

Planting & Growing Churches

by John Wimber

This sermon emphasizes the importance of embracing change and being a catalyst for transformation within the church. It highlights the need to slowly introduce change, focusing on actions rather than just words, and adapting to reach different demographics effectively. The speaker shares personal experiences of spiritual growth, revival, and the impact of ministering to the poor and marginalized, encouraging a shift towards a more inclusive and dynamic approach to church ministry.

Scripture: Matthew 9:37, Acts 1:1, Matthew 5:3, Proverbs 3:5, James 1:22

Topics: "Embracing Change", "Catalyst for Transformation"

Description

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Transcript

My concern in coming to this meeting is that somehow I'm not portrayed as a hero or anybody special or having some enablement or ability or acumen that others don't have because I'm convinced that if there's anything that proves the grace of God, it's my life. And that the Lord is able, he's able to use people who will show up part of the time and are faithful on occasion and that's the way I've qualified so far and today. I think, I have intention this week of talking a little bit about revival and at some point I want to talk about, from pastor to pastor, I want to talk a little bit about the basic problem of insecurity because I see that as, I've been asked to bring a word and that's what I see as a major, major problem in the church today.

But I think that in order to kind of segue from what I've been hearing and maybe to demythologize my role as a pastor and someone who is himself in transition, I think it would be good to take a few minutes to sort of introduce myself, you know, how do you get a John Wimber? What's the process? What are the things that guide me and that are important to me? And of course there's a number of circumstances that have to do with encounters with God and also with encounters with men, the things that shaped and formed me, information, circumstances that have been providentially brought about that have given me the viewpoints that I've had. Maybe by way of introduction I could say this, that I was converted at 28 years old, I was a rock and roll musician, had a group called the Righteous Brothers and we had some hit records and I had hit records with other groups but that was the group I was with when I got converted and I was converted

into a little Quaker church in Southern California. This church would have been typical to most Nazarene or Wesleyan churches.

It was an Armenian, Wesleyan kind of theology holding this church. It was a quaint little church in a quaint little community and of course I didn't know one church from another, I'd never been in one, I didn't have any concept, I was totally pagan, I was out of the pagan pool from pagan Anaheim right next to pagan Disneyland. So I didn't have a concept of church.

I remember once, I was a second world war kid, I grew up during that era and I remember one time riding my bicycle along a street in Anaheim called Broadway and there was churches along that street and I turned and came down Santa Ana Street and there was a little Pentecostal church there, I learned that later, but I didn't know Pentecostal from Baptists or anything else in those days because when you don't go to church you don't know the differences between them and I remember they had a little neon light on the side and it would flicker on and on and I said Jesus saves and I remember riding my bike, I was about 12 years old at the time and I thought I wonder what it is he saves because being a second world war kid we saved all kinds of things, we saved rubber bands, we saved paper, we saved all kinds of stuff, but I didn't have a clue as to what he saved and I didn't find it out until I was 28 years old and somebody asked me one time, wait a minute you grew up in America and you never met a Christian and I said well if I did he didn't blow his cover in my presence, I didn't have anybody ever tell me about Jesus and when I was 28 I was introduced to the Lord by a lovely man, he was a welder and he had had some tragic circumstances in his life, his daughter had been murdered and raped and which had given him a lot of notoriety and as a result of that he had been driven into the streets to witness and win people to Christ and by the time I met him he had won a couple of thousand people one on one to Christ using the, he couldn't go anywhere, everybody knew him because this was a major murder case in Southern California, it was during the early era of television and so it was carried nightly on the news sometimes several times a night for a matter of six months so it was a very dramatic case and in fact Billy Roop the young man that murdered her was the last person to die in the gas chamber in California, which by the way the man that led me to the Lord his name was Gunner Payne, Gunner had led him to the Lord before he died in the gas chamber but Gunner was a soul winner, he just went door to door and knocked on the door, everybody recognized him, they had a softness towards him because of the tragedy and he would come in and tell them all about, they'd want to know about the murder and he'd tell them all about the Lord and so in due course of time we got to know each other and he led me to the Lord and he disciplined me, now he didn't use the word disciple, he didn't know the word disciple but what he did was he would just say do you want to go with me and I just went and did what he did and pretty soon I could stand like him and spit like him and I knew all of his favorite verses and all of his favorite stories and I would say them as he was saying them and you know because all he did was basically essentially the same thing, he would just go from house to house and talk to people about Jesus and so we would make appointments kind of like insurance salesmen and so when I remember on occasion he had a son that had a tragic accident, the man had all kinds of tragedy in his life and I keep talking into this microphone I forget that I have this microphone on, he had all kinds of tragedy in his life and it's interesting to me that often men that are mightily used of God, and he has been, do have a great deal of tragedy in their lives, it's interesting that that's not only true in the scripture but it's true you know today, I sat countless hours that first year in Holmes and listened to him answer some questions, you know some of the most obscure questions and he would say well over here in Amos it says and back here and that's how I got through the Bible for the first time and so approximately a year into this process he had to move away and he basically handed off to me and so I had a ministry of soul winning and Bible study leading and it wasn't really Bible study because I didn't know the Bible, I knew the first three

