

## **PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE**

THEIR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN CLOGS THE AIRWAYS.

A WEIGHT LOSS FORMULA—CLAIMED TO HELP YOU LOSE  
WEIGHT THE NATURAL WAY...SLOWLY... SO YOU KEEP IT OFF.

JIM WHITE, HOST OF THE RESTERAUNT SHOW ON KRLD-,  
PROMOTES THE PRODUCT.

HE CLAIMS TO HAVE LOST 10 POUNDS WHILE STILL  
MAINTAINING HIS WINING AND DINING AS HE CRITIQUES  
RESTAURANTS IN THE AREA.

IN FACT, HE HASN'T CHANGED HIS LIFESTYLE AT ALL.

WHAT'S THE NAME OF THIS AMAZING PRODUCT? BODY  
SOLUTIONS.

FROM THE SOUNDS OF THE ADVERTISING...A PERSON CAN CONTINUE WITH THEIR UNHEALTHY LIFE-STYLE OF NO EXERCISE, EATING IN-BETWEEN MEALS, OVER-INDULGING, JUNK FOOD...AND KEEP IT ALL OFF THE WAIST.

WOW! THAT'S GREAT NEWS, ISN'T IT?

I DECIDED TO LOG ONTO BODY SOLUTIONS WEB SITE TO SEE WHAT WAS BEHIND THIS AMAZING PRODUCT.

THE FIRST IMAGE TO FLASH ON THE SCREEN WAS ONE OF THOSE SPECTACULAR BEFORE AND AFTER SHOTS.

I BEGAN LOOKING FOR THE SMALL PRINT.

“THESE RESULTS ARE NOT TYPICAL, YOU ARE NOT LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THESE RESULTS.”

WHEN IT COMES TO OUR BODIES... HEALTH IS A MULTI-FACETED CONCERN...WE CAN'T TOTALLY NEGLECT ONE AREA OF HEALTH AND EXPECT TO NEVER HAVE IT CATCH UP WITH US.

FOR EXAMPLE, YOU COULD EAT THREE REGULAR MEALS A DAY, BUT SIT BEHIND A DESK FROM 8 TO 5 AND IN FRONT OF THE T.V. ALL EVENING AND NEVER EXERCISE ANYTHING MORE THAN YOUR FINGERS ON THE REMOTE CONTROL.

HEALTH IS MULTI-FACETED: YOU NEED TO EXERCISE, EAT REGULAR MEALS, GET ENOUGH SLEEP, MAINTAIN LOW STRESS LEVELS, HAVE A BALANCED DIET INCLUDING FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES...

DID YOU KNOW WE'RE SUPPOSED TO EAT 5 SERVINGS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES EVERYDAY?...I THINK I'LL HAVE A V-8.

NOW HERE IS THE POINT THIS PREACHER HAS BEEN WAITING TO MAKE. HEALTH OF THE CHURCH INVOLVES A MULTI-FACETED MINISTRY.

WE CAN'T DO ONE THING WELL AND EXPECT THAT EVERYTHING ELSE WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF. THERE IS A PRINCIPLE OF NATURE THAT THE CHURCH WOULD DO WELL TO FOLLOW...

LET'S TURN IN OUR BIBLES TO MARK 4:26-28

V. 27— THE SPROUTING AND GROWTH OF SOMETHING THAT APPEARS TO BE DRY AND DEAD IS A MYSTERY OF NATURE.

V. 28—THE EARTH YIELDS A CROP BY ITSELF.

THE GREEK WORD USED HERE FOR “BY ITSELF” IS THE ONE WE TAKE OUR ENGLISH WORD—“AUTOMATIC” FROM.

THE GROWTH OF THE SEED IN THE EARTH IS AUTOMATIC—IT  
HAPPENS NATURALLY.

THE GROWTH PROCESS IS SEQUENTIAL—

\*\*THE YOUNG SHOOT,

\*\*BLADES

\*\*THE HEAD,

\*\*THE FULL GRAIN IN THE HEAD.

\*\*FINALLY, THE HARVEST

WE FIND THE SPIRITUAL APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH IN I  
CORINTHIANS 3:9,

“FOR WE ARE GOD’S FELLOW WORKERS: YOU ARE GOD’S FIELD,  
YOU ARE GOD’S BUILDING.”

\*\* SLIDE OF “YOU ARE GOD’S FIELD.”

THE CHURCH IS TO GROW NATURALLY AND PRODUCE A  
HARVEST AS A FIELD DOES.

WHAT I'M GOING TO SHARE WITH YOU THIS MORNING IS A CONCEPT KNOWN AS NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT. IT IS A PROCESS WHEREBY A CHURCH CAN DISCOVER GOD-GIVEN PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH AND LIFE.

