

THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

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greater things

*Focused
Vision*

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THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

MISSION STATEMENT

Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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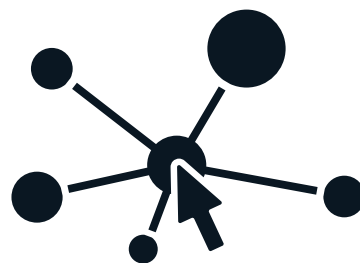
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This resource is interactive. Click the items in the Table of Contents to move around and explore each issue.





Article No.1

Five Restorations Coming to the Church

Editor's Note: This article was written in late 2020, but it remains as relevant today as it was then. Let each of us hear what the Spirit is saying and help lead the way into the prophetic future God has for the Apostolic Church.

Each year in October or November I try to spend the better part of a week with the Lord, away from the church, away from family, away from everybody, generally seeking God about the coming year. In early November, God spoke to me that He would send five powerful restorations to the Apostolic Church! It would be the restorations of personal relationship, the Word of God, prodigals, family, and Apostolic power and authority.

First restoration: Personal Relationship with God

The restoration of Personal Relationship with God is vital to each of us as Apostolics because it precedes every great advancement in the Kingdom of God that takes place in our lives. Restoration of personal relationship precedes times of refreshing, greater anointing, advancement, revelation, spiritual authority, favor, and blessing.

Pastors and ministers tend to be among the busiest people on the face of the earth. But none of the tasks or work of ministry will ever take the place of our personal relationship with God. Not only is that personal relationship more important to God than any position, responsibility, or function of ministry, but it also needs to be more important to us than anything else.

Second restoration: Faith in the Word of God

We know that the Word of God has many enemies today and is being challenged on every hand. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). The Word of God must be the final authority in our life, in our ministry, and in our church. We can and must trust and believe in the Word of God.

Pastor J. Todd Nichols, preaching to our Virginia District youth, said this, "If you are going to survive what is coming next in this world, you better get it settled what you believe." What a true statement for all believers.

The very faith of the faithful is under attack. Just recently a popular CNN commentator said, "Both the constitution and the Bible need to be amended." The Apostolic church needs a restoration of faith in the Word of God. The Word of God never changes; what was true in the Word two thousand years ago is still true today.

Third restoration: Restoration of Prodigals

God spoke very clearly to me that many prodigals are going to come back to God and church.

The church I am privileged to pastor is a great church in so many ways. In one year we had 588 first time guests, 214 were added to our roll, 141 were baptized in Jesus Name, and 394 people received the Holy Ghost. Forty-nine out of 52 Sundays someone got baptized and received the Holy Ghost. However impressive those stats are, they are not the statistics I am happiest about. In that time period, 31 prodigals came home. I'm thankful for all those good numbers, but there is a special place in my heart for returning prodigals.

Most families in your church will have at least one prodigal. Most believers have at least one friend who has fallen away. Too many church families have children who are not living for God. Under the anointing of the Holy Ghost and in the Name of Jesus, I prophesy on the authority of God's Word that prodigals are coming home.

God promised, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west, say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back, bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5-6).

Fourth restoration: Family

As we read the Word of God, we quickly understand just how much family means to Him. Much of the Old Testament is written to and about families. No institution, program, position, fellowship, or entity is more important to God than family.

God dealt almost exclusively with and through families for 4,000 years before He established a local church. Every time the Bible talks about the twelve tribes of Israel, it is specifically talking about twelve brothers who led twelve families. All of the chapters with the word "begat" over and over are referring to families. God is letting us know how important family is to Him, and how we must pass Truth on to future generations.

As Christian believers, we are facing unprecedented spiritual battles; all aspects of our faith are being ferociously challenged daily from every institution—education, government, high courts, and the concept of family.

Though every battlefield is significant, the battle for the family is one we absolutely must win!