chapters of the Gospel of John and then I was dead in the water you know and I didn't know those that well but so it really didn't matter what question they asked me I answered the first three questions, the first three chapters of the Gospel of John and I had an interesting homiletic and hermeneutic for that matter, if I didn't know the answer I just made something up and pretty soon the people that started getting wise you know to that and they'd say well wait a minute that's not right and they'd say well over here it says and I'd say well if you knew it why didn't you answer it and so pretty soon they started bringing their Bible aids and their you know stuff with them and we legitimately got into studying the Bible together but just to keep me honest but you know it's silly and it's you know funny looking back on it but it worked I led several hundred perhaps a couple of thousand people to the Lord in a three or four year period because I was so visible in Orange County as a musician I'd been there a long time and I was kind of the you know in rock and roll one of the early pioneers and had a major group and so I had a lot of visibility and that became an entree to talking to a lot of people about Jesus. Now all this process that was going on I was being introduced to church life and I found church life to be a lot different than what I had anticipated I can remember the first few weeks I had gone to Bible study in this home, a friend's home for three or four months before I went to the church for the first time and by then again being a pagan I didn't even know God had a book out so I didn't know that there was an Old Testament or a New Testament I didn't have any concept you know so when they told me the new part was two thousand years old I couldn't believe it and I remember starting to read it and I found out it was all about Jewish people did you know that? I didn't know God was Jewish and it was so strange because in the music industry and in television and movies where I had worked I worked with lots of Jewish people so one of my biggest difficulties before I got converted is every time I'd picture Jesus I would picture a little haberdasher with a cigar in his mouth you know making a deal you know a jeweler you know with a thing in his eye or something like that you know not exactly you know your classic view of Christ so anyway I got converted in this process I got disciplined and along this process I had read the gospels a number of times and I just fell in love with Jesus I was so excited about him I just loved the stuff he did did you like that stuff? Me too I just loved it I mean I liked it when he you know made the multiplied the fishes and the loaves didn't you like that part? And when he walked on the water was that hot? I got a theory about walking on water you have to do it very fast anyway I just loved him so I didn't know what they did at these churches and they kept saying come to church with us come to church with us so finally you know one time we went and I had what I had in mind after reading the gospels was that all these people would come to this building they would sort of pray a little bit and talk you know rev each other up and talk about it and then sort of divvy up the turf and then everybody would hit the streets and they'd go out and multiply a few fishes and loaves and heal the sick and cast out a demon or two and win the lost and then come back to church and meet in the afternoon so now you know you're looking at me like no that's actually what I expected to happen so I went there the first week and ready to go and we got in there you know we all kind of it was a building something like this we all kind of got seated and everything and they did this and they did this and then they did this and then they did this but no fish you know and no loaves no demons you know and so afterwards I you know I went to this friend of mine who invited me and I said did they have a bye today or what I mean what happened he says what do you mean and Carol grabbed my sleeve and said come on you know don't be doing it you're a troublemaker and all we knew how to do those days was fight and make children and we finally quit doing both so we I went home and she couldn't talk me into going back for two or three weeks and finally I said okay I'll go but I'm only gonna go if they're gonna go do it so we went back there and they didn't do it it's the same stuff that they did the time before us but so afterwards I went out on the front lawn they had a front lawn there where everybody sort of stood around and talked afterwards and this guy had a badge you know that's on this he looked important so I went up and grabbed his sleeve and I said excuse me and he said yes he was kind

of he's tall he's bigger than me and I said excuse me and he said yes and I said when do they do it and he said do what I said you know the stuff in the book he said what stuff I said you know the stuff this stuff for this stuff here like sight to the blind the deaf you know those kind of people dumb that kind of stuff you know walking stuff you know the healing stuff the stuff that they do in the book he looked at me like I had two heads he says oh we don't do it I said what I said you don't do it and he says no we don't do it I said wait a minute let me get this straight I said I gave drugs for this you're telling me they don't do it he says no he says sometimes we sing about it so I went and got in the car my wife and I had an argument all the way home I said what's the use I mean when I worked for the devil he let me do his stuff now I'm working for Jesus I want to do his stuff and so I didn't know that anybody did his stuff in fact what I was taught early on was that nobody was doing it better than they were and in fact this was sort of the premier group nobody ever used that language but it was the attitude and you know we would we would talk bad about this group and bad about that group every now and then and cut this group up and this doctrine down and you know and this when we were the group and I remember looking around I think boy Lord you're in trouble this is the group you know because this group is going out of business because and it was it was shrinking all the time and I've been in business for a long time and I knew about business and if there's anything I understood was business I've owned and operated now I think 61 businesses in my life and I understand business I know I know all about business and our business was bad we were not doing good and I remember going to the pastor and telling him you know one day I said what do you have in mind what are you what are you trying to accomplish he gave me the most startled look you know and I found out after about an hour and a half of listening to him that what he had in mind was this keep it on keep it on you know just doing it was enough you know just doing having the meetings and keeping the calendar and baptizing a child now and then and you know doing this or doing marrying somebody burying somebody and I thought there's got to be more to it than this well over the next few months and years you know a number of things happened to me I had some encounters with the Lord and I ended up in Bible school and seminary and early on I should tell you this I had an experience the Pentecostal it's called baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoken tongues and that without I've never read Acts and or Corinthians or Romans even at that point and so I don't know what in the world was going on with me I went home and told my wife and she said the devil had me and I said I don't understand that because I mean how could the devil have me I've been so good and she says all I know and she brought out this little book she got from this radio preacher sure enough the devil had me so we went down and talked to the to the pastor and she made me she made me show him that I could do it what I could do listen to this she said and so I did it and he said sure enough the devil had me and I said well I don't understand how the devil got me I said I'm not sinning I'm not doing bad I know how did the devil get me and he said well your problem is you don't have sound doctrine if you had sound doctrine these things wouldn't happen to you and he sent me off to Bible college and I got sound doctrine and you know it was he was a true prophet because the sounder I got the less of those things happened to me and so about a 12-year period went on during that time I was faithful to continue to do personal evangelism and start small groups and things and that was a wonderful era period of my life a very productive period it was set during a portion of the Jesus people revival and in those days in Orange County you could practically sneeze people into heaven and it was just it was just wonderful to lead people to Christ and though I wasn't working with the the hippie element I was still having my impact and it was a wonderful and I don't want to in any way cheapen the Lord's participation in my life it was wonderful but I there was an impugning dynamic in that I was being told that one aspect of my Christian endeavor was you know inappropriate and wrong and somehow a psychological quirk or a false teaching or or the devil had me or some other and I remember every now and then driving home from seminary and I checked to see if the devil still had me I've always been a little bit of a rebel you know