IT IS MY DESIRE THAT THIS CONGREGATION WILL EMBRACE THESE BIBLICAL CONCEPTS AND IMPLEMENT FOR THE GROWTH AND HEALTH OF THIS CHURCH.

OVER A PERIOD OF 10 YEARS A MAN BY THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN SCHWARZ CONDUCTED A GLOBAL STUDY OF CHURCHES WITH THE GOAL OF DISCOVERING WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO A CHURCHES SUCCESS? WHAT PATTERNS COULD BE FOUND DESPITE CHURCH SIZE, LOCATION AND CULTURE?

\*\* SLIDE OF 1000 CHURCHES, 32 COUNTRIES ON 5 CONTINENTS.

SCHWARTZ WANTED TO KNOW...

WHY ARE SOME CHURCHES GROWING AND OTHERS  
DECLINING?

WHAT CAUSES CHURCH GROWTH?

ARE THERE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GROWING CHURCHES?

WHAT HE DISCOVERED WAS FASCINATING. 8

CHARACTERISTICS WERE CONSISTENTLY PRESENT IN  
GROWING CHURCHES. THE HEALTHIER THE CHURCH WAS IN  
EACH OF THESE EIGHT AREAS, THE MORE LIKELY IT WAS TO  
BE A GROWING CHURCH.

I CAN'T IMAGINE ANY CHURCH THAT WOULD CHOOSE TO BE A  
SICK ONE...BUT, I'VE BEEN TO A FEW AND YOU PROBABLY  
HAVE TO.

PERHAPS YOU COULDN'T PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT...BUT THERE  
WERE REASONS THE CHURCH WASN'T VIBRANT, HEALTHY AND  
GROWING. NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT HELPS US  
UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE AREAS ARE.

I ALSO CAN'T IMAGINE A CHURCH THAT WOULDN'T DESIRE TO BE HEALTHIER THAN THEY CURRENTLY ARE?

ARE THERE AREAS WHERE YOU CAN GROW AND IMPROVE?

WHERE ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A HEALTHY CHURCH?

TODAY, WE WILL LOOK AT THE EIGHT SCHWARTZ DISCOVERED.

WHAT IS EXCITING TO ME IS THAT EACH ONE OF THESE 8 QUALITIES ARE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN SCRIPTURE AND WELL-SUPPORTED BY THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.

\*\* READ SLIDE, EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP, GIFT-ORIENTED MINISTRY, PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY, FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES, INSPIRING WORSHIP SERVICE, HOLISTIC SMALL GROUPS, NEED-ORIENTED EVANGELISM, LOVING RELATIONSHIPS.

\*\* SHOW SLIDE & EXPLAIN

THE STUDY REVEALED THAT THERE WAS A CLEAR DISTINCTION IN THESE 8 AREAS BETWEEN CHURCHES THAT WERE DECLINING--- SCORING BELOW THE 50 PERCENT MARK IN THESE 8 AREAS AND THOSE CHURCHES THAT WERE GROWING—SCORING ABOVE THE 50 PERCENT MARK.

\*\*SLIDE OF 3 PROFILES.

OF ALL THE CHURCHES TESTED TO DATE—15% SCORE ABOVE THE 65 MARK. NOTE THE QUESTION ABOVE THE GRAPH...

“WHICH OF THESE THREE CHURCHES IS WITHOUT QUESTION A GROWING CHURCH?”

CHURCH C—GREEN.

WHY? THERE ARE NO AREAS THAT DIP BELOW THE 65<sup>TH</sup> PERCENTILE.

THE PURPLE HAS A SIGNIFICANT DIP IN GIFT-ORIENTED MINISTRY (GM ON THE CHART). THIS AREA IS HANDICAPPING THEM. IT IS REFERRED TO AS THEIR MINIMUM FACT.

\*\* SHOW SLIDE OF (LOW IN SMALL GROUPS).

NOTE THE GRAPH OF SCORES FROM ANOTHER CHURCH. WHICH  
WAS THEIR MINIMUM FACTOR?

TO ILLUSTRATE THE EFFECT OF A MINIMUM FACTOR, I'D LIKE  
TO SHARE WITH YOU AN OLD GERMAN STORY:

## **There's a Hole in My Bucket**

Liza: Henry! Fetch me some water!

Henry: There's a hole in my bucket dear Liza, dear Liza  
There's a hole in my bucket dear Liza, a hole.

Liza: Well, fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,  
Well, fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, fix it.

Henry: With what shall I fix it ...

Liza: With a straw dear Henry ...

Henry: The straw is too long ...

Liza: Well, cut it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I cut it ...

Liza: With an axe dear Henry ...

