

**"The Prevailing Church"**  
**Randy Pope**  
**Notes by Dave Kraft**

The concept of "selective obedience." (28) Christianity with low or no expectations is the Christianity of the precautionary church. (29) Why do we see ourselves in a defensive posture, holding out under attack rather than an army in full counterattack mode? (30) A prevailing church is committed equally to the task of "mission" as it is to the task of "home." (31) When have you ever lost a member because your church was failing to effectively reach the lost? (33) In response to the question of a potential member, "Will the church's commitment to reach the unchurched hinder my needs or the needs of my family being met Randy responded. No, but it is my greatest ambition that one day soon the entire church and its resources will be so given to reaching the unchurched that it could at least be perceived that the believers needs were being neglected. (34)

Six widely recognized causes and an often  
Overlooked seventh Factor

Leadership structure, roles and responsibilities, and one's understanding of authority within the church are going to play a significant role in the growth of a church as well. (41)

How many churches are you aware of where a large percentage of the members are discipling younger believers? Think how few pastors and elders are giving significant time each week to discipling a handful of believers. Church members go where they are led. They grow up as strong as the environment in which they are placed. (43)

"I'm just a plow hand from Arkansas, but I've learned how to hold a team together, how to lift up some men, how to calm down others, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, a team. There are just three things I'd ever say:

1. If anything goes bad, I did it
2. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it

### 3. If anything goes good, then you did it

That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you (44)  
Attributed to Bear Bryant

A ministry plan consists of a clearly defined vision and mission with values and is supported by a biblically sound and culturally relevant philosophy of ministry. It includes a strategically designed infrastructure and has well-documented job descriptions and goals. Aspects of an effective ministry plan include:

- Leadership development
- Teaching and preaching of God's Word
- Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Church transitions
- Assimilation of new people
- Caring for God's people (47)

My hope of seeing the majority of church members becoming mature and equipped followers was dimming. From my perspective, the development of such disciples on the one hand and the process of church as we know it today on the other were quite incompatible. (48)

<p>First Component of an Effective Ministry Plan A GOD-HONORING PURPOSE</p>
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Churches often have the correct answer expressed in their carefully preserved documents while at the same time giving an entirely different answer by the way they behave (56)

<p>Second Component of an Effective Ministry Plan A FAITH-ORIENTED COMMITMENT</p>
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Regarding steps of faith, will it be, "is it possible," or, "is it the will of God." To what degree will we risk failure to bring glory to God. Attempt something so great for God that it is doomed to failure unless God is in it. (60) As much

as I fear failure, I have grown to fear the absence of risk in a faith commitment even more. (65)

"In 1889, Teddy Roosevelt said, "Far better to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat." (68)

<p>Third Component of an Effective Ministry Plan A GOD-GIVEN VISION</p>
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A significant aspect of God's rule in my heart involves my willingness to hear Him speak through the wisdom of other godly leaders. (70) God usually leads through a single leader.

It places the responsibility of receiving the vision on one person but maintains the significant role of confirming that vision within a group of fellow leaders. Sometimes a difference of vision requires a parting of the ways; note the separation of Paul and Barnabas (71)

Beware of being ambushed by ambition. (77) Three questions related to ambition:

1. Is what I am thinking of doing the "right thing?"
2. Is it being done for the "right reasons?"
3. Is it being done by the "right power?"

The object of my hope will dominate my life (78) Our goal as church leaders should not be to grow large ministries that reach unchurched people but to build discipling ministries that develop mature followers of Christ, who, in turn, reach large numbers of unchurched people. (79) "When will the anointing of God be enough?" Fred Smith Jr. (81)

<p>Two Functions of a God-Given Vision A SAFE HOME AND AN EFFECTIVE MISSION</p>
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We had never clearly identified what the residents of our "safe home" should, in time, ideally look like. We were throwing around terms such as

*trained, mature believers, and equipped Christians, but had no agreed-upon description for such persons.*

What kind of Christian was Perimeter designed to produce? We agreed the residents we would seek to develop would be called, "*Mature and equipped followers of Christ.*" (84) Such a person is one who:

1. Lives consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Word of God and the compelling love of Christ
2. Has discovered, developed and is using his or her spiritual gifts
3. Has learned to effectively share his or her faith while demonstrating radical love that amazes the world that it touches
4. Gives strong evidence of being
  - a. A faithful member of God's church
  - b. An effective manager of life, relationships, and resources
  - c. A willing minister to God's people
  - d. An available messenger to non-kingdom people
5. Demonstrates a life characterized as:
  - a. Gospel driven
  - b. Worship focused
  - c. Morally pure
  - d. Evangelistically bold
  - e. Discipleship grounded
  - f. Family faithful
  - g. Socially responsible (85)

The culture of America has changed and the typical church has not. The traditional-bound church does not really see itself as a "mission"—only as a "home." (91)

Yet it is typically the case that if you can't write down the vision, then you probably cannot articulate it well enough to cast it for those who are capable of making it a reality. A well-written vision, simple and brief, is a large idea expressed in a way that can be understood, remembered, and repeated to others (95) I can't emphasize enough how important it is that your church's

vision be God-given, well articulated in writing, and cast before your people as often and in as many forms as possible (96)

Fourth Component of an effective Ministry Plan

WELL-PRIORITIZED VALUES

One of a leader's key responsibilities is to know, and hold himself and others accountable to the priority of values. (98) At Perimeter we have the value of "what we do." We have three:

1. *We glorify our God* through public and private worship
2. *We grow in our faith* by fellowship and equipping
3. *We give ourselves away* in service, mercy, evangelism and stewardship

Another set of values is based on "How we do ministry."

1. Every-member ministry
2. Equipping
3. Cultural Relevance
4. Small groups (99)

Regular staff evaluations should include a values-oriented component. Resources are sufficiently aligned with your church's values

Here is a list of possible "what we do" values:

1. Worship and prayer
2. Outreach
3. Discipleship
4. Education
5. Fellowship
6. Pastoral care
7. Service and mercy

Out of this list "education" is the dominant value for most churches. With all the prime time filled with teaching and the pastor's weekly schedule filled

with preparing messages, it is easy to see why education became the dominant value. Little time or leadership was left for service and mercy, prayer, or discipleship.

We have some tough choices in the allocation of money, time and personnel

To be huge or holy?

To worship or to do outreach?

To have fellowship or education?

To offer pastoral care or discipleship? (101,102)

<p>Fifth Component of an effective ministry plan A WELL-DEFINED MISSION</p>
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To produce mature followers of Christ requires a radical paradigm change for most churches. We tend to think in terms of:

- How many people came to hear the truth
- How well was the truth presented (104)

A church is program-based when its primary method of making mature and equipped followers of Christ centers on the delivery of truth through the vehicles of church programs (for example, seminars, preaching, and classes) We had hoped that small groups would produce these equipped followers. We assumed that small groups somehow automatically led to maturity, but our small groups failed to produce mature equipped followers of Christ (105)

I discovered over time (with some men with whom I was meeting) that it was a matter of learning the truth and then spending time equipping them- showing them how to use the truths they had learned. Thirdly, we included a significant ingredient of accountability-asking hard questions and challenging bad behavior.

Fourth I emphasized and modeled mission-targeting a few individuals we were in the process of trying to reach with the Gospel. Fifthly, we prayed for one another each week. Truth, Equipping, Accountability, Mission, Supplication = TEAMS-our new paradigm of ministry. (107)

## A TEAMS-Based Church

After we went to a philosophy of TEAMS, we decided that Perimeter's primary outreach, nurture, education, care, discipline, and equipping would take place in small groups. We learned that to effectively make mature followers of Christ, the church must be intentionally scattered throughout its community. Discipleship must take place on the front lines of mission. (114)

### **Program-Based church**

### **Teams-Based Church**

Its strategy for making mature believers is <i>singularly focused</i> on the delivery of truth	Its small groups function both as "homes" that meet the needs of people; and as "missions" that reach the unchurched communities
It places undue emphasis on the importance of teachers	It places <i>equal emphasis</i> on the importance of teachers, pastors and disciplers

(115)

Without intentional and mission-oriented scattering, the gathering simply becomes a weekly worship and teaching session (116)

There are six principles regarding the success of the church functioning well when scattered:

1. Leaders must have no other major responsibility in the church
2. The groups must meet at different times for the different functions of "home" and "mission" in order to keep both clear
3. Prayer and fasting must undergird the decentralized ministry
4. Good ministries (often conflicting with the best ministries) have to be scaled back

5. Leaders must be equipped weekly and over long periods of time

6. There must be an extensive apprentice-training program

Elders had to move from functioning primarily as directors and decision makers to focusing on pastoring and discipling (119) Note how many churches, even today, that embrace the Reformed faith are most often traditionally "gathered" only and are satisfied with the task of proclaiming the truth. (121)

Implementing a well-defined mission
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Though visions remain the same, the vehicles that carry them must often be replaced with newer models. (132) He who multiplies the doers is worth more than he who does the work. (133)

Sixth component of an effective ministry plan BIBLICALLY BASED JOB DESCRIPTIONS
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Perhaps the first and most critical issue is to clearly identify the church's leadership and determine how that leadership will function.

