

THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

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overcoming barriers to church growth

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THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

MISSION STATEMENT

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

THE STRATEGIC GROWTH INITIATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

Jack Cunningham, Chair
Doug Klinedinst, Promotions
Nathan Scoggins, Secretary

GENERAL EDITING

Sylvia Clemons
Seth Simmons

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

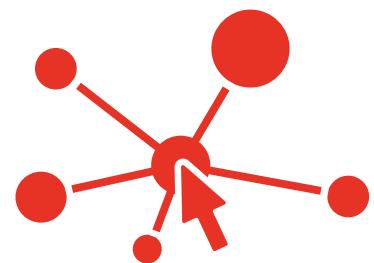
Seth Simmons

DISTRIBUTION

Seth Simmons
Nathan Scoggins

SPANISH TRANSLATION EDITORS

Trinidad Ramos
Rene Moreno
Marie Raggazo



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





Article No.1

A Realistic View of Church Growth

Growing a church is hard work! It takes effort, time, patience, and persistence. When we hear reports of great revival and church growth, we should rejoice, but we should not think that there are shortcuts to growth. Instead, we should realize two important truths.

First: Growth Requires a Foundation

First, someone generally has labored diligently for a long time to lay the foundation for growth. If a minister seemingly builds a quick work, he is probably benefiting from the efforts of others over many years. In my own case, I am deeply indebted to the training I have received from my father and mother, to the many advantages afforded by the United Pentecostal Church International, and to the apostolic ministry of many people over the years. In our congregation are people who first heard the gospel on a foreign mission field. I am reaping a harvest from the labor of home and foreign missionaries, fellow pastors, and even ministers who have retired or deceased.

Second: Growth Requires Significant Effort

Second, even when there is quick growth, significant effort is still required to ensure long-term results. For instance, if many people quickly and easily come into the church, then it will likely take quite a battle to retain and establish them solidly in truth and holiness. On the other hand, if there is slow but steady growth, then much of the work of discipleship will already have been accomplished during the conversion process. Either way, a significant amount of work will be involved. The point is not that we should prefer one type of growth over the other, but to recognize that however growth takes place, it will require hard work, patience, and persistence to see lasting results.

Some ministers continually search for a pathway to rapid success. This approach often results in disillusionment or deception.

Disillusionment comes about when they identify a success formula and operate accordingly but the predicted results do not materialize. One minister was convinced that the key to planting a church was prayer and fasting. He went to a major metropolitan area, adopted a strict routine of extensive prayer and fasting, and began services. Unfortunately, he was never able to establish a work, and he became quite disillusioned because it seemed that God had failed him. In reality, while a personal relationship with God—developed through prayer and fasting—is indeed an important component of church planting and growth, no single method is the infallible key to success, nor can we earn spiritual results by doing good works.

In many cases, they need persistence more than they need a particular method.

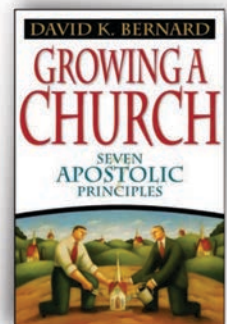
Deception can take place when ministers seek rapid growth and revival without taking into account the need for persistence. In some cases, they identify a certain doctrine or practice as the key to growth even though they cannot demonstrate this point from Scripture. Consequently, they abandon sound biblical principles, and this approach leads them further into error. Typically, the key that they have identified does not in fact lead to the results they expect, so they drift farther and farther away from their biblical foundation. In many cases, they eventually redefine success by compromising apostolic doctrine, apostolic lifestyle, or both, so that they can finally claim the success they seek. Some ministers achieve significant church growth but then promote a favorite idea as the key to growth, even though their own story of success involved a number of factors. They may neglect to mention hard work and persistence, and those who seek to learn from them do not think about this factor either. The reason is that most people desire more glamorous and exciting answers. All too often, the followers employ the recommended plan only to find that they do not achieve the same results. In many cases, they need persistence more than they need a particular method.

David K. Bernard

Questions for Team Discussion

- What is our foundation for growth?
- What temptations or deceptions do we face for "rapid success"?
- How can we protect our church and ourselves from these temptations?
- What joys and blessings will we see in persevering to grow a church?