Henry: The axe is too dull dear Liza ...

Liza: Well, sharpen it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I sharpen it ...

Liza: With a stone dear Henry ...

Henry: The stone is too dry dear Liza ...

Liza: Well, wet it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I wet it ...

Liza: With water dear Henry ...

Henry: In what shall I fetch it ...

Liza: In a bucket dear Henry ...

Henry: There's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza ...

THE MINIMUM FACTOR FOR A CHURCH IS LIKE A HOLE IN THE  
BUCKET.

\*\* (USE MY BUCKET)

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH WATER I POUR INTO THIS BUCKET—IT WILL ONLY FILL TO A CERTAIN POINT.

WHAT NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT DISCOVERED IS THAT A CHURCHES POTENTIAL IS LIMITED BY ITS MINIMUM FACTOR.

AN OLD-FASHIONED WOODEN BARREL IS A GOOD WAY TO ILLUSTRATE IT:

\*\* BARREL WITH STAVES. (EXPLAIN)

USING ANOTHER ANALOGY. MEDICALLY SPEAKING, IF WE SEE THE DOCTOR FOR A CHECK-UP, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW STRONG WE MAY BE IN SEVEN VITAL SIGNS. IF ONE VITAL SIGN IS WEAK, THE DOCTOR FOCUSES ATTENTION THERE.

\*\* CHRISTIAN SCHWARZ IN HIS BOOK, NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT, PUTS IT THIS WAY,

“IF ONE OF THE FOUR BASIC MINERALS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL PLANT GROWTH IS MISSING FROM THE SOIL, OUR PLANTS WILL NOT IMPROVE BY INCREASING THE LEVELS OF THOSE MINERALS THAT ARE ALREADY HIGHER. THE GOAL IS FOR A GOOD BALANCE AMONG THE MINERALS, BRINGING ALL ELEMENTS UP TO THEIR PROPER LEVEL.” NCD P. 54

ONCE A CHURCH HAS BEEN TESTED, THEY CAN THEN MAKE USE OF THEIR STRENGTHS TO IMPROVE THE WEAKEST AREA.

\*\* SHOW SLIDE

AS A CHURCH FOCUSES ON THOSE AREAS THAT ARE LIMITING GROWTH—THE WATER LEVEL INCREASES IN THE BARREL. EVEN IN ONE YEAR IT IS POSSIBLE TO SEE DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS. NOT ONLY CAN THESE BE VERIFIED BY RE-TESTING, BUT ALSO THEY CAN BE FELT AND SEEN WITHIN THE CHURCH.

\*\* SLIDE OF TEST ONE YEAR LATER.

\*\* BLANK

THIS MORNING, I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU THAT I'VE SEEN  
NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT WORK.

WHEN I STARTED PASTORING THE RICHARDSON CHURCH IN  
1998, THERE WAS SOME INTEREST IN CHURCH  
PLANTING...MAINLY BECAUSE THE SANCTUARY WAS QUITE  
FULL.

HOWEVER, AS I SAT THROUGH A NUMBER OF ELDER AND  
BOARD MEETINGS, I DISCOVERED THAT THERE WAS A  
SIGNIFICANT CONCERN. THERE WAS A GENERAL CONSENSUS  
THAT THE CHURCH WAS NOT HEALTHY ENOUGH TO GIVE  
BIRTH TO A NEW CHURCH.

THERE WERE SOME INTERNAL PROBLEMS THAT WERE  
LIMITING THE CHURCHES ABILITY TO FREELY AND  
NATURALLY MOVE FORWARD.

AS A RESULT, WE TEMPORARILY HELD OFF ON CHURCH  
PLANTING AND TOOK THE ROUTE OF BECOMING HEALTHIER  
FIRST.

THE INITIAL NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT SURVEY GAVE US AN OVERALL SCORE OF 47. I WAS SOMEWHAT ENCOURAGED BY THE RESULTS AS MOST ADVENTIST CHURCHES SURVEYED HAVE AVERAGED IN THE MID-30'S.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE AREAS THAT NEEDED SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT. OVER THE NEXT 15 MONTHS, THE PASTORAL STAFF AND LEADERS BEGAN FOCUSING ON IMPROVING THE WEAK AREAS. WE THEN RE-TESTED. WHEN WE GOT THE RESULTS BACK, THERE WAS A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND CELEBRATION. OUR AVERAGE SCORE HAD INCREASED BY 12 POINTS, FROM 47 TO A 59.

THOSE TO ME THOSE ARE JUST NUMBERS—47 TO 59...WAS THERE REALLY ANY DIFFERENCE?

WHAT DID IT MEAN IN REAL LIFE? WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF BEING A HEALTHIER CHURCH?

ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH INCREASED BY 100.