"Leadership is the key to church growth. If the church is really to succeed in its mission of witnessing to the non-churched world in the Twenty-First Century, it must develop aggressive, dynamic and inspiring leaders...leadership is thinking ahead, planning for the future, exhausting all possibilities, envisioning problems and dreaming up solutions to them, and then communicating the possibilities and the problem-solving ideas to the decision makers. This is leadership" Robert H Schuller. (138)

If the highest spiritual authority in the local church does not also have final authority over finances, a contest of power invariably follows. (141) The church has always been healthiest when she has lived under the leadership of wise elders functioning as a unit under the guidance of Scripture.

The decisions and declarations of the elders carry the authority of God (144-145)

Allow me to suggest that those who hold the keys to the kingdom must give themselves primarily to pasturing, leading, teaching, and discipling. Such roles can be performed in a variety of different manners, but should never be allowed to degenerate to merely administrative functions.

Regarding decision-making, the elders should deal only with policy and leave the programming decisions to me in my specific duties as pastor (149)

Key Roles: Pastor and Staff
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I like to refer to the pastor as a leader-equipper. Leading and equipping are to be among the pastor's primary responsibilities. (153,154) The Greek work translated "to equip" is *katartizo* and carries the idea of coming alongside as one seeks to arrive at his destiny-not to pull "sitters" off the bench. So, who does what? At our Inquirer's Class for potential members, when I ask who the church's customer is, I hear: nonmembers, seekers, other believers. Then I ask who they think serves in the church in a role comparable to the employee. I hear: staff members, church members, ordained pastors. Then who is the employer, all agree, God. Who is responsible to reach the customer? The answer employee becomes obvious. So, what is the role of the employer? The answer: to invest in the employee in such a way as to enable that person to do his or her job adequately. This involves leading and equipping among others things.

This is the way it should be:

**Owner = God**

**Employer = Elders / Staff**

**Employee = Members**

**Customer = Unchurched and Members**

To the degree that equipping remains an optional duty and the saints become insignificant middleman in God's design for ministry, the church will not prevail. (156,157) In much of the church today, members are spending much of their time working to enhance their own employee benefits and failing to give themselves to the task of reaching the customer.

I believe the pastor's leadership job description includes four primary responsibilities:

1. Discerning His leading regarding the future direction of the church

I read that the president of an Ivy League school said something like this. "Unless 20% of my time is spent with my feet on my desk, I can only manage this organization—but I cannot lead it." (159)

2. The leader-equipper sets goals for the church according to the will of God

In our church polity, the elders ultimately approve our goals, but they rely on me and our staff to wrestle with the initial formation of those goals and make recommendations.

3. The leader-equipper obtains goal ownership from the people

I share the vision and goals for the coming year of ministry

4. Last, the leader-equipper sees that each member of the church is properly equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing these goals

Now, what about the pastoral job description? The pastor's pastoral responsibilities must be limited so he has time to lead. The pastor's primary task is to equip the saints yet he does keep an appropriate time allotted in his life for pastoral and personal responsibilities. So in what ways does the pastor manage his pastoral responsibilities? There are four primary responsibilities:

1. To shepherd the staff
2. To shepherd the elders
3. To shepherd personal friends in crisis
4. To shepherd every person in need who makes their needs known when no one else is equipped yet to minister to them (163)

<b>Key Roles: Laity</b>
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The first reformation gave the Word of God back to the people of God, Today we need a 2<sup>nd</sup> reformation that gives the Work of God back to the people of God. (165)

Laity Job Description:

1. To discover and develop their spiritual gifts
2. To view themselves as the primary ministers of the church

They will never see themselves in this way until the leadership in the church persistently sees them that way. We need to give the work of God back to the people of God (166,167)