Recommended Resource
This article is adapted from
my book, *Growing a Church:
Seven Apostolic Principles*
(Word Aflame Press, 2011).



four **barriers** to growing an apostolic church



JACK CUNNINGHAM

FOUR BARRIERS

1) THE PASTOR TRIES TO DO
EVERYTHING

2) THE PASTOR DOES NOT
DELEGATE PASTORAL CARE

3) THE PASTOR DOES NOT
RECRUIT AND TRAIN AND
PLACE VOLUNTEERS

4) THE PASTOR DOES NOT
PRESENT A CLEAR VISION

Church growth has been my favorite subject to research, read, and study for decades. I own and have read a library full of church growth books and many church growth newsletters. I have taught more than 150 church growth seminars and conferences. So, it is not uncommon for me to bring church growth into many of my messages. I believe it is the will of God for churches to grow.

Growth should be a priority for local churches, districts, national churches, and international churches. We should challenge ourselves to succeed on every level. Let us continue to personally examine our church growth efforts, with determination to do whatever is required to grow a genuinely Apostolic church. We should be willing and quick to change habits, practices, policies, prejudices, and structures that hinder Apostolic growth.

Over the years, I have created lists of principles, practices, and concepts that negatively and positively impact Apostolic church growth. Below are the top four barriers to growing an Apostolic church.

Apostolic Pastor, I assure you that you have my sincere honor, appreciation, and respect. I promise that there is no disrespect intended. I am simply a growth-minded pastor talking straight about barriers to growing a church. However, the obstacles I address here focus on four areas most Apostolic pastors need to address.

1. THE PASTOR TRIES TO DO EVERYTHING

More than twenty years ago, a good, older Apostolic church invited me to minister. After their founding pastor had died, a new, energetic, intelligent, talented, anointed younger couple had taken the church. The new pastor invited me because they were concerned with declining attendance since taking over the church. It was around 300 when he became pastor and was down to 200 a year later. When I arrived, I found that the pastor's wife ran the music, played keyboard, led worship, cooked lunch in the church's Christian school, was Sunday School Superintendent, and oversaw several church ministries. The pastor led the entire service himself, did all preaching and teaching, was the Christian school principal, did all hospital and in-home visits, all counseling, and was serving as the Ladies Ministries leader.

The young couple was more talented, better educated, and had more energy than the founding pastor. They were not afraid of work; they were willing to spend and be spent for the church.

For the last several years, the founding pastor had depended heavily on the people to help him lead the church in every area. He had assigned tasks to everyone who desired to lead or be involved. He allowed leaders to thrive and to lead. However, in their zeal, the young couple decided to relieve key leaders and take over as many jobs as they could physically and mentally handle. By diminishing and limiting the size of the leadership foundation, the new pastor unintentionally limited the congregation's size and growth.

Many pastors attempt to directly or indirectly do everything. Every pastor who starts in a home missions church, takes the pastorate of a small church, or plants a church does this, myself included.

If a pastor wants to make sure the church does not grow to its potential, he should attempt to be the only influencer and lead everything.

2. THE PASTOR DOES NOT DELEGATE PASTORAL CARE

Nearly three decades ago, I understood that if the church was going to grow, I could not and should not be doing all the pastoral care. I invited two men to assist with the responsibility of caring for the church. One of them was good with administration, organization, finances, and budgeting, etc. The other was a great family man: a great marriage, a great dad with great kids. I introduced both men to the church and talked about their areas of expertise. I encouraged the church to utilize these men in the areas of their proficiencies. Did the church resist going to them instead of me? No, quite the contrary. They seemed to love it. People lined up at their office doors for care and counseling. Ironically, no one was at my door, and I wouldn't say I liked it. As far as I know, no one in the church had a problem with me sharing pastoral care but me. It took me longer to embrace it than any member.

One of the most important decisions I've made as a pastor that positively impacted the growth of the church was identifying, training, and empowering men and women to do pastoral care.

Thirty years later, here is how I feel about assigning and allowing pastoral care. I now have six full-time staff pastors and sixteen volunteer pastors actively working with the church.

One of the most important decisions I've made as a pastor that positively impacted the growth of the church was identifying, training, and empowering men and women to do pastoral care. As the church grows, a pastor will find that doing all of the pastoral care becomes more and more difficult. Not only are there more ministry responsibilities, but the church also has more people, more programs, more services, and more staff.

Years ago, John Maxwell said, "The pastor should give away every job that someone else can do and keep only the jobs that no one but the pastor can do."