INCREASED BAPTISMS.

PAYING OFF A \$250,000 MORTGAGE

A 52% TITHE GAIN

A MAJOR REMODELING PROJECT THAT WAS COMPLETED DEBT

FREE.

THE START OF TWO NEW CHURCHES.

--THE METRO NORTH CHURCH IN PLANO

--RICHARDSON SPANISH CHURCH.

THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS CANNOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO

HUMAN EFFORT. NOTE PAUL'S WORDS IN I CORINTHIANS 3:6,

\*\* SLIDE, "I PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED, BUT GOD GIVES THE  
INCREASE!

I BELIEVE GOD DESIRES FOR HIS CHURCH TO BE HEALTHY?

WHY? A HEALTHY CHURCH WILL MORE EFFECTIVELY REACH

THE HARVEST FIELD. A HEALTHY CHURCH IS AN

EVANGELISTIC CHURCH. IT IS REACHING LOST PEOPLE WITH

THE GOSPEL.

LET'S NOW QUICKLY EXPLORE EACH OF THE 8 QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH.

1. \*\*EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP. LEADERS OF GROWING CHURCHES ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING OTHERS TO DO THE WORK OF MINISTRY. LEADERS ARE COMMITTED TO THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH. \*\* BIBLE \*\* EGW
2. \*\* GIFT-ORIENTED MINISTRY. CHRISTIANS IN THESE CHURCHES ARE SERVING IN THEIR AREA OF GIFTEDNESS RATHER THAN FILLING SLOTS NECESSARY TO KEEP A PROGRAM RUNNING. NEARLY EVERY PERSON IS USING HIS/HER GOD-GIVEN GIFTS TO BUILD UP THE CHURCH. \*\* BIBLE \*\* EGW
3. \*\*PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY. PRAYER, ENTHUSIASM, AND BOLDNESS CHARACTERIZE THE SPIRITUAL LIVES OF THE MEMBERS. MOST MEMBERS LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH WITH POWER AND CONTAGIOUS ENTHUSIASM. \*\* BIBLE \*\*EGW

4. **\*\*FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES.** THE CHURCH HAS PUT SIGNIFICANT ENERGY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRUCTURE APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR CONTEXT. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STRUCTURES FOR GROWING CHURCHES IS LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. ALL CHURCH ORGANIZATION IS EVALUATED AS TO WHETHER IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH. **\*\* BIBLE \*\* EGW**
5. **\*\*INSPIRING WORSHIP SERVICES.** A SENSE THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS PRESENT IS FOUND IN THESE CHURCHES. THOSE ATTENDING FIND THE SERVICE UPLIFTING. FOR THE MAJORITY, IT IS THE HIGH POINT OF THEIR WEEK. **\*\* BIBLE \*\*EGW**
6. **\*\*HOLISTIC SMALL GROUPS.** THERE IS A CONTINUOUS MULTIPLICATION OF SMALL GROUPS THAT MEET THE REAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE. THE LOVING AND HEALING POWER OF FELLOWSHIP IS EXPERIENCED IN THESE GROUPS. **\*\* BIBLE \*\* EGW**

7. **\*\*NEED-ORIENTED EVANGELISM. EVANGELISTIC**  
ACTIVITIES RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE NEEDS OF THE  
PEOPLE THE CHURCH IS TRYING TO REACH. NEARLY ALL  
MEMBERS USE THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO HELP FULFILL  
THE GREAT COMMISSION. **\*\* BIBLE \*\* EGW**
8. **\*\*LOVING RELATIONSHIPS. A HIGH LEVEL OF LOVING**  
AFFECTION CHARACTERIZES RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE  
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH. CHRIST'S LOVE PERMEATES  
CHURCH ACTIVITIES. MEMBERS SPEND TIME WITH EACH  
OTHER OUTSIDE OF CHURCH-SPONSORED EVENTS.

\_\_\_\_\_ CHURCH, HOW HEALTHY ARE YOU? I'M  
EXCITED THAT YOUR LEADERS HAVE CHOSEN TO SURVEY THIS  
CONGREGATION.

30 SURVEYS WILL BE GIVEN TO ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH. IN ABOUT A MONTH, YOU WILL BE INFORMED REGARDING THE RESULTS. I'M ANXIOUS TO SEE THE RESULTS. I'D ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE A SERIOUS LOOK AT THE RESULTS. DISCOVER WHERE GROWTH IS NEEDED AND THEN IMPLEMENT PLANS TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE ARE GOD'S FIELD. MY HE FIND US GROWING AND PRODUCING AN ABUNDANT HARVEST AS HE GIVES THE INCREASE.

---- At potluck.

Develop a NCD team for implementation.