

by Justin McCorkle

A photograph of two people climbing a large, light-colored rock face. The person in the foreground is wearing a blue jacket and dark pants, reaching up towards the second person. The second person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and shorts, reaching down towards the first person. The background is a bright, cloudy sky.

a Functional Church



Foreword

Ever forward. To go back, or even to stop, is failure in the Christian life. The same is true for the Lord's church.

The Lord is to be praised for the continuing growth and success at the Mauriceville Church. Many souls are coming to know the Lord and many more wait to hear the gospel of Christ and see the faith in action. A great burden and honor is upon our shoulders to brightly shine the gospel of Christ in the community. Accomplishing this task to the point we have attained, and even more-so to attain greater heights, we must be a functional church according the pattern of God's word.

In this workbook we will look to the pattern of organization given in God's word to remember the principles that we are to operate within. We will also give an explanation of the processes we are currently using, along with Scriptural explanations, for the benefit of all the members. Every member of Christ's body should be able to explain the methods of the church they are a part with. If you have ever wanted to understand the "who, what, why, and how" of the local work, this is the study book for you!

"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

(Colossians 3:17)



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A Church with Vision

IN PREPARATION...

Matthew 13

Where was the seed sown?

Who sows the "good seed" in the world?

What does the dragnet gather up?

What is the scribe who becomes a disciple like?

Without vision there can be no leadership. A lack of vision is a substantial part of the problem among many churches of God's people. Many brethren share a vision of the church that is weak, short-sighted, and is therefore content with the status-quo. Even when Christian workers have a vision of something more grand (and more in harmony with the lofty thoughts of our Lord on the topic) it can be seemingly impossible to convince other Christians to share this vision.

There are many reasons this lack of vision exists today such as a quickly changing culture, the seeming lack of interest in the gospel in the community, past failures, and the 'good old days' mythos that longs for a return to the mass conversions of the Restoration Movement. Whatever the reasons, a revival of hearts and minds is essential if churches of Christ are to begin again to lead the lost to Christ in substantial numbers. The Mauriceville Church is spiritually prospering today not simply because of some formula that can be systematically applied, but because of shared vision that exists among the shepherds, deacons, evangelists, and body of the believers. When that vision changes or if a large enough percentage of the congregation stops sharing in the vision, the success of the church will slow and ultimately stop. This lesson will discuss briefly the vision of the Mauriceville body of Christ.

A Biblical Foundation for Our Vision

Have you ever been reading the book of Acts and found yourself struggling to harmonize the "numbers don't matter" mindset with the joy of numerical success seen within the pages of the church history? "Three thousand souls" are baptized in 2:41, "multitudes of men and women" were being added in 5:14, the number "continued to increase greatly" in 6:7, plus many other statements revealing the growth of the early church found

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throughout the book. Perhaps the mantra that “numbers don’t matter” is a defeatist attitude, and what should rather be said is that “numbers alone don’t matter.” Numerical growth is irrelevant if there is no spiritual growth. But the Lord wants souls and He expects us to be laboring heartily to bring in the numbers as well.

A better vision of the church is picture the impact that the church should have on the world around us through the gospel of Christ. The attackers of the faith said, “These men who have upset the world have come here also” in Acts 17:6. What if we were the ones ‘upsetting the world’ today? That certainly cannot happen solely from the preaching during worship.

The Scripture presents a tremendous view of the impact the church can have on the world. Isaiah 2:2-3 speaks of the new covenant the subsequent work of the Lord’s church saying, *“The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk His paths.’”*

Why should we not have a vision of grandeur and glory for the local church, knowing that we are the mountain of the Lord in this community? Why should we settle for what we are currently accomplishing? The vision shown to us of the church in Scripture is much more powerful than we have yet attained. Indeed, no matter what we have attained as a church there is always more that can be accomplished.

Making Jesus’ Goals our Goals

Upon the rock of Peter’s confession and faith Jesus built His church. (Matthew 16:18) As His church we must make Jesus’ goals our own. So what are Jesus’ goals for the church? A few of them include growth, the word being sown, and faithfulness from His disciples.

Jesus wants the church to grow. I am always surprised that many Christians do not seem to understand this as a goal of our Lord. Sometimes this lack of understanding presents itself through comments such as, “That church is too big.” Where would these brethren have gone if they were in Jerusalem with a church of 5000 men (not including women and

A Church with Vision



children) and growing? (Acts 4:4) And a better question still, does Jesus think the church is too big? The parable of the sower suggests that growth is exactly what the Lord desires.

Jesus says,

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32)

Jesus wants the seed sown everywhere in order to bring about this growth. The parable of the sower shows that the seed, the word of God, should be sown into all soils so that the seed can perform its task and the soil can do with it as it pleases. (Matthew 13:2-9) The seed will not reach all of the places it needs to reach if we are looking only for the soils, or hearts, that we think will be receptive. The church should be in the business of sowing everywhere!

Jesus wants disciples to keep His commands. Truth, repentance, and devotion are all summed up in the great commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:18-20) The church should be teaching all to observe the Lord's commands. Christ is our Teacher and we are to aid all in becoming more devoted students of His.

See What Others Do Not

The last key to being a church of vision is to be able to see what others do not. We must see potential in the community that we are laboring within. We must also be able to recognize the options for spreading the gospel that perhaps others have overlooked. We can stay within the bounds of Scriptural authority and yet still approach evangelism and edification in very uncommon ways. We must also be able to recognize the discipline and hard work that is necessary for success. Too many brethren labor under the delusion that success either comes easily or not at all, and they could not be more incorrect. Success only comes with difficulty, constant struggle, occasional heart ache, and constant sniping from those who would denigrate our efforts. Even so, we must strive to become the image of Christ to this community. I pray that we can always share a vision of the church with one another, the apostles, and our Lord!



Lesson 1

A Church with Vision

Can a "formula" of some kind be simply applied to cause church growth? If more is needed, then what?

What is one example of a parable that shows the desire of Christ for numeric growth?

What must the church teach those who come into it, according to Christ? Why is that necessary?

What are three things that we must see that others do not?

A Church with Planning

IN PREPARATION...

1 Thessalonians 1

What did Paul constantly bear in mind about them?

What were they to all the believers?

What had sounded forth from them?

What were they waiting for?

Having a shared vision is essential to the growth and healthy functioning of the local church, but it is only the beginning. Careful and deliberate planning to plot a course are essential to realizing the vision. Many seem to think that planning and goal setting are concepts solely suited to the business world, but these things are necessary in every area of life if success is to be found. We find the apostle Paul constantly planning and goal setting his work as an apostle regarding when and where he would visit, the work he wanted to accomplish, etc. But how does a church go about planning in order to actualize their vision? This lesson will discuss some of the principles that guide the planning process of the Mauriceville Church's leaders.