just just a tinge and I'd check and sure enough he still had me I think well you know he really holds on once he gets a grip in some area of your life I just simply couldn't handle the ever-increasing residual group of people that just didn't make it in that kind of system I know now that some of them were demonized and others were having other kinds of problems but I just they just kept falling through the cracks it was breaking my heart to see people that I sometimes gave countless hours to just unable to to overcome and unable to function in a system that that really didn't recognize the enemy's power much and didn't didn't recognize sin in the way that I think it I now recognize it and some other things and at the same time I want you to know that said that the people I worked with there were godly people wonderful people I you know I owe much of my foundation and understanding to them and with just a few points of departure I'm much the same as they are today in the aftermath of that I had planted a lot of churches as a byproduct of small groups and that became known and Fuller Seminary approached me and asked me to pioneer a department of church growth called the Fuller Evangelistic Association and it was a consultative arm that worked with denominations and parachurch organizations so between 1975 and 74 and 78 I worked with 27 denominations and nine parachurch organizations and as a church growth advocate I still am people ask me today do you still believe in church growth I do I the only proviso is that well I didn't believe it then I used to say I'm a thoroughgoing church growth advocate except for two things one is I do not think anything you learn from church growth can grow a church only God can grow a church and I you know I always believed that and so that's not inconsistent at all and furthermore that that the assumption that learning these things will somehow give you control or ability to manipulate growth and I don't believe either one of those things I didn't believe it then I don't believe it now but beyond that I really don't have any problem with church growth but not everything that's called church growth is church growth but generic church growth teaching is simply reporting it's reporting what God's doing around the world and in such a way as it ought to be helpful to help you discern what he may be doing maybe at an embryonic level in your midst and in your group probably the two most important things that happened to me at seminary is other than my not graduating one is I was introduced to George Elton Ladd first time I ever met him he found a sandwich in his pocket that had been there for four days he was a classic absent-minded professor type you know he literally did he reached it he says oh there that is you know it happened to be a tuna sandwich I'll never forget George but he introduced to me the teaching of the kingdom of God is and frankly it became the very foundation of everything that I do it gave me the integrating theme that made the Bible make sense to me up until then I had been trained as a dispensationalist and whereas I haven't really left dispensationalism as a whole I left one aspect of it cessationism which of course you wouldn't agree with but I was introduced to and thought that it was true I thought that all the gifts had died out the end of the Apostolic Age and so that was one of the things I was indoctrinated in to get sound doctrine so I wouldn't speak in tongues any longer so being introduced to George was profoundly important and then one day I was sitting out on the mall eating a sandwich and I was reading in the speed reading actually the gospel of John and I came to the 14th chapter and I was reading through it if you'll turn there with me I want to share three or four verses that tell you the core of what I'm all about this is Jesus speaking he's having this interaction with Philip Philip has said Lord show us the father Jesus answered don't you know me Philip even after I've been among you such a long time or with you such a long time anyone who has seen me has seen the father how can you say show us the father don't you believe that I am in the father than the father is in me the words I say to you are not just my own rather it is the father living in me who is doing his work 11th verse believe me when I say that I am in the father and the father is in me or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves now what he's saying here is very logical within a Hebraic mindset he's saying if you can't believe my testimony believe that that testifies of me which is the miraculous and gives evidence the fact and pointing in his

case to his divinity as well as to the undergirding and the backing up and blessing of his father and then he says this incredible statement I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing now when you learn scripture under a teacher they tell you what it doesn't mean and doesn't mean and the ones once you've been taught that you have what we would call paradigms viewpoints understandings and I had been taught what this doesn't mean which is what it obviously says it does mean and that controlled the way I viewed the text now I don't know if it was my Apple or the sunlight or the fact I was reading a New American Standard or what but I came to this text and I heard it like it was resounding in my head I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing and it was like an explosion in my face and then I read on he will do even greater things than these because I am going to the father now at the time that I read the text I had been taught that of course Jesus didn't mean even greater things and I you know there aren't many commentaries or theological writings that you can find today that would support what I think we have in common in our belief and that is the understanding that it is in God's intention and is here being prophesied by his son which the book Revelation tells us in whom the spirit of prophecy you know is as its full being as it were and he's prophesying about a time I believe yet to come in which the church will literally do literally do literally do greater things than Jesus did now I have been taught as I said not to believe that but that day you know it was just like an explosion in my face and texts came to mind that might otherwise seem a little obscure for instance there's a sort of a transitory news brief found in the fourth chapter of the gospel of Matthew let me read this to you and I'm going to dramatize it as I have in other places by reading it as a newscaster because I think it helps contemporize it this is the fourth chapter of Matthew the 23rd verse I'm reading it out of the NIV which is necessary in vineyard Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people news about him spread all over Syria and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases those suffering severe pain the demon possessed those having seizures and the paralyzed and he healed them large crowds from Galilee the Decapolis Jerusalem Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him more at 11 o'clock this little passage along with one found in the ninth chapter of Matthew are like bookends on the outside of the Galilean campaign and they clearly state clearly state that the characteristics of the ministry of Jesus was done both in the doing and the telling this is what Luke catches in the first chapter of the book of Acts let's look at that for a second in his writings he says this in my former book Theophilus I wrote about all that Jesus began and to what to do and to teach now it was the marrying of these two ideas that formulated my whole theology at least as it relates to ministry you see the message of Jesus was contained not only in the words but also in the works now I believe that we can be converted as it were outside of a direct interaction with Scripture but I don't think we'll be fully converted until we know the Scripture the Scripture knows us I think conversion is a process as well as an event and that we we need to as it were have our minds come under the tutelage of the Scripture now I know that there's theological tensions with that but I think I can defend myself ably in this particular area so I see the Word of God as the message of God but I also see the works of God as the message of God that is to say the Word of God gives the illumination but the works of God give you the illustration the illumination without the illustration is a incomplete message and in this century the phenomenon of the Pentecostal charismatic and now third wave movement has married those two ideas to the extent that it is impacted the church the world over and we have various and sundry numbers summarizing the total at the present time it ranges everything from 327 million to 372 million I don't know if those two numbers have been turned around but there's no question about it that the most incredible move of God in all the history of redemption is going on today worldwide and it's inculcated in the Pentecostal charismatic and now third wave aspects of the work of God and so if there's anything that I felt that I had a got a hold of I got a grasp of and remember this was back in 1985 and at that time we