When a church reaches about 100 worshipers, it becomes tough for the pastor to provide pastoral care single-handedly. It is nearly impossible when a church reaches 150.

3. THE PASTOR DOES NOT RECRUIT AND TRAIN AND PLACE VOLUNTEERS

I was studying the story of the "11th-hour laborers" in Matthew 20. The main focus of my message was to center around, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" The statements I intended for this "idle" bunch during harvest were not complimentary. And that would have worked until I read verse seven with their answer to the question, "Because no man hath hired us." Their response ruined my message. I could not make them the bad guys for "standing idle" if the reason was that no leader had hired them or put them to work.

One key to an effective, growing, inclusive church is developing and utilizing a volunteer workforce. One of the most critical tasks of a pastor is finding, training, and deploying volunteers. A successful volunteer program in a church is more than just a good thing to do. It is essential to the growth and strength of the church. This is the case at every level of ministry. The more people involved in ministry at every level, the faster the church will grow. Increase volunteer base and departments and ministries will grow, and the church will grow. The principle applies at all levels.

We pastors ask one another, "How's the church doing?" We often answer with a number, e.g., "We're running about 100 on Sunday mornings." Some argue that a better indicator of the strength or success of the church is how many attend midweek Bible Study. I suggest that no attendance numbers are even close to the most important ones to track.

The church I pastor tracks all kinds of numbers. However, the most critical one we track that has the most significant impact on the strength and growth of the church is the number of members involved in ministry.

Finding, training, and placing volunteers into ministry should be one of the highest priorities of the pastor..

4. THE PASTOR DOES NOT PRESENT A CLEAR VISION

Carey Nieuwhof suggests in an article that a pastor should regularly sit down and ask key staff and essential volunteers, "What is our mission? What is our vision?" He then says, "If you do not get the same answer from four different people, you have a problem. Even worse, if it's fuzzy in your head, it's fuzzy to the people you are trying to serve."

**"Where there is no vision, the people perish"
(Proverbs 29:18).**

Churches need clarity of mission and vision. The people want their pastor to talk about the mission of the church. Why does this church exist? What do we focus on? Where are we going as a church? What are we capable of accomplishing together for the Kingdom of God? Whom will God use?

Congregations want a pastor driven by the vision he received from God. And they want him to share his God-given vision with them. Where is God taking us? What will the church look like when we've obeyed the vision? What impact will we have on the community and our family? What ministries are available to the church? What will this church look like a year from now, five years from now, a decade from now?

There is nothing on this earth more powerful than an Apostolic church doing and being what God designed it to do and be!

While it is true, "Where there is no vision, the people perish," it is also accurate to interpret this powerful statement to mean that a church without vision will not succeed. And a pastor without vision will not succeed either.

Jack Cunningham



Article No. 3

The Power of Ministry: Suffering

As Moses stood before the burning bush, he was instructed to remove his sandals because of the holy ground where he was standing (Exodus 3:5). Here, in this holy moment, as Moses communed with God, his feet of clay were immersed in the dirt of which he was formed. The dirt connected Moses to the humanness of his experience. The supernatural experience at the burning bush was grounded in the commonness of dirt.

In much the same way, in ministry, we seek often to see firsthand the flame of the presence of God upon the lives of those we serve. We see the healing, the restoring, and the supernatural work of the Spirit in the lives of our brothers and sisters. In this, what grounds our experiences and produces an authentic power is suffering. The pains of ministry, the pressure, the opposition we face, the storms of life that come all serve as the dirt that keeps us connected to the heartbeat of our call.

None of us enjoy the suffering that is often to be found in ministry. However, a painless ministry is as effective as a bloodless cross. The power of Calvary emerged through the stripes and the nails that Jesus endured (Isaiah 53:3; 1 Peter 2:24). It is in much the same way, in our own pains, where our capacity to be fruitful in the kingdom is forged.

The Apostle Paul is another example of the power of suffering. As we read the account of his calling in Acts 9, we find that God tells Ananias, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16, NKJV). The context of Paul's ministry was not to discover the blessings he will receive, the miracles he will witness, or the joy he will find; rather it was simply the suffering he must endure for the name.

We will briefly examine five areas where power in ministry is formed through suffering. These are: (1) enduring hurt, (2) enduring pressure, (3) enduring opposition, (4) enduring necessity, and (5) enduring emptiness.