Fifth restoration: Restoration of Apostolic Power and Authority

So many are preaching about, reaching for, and hungering after the restoration of Apostolic power and authority.

But God spoke clearly to me that the fifth restoration will only follow the first four; those first four must precede the fifth. God cannot give us Apostolic power and authority until our relationship with Him is right! God will not give us Apostolic power and authority if we've allowed our faith in the Word of God to be weakened.

A genuine Apostolic church believes in Apostolic doctrine and Apostolic demonstration!

A church that has Apostolic doctrine but not Apostolic demonstration is not a genuine Apostolic church! On the other hand, a church that has Apostolic demonstration but not Apostolic doctrine is also not a genuine Apostolic church! The end time Apostolic church must make an equal commitment to Apostolic doctrine and Apostolic demonstration!

Jack Cunningham

greater things



DAVID BERNARD

IDEA IN BRIEF

Paul warned that in the latter days some would depart from the faith and many would reject sound doctrine. Yet Peter echoed the prophecy of Joel that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. We are seeing the fulfillment of both statements.

While some are falling away from truth, many others are coming into truth. We can be part of great backsliding or great revival. The choice is ours.

In this article, we will analyze a biblical promise from Jesus and learn how it sets the stage for greater power, greater victory, and greater things in the days ahead.

From the standpoint of salvation history, we are living in the last days. According to Scripture these are times of great falling away but also great revival. In this crucial hour we need to claim the promise of greater-greater power, greater victory, greater things.

Shortly before Jesus died, arose, and ascended to Heaven, He revealed to His disciples who He really was. In John 14 He declared that He was the invisible incarnation of the invisible Father. To see Him was to see the Father manifested in the flesh. If they had difficulty believing His words, they could observe His actions and see that He did works only God could do. By His actions they would know that the Father truly dwelt in Him.

Then He promised, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12). At first, this promise seems to be impossible. How could His disciples, whether in the first century or the twenty-first century, perform greater works than God manifested in the flesh? Jesus has redeemed us from sin; how could we do anything equal, not to mention greater?

Jesus didn't mean we would perform works greater in quality, value, or power. Rather, we would perform works greater in quantity. Moreover, we can't save anyone, but we can administer the gospel of salvation.

The power comes from Jesus, not from ourselves, as we believe on Him. In subsequent verses Jesus explained that we would be able to do these greater works as we pray in His name. When we invoke the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, we express our trust in Him and rely on His atoning sacrifice.

In the next few verses Jesus further explained that the relationship with His disciples would soon change. He would depart from them physically but would return invisibly as the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in their lives spiritually. He would no longer be "with" them, but He would be "in" them. As such, He would continue to do the work of the Kingdom through them.

While on earth, Jesus subjected Himself to the limits of space and time. He ministered to those who came to Him, and His ministry was confined primarily to His Jewish homeland. By ascending to Heaven and pouring out His Spirit, however, He provided a way for healing, deliverance, and salvation to extend across the entire world and across many generations until His second coming. The inspired writer Luke recorded in his Gospel all that Jesus "began both to do and teach" while on earth (Acts 1:1). In his sequel, the Book of Acts, Luke recorded what Jesus continued to do through believers in the first century. Similarly, we continue the Lord's work of preaching, teaching, healing, and bringing salvation to people in the twenty-first century.

Paul warned that in the latter days some would depart from the faith and many would reject sound doctrine. Yet Peter echoed the prophecy of Joel that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. We are seeing the fulfillment of both statements.

While some are falling away from truth, many others are coming into truth. We can be part of great backsliding or great revival. The choice is ours.

We desire to be part of great end-time revival, and indeed we are seeing it come to pass. More people are turning to Jesus Christ than ever before in human history. More people today have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost than ever before.

Our fellowship has grown greater than ever before in finances, churches, ministers, and worldwide constituents. In several national conferences, we have seen more people receive the Holy Ghost in one place than on the original Day of Pentecost.