didn't have Dr. Barrett hadn't published it we didn't have some of the information we now have concerning the rapid growth of the Pentecostal charismatic influence and so when God spoke to me so clearly and so plainly it set me off like my grandpa used to say like a scalded dog trying to work it out and I remember writing down I had a as I said a new American standard was with a large what do you call border and I was right I wrote down I must learn next to John 14:12 I must learn to believe what Jesus believed and do what Jesus did now since that time and in fact if you want to know what I'm about that's it that's I'm still working on John 14:12 I haven't ever got to 14:13 yet I'm still trying to work out and my understanding is it comes out of the core of it comes out of intimacy with Christ which is that is what Jesus was saying to Philip when he said he is in the Father and the Father is in me and so the two very important understandings that I have is one that I've been called as a member of the body of Christ to work out in some practical way an evidential Christianity that is more than just a good idea more than just a good philosophical framework for working out your life and it's in its derivatives it is a Christian experience an experience with God that can be evidenced from day to day in place to place among all people that transcends every culture every language and every division that the enemy has been able to bolster or develop from that day to this that's the kind of Christianity that I want to work with and work in and along the way God spoke to me and gave me a directive and that directive basically is he told me to go home to Anaheim and plant a church and I'm still there and we're still in that process but God called me at home to plant a church and but the difficulty is he's really given me three basic jobs and one of the jobs has to do with pastoring a church another is fostering and fathering a movement and probably therein is that's been the most difficult part of my pilgrimage the last ten years the movement has grown rapidly and I don't know if it was false humility or real humility but I had difficulty believing that God really wanted me to take those churches seriously and it's only been in the as a direct encounter with Paul Kane and in which he called me to account in the name of the Lord for my fathering that that I've really taken seriously the role of spiritual father and I want to go on record as saying that there have been a number of helps and aids not the least of which was Ernie Gruen he's helped me too in that regard and so I'm taking seriously the role of fathering the churches now for the first time and I and I give more time to it but the Lord told me a long time ago he gave me a third job and he gave that to me out of Matthew 10 you don't need to turn there but you know that's where Jesus sent out the twelve and he called them by name and he gave an express and specific job to do and he told him to go not to the Gentiles but to the house of Israel and told him to preach this message the message of the kingdom and he told him to heal the sick cast out demons raise the dead now the Lord took that text a number of years ago and I know that this is an allegorical hermeneutic whereas I don't believe you can use them for teaching I do believe that God uses them for speaking to his children I think there's ample illustration of that in the scripture where God abuses Old Testament Jesus himself abuses the meaning of Old Testament text to give a new meaning in a New Testament context and I believe the Holy Spirit still does that and so the Holy Spirit gave me that text one day in prayer and said I want you to go to the nation so I want you to go basically to the Western nations and I want you to arouse them excite them make them mad at you he didn't tell me that he just said I want you to go and preach this gospel to the kingdom and I said where he says to the house of Israel and I said you mean that you want me to literally go to Israel he said no the church and so he sent me to the church so a long time ago he made a bargain with me my understanding of the bargain is if I will give nine-tenths of my time travel time to working in his church he will in effect grow mine and that's been our agreement so that's the way that's the division of labor I go out and do meetings such as this you know working trans denominationally of all the weeks that I'm gone at nine-tenths of the time I give to this kind of thing one-tenth of the time I give to the movement the rest of time I spend home and the Lord is as blessed and it's been wonderful and and I'm grateful for it he also told me as some time ago to be a change agent and