Enduring Hurt

Ministry means actively engaging with people. And where there are people, there will be disappointment and hurt. The pains that we experience in betrayal will become a valuable asset in ministry. As people walk away and turn their backs on us, we learn to trust the Lord, the source of our hope and peace.

In ministry, we endure the hurt of brothers and sisters. We are often hurt by those we serve and those we follow. It is through these hurts that we find empathy and compassion for the broken around us. In our pains, we connect to the pain of our congregations and the hurts in our world.

Enduring Pressure

It is through the seasons of pressure where our ministry is forged to produce fruitfulness.

**Anyone can steer a ship in the calm waters,
but true leadership is learned and demonstrated
in the storms of life.**

As is often the case, the seasons of pressure that we experience lead to dramatic strides in personal development and effectiveness. By living up to the times of pressure, our leadership capacity is broadened in the eyes of those we lead.

Enduring Opposition

While there may not be many absolute guarantees in ministry, one thing is sure: people will not always agree with you. Some may not even like you. You will experience times of opposition, whether from those you lead or in times of spiritual opposition. It is the resistance of opposition that leads to a breakthrough. It is in the seasons of opposition that opportunities are created for new ground to be gained.

Enduring Necessity

Sooner or later, you will find yourself in the place of not having the resources that you need to fulfill your vision. It is the frustrating task of seeking to accomplish the vision that we believe is from God with limited means and resources. Our limitations produce opportunities for greater trust and dependence upon God. The disciples learned this in the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21). We learn this lesson repeatedly as we do what we can with what we have and trust God to make up the difference.

Enduring Emptiness

Emptiness is often common in our experiences in the ministry. Whether it is an empty harvest or feelings of personal emptiness, we understand that empty nets are a reality of the ministry attempt. There are seasons when we do not feel personally fulfilled. It is in our emptiness that we forge faithfulness and determination. It is in our emptiness that we lean into the abiding presence of God. We are reminded during these seasons that, more than accomplishments, God is concerned with relationships.





Article No. 4

A Revival of Sending

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Matthew 9:35-38).

In Matthew 9, we discover a divine design. Jesus saw the harvest as it truly was. He saw the need and it was great. He instructs that there be prayer for laborers to be called and, with the calling, for the laborers to be sent into the harvest. He gave us a very simple but yet profound pattern to follow: See—Pray—Call—Send.

See

While Jesus was in the midst of teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and working in the supernatural, He saw the multitudes as sheep having no shepherd and He had compassion on them. In the natural, sheep are completely dependent on their shepherd. The shepherd leads them to green pastures and calm waters. But sheep without the shepherd are defenseless and vulnerable to attack; they are not good foragers on their own; they become confused and hungry.

Do we truly see the need?

Let me ask you? If you walked into work one day and saw a group of physically bloodied up and hungry people, wouldn't you do your best to take action and help them? But is this not also a physical description of the spiritual reality of souls around us? Have we grown complacent and failed to see the need? If we do not have the spiritual vision to see them with compassion as Jesus did, we are not truly following His pattern.

Pray

Praying for laborers to be sent is how we partner with God. It's how we bring heaven to earth. It's how we access His will and His power to get things done. Prayer should always be our first response when we see a need—not because we aren't willing to roll up our sleeves and help, but because we recognize that we need authority and gifting from God in order to accomplish it successfully.

Call

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them and then earnestly declared that the harvest is truly plenteous but the laborers are few.

The Greek word Jesus used in Matthew 9 for “send out workers” is *ekballo*, which means to violently eject or throw something. In this case, it implies urgent, interruptive action. The abundance and urgency of the harvest necessitates pulling laborers away from what they are currently doing to employ them in the harvest instead.

By nature, this is a disruptive call. It means we cannot go on living business as usual. We must pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers and, no matter how great an interruption it may be, we must be ready to release them when He calls.

Send

By Jesus' own observation, even as God in the flesh, He knew that the harvest demanded more hands than just His own to reap the harvest of that day. And according to Matthew 10, Jesus at that point begins to recruit fellow laborers into the harvest.

We as local pastors are under-shepherds. How do we see the harvest? Does the harvest demand more laborers as it did in Jesus' day or is my single influence alone enough to meet the need of our present-day harvest? Jesus made it very clear that in order for laborers to exist, they must first be called, then sent into the field.

The harvest is ready and is waiting for us! Will we respond?