For example, on November 29, 2015, in one day 3,842 people received the Holy Ghost in El Salvador. In February 2016 in national conferences, 3,500 received the Spirit in Bangladesh, while 5,000 received the Spirit in the Philippines. Yes, it seems that the world is promoting and glorifying sin as never before. But where sin abounds, the grace of God does much more abound (Romans 5:20).

Yes, it seems that the devil is fighting harder than ever before as he sees the end approaching. But the Bible assures us: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

We can indeed do greater works. This promise is not bound by a pandemic, civil distress, or political chaos. We have the opportunity to see more people healed, delivered, and saved than any generation before us. It is time for us to claim the promise and act in faith. We will indeed see greater revival, greater victory, and greater things as we move forward in the will of God.

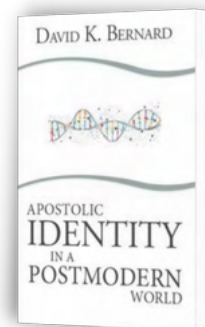
Questions for Team Discussion

- What greater things is your ministry team praying for?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted or influenced the ministry of your church?
- This week, how can you communicate and celebrate the victories of your church?
- What can I do to stir a fresh sense of faith on my team?
- What are you most excited about as you look to the future?

David K. Bernard

Recommended Resource

This article is adapted from my book, *Apostolic Identity in a Postmodern World* (Pentecostal Publishing House, 2019).





Article No. 3

The Purpose of Ministry

The purpose of ministry is people. Scripture tells us that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). William Temple said, "The Church is the only organization that does not exist for itself, but for those who live outside of it." No matter the role or position you may have, whether you serve on a local level in your church body or on an international level in our organization, the ministry's purpose is to serve people.

Living out the purpose of the ministry, in serving people, occurs in several different ways. As ministers of the Gospel, we are called to serve the needs of others. The ministry the Lord gives you and performs through you is not for your benefit but the edification and spiritual formation of others.

It has often been said that we are in the people business because our calling propels us to deal with the complexities of human relationships, problems, desires, and ultimate longing for God. The hope that we all have in this calling is that Jesus paid the price of His precious blood for all people. Regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family history, education, or prominence, Paul tells us in Romans 6 that Christ died once for all. His sufficient sacrifice on Calvary's cross is for all people. Understanding the cost of Calvary and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross brings us to a clear picture of the immeasurable eternal value of every soul.

Knowing the incredible value of every person who has been made in the image of God and the great love that God has extended towards us in the hope of eternal salvation, we are once again confronted with the purpose of ministry as being the task of serving people.

This understanding brings us to five key points to consider as we seek to live out the purpose of ministry in serving others: (1) Spend Time with People, (2) Help People, (3) Encourage People, (4) Pray for People, and (5) Share with People. We will briefly examine each point.

Spend Time with People

The central fact of serving people in ministry is that it is time-consuming. Discipling, developing, teaching, and training take considerable time. If we are to invest in the lives and eternal salvation of others, then the cost will be our time and energy. Time is everyone's most valuable asset. When you give time to people, this speaks volumes about your concern for them. If you do not like to spend time with people, the ministry will struggle. Jesus illustrates this point both in the considerable time He spent with His disciples and in the time He spent ministering to the multitude.

Help People

Ministry that is not focused on the needs of people will soon become sterile and ultimately unnecessary. Our task must be to serve and meet the needs of people who walk through the doors of our churches or in our communities. Our world is in great turmoil, and there are considerable needs that so many are facing.

Making a difference in the lives of those in your ministry setting begins with addressing the needs that they face. Showing love, being an encouragement, praying for, and standing beside are all ways we can start to assist people in meeting their needs. If you are unwilling to be inconvenienced by people, you should not be in the ministry.

Encourage People

So much of our world is clamoring for hope. The brokenness in homes and despair in our culture and society have created a genuine longing for something of substance and value in the perceived meaninglessness of this life.