for 16 years now I've been teaching in the doctoral program at Fuller some people think that I was fired at Fuller I've never been fired I have all the work I want and more than I want and during that time I've been teaching on being a change agent but I'm teaching primarily there as well as in the meetings that I go out to I mentioned a moment ago that we've had about 400 it's approaching 400,000 people in our meetings they're mainly leaders about 85% are professionals that come to those meetings 63% of them are pastors and or pastors wives so we're talking to professional people only 2% of them are Pentecostals about 6% are Charismatics and the rest of them are mainline church people largely conservative evangelicals and so God has given me a target audience a group that he wants me to talk to and this is the non-tongue speaking portion of the evangelical strata and my job to them is to go and tell them that they need to speak in tongues no my job is to go tell them that you don't have to leave your mind at home to get your tongue to work or something like that and to preach the kingdom of God to them and to get them to to expand their horizons and their understandings and as I have prayed over it and worked with it and analyzed it I think the main problem that I'm dealing with there as I go to the conservative evangelical church is that they are theologically theists but in practice deists and what I'm dealing with is and assaulting again and again and again is a is a perception of the work of God vis-a-vis the Holy Spirit that distances him and does not anticipate or expect his present action or presence today now that is not the problem in this room that's that's not my analysis of you and or a Pentecostalism generally I think Pentecostalism has some other problems and if you want to pay me a lot of money and get me a screen here where I can stand behind it I'll tell you what your problems are someday and so my job has been to go out and talk to a group of people and remember Bob talked about waking how to wake a sleeping dog and go out and talk to a group of people who are by and large believe they're right about everything they're right and they know they're right and we are right and when you're right you don't need any help or you know counsel or work and you just let's just affirm how right we are by telling everybody how wrong everyone else is and that's a kind of a cyclical process in which they they they swirl in their reasoning we've come to a place of liberal thinking through interaction with what is called a higher criticism in the Anglican circles he would have difficulty with any number of cardinal doctrines concerning Christ his birth and his ascension that type of thing resurrection and then depending on which circle you're in whether it's in Lutheranism or in Presbyterianism for them if you study church growth as I have and still do you'll know that there's been a continual out migration for 40 years now when you study the decline of the Presbyterianism and Methodism and Episcopalianism and other church systems here the United States and wherever we see a an adherence to and a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and the infallibility of Scripture and a substantial commitment to the cardinal doctrines of the past you'll see a more solidarity and more substantial church life wherever you see them vacillating it's just almost destroyed the church and so and so America's changing advancing pluralism is set in and throughout the South we've had major changes in communities and there's been a number of studies showing the interaction between groups and so on the one hand there's the larger menu of what's happening in the nation but on the other hand there's there's that that that's coming up through the nation such as what we call the baby boomers and somebody was talking to me at lunch about you know the baby boomers and I minister to the baby boomers and and in fact if I've heard two people say this since I got here last night how with sort of an enviable sound in her voice gee isn't it wonderful to be on the cutting edge of working with the baby boomers hey it's not so hot the baby boomers are hard to minister to it's very important that you understand the baby boomers are entrenched in rebellion and witchcraft it's widespread and the manipulation of themselves self-exploitation they're very mobile that change and fluctuate and you know it so you have to do it kind of do it on the run you know hey I got one more thing I want to tell you about Jesus and so somebody said well you know are you discipling your people at the vineyard and I said I don't know it I watch him come in the front door

watch him go out the back door how much discipling can you get in and a half an hour you know I don't know it's it's hard work to disciple but we you know we catch a core and and we are growing and by every standard that I know of in terms of measurement we're processing them well keep in mind the New Testament we have the images of fishing and farming I said I was converted in 1963 into a church that was really about 25 years out of phase with a culture I mean you could have walked in there in 1940 and heard the same music the cars would have been a little different in the parking lot but they would have been mainly Chevys and the clothes they look the same they were still to get getting in with JC Penney's and but as far as the music and the way they preached and the way they interacted together they were at least 25 years out of phase with the rest of culture keep in mind that the church system being a microcosm of the larger culture is in itself cultural retardant it's resisted it does not change at the rate that the rest of the culture does now that's one of the values in that it helps us as it were keep the faith but one of the negatives is that it helps it deters the rate at which we can share the faith because we don't look like act like talk like the people we're trying to witness to and relate to and people they see that very clearly and we can't see it nearly as clearly as they can see it but you know I want in in reverse you know most of you would know that many of the churches in the community but you probably don't know all the beer bars I hope and but those that frequent beer bars they know all the different beer bars and when you can get the cheapest beer at the right time and get the most beer or the quality beer or the or the waitress that's the better-looking and they know all about it they can tell you all the pros and cons of where to go in much the same way you could the churches that you might attend because you're a consumer you use churches you go to churches you understand churches and so those that frequent other places they see clearly the distinctions you know when you go into a mall and we have them across the country now and you know my my daughter she likes to dress me it's a it's a thing I don't know why she's taking it on I think she thinks I'm looking very old which by the way does anyone here know my wife Carol would you raise your hand four or five of you do oh Danny hi don't tell her I got up here with a wrinkled shirt when you see her nothing makes her matter I forgot to change shirts so my daughter she's been she's been buying my clothes lately now when we go into the mall there's four or five stores that I recognize instantly as my kind of stores right I mean I can tell by the clothes they've got out in the front window I can tell by the music that's not playing when I walk in the door I can tell by the the age of the men and women serving us that it's my kind of store that's not the kind of store she wants to go into to get me clothes she wants to go into these places where the lights are rocking I'm saying Stephanie you don't understand I'm 57 years of age and I like it and I'd like to dress 67 I don't want to dress 27 so we have these little dialogues and so a number of years ago when the Lord gave me an opportunity to start a church now I I don't want to in any way sound like I thought this thing all up because believe me the Lord he had to wrestle me down to get this church started and I mean he spoke to me 19 different times in three months and in different ways ways I was not used to he spoke to me through a prophetess I didn't believe in prophecy much less prophetesses dreams visions I mean I'm in our circles we had four ways that God spoke to us he spoke to us through highlighted scripture right God gave me a word today right you know that one now that was a biggie that was you know number one for us and if you got that you were there and then we had one it was just a slightly more subjective it was called the burden you know the burden everybody ooh this is a spiritual man you know he's got a burden I don't have a burden you know he's got a burden I know that man's spiritual because he got a burden you know I mean it qualified him instantly in our circles now there was there was one of a sort of in between that it was not quite some subjective it was every bit as good and that was the counsel of your elders and besides that your wife said it was okay and so if you got those two you're in you know if the scripture is highlighted and you got the counsel you didn't really need a burden you know you know that God was in now the most qualified spiritually was called the open door it just came together and boy

