these denominations haven't wanted to start new groups. Most of them were dismissed from the sect they were trying to reform. The new denomination has typically come from their disciples who, as babes in Christ, suffered from an identity crisis and needed to establish one desperately. This is true of Martin Luther's disciples, John Calvin's disciples, Wesley's disciples, right down to the present day movements. All have needed to enshrine their peculiar distinguishing doctrine and build a denomination to preserve it. Once this happens, the creeds, practices, and denominational distinctives reflect the reason for the denomination's existence which is locked into history. Many denominational adherents don't even know why they

32 **Cessationism** – the doctrine that all spiritual gifts including speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing ceased to operate in the church after the end of the apostolic age.

have such distinctive, beliefs, and practices, and church leaders have long forgotten the historical battle that made them a denomination in the first place.

Nevertheless, the wineskin structure has been created, and many will defend it to the death. Those who most ardently defend their denomination are usually the ones who either have been born into that particular church group or have been saved in it. They have not come to the opinion of the supremacy of their religious group by objectively studying comparative theology within the Word of God.

And so, Paul found himself at the beginning of denominationalism with the disciples in Corinth. They had begun to form themselves around particular teachings and allegiances to specific church leaders. Paul had not encouraged this, quite the opposite. Before sending his letter, he sent Timothy back to Corinth to sort out the silly nonsense that was occurring.³³ I don't believe that Apollos had encouraged sectarianism either. Paul complimented Apollos in his letter to the Corinthians because he had watered what Paul had planted.³⁴ (And Paul indeed didn't have a problem reprimanding church leaders publicly for errors in doctrine and practice if he needed to, as he had done with Peter.³⁵) Apollos, in fact, didn't want to go back to Corinth, even at the request of his followers and Paul's urging.³⁶ What was Paul's answer to this sectarianism? Love and identity in *Christ*.

33 **1 Corinthians 4:17** – For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

34 **1 Corinthians 3:5-7** – ⁵Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

35 **Galatians 2:11-13** – ¹¹Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹²for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

36 **1 Corinthians 16:12** – Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time.

Solution to Sectarianism

Sectarianism is why we have the “Love Chapter” in the letter to the Corinthians. Love is the pinnacle of Christian maturity. It’s this quality of the Holy Spirit’s fruit in the believer that enables him to walk in humility and not seek his own agenda or selfish ambition and guard his heart against the root of bitterness. It is impossible for a church split to occur when God’s people decide to operate in love: that’s *agapé* love, the God-kind of love. That’s the love that’s been shed abroad in the heart of every believer.³⁷ If God’s kind of love in the believer is patient and kind, does not envy, is not proud or self-centered, doesn’t behave rudely, and refuses to think evil of others,³⁸ then a church split is impossible.

Paul saw the same issues beginning to take place at the church in Philippi. There was a rift opening between two of Paul’s co-workers, Euodia and Syntyche, women leaders in the church. He addresses them personally in his letter and urges them, “to agree with each other in the Lord.”³⁹ Paul’s letter to the Philippian church is all about unity and how to obtain it through humility. He was trying to head off a church split. He pleads with them:

If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand (Philippians 2:1-4, The Message Bible).

37 **Romans 5:5** – Now hope does not disappoint, because the love (*agapé*) of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

38 **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** – ⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

39 **Philippians 4:2-3** – ² I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Paul then appeals to Christ as the example of humility, who made Himself of no reputation and begs them to have the same mind as He.⁴⁰ Later in the letter, after reprimanding Euodia and Syntyche, Paul continues to instruct the congregation to move into unity by capturing their thoughts onto things that are right, noble, just, pure, lovely, of a good report and to follow his example.⁴¹

The Corinthians received this same desperate plea from Paul who stated, (and I paraphrase), “Don’t get your identity out of a man, recognize that those who minister to you, those from whom you get spiritually fed, are merely God’s instruments. It’s God who ministers to you. God sends these into your life at a particular time to develop you. They are nothing compared to God who is the only One giving the increase to you, not man. You are a unique building that God is constructing. He is supervising the effort by bringing different tradespeople into your life to move the task along. Don’t get fixated on the tradesperson of the hour. He is just doing his job. It is God who is in charge. This truism is right for each believer personally, as well as for the corporate body.” The Message Bible renders it this way:

Who do you think Paul is, anyway? Or Apollos, for that matter? Servants, both of us—servants who waited on you as you gradually learned to entrust your lives to our mutual Master. We each carried out our servant assignment. I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow. It’s not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow. Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages. What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God’s field in which we are working. Or, to put it another way, you are God’s house. Using the gift God gave me as

40 **Philippians 2:5-8** – ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

41 **Philippians 4:8-9** – ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

a good architect, I designed blueprints; Apollos is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation! Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ. Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually, there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing. If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won't be torn out; you'll survive—but just barely (1 Corinthians 3:5-15).