What does that mean in the local church? It means, as a pastor, I must encourage the saints of our church to be involved in the evangelization of our present community. We do this by training, equipping, and sending them to teach Bible studies and start preaching points. Preaching points then have the potential to become daughter works and ultimately self-governing works.

In closing, none of this will happen by mere accident. It will not happen until we become intentional in following the pattern Jesus set for us! We must see the harvest with compassion as He saw it; we must pray that laborers be called; we must help send them into the fields.

The harvest is ready and is waiting for us! Will we respond?

Nathan Jiggins



Article No.5

Leaders Must Lead

The story of Nehemiah is a great example of a leader who led the people to accomplish a great task. He had to be precise and direct to pull together a team of people who would buy into the vision and then be willing to work the vision. Nehemiah had a vision that could rally the people.

As we read through this insightful book, we can find seven principles Nehemiah used to bring the people together to accomplish his given purpose.

Simplification (Nehemiah 2:5)

The vision was simple, build the wall. The vision will seem overwhelming when you overcomplicate the task or weigh the people down with too many details. Make the task easy to understand, and people will feel capable of contributing to the vision.

Preparation (Nehemiah 2:9)

There were many dangers to face to reach Jerusalem. Still, Nehemiah prepared by requesting that the king protect them on their journey. Then when he arrived in Jerusalem, he set a watch on the city to safeguard it until they reconstructed the walls. The more you prepare, the more confident people will feel in your ability to lead.

People will feel safe when a leader takes the proper time to consider all the risks of the task and adequately prepare them to succeed.

Participation (Nehemiah 2:18)

Nehemiah included as many people as possible in the process. Show people where and how they can use their talents, and they will desire to join the team. Make your plan inclusive for everyone, no matter where they are on their journey to Christian maturity. Help people see the importance of being involved.

Delegation (Nehemiah 3, 4:16)

He matched the task with the workers utilizing the planning team, the work team, and the war team. When a leader cares enough to delegate with purpose, people care enough to accomplish the task. Assign people to jobs according to their strengths, and they will excel in the work they enjoy. Delegation done right builds trust and confidence between the leader and the people.

Motivation (Nehemiah 4:14)

Nehemiah brought people into the vision and encouraged them. Good leaders don't just give instructions. They motivate by example. They work beside the people and inspire them to extraordinary achievements. The leader's encouragement must be louder than the voices of discouragement and distraction that will come to derail the vision. The leader must encourage him or herself while also encouraging the people.

Cooperation (Nehemiah 5)

He instructed the people to work together. He charged them to stop the leaders' abuse of the people and restore the land of their brothers. Leaders must face challenging situations with solutions that benefit the people, not just an individual. A good leader will discern the areas that need correction and give clear direction to keep the vision on track.

Celebration (Nehemiah 8)

After the people had worked and endured much temptation and struggle, they celebrated the wall's completion with a great feast. Celebrate milestones of accomplishments. Celebration is vital to the continued life of a grand vision. A strong vision continues to grow, and celebrations will keep the people moving forward to the next task of the vision.

Nehemiah declared the people had a mind to work, so they built the wall. The bearers of burden strengthened that which was decayed. The leader recognized the distraction of their enemies and led the people to a resolution to overcome.

**No one accomplishes a great task without people to do
the work and a leader to guide the way.**

But with a leader who leads, the impossible becomes possible.

Tom Foster



Article No. 6

My Brother's Keeper

At 3:15 am on March 13, 1964, a tragedy permanently etched the name Catherine Genovese in the halls of popular psychology studies. On that fateful early morning, Catherine was the victim of a brutal murder on her apartment doorstep. However, what made the case famous was that initial reports stated that over 30 people heard her cries for help, yet no one chose to come to her aid. Though police help was within two minutes from the scene, the brutal murder took over 30 minutes while people sat idly by. Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as the Bystander Effect—the study of how someone could witness another in dire need and not do anything about it. (Ruhl, C., 2021, Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Kitty-Genovese.html>)

There are many reasons why someone might not have intervened in this case: fear, lack of self-trust, anxiety, self-preservation, lack of motivation, and the list goes on. The case brings to light the age-old question that the religious people of Christ's time grappled with, "Who is my neighbor?" More precisely, "Who am I responsible for outside of my own family?"

When pressed about social or moral responsibility for others, Jesus answered His audience with one of the most famous parables in His catalog, the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the story, Jesus does not rebuke the perpetrator of the crime. Instead, Jesus directs his rebuke toward the religious who passed by the individual in need. Jesus conveys His disdain for orthodoxy where it neglects the fundamental principles of His Kingdom, the commandment to "love one's neighbor."