Being an encouragement to others is a work of ministry.

Speak hope, faith, and courage to those who are in need. Provide a smile and remind others of the love of God for them.

Pray for People

Perhaps the most valuable treasure you could ever give someone is the gift of prayer. Sincerely praying for their need is of incredible value because it invites the power of God into their lives. Paul told the Corinthians that we are fellow laborers with Christ (I Corinthians 3:9). While we understand that we can offer our time, serve the needs of others, and be an encouragement, we also know that our work is only in part. The power of God in an individual's life far exceeds the work that we can do.

Share with People

A unique attribute of Christians is their willingness to share their lives. This is especially valuable in ministry as we share the goodness of what God is doing in our collective body. Sharing both in our blessings and our trials is part of what makes the body of Christ so impactful as we can rejoice with our brothers and sisters and know we have people to stand beside us during difficult seasons.





Article No. 4

Do You See A Lion?

When we look at the potential of planting a new work and moving beyond our own walls to reach our community, there are many reasons to delay setting an action plan in motion.

What are you waiting for?

- "It's not the right time."
- "There's too much adversity right now."
- "I don't have the right leaders in place to help me."
- "We don't have the finances to help support a new work right now."

What is your focus?

- "I'm too busy just taking care of the saints I have now! They need me!"
- "How would I ever find time to plant another work?"
- "I don't have any more hours in the day!"
- "I just need to focus on this congregation right now."

Does the "tyranny of the urgent" have you in captivity?

- "There are so many things that demand my attention every day!"
- "I just don't have time to plan ahead."
- "I can barely keep up as it is."

Do you see a "lion in the streets" (Proverbs 26:13)?

- "I'm afraid of what will happen to my church if I send people out to another work."
- "What would I do without the leaders I have helping me now?"
- "I can't afford to lose anyone."

It's easy sometimes, even as ministers of the Gospel, to let our very human fears of the unknown and worries about the "known" keep us more short-sighted than we need to be. As a way of helping His disciples see beyond their natural sight, Jesus told them, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). He wanted them to see by faith and be willing to act on the need their faith saw and not be imprisoned by the short-sightedness of focusing on the cares of the moment.

We are living in a world in a greater sense of turmoil and chaos than there has been for many years. We have disease; we have racial tensions; we have political divisions; we have evil proliferating around our world. We are all living ever busier lives with over-scheduled, over-stressed, over-tired bodies and minds pushed to and beyond their limits.

If we look at those circumstances with our natural sight, it is easy to see the obstacles to stepping out in faith and planting new churches. But, if we allow ourselves to see by faith, we can know with assurance that, in these times especially, there are people who are desperately seeking answers. There are desperate people who don't know the love of God and who don't have any real sense of hope or assurance to help them get through the storms of life. The prophet Jeremiah, too, was in desperate circumstances. His world was going through very troubled times. There was widespread panic because invaders had overrun the land.

Anyone who could do so was selling their land to have cash available. No one in their right mind was buying land in a war zone when it could be taken by the enemy at any time.

Jeremiah had been put in prison while many of his people were being deported. And in the midst of all this, he was offered an opportunity to purchase something for himself. He had the inherited right to own it, but he had to buy it for himself. His cousin, desperately trying to acquire cash, offered it to him.

And in a powerful affirmation of hope, Jeremiah buys the land. In Jeremiah 32:9 he says, "I bought the field at Anathoth."

His decision to buy his family land in those times was much more than just a commercial transaction. It was a statement of his faith and trust in God's future.

As believers, we have the right to that inheritance also. But we, too, must buy the field; we must claim it for ourselves. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew 13:44).

Let us not see the "lion in the streets" of Proverbs as one that makes us uncertain and fearful. But let us, instead, see the Lion of Judah in the streets leading the way into capturing the harvest that is promised and that awaits us. The time is now! Let us move forward with courage and confidence and plant the churches that will help bring salvation and answers to hungry, hurting people! In Jesus Name!