Consider the Successes of Others

It would be foolish to ignore the successes of other faithful churches as we seek to labor for the Lord in Mauriceville. In fact, many of the current efforts taking place here were seen at other congregations first. For instance, we use a yearly theme along with a yearly theme book to bring all of the years efforts into concert with one another, but we did not invent this idea. A congregation of Christ's people in the north was doing this and our leadership thought it was a great idea so we adapted and adopted it! The Big Picture was originally developed by Ken Craig and, after our own modifications, has been successfully used here to teach the gospel. Many other things could be named as well. Why would we not see what is working to bring Jesus glory in other places and then try those things here?

The Thessalonians served as a great example to other churches during the first century. Paul says they "became an example to all the believers" and praises them for their spiritual focus. (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8) Indeed, even other congregations sometimes now look to Mauriceville and seek to learn from our

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growth and techniques. (We will discuss efforts with other churches in a future lesson.) That is the way it should work. The successes of other Christians is our success, and our success is success for others as well. We are all laborers in one body. We must continue to look to the successes of others and implement them when possible to improve our own work.

Consider the Failures of Others

It logically follows, then, that we should also be willing to learn from the failures of other churches. Who does not look to the letter of 1 Corinthians for exhortations regarding the numerous problems in the Corinthian church? We do the same thing. "What went wrong?" is a common question that we ask when considering churches that are struggling or have failed altogether. If we do learn from their example then we are destined to become such an example. Whether it be falling into false teachings, compromising the truth, failing to bring the lost to Christ, or division due to infighting, we must learn from the mistakes of other congregations to keep those things from happening in this place.

Planning with a Mind to Authority

Another typical step of planning in the church, particular when some change is being suggested, is to consider anew what the Scripture says regarding the issue and to debate the authority to perform such an action. Many times I have sat through meetings where theoretical objections were being offered in order to debate whether or not there was authority to put into place some idea. Honest hearts must be able to analyze God's word regularly to reflect on Jesus' will for His church.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5) And a like exhortation is given, "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged." (1 Corinthians 11:31) Leaders of the church are mere stewards of what belongs to Christ. If we disregard the Lord's will to carry out our own then we are sure to be judged by Him.

Successfully Implementing Plans

Once a plan has materialized and been tested for authority, then we must consider how to put the plan into place. Several practical things must be considered. First of all, are the

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leaders in agreement with whatever action is being discussed? The church's leaders must be a united front. It is understandable that there will be disagreements on matters of judgment from time to time. But now that a decision has been made, will unity prevail? It is better to answer those questions before an action is taken rather than afterward.

We might also ask, "Is the church ready for what is about to happen?" So much thought and conversation is invested among shepherds, deacons, and evangelists about church issues that it can be easy to assume that, if we came to agreement, all of the church is in agreement. What is the general 'temperature' of the church regarding the idea? Again, it is better to know sooner than later. If the church is not yet ready then it may be wiser to devote public studies and discussions about the topic so that there will not be any surprise or anger when something different takes place. Even in the early church the apostles commanded the brethren to consider such things. Paul says regarding the truth that "there is no such thing as an idol" and all meat is acceptable to eat that "not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now" could not eat with a clean conscience. (1 Corinthians 8:4, 7) Patience and teaching was necessary to help these weaker brethren.

Assuming the leaders are in general agreement and the church is suitably prepared, we might also ask, "Are the leaders ready for the blowback from this action?" There will always be people outside of the congregation ready to criticize any actions taken that do not meet their approval. Sometimes these voices are barely noticeable, but other times they may attempt to disrupt the work of the congregation. If the leaders are not aware or prepared for such things they may respond too slowly, passively, or even too aggressively to the critics. It is wise to discuss the potential for blowback before it arrives.

Love is the Motivation

Love for the Lord, love for one another, and love for lost souls should drive all that a church does. As we seek to implement strategies to more fully realize a vision of the church that more capably accomplishes those desires we must be patient and wise in our efforts. May God grant wisdom to the church's leaders and show us the Way ever more clearly!



Lesson 2

A Church with Planning

In what way should the successes of other faithful churches be our success? How can we, as a church, share in our successes with others?

Why is it important to always consider anew the principles of biblical authority in our actions? What passages remind us of this?

What issue was causing struggles for some at the Corinthian church and straining personal relationships? What principles should aid the church?

What should be our primary motivations for all that we do?

A Church that Works

IN PREPARATION...

Ephesians 4

What is the purpose of the church positions Paul mentions?

How are we to speak the truth?

What must we lay aside?

What must the thief do?

The Jews returning from exile during the days of Nehemiah were able to accomplish great deeds because they “had a mind to work.” (Nehemiah 4:6) In the last two lessons we have considered how to be a church of vision and a church with planning. Those things are essential to becoming a properly functioning church. However, if a church does not have a mind to work then vision and planning will not produce tangible fruit.

With so many tasks and such visions of glory as the church is depicted with in Scripture it can be easy to become overwhelmed and shut down. Besides that, some people and churches are simply lazy. Consider for a few moments how to be a church that works.

Being an Active Church

Jesus saw great need for the truth of God during His days and told the disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Luke 10:2) It is no accident that He spoke these words to the very people who would be responsible for carrying the gospel throughout the world. They had to see the need so that they would get to the work! Can we see the need today?

Enormous tasks are laid at the feet of the local church to take care of by the Lord. First and foremost we are to be spreading the gospel to the world around us. We must also take responsibility for building up the saints who are already a part with us. The church must also stand ready to care for the needy saints and every person must be seeking opportunities to “do good to all.” (Galatians 6:10) Each of these tasks requires a great deal of energy and time to accomplish. What is a church to do?

We must be workers. The culture of the congregation must be active. This attitude must permeate the entire body of believers.

A Church that Works



A great sign of an active church is the growth of ideas and efforts from among the general membership that is then supported and encouraged by the leadership. Far too often Christians are mere observers in the activities of the church and then complain that there is nothing for them to do. If a Christian feels that there is no work to be involved with then they should create opportunities or ideas that can be shown to the shepherds and deacons. In so doing they can not only be busy working but also helping to create opportunities for others.

Organization is Essential

Just as organization is essential to building a vision and planning a path to achieve it, so is organization essential to carrying out the work of the church. Even when all agree that some task must be done, until a person is put in charge of the task people tend to wait for someone else to act. One of the organizational needs of churches is for everyone to know who does what and to put into place a system for making individuals responsible for their assigned tasks.

The apostles recognized this need in Acts 6. When the hellenist widows were being overlooked they knew that they did not have time to oversee the task, it had to be organized, and someone had to be responsible for making sure the work was done. Thus, they instructed the church to select out seven men full of the Spirit that could oversee the workmen who were likely the very first deacons in Christ's church. (Acts 6:1-6)

As local churches were established throughout the world, shepherds were also put into place to be responsible for the spiritual oversight of the congregations. Paul visits one such group of men, the Ephesian elders, and says, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28) Organization is essential, according to the apostles and the Holy Spirit, to the proper functioning of every congregation.

Organization with Purpose

The end goal of organization is not simply to be organized. We are to organize so that the work will be accomplished just as it was in Acts 6. Is this not the reason that Jesus organized local churches? The entire New Testament is predicated upon the idea that Jesus has established the local church structure so that the gospel will be spread and the related

A Church that Works



works will be performed well.