And so, Paul carries this theme of unity and oneness throughout his writings to combat the innate desire of immature believers to form their identities around a man or woman who is ministering God's grace to them. Even to the church at Ephesus, where Paul spent three years in total, laying the spiritual foundation through discipleship and teaching, he had this to say:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Paul had no tolerance for dissension. If there is one God and Father who has called us by one hope into one faith through one Spirit creating one body, how can there be dissension, factions, splits, and denominations? There can only be one mind of the Father! Paul then, by the Spirit of God, offers the solution. Following on, he lays out the five-fold leadership ministry that is given and will continue to be given to the church to bring about “unity of faith” and bring the church to, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We will arrive at a day when the church is no longer immature having various differing doctrines but has grown up in love. This is the promise of God's Word,⁴² believe it or not. However, we have to believe it to see it!

42 **Ephesians 4:11-16** – ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity

Non-Denominations

And we are beginning to see it. Never in church history has there been a time when the vast number of God's people have matured beyond denominationalism in their thinking. God is raising up apostles outside of denominations to address the body of Christ worldwide. A large number of believers are fed by spiritual teachers beyond the four walls of their churches. Churches are minimizing their allegiance to denominations and forging new relationships with fellowships and associations. We are on the way, but we are not there yet!

This transition began happening in the 1980s and early 1990s when media cable and satellite began broadcasting Christian programming, and when ministry organizations created television networks. For the first time in history, the average church-goer could listen to teaching beyond what was served within their limited grid every Sunday. God's people began to recognize the body of Christ beyond their denomination. They could now see and hear for themselves what other Christians believed and not what they were told they believed. Those hungry for more profound truths from God's Word could feed off other teachers in the privacy of their homes and still attended churches where they may not have been fed. This shift led to Christians attending conferences and seminars outside what was offered by their denominations. Thus, they got onto mailing lists and received exposure to teachings from within the worldwide body of Christ.

This shift caused mainstream churches to begin cloaking their denominational affiliations. A growing number of church attendees didn't care for it any longer; in fact, it became fashionable to be non-denominational. In 2007, the Assemblies of God (AOG) denomination in Australia changed its name to the Australian Christian Churches (ACC) publicly, while still holding its legal entity as the Assemblies of

of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

God. Many local ACC churches dropped their AOG identification and took on innocuous names like Hillsong, Planetshakers, Inspire Church, METRO Church, Edge Church, and so on; a sign of the times that the body of Christ is still undergoing reformation and moving, once again, closer to the blueprint of the New Covenant church. With inoffensive names like Hillsong, praise and worship recordings have gone out worldwide and have been embraced wholly by mainline churches, many of which stand in opposition to the doctrine of the Assemblies of God. God does have a sense of humor!

It is difficult to ascertain how many non-denominational groups there are in the world today. While most would be classified as evangelical,⁴³ individual pastors have no corporate body to which they report. A 2016 Gallup survey indicated that ten percent of U.S. adults identify themselves as non-specific Christians without any allegiance to a particular denomination. Up from six percent ten years earlier.^{vi}

Americans have become less likely to identify with an official or formal religion in recent decades, and nowhere is this more evident than in the dwindling percentage who identify with a specific Protestant denomination (*Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and so forth*). In 2000, 50% of Americans identified with a specific denomination; by 2016 that figure had dropped to 30%.^{vii} (This data is based on selected Gallup surveys in which Protestants are asked detailed questions about their specific denominational affiliation.)

Gallup bottom-lines it by concluding:

One of the clearest trends in American religion in the past decade has been the shift away from formal or official religious identity. About one in five Americans now say they have no specific religious identity at all, and fewer Americans today than in 2000 identify with a specific Protestant denomination. This latter trend reflects the increase in non-denominational Protestant churches in America today, and may also reflect a tendency for church leaders to downplay their denominational affiliation in their own local branding.^{viii}

43 **Evangelicalism** – a trans-denominational belief in personal salvation by grace through faith in Christ’s atonement and the belief in the authority of the Bible as God’s Word.