Nathan Figgins



Article No. 5

Focused Vision

What makes a great team in church work? Some say it takes a great leader; but without strong workers, the leader can only do so much. Some would say you need a great music team; but without a great outreach team, the music team will have no one to sing to. Another may insist, it's all on the prayer team; but the church still needs some follow-through to be great.

It's never just one ministry. It will be a mixture of strategies possessing a few common ingredients. The leaders and workers will learn how to triumph together. Not every church will do it the same, but they can have some dependable characteristics that will cause their church to grow and experience revival.

One characteristic is vision. It can't be just words on a website or business card. I'm talking about a God-stimulated idea, something that moves the church out of its comfort zone.

A God-inspired idea causes the church to dream of what could be.

Vision is so important to a church leader. It should remain clear and simple. Don't clutter your vision with too much busywork. Have a strong focus on a limited set of intentions. Do a few things with great intensity and high excellence. Be specific, choosy, and focused. The apostle Paul demonstrated his focus when he said, "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). This kind of focus will cause us to realize that God is doing something special with us.

In Luke 10, Martha complained to Jesus about having no one to help her with her chores in preparing for Him. Jesus said, "Martha, Martha . . . one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part" (Luke 10:41-42). Sometimes we try to do everything and wind up not doing it to the best of our abilities. Let's increase our focus and do our vision well.

When Nehemiah was rebuilding the broken-down wall of Jerusalem, Sanballat and Geshem wanted to meet with him to stop his momentum. Nehemiah's answer is classic, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (Nehemiah 6:3). He refused to be distracted or disturbed.

The vision must be the guiding force for the church or ministry. The vision is a picture of the chosen destiny. It is the church's designed future. The vision gives direction. Without vision, we perish (see Proverbs 29:18).

Three elements of vision:

- **Be precise:** If people can't remember the vision, they will never catch it!

- **Be manageable:** People should be able to communicate it to others in less than a minute.
- **Be incendiary:** Ignite a fire of passion that moves people. It should burn in the heart but be too big to do on our own. The vision should cause growth in our spirit.

A vision that captures the church will have people who give their life to it. They are saying, "Give me a vision to die for and I will not miss coming to church. Give me a vision worth living for and I'll get involved in it." Everyone wants to be a part of something that is making a difference. The clearer your vision, the easier it is to do what Jesus called you to do.

Remember, good is the enemy of best.

When you increase your focus, you decrease your options. Greater concentration equals higher power.

As leaders, let's seek Jesus! Let's hear and see His vision so clearly that we are overwhelmed by it. Let it consume us to the point that it spills out in everything we do.

Tom Foster



Article No. 6

Facing the Enemy

The scars wouldn't lie. They would tell the story of where the wounds ran deepest, "in the house of my friends," as foretold by the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 13:6). Jesus further expounds upon this truth when He says, "a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" meaning they will come from within (Matthew 10:36, NIV). Even as Jesus Himself was going about setting up the outline of His Kingdom, choosing emissaries to represent His courts, He revealed, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). This was from within.

As we go about confronting the enemies of vision, progress, joy, hope, and peace, we must reckon with a harsh reality that most often this enemy is from within, in our own hearts.

As leaders, we all grapple with a constant internal dialogue. And that dialogue is a conversation consisting of the phrases and ideas that were started or stirred by the cultures and people that influenced us most.

It reflects how we were raised and the life situations that were allowed to shape our thinking and reactions. This internal dialogue guides our actions and reactions, and this is where things mostly go wrong. That internal conversation is usually emotionally based and is reactive, not proactive or Spirit-governed. We must take power over the conversation of our life and over the transcript of our home and ministry. When considering all the demons, enemies, and opposers that Christ confronted in His earthly ministry, I find it a bit shocking that His sharpest rebukes and strongest words were toward His own, toward the internal religious community. At one point Jesus said to the religious leaders (paraphrase mine), "You have created a process so difficult and have made the way so difficult that even you yourself cannot find truth or enter into hope" (Matthew 23:13-15).