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

As we seek to be a church that works, let us remember that our Lord is holding us accountable to equip the saints and build up the body of Christ.

Keeping Our Zeal

Thinking of all the work to be done can be exhausting. “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” (Galatians 6:9) How can we keep our zeal with so much yet to accomplish?

First, we must rejoice in our victories. Marking achievements is great for morale and reminds us that we are accomplishing a great work for the Lord. The satisfaction we gain from completing a task can keep the fire kindled in our hearts to pursue even more!

That leads us to the second recommendation; we must set new goals. Goals must be achievable, but not easily achievable. They must be something worth celebrating, and then they must be replaced when completed so that we see another waypoint to reach. Just because our work never ends doesn't mean that it must feel like drudgery. We are fellow laborers with our Lord. Let that always be a source of strength, knowing that we are not alone and that He recognizes our efforts.



Lesson 3

A Church that Works

What three great tasks are laid at the feet of local churches to oversee?

What is a great sign of an active church?

What is the purpose of organization? Give Scripture to support your answer.

In what two ways can we help to keep our zeal alive?

A Process for Leadership Selection

IN PREPARATION...

1 Timothy 3

Why is household management tied to an overseers work?

Why not appoint a new convert?

Men who would be deacons must "first" be _____.

Paul is writing so that Timothy would know what?

The church needs shepherds and deacons. Jesus gave those positions because of this truth (Ephesians 4:11) and the apostles anxiously sought to have qualified leaders put into position. (Acts 14:23) The process of appointing leaders in local churches is shown in several statements of principle, but a measure of liberty is granted to churches regarding some of the specifics about how to handle appointments.

Many churches are afraid to attempt appointing new leaders. There have been many church quarrels and divisions that seemingly originated from the leadership selection process. However, those quarrels usually relate to much deeper problems within the church or scriptural problems with the manner in which leaders were selected. The Mauriceville church has enjoyed numerous leadership appointments over the years that have been peaceful and unifying. Love and respect for one another is a large portion of the reason why but the system of leadership appointment we employ is also beneficial to the harmony of the church. This lesson will discuss the method we currently use to nominate, examine, and appoint new leaders into the positions of shepherds and deacons.

Preparing the Church

The selection of new leaders is a cause of much study and reflection in the congregation. The evangelists are the driving force to begin the nomination process. As the evangelists are given charge by Paul to "set in order" the churches, when the need for more leaders is recognized the evangelists will begin planning to see that the need is met.

The actual process of selection begins with teaching. Timothy and Titus were given the leader qualifications by the apostle Paul and, thus, are ultimately responsible for seeing to it that the church is taught Jesus' will for the men and roles of the

A Process for Leadership Selection



positions. Several lessons, bible studies, and typically a question and answer session are dedicated specifically to the qualifications and works of the deacon and shepherd positions. Only after a general base of knowledge is laid in the local church can the members wisely select the next leaders.

Nominating Leaders

It is the church, not the current leadership, who selects shepherds and deacons to add to those currently serving. When servants were needed to oversee the distribution to the widows the apostles did not select the men. Rather, they instructed, “brethren, select from among you seven men... whom we may put in charge of this task.” (Acts 6:3) We also have leaders who are selected by the brethren.

A locked box is placed in the foyer along with slips of paper and pens. All members are encouraged to consider the men of the congregation to determine who would make fine leaders. They write the names of those men on the paper slips and drop them into the box. The box is left out for nominations for about 2 weeks to give adequate time for reflection among the church.

When the set time has expired, the evangelists collect the box and contact all of the individuals who have been nominated. Peter says that leaders should serve “not under compulsion, but voluntarily.” (1 Peter 5:2) This is the first qualification to be considered among the nominees. The nominee will decide whether he will be considered for the position for which he was nominated or not. Any who declines the nomination has his name removed from the list and the process continues without him.

Nominees Examined

Those who have accepted their nomination are announced to the congregation so that each one can be examined by the church. A time for examination is given which is usually about two weeks. If any member has a Scriptural objection to a man’s nomination he or she is to go speak to the nominee personally in order to come to a resolution.

Interpersonal conflicts should be resolved among all brethren, and not just during the leadership selection process. It must be understood that raising an objection to a nominee is not about ‘what I want’ or ‘what I think.’ This time period is to consider Scriptural

A Process for Leadership Selection

objections based on the qualifications given to Timothy and Titus. If a man is Scripturally qualified for the position according to the Spirit then who has the authority to stand against that man's nomination?

In the event that some dispute is not resolved in private between the nominee and the one who challenges their appointment, they are to submit into the box the objection, who it is against, their own name, and sign that they have personally spoken to this individual about the issue. It is only after they have spoken personally to the nominee without resolution that any others will join the conversation.

If a Scriptural issue exists between a nominee and another Christian the shepherds will sit down with all of the involved parties and seek to ascertain an understanding of the issue and resolve the conflict in whatever way is necessary.

Appointing Leaders

After the time period for examination is completed, those men who were nominated by the church and have either not been objected to on a Scriptural basis or who have had Scriptural objections resolved will be appointed into their respective roles as shepherds or deacons by the evangelists. They will be recognized by the church as leaders of the congregation and the faith. We remember, "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do" and "those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 3:1, 13)

We have also begun the process of enjoining the appointment of these men with a voluntary church-wide fast. We see the example in Scripture, "When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23) With our mutual prayer and fasting we rejoice in the new leaders who will help the Mauriceville Church to grow and spiritually prosper in the coming years!



Lesson 4

A Process for Leadership Selection

Who selected the servants in Acts 6? How are we imitating that pattern?

Why are nominees given the first opportunity to remove their own names and what is a Scripture it is based on?

What is the difference between a personal objection and a Scriptural objection?
When should interpersonal conflicts be resolved between members?

Who appoints the new leaders into their positions? How does the church as a whole participate on the day of appointment?

Shepherds of the Church

IN PREPARATION...

Acts 20

What did Paul declare to the Ephesians?

Who made these men overseers of the church?

What was coming after Paul's departure?

What does Paul commend the Ephesian elders to?

Jesus places shepherds over each church. (Titus 1:5) These men are to have proven spiritual and leadership qualities so that the congregation can see them as examples and follow them. (1 Peter 5:3) While a great deal of time is spent studying the qualifications and character of these men, it seems good to also help the church to better understand the mechanics of how the elders carry out the work of shepherding in Mauriceville.

This lesson is meant to explain the primary tasks of these leading men and how they accomplish the commandments given in God's word regarding their work. It is also good to note that our shepherds are also just men, so they make mistakes from time to time that require them to reconsider their approaches to various situations. These systems are merely put into place to allow for a more systematic approach to the work and help to minimize the number of problems that arise.

What do the shepherds do?