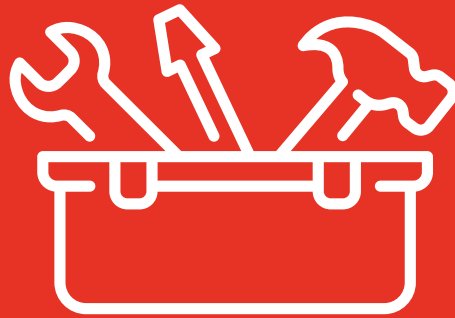
"Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Tragically, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the "ultra-holy" ministers had no time for another in need and even demonstrated an effort to avoid engagement. Jesus reveals the real answer on the subject of moral responsibility to our neighbors: "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these...you have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

As spiritual leaders, we must reclaim and refocus our efforts on being true to our God-given identity. God calls genuinely spiritual, "Spirit-led" leaders to restore the fallen and encourage one another. Healing begins here, and this is where the body of Christ performs preventative measures.

I know you are busy. I know you have a ministry, a family, a job, and a lot of responsibility. I know it is inconvenient to pause your work and your schedule to see about someone in need. But, as the body of Christ, it is our high calling to carry one another's burdens. Whether through prayer, a quick text, or a phone call, it is our God-given privilege to be our brother's keeper.

David Bryan



ISSUE 6 TOOLBOX

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE





CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE

A Journaling Exercise by Rodney Shaw



This SGI issue encourages clarification of vision and purpose to overcome church growth barriers. Pastor Rodney Shaw provides a resource to help clarify the purpose of senior leaders and their team members.

Instructions

STOP! This worksheet is a companion to Chapter 19 of Churchwork. Please read this chapter before proceeding. You can read a condensed version on www.rodneyshaw.com/clarify-your-purpose.

This worksheet is designed to help you clarify your purpose by reflecting on your calling, your constitution, and your context. It is assumed you have some idea of your calling, and therefore, the primary purpose of this exercise is not to clarify your long-term, ultimate calling. The point of this exercise is to help you realize your calling must be exercised within the opportunities and limitations of today. Accordingly, your purpose is not on hold, awaiting the arrival of idealized circumstances; rather, your purpose is to live out your calling in your current context through your constitution. When you do so, you are living in your purpose for today.

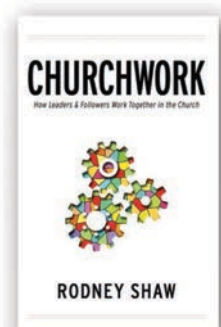
This worksheet is designed to be used for personal assessment, reflection, and prayer, perhaps over a period of several weeks. If you are in transition, it would be good to revisit the worksheet in a year. It also might be helpful to have a trusted friend or family member fill out the worksheet with you or have them fill out a copy on your behalf and then compare results.

What is Purpose?

Purpose is not found in what we dream about; purpose is found in what we do each and every day. God's purpose for our lives is tangible and obtainable. He wants us to walk in our purpose now. And though the ultimate purpose for our lives may unfold over time until we reach our fullest potential, we can know we are living in our purpose each day.

Ultimately, purpose is found at the intersection of our calling, our constitution, and our context. Our calling is God's claim on our life. Our constitution consists of the unique things which make us who we are including our talents, resources, education, obligations, and relationships. Our context is the location and ministry circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Recommended Resource
Churchwork by Rodney Shaw
(Word Aflame Press, 2021)





CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE

A Journaling Exercise by Rodney Shaw



Calling

Calling is the claim God has placed on your life. It often is discerned as a compulsion to do a particular thing or to serve in a particular way. Calling is the non-negotiable demand that is on your life apart from which you cannot be fulfilled or happy.

Part 1: My calling

The following questions will help you reflect your calling:

- What are my recurring opportunities?
- How has God used me in the past?
- When do I feel most fulfilled and valuable?
- What things am I uniquely qualified to do?
- What do I feel compelled to do?
- For what specifically do I feel accountable to God?

Part 2: My calling over time

- Consider how your sense of calling may have evolved over time.
- How did I first receive or discern my sense of calling?
- Have I ever prayed for God to open a particular door which never opened?
- Have I ever desired a particular calling only to realize later this was a mistake?
- How have I misunderstood my calling in the past?
- How has my sense of calling evolved over time?
- How have trusted leaders recognized my calling?
- Can I distinguish between my personal dreams and the call of God?