What I see in church after church are multitudes of God's people with amazing gifts for ministry sitting idle while a handful of "professionals" try to do too much of what they are not particularly gifted to do. (169)

3. To spend time needed to be equipped adequately to use their spiritual gifts
4. To commit the time necessary to use their gifts of ministry

Seventh component of an effective ministry plan: A strategically designed infrastructure

There are three main resources necessary to make a specific ministry succeed—primary leadership, primary financial resources, and prime time. If the congregation is decentralized into small groups, will they be designed as discipleship groups or merely as care, share, and Bible study groups? (178)

Eighth component of an effective ministry plan: A culturally oriented strategy

My passion in ministry has a lot to do with discipleship (187) To determine *your mission* you answer the question, "how will we accomplish our vision." Every individual ministry plan must be in

alignment with the overall ministry plan. Four universal questions must be answered in the development of a culturally oriented strategy:

1. In what ways and to what degree will the unchurched be reached and hurting people be helped?
2. In what ways and to what degree will new people be folded into the family of God?
3. In what ways and to what degree will God's people learn biblical truth?
4. In what ways and to what degree will people be shepherded (188)

#### REACHING THE UNCHURCHED AND HELPING THE HURTING

Which approach of outreach will the church embrace; and if multiple approaches, which one gets the greater investment of resources? Here are four of the most effective options:

1. Worship services
2. Small groups

There is no better environment for equipping and accountability than a small group. Thus, such groups become excellent vehicles to win the lost. Groups could be evangelistic inviting the unchurched to attend, or they could be equipping stations to launch individual believers into the mission fields in which they live, work, and play (191)

3. Specialty programs
4. Individual equipping

Two things here:

- A. They must see their pastors and leaders practicing the disciplines of the spiritual life, particularly the sharing of their faith with others on a personal basis. This is training by modeling

- B. They must be equipped, encouraged, and expected to share their faith with others as one of the primary expressions of their growth in discipleship (192)

Busyness rapes relationships. New people assimilate best with new people (194) We offer fellowship, service, and equipping groups. Each type of group majors in that which its name implies and minors in the other two functions (195) Reformed tradition in theology bank almost solely on the pulpit for educating their people. What is the goal of preaching? Is it to primarily to educate God's people? Or is the goal to challenge God's people? The goal of preaching should be to bring God's Word to bear upon people in every stage of spiritual pilgrimage in such a way as to bring every person under the Lordship of Christ in every area of life.

To aim at a Bible passage as one preaches, periodically making applications to personal life, will leave the believing community convinced they have been taught by God's man. But to aim at a personal life while preaching, bringing God's truth to bear upon its need, will leave the believing community convinced they have been taught by God's Spirit (197) Life changing preaching does not talk to people about the Bible. Instead it talks to people about themselves. The basic principle in preaching is to give as much biblical information as the people need to understand the passage, and no more. Then move on to your application. I am discouraged to see how often intellectual stimulation is more desired than spiritual vitalization (198)

Ninth Component of an Effective Ministry Plan; well documented goals
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Jesus Himself in response to warnings of danger from Herod, said, "Go tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day, I reach my goal' " (NASB) Paul in Philippians 3:14 says, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (NASB) (208) Goals will ultimately be decided by answering the question, "How will we know if we are making progress toward accomplishing our vision and mission?" A good test of alignment is how often the mission and vision are quoted (209) Goals are a lot like budgets. In fact, establishing a budget represents one of the clearest examples of goal setting (210) Goals must be supported by a plan owned by those required to accomplish them, and

supported by the necessary resources (211) Who sets the goals? I believe there is wisdom in allowing the lead pastor start the goal setting process. Other staff members should share their counsel (and have major influence in the goals that relate to their specific ministry (212)

#### Tenth component of an effective ministry plan; a time-bound schedule

I have far too often invited resistance by seeking to get ownership from our people when, in reality few if any would have even noticed the change. It is often best, when possible, to merely add new initiatives without killing the old ones. It is often the wisest choice to allow old programs to die natural deaths while the new ones thrive (217) In order to assess the impact of changes to be made, we find that "focus groups" serve us well. They enable us to hear from a representative sampling of our congregation regarding three areas:

- What issues will we face when we introduce the change?
- What resistance will be offered as a result of the change?
- What needs and concerns have perhaps been overlooked? (219)