Several passages of Scripture discuss the work of the shepherds. (Acts 20, 1 Peter 5, Titus 1) However, the Scripture does not always lay out how those specific tasks are to be accomplished. The primary responsibilities of our shepherds and how they complete those duties are as follows.

Work with Struggling Christians

The church is to build up the weak. Sometimes Christians fall into spiritual slumps and require special attention from the church. It is the shepherds' job to identify those who are struggling and find some way to encourage them if at all possible. Indeed, all Christians are to seek to build one another up. (Galatians 6:1-2) The shepherds, as the term implies, are still ultimately responsible for seeing to it that the members are growing. This may be accomplished through personal studies and visits, words of wisdom, or in various other ways.

Shepherds of the Church



In times where a saint has turned back from the truth and is living in rebellion to our Lord, the burden of marking him or her as unfaithful falls upon the shepherds' shoulders. Of course, this is only done after every other effort has been exhausted to renew them to the Lord and is in keeping with the command:

"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

Establish New Christians

When one is baptized into the body of Christ they must be strengthened through knowledge in God's word and exhortation from the brethren. In Mauriceville the shepherds are primarily responsible for establishing new Christians. We are currently using the Firmly Rooted study book, written by the evangelists, to help with this work. One of the shepherds is to meet each week with each new Christian in order to study all six lessons of the workbook. Those times also present opportunities to discuss other issues beyond the workbook and to get to know one another.

Jesus Himself, the Great Shepherd, says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27) While new Christians must learn the voice of Jesus through His word, the shepherds should also be seeking to have such relationships with their spiritual flock that the Christians know their voices, as well.

Monthly and Weekly Meetings

Once per month the shepherds of Mauriceville assemble at a home along with the evangelists, share a meal together, and spend time discussing the issues facing the church, individuals who are struggling, goals and things that need attention during the next month. There is also typically a bible study focusing on interpersonal relationships, the shepherd's role, leadership, or some doctrinal issue that needs to be addressed. The studies are led by one of the evangelists and conversation around the topic is shared in by all. The monthly meetings are essential for our model as it allows for few time restraints so that all issues can be exhausted, as needed.

Our shepherds also have a weekly meeting to discuss pressing issues and to consider the

Shepherds of the Church



progress being made accomplishing the goals outlined during the monthly meeting. Any conversations that have been had since the monthly meeting that impact the conversations had then will be shared so that the shepherds can be on the same page moving forward.

Weekly Visiting

At least once per week the shepherds set time aside to visit those who are sick, struggling, new to the faith, or simply haven't been visited in a while. They typically go out in pairs or recruit others from the church to ride with them. These times are essential for relationship building and for having intimate conversations that are more difficult to have during service times.

Future Planning

If leaders do not have vision their destination will not be a desirable place. Churches need shepherds who have a vision of what the church can and should be. These leaders must invest time and thought into developing Scriptural and Jesus-glorifying goals for the congregation to achieve. We must labor in faith, but that does not mean we should labor without direction.

When we say that our shepherds plot the course for the church we mean that they are looking ahead 5, 10, and more years to see where the church ought to be at the point. This is an often forgotten role of our leaders but it is just as essential as the other works they do.

Spiritually Feed the Church

The shepherds also help the evangelists to identify any specific studies or lessons that are needed for the church. Although the evangelists primarily build the schedule for sermons and classes, the shepherds give input when they feel that some topic needs more attention. In this area and several others as mentioned, the shepherds and evangelists work very closely together to provide spiritual nourishment for the Christians in Mauriceville as best they are able.

The work of the shepherds is central to the growth and well-being of the Mauriceville church. They deserve honor and love from all of the brethren for the things that are accomplished. I pray that the Lord continues to bless this church with men of faith and vision to lead as shepherds.

Lesson 5

Shepherds of the Church



What are the primary tasks of the shepherds?

What are some of the benefits of having the shepherds take the primary responsibility for establishing new Christians?

How often do the shepherds meet? What takes place during the meetings?

Why is future planning important to the church?

Servants of the Church

IN PREPARATION...

Acts 6

What was the conflict in the Jerusalem church?

Why didn't the apostles oversee the work themselves?

Who approved of the apostles' statements?

What happened to the number of the disciples?

Special servants, or "deacons," are essential to the proper functioning of the church. Their work allows the shepherds and evangelists to be focused on the spiritual tasks of building up the Christians and spreading the gospel while the deacons care for the physical needs of the church. However, that does not mean that their role is not a spiritual one.

The men appointed as deacons are to be spiritual leaders in the church that have shown devotion, wisdom, and trustworthiness and have lived the qualifications as enumerated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These men will be in a position whereby they can serve the church well and increase the effectiveness of the gospel or serve poorly and perhaps destroy the work and progress of the church.

Paul says, "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 3:13) It is easy to understand why. Service to the work of the Lord in often unglorified manners builds up the whole body.

Primary Responsibilities of Our Deacons

So that the congregation can better understand the important work and tasks of our deacons, this lesson will explain some of the primary responsibilities of this group of servants. It should be noted that we have actually identified over 100 tasks that our deacons oversee, but for obvious reasons we will not be considering each of those.

Caring for the Budget

The earliest accounts of deacons reveal that financial responsibilities were laid at their feet. (Acts 6:1ff) It is for this reason that they "must also first be tested." (1 Timothy 3:10) Our deacons must care for the church's finances and see to it

Servants of the Church



that the budget is used wisely. They determine how much money is available to the church and assign amounts to be budgeted for specific tasks. The shepherds will at times discuss budgeting issues with the deacons when changes need to be made, such as determining what the church can afford to spend on new construction, how much is available for outside evangelism, etc.

Maintaining the Church's Assets

Our deacons handle the maintenance needed on the property and building owned by the church. Everything from replacing light bulbs to repairing the toilets is overseen by these servants. There is much more to be done than meets the eye of those who assemble at worship times.

Church Benevolence

Acts 6 also reveals that the early deacons were involved directly in the benevolence of the church toward needy saints. Likewise, we entrust our deacons to make difficult decisions and handle the financial responsibilities regarding benevolent needs.

When a saint in Mauriceville falls into need our deacons oversee the benevolent work to relieve them. They determine the capabilities of the church and give support when necessary from the treasury, but they also can be found organizing individual efforts beyond that. When there is a desire to relieve one who is not a part of Christ's body these men can sometimes be found collecting funds from individuals outside of the treasury to give aid.

It is important to have servants, then, who properly understand the Scriptural teachings of biblical authority and are able to make a distinction between the funds of the individual and the funds of the church. Our deacons seek to imitate the mindset of the apostle Paul when he shows the distinction between family responsibilities and church authority. (1 Timothy 5:16)

Ongoing Church Projects and Data Collection

There are many projects simultaneously taking place in Mauriceville that the deacons oversee. The recent construction on the building is apparent, but also works such as collection of visitor information, security protocols during worship, lesson recording and video operations, etc. all fall under the purview of our servants.

Servants of the Church



Future Planning

What will the church need in the future to carry out its work? What types of problems may the church encounter relating to church's property regarding issues such as safety and security? While our shepherds are planning for the spiritual and numerical growth of the work our deacons must also be thinking about the effects of said growth on the budgetary and physical assets of the Mauriceville Church.