whenever that happened that was a coup de gras we knew God was alive and working in our circle now I'm saying it in a humorous way but I want you to know that was that was that was the total thing and so the kinds of things that happened to the people in the Bible were just not on my horizon dreams and visions and people talking to you and angels of bearing and stuff like that you know well God's God used all those means one of the first things he used Larry was a Lutheran man came up to me in a meeting in New York City and he was very embarrassed and he said I I don't know I've never done this before it's going like that he says I've never done this before he says but I I was sitting there today and he says I I don't it could I could be wrong he says every time I looked at you I saw a big Indian I said I said what he said I saw an Indian I mean I saw an Indian like that he said and he said I saw it in a gymnasium I said what he said he said I saw an Indian I never had talked to anyone there with a vision before I think it was his first vision and he says he says to me while you were up there speaking I could see this look like a gymnasium to me he said I saw this big Indian and he says and I know that that's where you're going and you're going to start a church there well a year and a half later we move into a gym it was about the size of this and we're I'm walking in the door and I turn and I'm on the wall from floor to ceiling is an Indian that's the symbol you know and so you know authenticated his work and so God gave me through a number of unique experiences leading to start this work furthermore he gave me similar kinds of things for for the movement furthermore he gave me similar kinds of things for the work among the churches and I learned to speak all the buzzwords you know I knew how to talk to the Southern Baptist and I knew how to talk to the GARB it was you know Conference Baptist from the you know this group and that group and I but you know they're all different I knew seven different kinds of Mennonites I learned three different kinds of Presbyterians and each of them had their own language symbols and systems you know yeah I remember getting off the plane once in Memphis and meeting a Southern Baptist brother you know the first thing in the worst in the blood brother it was Monday morning his throat was hoarse and had been preaching hard and you know I'd never heard washed in the blood before I was a Christian I was a consultant you know but I washed in the blood what's he talking about you know but I decided I must be so I said yes and that that seemed to qualify me he never asked me another question about my education or training or background for being there and charging him \$800 a day as a consultant and so I discerned that very few people were reaching the boomers and so the Lord said go home and start a church and I said Lord can I start it with the boomers can I reach young people and he said okay in effect I got the distinct impression it was okay and so I said Lord what do I have to do and that's when he started giving me these images of malls and centers where do young people go how do they dress what kind of what's what's the decimal level for young people is over against your comfortable zone John and so I realized from all the years of traveling around churches in America the churches are made for people approximately 48 years of age they're designed for that the buildings are designed for it the sound the color selection the tones everything is designed to accommodate people you know in their mid to late 40s it's not for 28 years old it's not for 18 years old so I said Lord if you want if we want me to have a church where should I have it he said put it in the gymnasium that's where they're the most comfortable and so that's where we went we stayed there for five years we grew from a handful of about 50 people to 4,000 in that five years or four years in the gymnasium and then we moved from there to a factory and that didn't seem to bother him too much so we kept on growing I got a long letter the other day why aren't we having kinships anymore and I said well because they don't work anymore you know we've changed you know if you were fishing in the lake and you caught all the bottom fish would you continue to use the bait and set up for bottom fish what would you do if you wanted fish you'd hook up on a different setup right not the church I want to keep fishing for bottom fish there ain't no bottom fish I don't care if there's no bottom fish I like to set up with this setup this is the one my daddy used and my granddaddy used and I'm gonna keep on using it I am

speaking to the right group because we sanctify our methodology and I understand that you know you get saved in Sunday school what do you do the rest of your life you work in Sunday school you get saved at camp what do you do the rest of your life you go to camp you get saved at a grand crusade what do you do huh it's at your point of entry where did you have these occasions with God and so that gets you know you build a little tabernacle and you camp there huh that's biblical isn't it but what what am I advocating and arguing for is that in the meantime people are moving on and going to hell every day we got to set up to reach him now I'm not advocating that all of you change your churches from the inside out I think that would be dumb and dysfunctional harmful it would be in lack of harmony with God I think you'd be doing a disservice to him I think some minor modifications might help accommodate a larger group than you're now working with but I'm not in any way encouraging you in fact because I've spent so much time working with the church system when I don't advocate anything that the vineyard does for the church system I'm dead serious it's not for you you shouldn't use our stuff you should develop your own things that will accommodate you now there's a lot of things that can be done a few years ago I was sitting with some Anglicans in in central London and they said our church is packed to the brim now they don't they're not a lot of Anglican churches they have that problem but this particular one did it it's Holy Trinity Brompton in central London they said that our church is packed to the brim what can we do and I said well let's church plant we can't church plant we have the parish system we can't do that and I said are there any redundant churches well yes there are I said go to the Bishop of London find out how many were they did found out there were 33 redundant churches in the community now the difficulty with their system is even if the church is closed it since it's owned by the state in effect it's still under controls of people who have vested interest in keeping that control you ever heard of a church boss you haven't if you've been in the church five minutes because every church has a church boss or two and so they had their church bosses and they had to get around those church bosses but I don't know how to do that I've been doing it for years and so I just gave him some counseling we worked with it and prayed over it and since that time they've started I think they're on their seventh church in central London they've grown from I think about 13 to 1400 people now to almost 5,000 people in central London building big healthy vibrant Anglican churches in the center of one of the largest cities on earth where you couldn't afford the property to save your life but by simply getting past the system and doing their job they're doing their job a similar situation in an Anglican Church in northern England they had a lot of what we would we call urban blacks this doesn't mean people with the Afro ancestry these are people that are white people that dress in black clothes dye their hair garish colors it's often black they wear all black clothes they're all over Europe and nobody to speak of is reaching them there was a young man in that community named Chris Brain he came to our meetings he was a fine musician very artistic very gifted and I could see evangelism all over him so we prayed for him and the Spirit of God put him in seminary for several hours on the floor flopping like a fish and he came up and we we said there's your pastor pastor there's your evangelist and now they have over 900 of these young people that meet in what they call the nine o'clock service and now they're beginning to multiply those churches churches within churches these are churches that are reaching a select group of people now the people in the morning don't want to see those young what those young people do at night and so the pastor says don't come around here at night you won't like it because about three o'clock in the afternoon they come in and they they hang things and they I mean this hardly seemed like church because they have lights and they have photographs and all kinds of media going on and and rock and roll music and and the the drums beat all the way through the service while the preaching is gone while the I used to be a rock and roll musician but I was totally threatened when I was in that service preaching through it was hard for me to handle because it's so foreign to my understanding of what it ought to be but when you see those young people coming forward the tears running down their faces and saying Jesus