#### Difficult Choices

What many pastors lack is an effective ministry plan. And one reason they don't have a plan is that they consciously or unconsciously recoil from the difficult choices and dangerous waters they will have to navigate in order to develop such a plan (221) The church will never reach its full potential without its people developing a passionate desire to seek the best, not merely the good, (223) It is better to be aligned than popular. Ask, "Does this activity fit with our church ideology (vision and core values) and does it promote the achievement of our goals (224) People today think much more in terms of what they want than in terms of what they need, and the gap between the two is growing rapidly. We could change our theology and no one would care, but if we change our music we would split the church (225) When we decided to go to a discipleship-oriented ministry, we felt that we needed

a more singular focus on discipleship and decided that for the first several years we would curtail other types of groups that competed with discipleship teams for leadership and training resources (227)

I've said through the years that we at Perimeter wanted to merely have a large church, unconcerned about the maturity of its people, we would have made many decisions differently than we did. If you are a pastor who is passionate about leading a prevailing church, get ready for criticism (229)

### Strategies for evangelism

Evangelism and discipleship are the squeaky wheels of the effective ministry plan. They must be greased. Disciples evangelism as an evidence of effective discipleship. (231) Until the gospel begins to leak out of us, we haven't fully received it. I believe that every church should have a plan and at least one method for equipping believers to individually share their faith. To simply expect church members to be "bringers" to church in order to let the professionals do the evangelism is to rob them of their privilege and responsibility to be soul winners. It is the church leadership's responsibility to make certain that such equipping is made available.

Let me make eight suggestions for pastors who want to see their churches used effectively to reach the lost:

1. Lead your elder leadership (or its equivalent) to embrace a philosophy of ministry which makes reaching the lost as high a priority as ministering to God's people

I can't stress strongly enough the importance of casting the vision well and often for the value of reaching the lost. They must see their pastor living out a passion for the lost

2. Indoctrinate your people through multiple ongoing means as to the high value your church places on reaching the lost

One of our three distinctives has to do with being an effective mission that remains contemporary to its culture. The other two

include being a safe home that meets the needs of God's people and being an effective equipping station that views the pastor and staff as equippers and the laity as the ministers

3. Make your church services and ministries seeker friendly

Not only friendly to the lost, but, in fact, strategically designed to reach the lost

4. Teach your people to answer the questions that nonbelievers are asking

We have found that putting answers in booklets (Life Issues) has been a confidence booster to our people

5. Teach your people how to wisely create a forum to address the questions that nonbelievers are asking—preferable, by teaching them how to have multiple appointment conversations rather than to make single appointment presentations

6. Model for your congregation a lifestyle of being faithful as an evangelist humbly telling your personal stories of opportunities to share your faith

7. Create periodic churchwide, culturally relevant outreach events for the sake of providing easy opportunities for your people to invite unchurched friends

8. Create a discipleship-oriented small-group ministry that equips your people to share their faith, holds them accountable to do so, and uses a group approach to reach the unchurched (which allows the participants to focus on their spiritual gifts to directly contribute to reaching the lost)

There is no better forum for equipping and holding disciples accountable than in a small-group setting (233-237)

A case for two sides of discipleship
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As I speak of discipleship here, I refer to the most mature form defined as "life-on-life, laboring in the lives of a few" (241) I define such discipleship as "having a life product, being intentional about imparting that life product, and doing the right things to impart that life product." (truth, equipping, accountability, mission, and supplication) Without life-on-life discipleship, we run the risk of producing immature believers, at best, and disillusioned learners, at worst (246)

Organic discipleship describes the life-on-life side of discipleship. It is Jesus saying to His disciples, "Follow me." This is the *caught* part of discipleship in comparison to the *taught* part.

Engineered discipleship is a term used to describe the structural and planned side of discipleship.

In student ministry I used the Engineered discipleship. The working world, the real world, was much different than that of a student. I have had to adapt my approach to discipleship, without compromising my values and priorities. As a contrast to two out of three weekly gatherings being devoted to organic discipleship during my college days, now 2/3rds of my once a week gatherings must be spent devoted to the organic. With only one-third of my time available for the engineered discipleship, I must make every moment count (250) If you are committed to life-on-life, laboring in the lives of a few, be diligent to keep a healthy balance between the organic and engineered functions of discipleship (251)