All leaders need vision. In fact, there can be no leadership without vision. We task our deacons with reflecting upon the current and future struggles of the church and working to remedy those things before they are upon us. As has been said, "The one who does not plan, plans to fail."

Individual and Collective Work

Most of the tasks we have discussed are individually delegated to specific deacons and they are responsible for seeing to it that each work is done well. That does not mean, though, that these men do not function as a collective. They are accountable to one another for the tasks, which means they must report to one another. They are all deacons and therefore should consider questions concerning their works with one another to have the benefits of shared wisdom.

Our deacons are to meet monthly for a bible study led by the evangelists and to discuss any changes or problems as well as to give a report of their work. They also may meet more often when necessary to discuss more pressing issues. Setting times aside specifically to discuss their work allows for many conversations to take place that otherwise may not have happened at all.

Special servants are to be honored for their works sake. We are blessed to have zealous and capable men serving as deacons and pray that the Lord continues to bless this church with leaders who know how to serve.

Lesson 6

Servants of the Church



What two important responsibilities are given over to deacons in Acts 6?

Why is it important that deacons understand the difference between individual and church authority?

What types of ongoing projects do the deacons oversee?

Why do the deacons need to be thinking about future plans for the church?

A Process for Leadership Building

IN PREPARATION...

John 21

What did Jesus ask Peter three times?

What was to happen to Peter when he was older?

What was Jesus' instruction to Peter regarding his future?

How did many misunderstand Jesus' statement about the disciple He loved?

Another generation of Christians is always in development and it is important that the church invest in the growth of these future leaders. This is a commonly accepted view regarding our young people, but the same principle is true for those adults who will be future deacons and shepherds.

Helping to develop men to fill these roles in the future has the future benefit of better equipped leaders and the immediate benefit of greater investment in the Mauriceville Church. The congregation has recently begun to implement plans for developing future leaders. Of course, if there are to be good leaders in the future our current leaders must model it for the church now.

Principles of Leadership

There are principles of leadership that are essential to having a strong body of shepherds and deacons. The two primary principles that our leaders should be seeking to excel in are those of influence and servitude.

John Maxwell, one of the world's foremost experts on leadership, explains simply that "leadership is influence." In other words, if a person does not hold influence over others then he/she is not a leader, regardless of what position they hold. On the other hand, if a person has influence in the lives of others then they are a leader even if they do not hold a specific leadership position. The same principle applies to church leaders. We have looked to Acts 6 several times and know that the apostles told the church to "select from among you seven men of good reputation" for the benevolent work needed. (Acts 6:3) Were the men that were selected already respected by the church? Yes. Did they already hold influence? Apparently so. The same must be true of those appointed to the positions of shepherd and deacon.

A Process for Leadership Building



Our leaders must also understand that true leadership is about serving others. This was a recurring lesson from our Lord to the apostles. Jesus says,

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.” (Luke 22:25-26)

Likewise our leaders must understand that their positions and their work exists to serve others. Arrogant and self-willed men can, and do, bring much harm to the body of Christ from positions of authority. Jesus summarizes what a church leader must be concerned with when He tells Peter, “Tend my sheep.” (John 21:17) Although a shepherd has charge over his flock, his efforts are spent serving their needs for their good.

Leadership Training Among Leaders

Leadership is learned and earned, it does not come naturally. It is with this fact in mind that the evangelists have been working to develop leadership based studies for the shepherds and deacons. The elders spent last year studying Crucial Conversations, a study-book on having productive interactions when emotions are high. A series of studies are currently underway with the deacons on the leadership needs among the servants. It is important that any who seek to lead well continue to learn and apply lessons on leadership improvement.

The brethren need to see memorable leadership displayed. It is written, “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7) This exhortation would mean nothing had the brethren witnessed poor leadership with selfish motivations from these men. We should all strive to leave strong impressions of godliness and leadership on others.

Creating New Interest

While our current leaders ought to be working diligently to improve themselves, it is also important that they generate new interest in the positions they hold and in leadership principles from other members. New leaders will be needed both due to age and health taking its toll on current leaders as well as church growth which requires more leaders to oversee. We are in a struggle against time to bring about the next group of shepherds and deacons from among ourselves.

A Process for Leadership Building



“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.” (1 Timothy 3:1) If such is the case, then why are so few anxious to become overseers? Could it be because so many decades have been spent making the office of overseer seem like anything but a “fine work”? Many churches are not willing to follow anyone and reject godly leadership the first time they have a disagreement with some opinion. Many Christians speak with lament over the heartache associated with the work and neglect to speak of the joy and accomplishment that can also be found within it. Many elders have created troubles and strife by seeking to lead as dictators who issue decrees on issues they have no right to speak on as it is beyond God’s word. The culmination of these issues has caused many to fear becoming overseers, or deacons or evangelists, instead of aspiring to this God-ordained, Spirit appointed office.

If we are to create new interest then we must begin to speak highly of those who lead, and show them respect and love for their work’s sake. The culture of the church must be one that will cause our younger men to look to our leaders with joy and trust to go to them with whatever issue they face. This must be the first step to developing future leaders.

Including Potential Leaders

An important step that we are beginning to take among our current leadership is to include individuals who may one day hold these positions at various times so that they can have a glimpse of what the work is truly like.

The deacons have been recruiting others to help them with their appointed tasks. Not only does this help with their workload, but it also enables others to get a feel for their work. The evangelists are inviting young men from the congregation to spend time with them doing personal work and biblical studies so that they can gauge their interest in becoming gospel preachers. The shepherds have been inviting various men to attend a meeting of the shepherds and/or do personal visits with those in need so that these men can see the nature of ‘shepherding.’ All of these things add value to the church and any who are interested are welcome to speak to those men about getting involved.

John Maxwell also reminds leaders that “everything rises or falls based on leadership.” It may sound like an exaggeration, but it is not. We must continue to teach the principles of godly leadership so that the church will have a spiritually prosperous present and future.



Lesson 7

A Process for Leadership Building

What two primary principles of leadership must our leaders focus on?

Why did the Christians need to “remember those who led you”? What lessons can we learn from that kind of leadership?

What are some reasons that many may not desire the office of overseer?

What must be done in order for us to generate new interest in church leadership positions?

A Process for Strengthening

IN PREPARATION...

James 5

What should the "sick" do?

What should we do to "one another"?

What does Elijah show us about the power of prayer?

If I turn a straying brother back, what have I done?

As a gardener cares for the garden bringing the plants to maturity so that they can produce fruit, so we must put forth conscious thought and effort toward strengthening new and struggling Christians. There is an art and science to building up faithful Christians and there is never a sure-fire way to accomplish this goal as it also depends upon the heart and desire of the individual we would love to see strengthened. Nevertheless, we continue to seek better methods of grounding individuals to the truth of Christ. In this lesson we will discuss some of the current methods we are using in Mauriceville for strengthening as well as some areas we would like to develop toward.