Jesus I give you my heart and my life and you and you see that you know I've been back now three or four times and I've watched him and they're now out evangelizing in the streets and feeding the hungry and so what I'm saying is that you need to begin looking at the the harvest that's around you know the harvest that the Lord is preparing in America today it's the harvest of the poor multiple millions of them multiple millions of them it's a great harvest not too long ago I was praying for them in the Lord I said Lord how I want to see the harvest I've been praying out of Matthew 936 and he said I want to see the harvest he took me to Matthew 5 and showed me the Beatitudes and he says that's the harvest the poor in spirit blessed are those that are me blessed are and I and I said Lord what's it look like and he showed me a wheat a field of wheat and I grew up in Illinois in Missouri and I know what ripe wheat looks like when ripe wheat is ripe what happens to the head of the wheat it drops and so walk around your malls walk around your streets and look at the people with their heads down they're ready but they're not going to come into your church most of them they can't now some of them will here in the south but many of them can't they just can't make that transition we saw that in our community we had Hispanics and people that were impoverished in our community we moved down into the barrio for the purpose of winning those people we were at a terrible time we'd win to Christ but we couldn't get him in our church so finally one of the young men said why don't we make a church for them that's so obvious and so he started what he calls the lambs lunch and he thought he said these people they're homeless by and large some of them have you know they live in a semi-transient situation they can afford motels and things when they double and triple up in families so part of the month they're in a motel part of the month they're in a state park part of the month they're in a car and sometimes they're sleeping on the ground depends on what part of the month it is and what where they are economically at that time and so I you know our guys were working with them all the time and I said tell me where the penetration ought to be every market has a point of penetration point of felt need he said it's for the children we're all sick over the educative loss for the children who are sick over the clothing for the children for the lack of dental care for the lack of any number of things they feel worse about their children than they do about themselves and I said okay let's let's set up a ministry for the children and so they came up with one called the lambs lunch they started that that a ministry about a year ago with three kids they average about 1,200 now on Saturday in the lambs lunch the lambs lunch has seen hundreds and hundreds of converts we've seen many people rehabilitated and brought back into the working market or back in homes many of them are now at church on Sunday but hundreds of them aren't and never will be and they ought not to be we've planted six churches out of the lambs lunch today are you and but they're not churches like the church you'd go to or I would go to their churches that are different but their churches that meet the needs of those folks their churches that are culturally approximate they're their churches their services are different their services last almost five hours you know why because part of it they have to do the food bagging bagging of the food that's part of it then they have to do the cooking and then they have to they have to dance for a while because that's part of the culture so they dance and sing and we have hirachi bands and we have you know and they have just a big party and it lasts about five hours and that's a normal church service for them and anything less than that they feel cheated and everybody from the smallest baby to the oldest grandma to the biggest dog comes that's the truth and sometimes opposing gangs are there and then we have violence you know and that's part of the culture too I used to play in Mexican weddings I never went to a Mexican wedding they didn't have some fights that's part of the deal so we don't we so when we when they gather they have some fights now most of you wouldn't program that into your order of I don't mean that there's violence every time to get together but there's potential for violence every time because it's in the culture it's the way they think about gathering and being being a people to understand and we have to administer to who they are not who we want them to be I want to talk to you for 10 minutes about change as I mentioned earlier I've

been lecturing as a adjunct professor at Fuller for 16 years and I've been doing a lecture on change being a change agent for that period of time so I know a little bit about change it's field-tested fear is a natural outcome of change particularly change that they don't get any input into or control over and so it's very important that if you're going to if you decide that you want to brain change you know Bob was talking about 330 degree I'd say a hundred three degree would be better for some of your churches I honestly change slowly change personally as over against professionally now let me talk to you about changes the way I understand it and again I've worked with lots of churches lots of different kinds of churches and there's some things that I think ought not be done I would not change anything on Sunday morning if I was going to bring change you know if I was in one of your churches maybe I was in the in the first assembly of God Church to the such-and-such I and I don't know what your churches are but if you mentioned Pentecostalism earlier I wouldn't change anything on Sunday morning that's the last thing that mess with keep in mind it works sort of like this orthodoxy and orthopraxy 92% of the people are tuned into what you do 8% are tuned into what you believe about what you do listen to me you start messing with what they do and immediately the set the singles get the symbols get cleared the single you begin signaling them very clearly changes here okay so don't mess with Sunday I mean it just it's just sheer idiocy to go home and bless God we're gonna we're gonna you know I've seen guys preach that way they go off to a conference and then somebody says back in the 70s get a bus that's the secret to success and I'm a church consultant I'm going across the country I saw thousands of rotting buses I mean I'm not exaggerating thousands of rotting buses sitting behind because back in 71 they went to the Chicago such-and-such and you know such-and-such said if you had a bus you can bus ministry you can do that so I want to bring healing into our church will you come and do a conference on healing in our church I said no way and I said I can't afford the blood and neither can you this was a very liberal church that you know I had had a very visible position in the nomination back a few years build a huge Oedipus now about a third full you know and doctors such-and-such had been there and doctors such-and-such and now it wasn't doctor anymore you know they couldn't afford doctor next now when you think of it negatively so that's a hard group to change and you think of another way that's a good group to practice healing on so I had to I had to ask some questions because see some of these things are prescriptive Lee put together you can't sell over-the-counter medicine on every situation I'm in a Methodist Church Oh 68 years of age so I had to find that out so I asked him a few questions tell me about your church and history the back I said you've got to you've got to build small groups in your church he says oh I can't get people in small groups I said that's right older people do not like small groups he says I did what I can't do it I said no way you don't understand you already have small groups he says what do you mean I said you told me earlier you have 22 committees in your church and they did and he was on every one of them you wonder what he did a whole month long and so he said what do I do and I said when you when you go home make hi how are you a question that doesn't mean pray about you that means pray on you he said oh they feel funny not you're sure they I said they will the first few times but just do it anyway do it quickly don't make a big deal of it don't make any big promises don't put on some sort of an attitude don't start speaking in King James's stuff like that just say Lord you know here's my brother and his back really hurts today touching God and that's it he says that all there is to it so the headaches went away you know and other things didn't happen you know person here I said start tearing pages out of books share this guy share it with that guy you know get a chapter here or there write an article don't preach it from the pulpit bring change in very slowly then I said begin looking for their children and grandchildren and start having parties for them and he says what do you mean I said look by the way this would have been very easy in a Hispanic or an Italian culture but it was very hard in the culture he was in because of the way they view elderly but see in a Hispanic or an Italian culture they love honoring the older people and so having a party for you know Papa