Part 3: My calling today

- From today's perspective, answer the following:
- I am called to:
- What are the evidences of this call?
- What are the various roles in which I can fulfill my calling?
- How am I exercising my calling today?



CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE

A Journaling Exercise by Rodney Shaw



Constitution

Our constitution is our personal makeup including our gifting, our temperament, our family circumstances, and the countless things which are permanently attached to us which make us who we are. The same call of God can fall on two different people and be manifested in two entirely different ways. A person's constitution has as much to do with finding purpose as does the call of God.

Part 1: Temperament

Describe your personality and gifting.

- What do I enjoy doing?
- What energizes me?
- What depletes me?
- What am I good at?
- What are the strengths of my temperament? What are the weaknesses of my temperament? What are my talents and abilities?
- How would my friends and family complete this sentence: "He/she is so _____."
- Do I tend to be suspicious or trusting?
- Do I tend to be confident or insecure?

NOTE: It is recommended that you take a personality test like Myers-Briggs, DiSC, Enneagram, iPersonic, etc.

Part 2: Influences

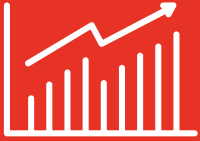
What primary influences have shaped your life?

- My life has been shaped by these events:
- My life has been shaped by these people:
- I have been educated and trained in the following ways:
- This person has shaped my perspective on life and ministry more than anyone else:
- My closest friends are?
- How do my friends help or hinder the pursuit of my calling?

Part 3: Obligations

Describe your obligations and limitations.

- How does my stage of life bring focus, and perhaps boundaries, to my life?
- My job requires the following commitment:
- School and other obligations require the following commitment:
- My personal and family obligations include:
- How am I limited or enabled by finances?
- My daily schedule is as follows:
- I have _____ hours of discretionary time each week to pursue personal interests.
- I have the following unique limitations:



CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE

A Journaling Exercise by Rodney Shaw



Context

God's call is lived out in a specific location. The place in which we serve has unique opportunities and limitations. Our calling is fulfilled in a specific place, so it must be adapted for the context in which we operate. We must find a way to fulfill our calling where we are.

Part 1: My Place

- How was I led to my current context?
- The culture of my city and the region are unique in the following ways:
- The culture of my ministry context is unique in the following ways?
- How am I currently engaged in ministry?
- Is there room for me to grow here?
- How do my leaders, peers, and followers understand my call, gifting, and role?
- Have I accomplished all that I can here?

Part 2: Opportunities

- What is beautiful and special about this place?
- How has this place contributed to my growth and development?
- How can I continue to grow and learn here?
- What am I able to do here that I could not do elsewhere?
- What opportunities do I currently have?
- What is currently going undone here and how can I contribute to the solution?
- How do I envision living out my call here?

Part 3: Limitations

- What do I wish was different about this place?
- What am I unable to do here that I could do elsewhere?
- How can I shape the culture for the better?
- What are the unchangeable parts of my context which I must accept?



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Clarified Purpose

Purpose is living out our calling in our current circumstances. By doing so, we find maximum fulfillment in the present and position ourselves for more opportunities in the future. Purpose is found when our calling is incarnated through our constitution in a specific context. Our purpose is to live out our calling using our God-given resources in our God-assigned location, even if it is a less-than-ideal situation. Purpose is about today!

Part 1: Synthesis: Summarize your reflections from the following pages.

Given my unique constitution and the realities of my context:

- How can I live today so that I fulfill my calling to the best of my abilities?
- How can I live today so that I am positioning myself for what I feel is next?
- How can I use what I have and who I am for the betterment of others today?

Part 2: My Purpose Statement

Write a purpose statement that outlines how you can maximize your calling utilizing your unique circumstances in your current location. Be realistic and factor in obligations and limiting factors. The following format may be helpful:

- I am called by God to _____.
- I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I have received wonderful gifts such as _____.
- Today, I can use these gifts to fulfill my calling in the following ways: _____.

Doing these things faithfully and with excellence is my purpose for today!

Part 3: Action Items

- How can I be fully present, fulfilling my calling to the fullest given my constitution and context?
- How can I improve on the areas of my constitution that are limiting the fulfillment of my call?
- How can I make my context a better place?