New Christians

It is an exciting moment when one obeys the gospel and is added to the body of Christ. Every individual comes out of the water of baptism purposed to serve the Lord, but somewhere along the way many fall to the wayside just as Jesus said would happen in the parable of the sower. (Luke 8:5-8) It is our responsibility to strive to minimize the number of individuals who give up their faith.

Firmly Rooted is a study book written by the evangelists to help teach some basic principles of Christianity to the new Christian. It contains six lessons which discuss the basic principles of bible authority, godly living, and and other foundations of the faith. Once a person has been baptized they are given this book as well as a NASB bible. One of the shepherds then sets a study time and begins the six lesson study with one lesson per week.

It is necessary for new members to be specifically invited to activities that are taking place outside of the regular assembly times such as home studies and potlucks. Many who are new do not realize that they are welcome to attend such events and

A Process for Strengthening



others simply feel uncomfortable going to an unknown setting. However, those events are great for developing more familiarity with one another on a personal basis and are open to all!

We are also looking forward to offering a basic principles class during bible class assembly times in the near future. Enrollment in this class will be encouraged for new Christians but will also be open to others who may simply want a refresher on some of the basic teachings of the faith.

New Christians need to be involved in what is taking place with the church. They can be involved in evangelism, aiding in some worship task such as leading prayers or serving in the Lord's supper, and/or being enlisted by one of the deacons to assist with their work. It is important that all Christians who are members at Mauriceville are opportunities to be involved in the Lord's work to the extent that they desire and are able. It is our hope that the deacons will be able to incorporate newer Christians into these tasks in increasing amounts.

Struggling Christians

We have all had struggles in our spiritual walk at some point. When brothers and sisters in faith are struggling there are a number of things the church can do to encourage them on to greater faith. When one of our own is falling to the wayside we must do our best to help to pull them back onto the path of truth.

Making a personal visit to one who is struggling is a great thing to do. Our shepherds make personal visits because too much is lost in a phone call, email, or text message. Those other forms of communication are not useless, but they do not convey the same sincerity or have the same impact as a face to face visit. There is a personal type of appeal that has much more impact in person, and our goal is to have as much of an impact as possible. Paul writes,

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

It is only through bearing one another's burdens that we can fulfill the law of Christ. It is important for all of us to find opportunities to encourage our struggling brothers and

A Process for Strengthening



sisters.

The Firmly Rooted books are sometimes used to study with struggling Christians, as well. At other times the elders study another study book entitled Enjoying Christianity. Either way, the purpose is to help our brethren return to God's word and consider His will for our lives. The time and work invested in working with others in this way are good works to be involved in with James' instruction in mind:

"My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20)

Those who are struggling with their faith are often overwhelmed with the thought of turning their life around. One approach we use to help individuals take the first steps toward faithfulness is through setting basic goals of commitment. Setting small goals of personal faith whether it be to do personal bible study for a set amount of time each week or attending services a minimum amount each week can help to build godly habits that can be improved with time. While we would wish that everyone could go "from 0 to 60 miles per hour" instantly, the reality is often that godly habits must be built incrementally.

Patience with All

"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3)

These words of Paul reveal the attitude that we must have toward all of our brethren, especially those are new or struggling. Patience is essential to enabling lasting spiritual growth. Can I expect my garden to produce their fruit before the plants have grown to maturity? I can only labor to provide the proper nutrients and give time in order to receive the end result. The same is true with regard to working with the new or struggling. Let us be patient, understanding, encouraging, and diligent to aid those who are most fragile in the body of Christ to grow up into the image of the Son of God.



Lesson 8

A Process for Strengthening

Why is it important to specifically invite new Christians to outside activities?

What are the benefits of doing a personal visit over something like a phone call?

What does Paul say we must do to “fulfill the law of Christ”?

Why is patience necessary when working with new or struggling Christians?

A Culture of Love

IN PREPARATION...

1 Corinthians 13

What "is" love?

What is love "not"?

What does love rejoice with?

When does love fail?

Love has become little more than a buzz word among many Christians. We say that we love the Lord and love our brethren when our actions betray the truth of our hearts; we either do not understand what love is or we simply do not love. This local church is seeking to have a culture that loves, and that is no small order to fill. This lesson will be devoted to understanding what love is, why it matters, and how every action of the church should be rooted from love first and foremost.

What Love Is

It is common struggle for new Christians to fathom that they now must "love" these people that they just met, know little about, and may not share a great deal in common with outside of the faith. Truly, this struggle exists because we often equate "love" with "butterfly feelings." However, this is not the idea of love (agape) in our Scriptures. To break down the concept into words we may more easily relate to, consider three things that Scriptural and brotherly love is.

First of all, love is helping one another. Specifically, it is putting the needs of others ahead of ourselves. One writer exhorts the brethren,

"Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed." (Hebrews 12:12-13)

Although the word "love" is not used, that is exactly the attitude that is being commanded. They are to see the needs of others, in this context he is specifically referring to spiritual needs, and go out of their way to strengthen their brethren.

Love always shows respect to others. The thought can be seen in the teaching of Jesus when He speaks the famous words, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them

A Culture of Love



to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12) We would truly be loving one another if we kept these words while interacting with our brothers and sisters.

Love is also forgiving one another. If a Christian refuses to forgive when their brethren have wronged them they are truly lacking an understanding of Jesus’ will for us. Paul writes, *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”* (Colossians 3:12-13)

We are so thankful for mercy from our Lord. If we, though, fail to extend forgiveness to others we will not receive it ourselves.

Why Love is Important

There is certainly a great deal of emphasis put on love in our new testaments. But why? Several statements reveal a few of the reasons that love is so important.

First of all, love for the brethren is love for God. The apostle John explains, *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”* (1 John 4:7-8)

These words ought to send a shudder into the hearts of those who refuse to live the principles of love in their dealings with brethren.

Jesus also explains that love is essential for evangelism. He tells the apostles, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:34-35)

What if they did not have love for one another? What if they paid mere lip service to the idea of love? Their work would have failed and the gospel would have had to find another way to be heard. Instead, these men lived an example of love and service and we still marvel at their accomplishments today.

Lastly, love unifies. “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of

A Culture of Love

A photograph showing two people on a rocky cliff. One person is higher up, reaching down with their hand outstretched. The other person is lower down, also reaching up with their hand outstretched. They appear to be helping each other climb or are in a moment of connection. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

unity.” (Colossians 3:14) Churches divide for many reasons, but chief among them is a lack of love for one another. How many conflicts could have been resolved and misunderstandings cleared up if the unifying power of love was present in the hearts of those involved? And how can we hope to stand pleasing before the Lord if we are divisive, lacking love for one another or the church Jesus has purchased with His own blood?