such-and-such is a big deal then get everybody off of that I know a guy in Long Island that lost an island that's built a huge church that way just constantly winning people to Christ beautiful work of God built around the culture and its natural interaction the way it naturally relates so they love to get together and they love to talk big about one another so he lets him do that and he just puts Jesus in there has one of the granddaughters get up and give her testimony he's telling me about winning one of the mafia people there that old man was sitting there and the tears are running down his face let him do the Lord about a month later you see the entree that's his heart that's his grandchild there he loved what was going on so go back to the Methodist and so I said to him introduce it by doing it you see you are the change agent they will do what you do they'll do what you do not what you say to do but what you do years ago when we were worn out Pharisees and we had a Bible answer to everything Bob I really witnessed to that this morning we did we had an answer to everything anything we didn't have an answer to wasn't worth knowing and we would tell you that oh don't worry about that that's not important here's what's important and but we were just burned out on it we were dry as dust we knew everything but we couldn't even like each other couldn't hardly get together we were so quickly and so I'm stinking mean trained to talk bad about everybody I haven't gotten over that yet I still lapsed into that from time to time and this breaks the father's heart and breaks mine too because it just comes out of me it's just entrained in me so I don't think I have to stop and repair because I did that last week so my point is this is that you you're working with the people and you're bringing them along and you bring them along by what you do more than what you tell but there is a point we have to tell them what Jesus both began to do and tell acts 1 1 and so there's a point in which you must give an explanation and that that point came in our own church as we we were a bunch of worn-out pharisaical legalists conservative evangelicals and I remember people trying to raise their hand in a worship service all that was painful still painful for me I still can't do it I still can't do it it just shuts me down to be in a setting where everybody's open and having a good time but I just close up get quieter and quieter can't make it yet you know I'm still working on it I hope to before I go to heaven because I understand they do it all the time up there but in the as the church grew in its acumen you see we started seeing some healings we started seeing people empowered by the Spirit baptized in the Spirit we saw people be being released and then they said what is this you taught against this in the past I said well I think I was wrong you know but let me show you this this is something I've been reading or let me give you this chapter out of this book but read hey read such-and-such that was really helpful to me and so just by pointing them to sources and feeding them on the basis of their hunger as over against clamping it down their throat saying you need to know this so that we can move ahead because bless God you're stopping the cause of God among us that won't get it I believe that there's a great harvest being prepared and it's being prepared among the poor but why by the poor I do not only mean the those that are the Jetson and the Flotsam of society those that are homeless and incapable of functioning and uneducated and economically deprived we live now in a nation that's largely fatherless and all about us there are literally hundreds of millions of people who have grown up in households that have been dysfunctional to use the current popular term and so we have a nation of people that don't know who they are they don't know what they're all about they've got all kinds of shiny glittery things and there's no happiness in it and they're impoverished they're poor in spirit and broken now some of them are still so excited about the glitter and the glamour and the thing the new thing they got that their heads aren't down you walk around the streets of your communities and you'll see those heads down and if you go and minister to those folks you're gonna find a ready receptive group for the gospel they may not be the group for you to land but you can land them somewhere you can find a church or make a church that they can go to and as you start doing that you'll see an impact on your community on your culture three and a half years ago our church went to its lowest ebb during that period of time I had had a heart attack just part of that A5 I went through

a lot of difficulties with with lots of issues I was spiritually deceived by something the enemy had put together in which he told me that I was to give my church up and to walk away from it and it was wrong it was a lie the Lord showed me that but in 1987 we only had 52 converts baptized now for some churches that would be a lot you know in a year's time to have 52 baptized converts but for us that was just absolute miserable failure and I was so broken over it but sometimes you see we need these quantifiable measurements to see where you really are and I was looking at it we'd only spent about six thousand dollars on the poor that year you know all we had an international reputation we grew 2,000 people that year we were put in some magazine as one of the fastest growing churches in America I was sick I almost vomited when I read the article not because the man that wrote it was wrong but because it was so dishonest we weren't the church I didn't want to go to that church I don't want to be part of that people and then I realized whose fault it was they were in the condition they were and so I had to repent now God has turned that around last year we gave out over a million meals in Anaheim we had over 1,700 baptized converts this year to be considerably larger than that God is stirring us again we're planting churches again we're ministering again God is causing us to flourish the people are studying the word again the people are growing the small groups are growing by every measurement I know how to measure except one which has to do mainly with Bible study I think we're biblically ignorant in our church and how we've gotten that way I don't know but again it probably comes back to me somewhere I'm probably not doing enough Bible teaching my point in saying that is simply this there is a market out there and we're testing that market for you and I tell you there are literally hundreds of thousands of people in America that are hungry for God right now and later you know tomorrow I want to show you empirical proof that revival has started in America I'm absolutely convinced it's underway but let's just close and it gives you a little break time before dinner father thank you for these your people and we ask O God you'd richly bless them and strengthen them in their understanding of who they are and what they're for and Lord give them eyes to see the heart

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