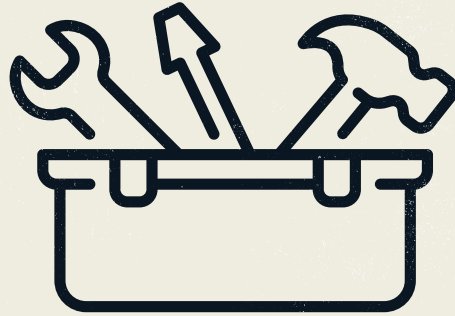
To gain true peace, we must reckon with the reality that much of the stress we face as leaders is created from within. The enemy uses the following factors to wreak havoc and cause us to give in to destructive patterns of thinking and doing.

- The culture of comparing ourselves among one another because others seem more celebrated than we may feel.
- The terms and idea of "success" that we have allowed to become the standard among us; when, in fact, true success is not even a human standard, but rather a God-standard of faithfulness and obedience to His Word and Will.

- The lack of understanding and compassion that we have had in times past with those things or people we didn't know or seek to understand. We create roadblocks for ourselves when we are not merciful and understanding of others. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Today the battle is won by the power we take in re-ordering who and what influences us and orders the conversation. The first step to peace and healing is controlling the conversation from within.

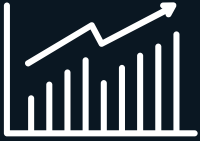
David Bryan



ISSUE 5 TOOLBOX

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE





BY THE NUMBERS

Statistics that define life for the modern pastor



Most pastors start early on their path to ministry

More than half sense their calling between ages 14 and 21. Overall, 85 percent of pastors attended church as a child and eight in ten were part of a youth ministry.

A sense of calling deepens with time and experience

Two-thirds say they feel even more confident about their calling today than when they first entered ministry.

It's not uncommon for spiritual leaders to face doubt

One out of every four pastors has experienced a period during their ministry when they significantly doubted their faith.

Nearly half of pastors face some sort of relational risk

Forty-three percent of pastors are at high or medium relational risk, whether they are experiencing challenges in marriage family, friendships, or other close relationships.

Families usually weather the challenges of ministry

Pastors report greater marital and parental satisfaction than the general population, though half say their current church tenure has been hard on the family.

As a cohort of leaders, pastors are getting older

As other careers woo Millennials and older generations struggle to hand the baton to younger pastors, the median age of pastors has risen from forty-four to fifty-four over the last twenty-five years.

Most pastors are faring well, but one in three is at risk of burnout

More than one-third of pastors are at high or medium risk of burnout, and three-quarters know at least one fellow pastor whose ministry ended due to stress.

Pastors are not immune to mental health struggles

One in five pastors has struggled with an addiction - most commonly, to porn - while almost half have faced depression.

Even when earning less, pastors thrive in other ways

Pastors earn below their educational level, but most feel financially secure. High relational, emotional, and spiritual satisfaction is found among those making less than \$40,000 a year.

Worship helps pastors stay resilient

Pastors who experience meaningful worship at their own church are at lower risk of burnout, relationship trouble, and spiritual difficulties.

Questions for Personal Reflection & Group Discussion

- Of the statistics listed, which are most surprising to you?
- Using these statistics, how would you define life for the modern pastor?
- In what way are these statistics a warning? In what way are they hopeful?
- How do these statistics reveal the need for community, peer-to-peer relationships, and mentorship among ministers?
- How do you think worship "helps pastors stay resilient"?
- What factors do you think lead to burnout in one out of every three pastors?
- How has your sense of calling deepened with time and experience?
- How do these statistics influence the way you pastor your church or lead your ministry team?