Every Act of the Church is Based on Love

When the church’s culture is based on love every act of the church will be rooted in love. When we worship it will be out of love for the Lord. We will sing with love for one another. We will study with a love of truth. We will live the teachings and love others, as well. When the evangelists step into the pulpit they will speak to exalt others and Christ instead of themselves. The truth will be unhindered by poor attitudes and selfishness. Evangelism will be done by all out of sincere love for our fellow man who has also been made in the image of God. We will leave our comfort zones out of deep love for the eternal soul of every one we can instruct. Even when church discipline and withdrawal is carried out, it will be done with love and the goal of winning this one back to the truth in Christ.

There is nothing that the church does or should do that is not based upon love. It was established by the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit. If we are to labor within His church we must constantly reexamine our motives and ensure that we act out of love alone.

Each Christian who joins with us in our work in Mauriceville, every shepherd, deacon, and evangelist, must add to the culture of love in this place. If that ever ceases to characterize our work then we might as well close the doors.

Lesson 9

A Culture of Love

In what three manners is love described by the author?

What did Jesus tell the apostles would happen if they loved one another while they worked?

Why is love necessary for unity in a church?

What actions of the church should be rooted in love? Do you think that is the case in Mauriceville? If not, what can you do to help change it?

Identifying Needs

IN PREPARATION...

2 Corinthians 8

What church had been generous in poverty?

How does Jesus show an example of giving?

It is acceptable according to what?

Who was coming to collect the gift from the Corinthians?

A functional church needs to be concerned with identifying the benevolent needs that arise. This is not nearly as easy of a task as one might assume it is. It took the apostle Paul traveling from church to church for the brethren to be made aware of the needs of the saints in Jerusalem. It took Paul sending letters to various churches for them to be made aware of his own needs at different times. This congregation must have a mindset to seek out the needs of those with whom we have affiliation.

If Needs are Overlooked

By now the reader is familiar with the struggle recounted in Acts 6. Luke writes,

"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food." (Acts 6:1)

This was no small charge. Essentially, the Hellenistic Jews were charging the Hebrews with racism. The needs of their widows were being ignored and they were upset. People often feel ignored or disenfranchised when needs are overlooked. The family members of the unattended can become bitter. Such things lead to greater problems. Division can even come into the church as such oversights can cause festering anger.

Deacons were put into place to remedy the oversight at the Jerusalem church. We, likewise, have deacons in place to care for the benevolent needs of the members. But they must know there is a need in order to handle the need. The Christians of Mauriceville must be willing to approach the deacons when a need arises that they are not able to remedy themselves. These servants have the means and organization to find a way to aid if at all possible. Sometimes they will authorize the use of the church treasury to give aid. At other times they can be seen

Identifying Needs



collecting funds after services to give relief without burdening the treasury. It takes wisdom and work to do the benevolent work they have been assigned and the entire church should be thankful for our deacons' efforts.

Christians Who Act

The church must also be populated with individuals who are personally willing to identify needs and act to remedy them. Dorcas is a woman who serves as a great example of this servant mindset. Peter was coming into the area when she had died. Luke recounts, *"Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did... and all the widows stood beside [Peter], weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them."* (Acts 9:36, 39)

This woman had a reputation for doing benevolent deeds for any who had need. We are blessed to have women within the Mauriceville Church with similar hearts and hands. Indeed, we all should strive to have a heart of servitude in whatever way we have skill or ability.

Individuals can help others in many ways. Preparing meals, helping with some physical project for someone with need, giving personal financial aid, and even a well timed visit can go a long way toward aiding the suffering. We must continue to foster the atmosphere of personal responsibility in helping one another.

Opportunities in the Community

There is one area where the shepherds and evangelists have decided too many opportunities are being missed. Needs arise in the community on a regular basis where Christians could offer aid and open doors for evangelism. Whether it be when someone's house burns, some medical emergency has depleted a family's resources, or any number of other calamities, many Christians who would otherwise be anxious to help are simply unaware of the opportunity.

Christians are to follow Paul's command,

"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

Identifying Needs

A photograph showing two people on a rocky cliff. One person is higher up, reaching down with their hand outstretched. The other person is lower down, also reaching up with their hand outstretched. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Galatians 6:9-10)

All Christians need to help those outside of the church when we have opportunity. We have not gone out of the world and positive interactions with the community will help the gospel to spread to more souls. Although there is not example or authority in the New Testament for the church to open its treasury to unbelievers, there is no such limitations placed upon us as individuals. In fact, James associates our willingness to help others in need with the purity of our faith saying,

“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:27)

It is with these thoughts in mind that the evangelists will begin to offer a webpage for members of the Mauriceville Church to visit for information regarding needs that we know of in the community. Also, if you hear of a need in the community you can submit it to the evangelists and they will add it to the list for others to see as well.

The web address is **mauriceville.info**. The goal is simply to better disseminate knowledge of ongoing needs in the area so that the brethren can consider their ability to act and increase our involvement among those outside of Christ’s body. Let us strive to be beacons of light in the area and examples for others in all good deeds.

Identifying Needs



What can happen if needs are overlooked in the church?

Who is an example of a benevolent Christian in Acts? How can we follow that example?

Why should we try to be aware of needs in the community?

What will mauriceville.info be used for? Who can submit information to it?

A Process for Evangelism

IN PREPARATION...

Acts 16

Where did the vision beckon Paul to go to?

Why was Paul dragged to the authorities?

How did Paul stop the jailer from killing himself?

How many studies were had with the jailer before he was baptized?

Most conversions to Christ today are accomplished at the kitchen table rather than from the pulpit. The struggle with this truth has more to do with our own comfort zones than with any disagreements on the conversion statistics. For instance, in the Mauriceville Church of Christ we have 9 baptisms outside of services for every 1 baptism during service times. Many of those baptized outside of worship have never attended a service beforehand and many of those minority that respond during service times have already been taught the gospel in their homes.

Since the work 'outside of the pulpit' is becoming an increasingly essential part of growing the Lord's body it is good for us to consider some of the tactics of developing contacts in the community that are proving successful in our area.

In 2014, the Mauriceville Church was involved in the repentance and baptism of 22 individuals. This article will discuss the basic plan used to establish contact with nearly all of those souls so that all members can better understand what we are doing.

Putting in the Work

Any gospel preacher who desires success in evangelism must be willing to invest the time necessary to make consistent home visits with outsiders. Making time to establish and develop contacts will come easier if it is built into a weekly schedule.

We have chosen Tuesday nights for working new contacts. Unless there are stipulating circumstances, we will be out late that night each week and can adjust our schedules accordingly. Also, it is helpful mentally with the work because it forces us to 'dig deep' and come up with some productive stop to make when there are no hot leads.

A Process for Evangelism

A photograph showing two people on a rocky cliff. One person is higher up, reaching out their hand towards the other person who is lower down, also reaching out. The background is a blue sky with light clouds.

Hot, Warm, and Cold Leads

Every individual that an evangelist will visit can be classified as either a hot, warm, or cold lead. We define each lead in the following way: Hot Lead-- One who has visited services recently, especially that has a connection to someone in the congregation. Warm Lead-- This person has a connection to a Christian locally and has heard favorable things about the congregation. Cold Call-- An individual with no real connection to the congregation and has never visited. Using these classifications help us to prioritize the stops we will make with the limited amount of time available each week. We will only invest time in cold calls when there are no better options. I have found no measurable success in attempts aimed at cold calls, including attempts through mass media, door knocking campaigns, and mail outs.