Continued Reformation

Denominationalism, by its very definition, is exclusive rather than inclusive, focused on its distinctives, and more concerned about enlarging its group than expanding the Kingdom of God. These are hard statements, but true. Nevertheless, God works with what He has to work with, as limited as it is. That's true of every group and every individual. We can experience the love, mercy, and grace of God even when we are in sin and rebellion because love, mercy, and grace is the nature of God. However, we limit ourselves from the fullness of what He has for us. The children of Israel experienced this truth in the wilderness for forty years. Even with self-centeredness, envy, and strife, the Gospel can still go out, and people can still get saved. This is the grace of God. Paul had the same attitude toward those who preached the Gospel out of selfish ambition. It wasn't the best, but the Gospel was still going out, and Christ was being preached!⁴⁴

People often mistake the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's gifts, healing, the number of salvations, and encounters with the Holy Spirit as evidence that the minister and group is walking in the fullness of God. They are completely blown away when it's revealed that the evangelist, healer, or pastor may have been in a homosexual relationship or sleeping with the wrong woman during a period of apparent spiritual fruit in their ministry. They don't understand why God would endorse the minister with all that self-centeredness, sin, and hypocrisy going on. The answer is simple. God confirms *His Word* with signs and wonders; He doesn't validate *the person* through signs and wonders.⁴⁵ God works with what He's got to work with: the good, the bad and the indifferent. However,

44 **Philippians 1:15-18** – ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

45 **Mark 16:20** – And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

we do limit the fullness of what God wants to accomplish by our lack of obedience, unbelief, and by our self-centeredness.⁴⁶

There is nothing wrong with reformation within a denomination. It's what brings the church into closer alignment with the will of God and the blueprint laid out in the New Testament. It's what enables the church to mature into the bride of Christ. However, when a movement, association, fellowship, or denomination (it doesn't matter what it calls itself), locks in its distinctives and enshrines what makes it different from the remainder of the body of Christ, it becomes rigid and loses the flexibility to adapt to the next reformation that the Holy Spirit brings to the church. We have seen this time and time again for twenty centuries! In more recent history, the Pentecostal denominations, formed in the early 1900s, would have been able to embrace the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s had it not been for the Pentecostals' strict position on speaking in tongues, which was its distinctive. Similarly, the Word of Faith Movement of the 1970s will need to embrace the current Reformation of Grace that is sweeping the world, if it is to remain viable and not be relegated to a paragraph in dusty church-history books. History has shown that when the Holy Spirit is ready to pour out the new wine of reformation, He will always start with the wineskin of the previous reform. However, if He finds that wineskin too rigid, He has no choice but to bypass the old and create a new wineskin.

Denominationalism is more of an attitude or spirit. A *movement* or an *association* can function as a denomination by its position and presentation even though it may not be one legally. The opposite of a denomination is the Kingdom of God. Where a religious group is exclusive, focuses on its distinctives, and seeks to disciple its people into loyal adherents of its group, the Kingdom of God is inclusive of the body of Christ, pursues balance from the entire counsel of God's Word, and makes disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

46 **Psalm 78:40-41** ⁴⁰ How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! ⁴¹ Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Summary

We have just learned what the blueprint of a bonafide New Covenant church doesn't look like. We have seen the insidious nature of church splits, what causes them, and the fact that they have been with us from the beginning because of the narcissistic tendencies in the unrenewed mind of immature believers. The Bible provides the remedies to guard against church splits; it takes the personal discipline of humility and the decision to operate in agapé-love. But it is possible. We have observed a helicopter view of church history and discovered how we have arrived at so many denominations today. We have seen that church reformation is a necessary work of the Holy Spirit to mature God's people and that a reformed movement can position itself to embrace the next reform if it doesn't become too rigid in its distinctives and purpose for being. Denominationalism is a way of thinking; it's a mindset. Are you a denominational-thinking believer or are you a Kingdom-thinking believer?

Now, let's move on to study the actual blueprints of a bonafide New Covenant church and see how that looks. We will examine early church history as laid out in the Gospel writings and *Acts* and begin to develop an unfolding progression of how church leadership was established in the New Testament church. Jesus started this whole process by selecting and training twelve disciples. From this foundation came the five-fold ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher in the New Testament church. You are about to embark on an exciting, groundbreaking journey that will enable you to come to grips with the calling, function, and role of each of these ministry offices. You will learn how to recognize these gifts of Christ to the church and how they function within the local church to equip the body of Christ.

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The answer to these problems is found in the blueprint of the New Covenant church leadership model, meticulously drawn up for us in the Book of Acts and the apostolic epistles. We have inadvertently built God's house using a wrong set of blueprints. The result is that 75% of ministry leaders are reporting severe stress causing anguish, worry, anger, depression, and alienation.

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