While hot leads are obviously most preferred, most conversions in our area begin as warm leads. We are not in an urban area and walk-ins are not very common.

Leaning on the Brethren

Warm leads primarily are discovered through members of the congregation. Having a relationship with the church that results in brethren bringing leads is difficult to build and will only be accomplished through time, wisdom, and earning trust through success with others. No brethren want to have their relationships destroyed by unwise evangelists. On the other hand, if members see us handling their relationships with care and, especially, baptizing others into Christ then they will be anxious to have their contacts meet us.

In the mean time, there are many warm leads to be had without the brethren offering them up directly. For instance, when Sister A discusses someone in the community that she had a spiritual conversation with we might write that persons name down along with the information we have available. Then, we might visit that person at a time of our choosing. The same principle can be applied to sick ones that are mentioned, family of members, etc.

We use our own variation of the Big Picture presentation with great success when studying with many individuals. We track all studies through diligent record keeping so that there is proof of our success or evidence of flaws.

A Process for Evangelism



Taking the Lead

Numerous times I have been told, 'you should not visit Outsider B because he will have no interest,' only to disregard the Christian and baptize Outsider B a short time later.

Another tactic that we employ is making unexpected visits to our leads. While most everyone says, "Call before coming!" we find that what usually happens after calling is a response of, "Now's not a great time." However, if we go unannounced the same person will receive us with hospitality, an apology for some perceived mess, and a worthwhile visit. Very few times have we been received in any other manner. Of course, this may be partly because we are in Texas, but experiences in other areas have not shown this to be the case.

Developing the Relationship

All of these things being considered, we develop the relationship with contacts through a loosely organized three step method. First, we have the initial meet where we simply introduce ourselves, reveal our connection to the individual, have casual conversation, invite them to services (we especially like to put something in their hands such as meeting flier), and then leave. Typically the initial meet is no more than 15 minutes. Next, we have a return visit, usually about 2-3 weeks later. In this visit we express an interest in having them visit the congregation, accept any hospitality they offer, visit for as long as they seem to desire (but no more than an hour), and leave. On the third visit (approximately) another 2 or 3 weeks later, we will go with greater purpose, especially if they have visited by that time, in order to seriously discuss a spiritual issue and/or setting up a Big Picture presentation. If nothing else, we will explain to them what they can expect when they visit and begin discussing some of the major differences between ourselves and the denominations that they have been affiliated with.

Building relationships in the community for evangelism is a goal that requires time, planning, and wisdom to carry out. It is not to be done insincerely, either. May we do all things for His glory!

*This lesson was adapted from an article written by the author for Truth Magazine, February 2015 issue.

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How many baptisms were done outside of services verses during service times on average through 2014 in Mauriceville?

What are hot, warm, and cold leads?

What is the one-night study that we currently use to study the gospel with people?
Have you seen it?

Why do we make unannounced visits more often than announced visits? Does your personal experience agree or disagree with our reasoning?

Lesson 12

A Process for Aiding Other Churches

IN PREPARATION...

Acts 14

What shocking thing happened at Lystra?

How did the work go in Derbe?

Why did Paul go back through the churches?

What did they report to the church at Antioch?

We pray that the work continues to progress well here in Mauriceville. This lesson book has been about our efforts to see to it that souls are saved, services are done in an orderly manner, and the leadership is united to bring glory to God. However, the kingdom of God does not begin or end in Mauriceville. The same spiritual war is being fought in many other places with varying degrees of success.

As Peter began one letter to the saints in another location, "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ..." (2 Peter 1:1) We are united by faith with those serving the Lord in truth and we desire to aid the gospel work in as many places as possible.

Faithful churches seem to have very few 'tricks up their sleeve' for aiding the work in other locations. Usually if we want to aid the work of another group we can think of only one way; send money. The problem with that approach is generally that very little lasting good is accomplished by simply throwing money at a problem. That truth, as well as the strained budget our church has faced in the last few years due to hiring a second evangelist and building a new auditorium, has caused the evangelists and shepherds to design other methods for assisting the work of the Lord in other congregations.

Evangelism Trips

It is a cause for joy to us when the gospel prospers in other places. As Paul writes,

"For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything." (1 Thessalonians 1:8)



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We've all heard the saying many time, "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime." So has our effort through evangelism trips been purposed. Our goal is to primarily teach a church some of the effective evangelistic techniques we have been involved with.

The typical one week gospel meeting approach has shown very little effectiveness in evangelism in recent history. Instead, we take two week trips to congregations that have requested our efforts. The first week is spent working in the community meeting contacts that we have through the local church and inviting those individuals to attend the meeting which will take place the next week. This effort has proven every effective at bringing visitors out everywhere that it has been tried. During the meeting itself, we try to set up studies with the visitors who attend. We have seen individuals baptized during the meeting week at almost every place this work has been done.

During our time there we also help the church to build a website if that has not been done, show how to perform basic maintenance to the site, and teach how to record, edit, and upload sermon videos. The internet is the most common way visitors locate and investigate churches today so it is important that this work is given attention.

Also, we offer advice on simple changes that a church can do to make it more welcoming to visitors. For instance, announcements at many small churches are extremely long, have no relevance to visitors, disseminate information that the members already know, and are extremely disengaging to those visiting. Those types of things may seem small to us but can be important to visitors.

Lastly, we try to teach the church how to present The Big Picture presentation. More than simply learning the presentation, we discuss the types of things the church can expect when using this approach, the need for follow up studies, and how to communicate the purpose of the study in a way that will build interest in others.

These two week evangelism trips have proven very useful for adding souls to the body of Christ and revealing the heart of the church that has invited us. Although this is currently our primary method of aiding other churches, we are looking forward to increasing in other works as well.



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Evangelist Training

It is our desire to begin a structured evangelist training program at some point within the next few years, as the budget allows. Many of the details have yet to be decided but it will be a 1-2 year program that will focus on biblical studies, personal evangelism, and church organization.

After completing the course of study we hope to be able to financially assist the evangelist in his first work if he moves to a church that cannot provide full support. He would continue to have advice and encouragement from the Mauriceville Church if it is so desired, as well.

Financial Support of Evangelism

The church also longs to be able to be involved once again in ongoing financial support of evangelists in other locations. Paul was thankful to brethren with a heart for that work writing,

"You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs." (Philippians 4:15-16)

As the church grows we will have more financial ability to do these things and others. Pray that the Lord blesses us and keeps the heart within us to pass those blessings on to evangelize in other areas as well!



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What are the four works we attempt to accomplish during the two week evangelism trips?

What is an example of a 'small thing' that can be off-putting to visitors?

What are the goals of instruction in our planned evangelist training program?

What was Paul thankful for from the Philippians?