

THE **Total** **MINISTRY** **Makeover**



SHANE THACKER

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated first to the Lord.
My prayer all throughout writing this book is that
I would do God's will and bring Him glory.
I pray that this offering is pleasing and acceptable to You.

To my beautiful bride, Christina,
you have supported me and all my ridiculous
dreams throughout our entire marriage.

To our three amazing children. Emma, James, and John-Luke.
I pray that as Christina and I raise you up to be
amazing young men and women for the Lord,
that you yourselves will have a healthy relationship
with the Lord and also His Church.

Finally, to Inola Christian Church.
It is through the people of this congregation that I
have had so much support, encouragement, and growth.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Page 1

INTRODUCTION

Page 3

STEPPING STONES

Stepping Stone 1:

Fall in Love With the Lord

Page 7

Stepping Stone 2:

Fall in Love With the Church

Page 15

Stepping Stone 3:

Assess Your Strengths
and Weaknesses

Page 23

Stepping Stone 4:

Assess the Church

Page 33

Stepping Stone 5:

Start Leading Your Teams

Page 45

Stepping Stone 6:

Kill the Golden Calves

Page 53

Stepping Stone 7:

Transition to
Purpose-Powered Ministries

Page 63

Stepping Stone 8:

Raise Up Leaders

Page 73

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Stepping Stone 1:

Fall in Love With the Lord

Page 81

Stepping Stone 2:

Fall in Love With the Church

Page 83

Stepping Stone 3:

Assess Your Strengths
and Weaknesses

Page 85

Stepping Stone 4:

Assess the Church

Page 87

Stepping Stone 5:

Start Leading Your Teams

Page 89

Stepping Stone 6:

Kill the Golden Calves

Page 91

Stepping Stone 7:

Transition to
Purpose-Powered Ministries

Page 95

Stepping Stone 8:

Raise Up Leaders

Page 99

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Page 101

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INTRODUCTION

Short-term ministry? I don't know anyone that has intentionally set themselves up for short-term ministry; but without the right foundation, that's exactly what ends up happening.

Jesus tells us the wise man will build his house on the rock, while a fool builds his on the sand (see Matthew 7:21-27). A proper foundation holds up the structure and helps keep everything intact. It stands firm, weathers the storm; it is a safe, healthy, sustainable place to dwell. Jesus of course was talking about the foundation of following the will of the Father and entering the Kingdom of Heaven, but the same principle applies not only to physical structures, but also every aspect of your life. Whether it is getting into a relationship, holding a job, raising your children; we need a proper foundation if we expect anything to last.

Why would the same not be true for your ministry? Let's be clear: ministry is a major undertaking that should not be entered into lightly. After all, this is the church. This is the Bride of Christ.

We see it far too often. A person in vocational ministry who had the right heart, mind, motives... had the wrong foundation. After a short time, they are being "called by God" to some other church. While there are many cases that this is legitimately true, you and I know that there are many that are simply saving face (for either themselves or the church), because they got either burned out or fired, or both.

That sounded insensitive, didn't it? Just imagine how the church family felt that was left behind. As leaders, it doesn't give you a proper foundation for ministry, and the same is true in your church.

What would happen if we as leaders in the church were able to prepare a solid foundation for our ministry in the churches we serve? How would that change our effectiveness as leaders? How much more of an impact would a healthy church have on the local community they serve? How many more people would we collectively reach for Jesus?

With *The Total Ministry Makeover*, we have one goal: to empower ministers everywhere to have the right foundation in ministry. Why? Because it makes us healthy leaders. Healthy leaders will lead healthy churches. Healthy churches will lead healthy church members. Healthy church members will be equipped and effective in reaching people for Jesus and carrying out His mission. With a proper foundation, you can be a leader that leads not only followers of Jesus, but also leaders for Jesus.

(Before going on, read that last paragraph again.)

There are eight steps that I have learned during my time in ministry and put them into action. Some of it was planned, some stumbled upon; but all of it was God-appointed. It has radically changed how I lead in ministry and has revolutionized everything we do. With that in mind, here are the eight Stepping Stones that will lead you to a proper foundation and a healthy ministry:

The first three steps are done *before entering a ministry*:

- 1) Fall in love with the Lord.
- 2) Fall in love with the Church.
- 3) Assess yourself.

If you are already in vocational ministry, that's OK. I do a self-assessment regularly to ensure I'm still following these steps, and after reading this book, I encourage you to do it as well. Think of these first three steps as the base foundation of your ministry. These steps, when kept in order, will be the foundation of your ministry as you build on the next five steps.

The last five steps are done *after entering into ministry*:

- 4) Assess your church.
- 5) Start leading your team(s).
- 6) Kill the "golden calves".
- 7) Transition to "Purpose-Powered" ministries.
- 8) Raise up leaders.

These are like the walls, the roof, the interior. If you keep these steps in order, you're going to have a great foundation and setting yourself up for long-term, healthy, and sustainable ministry.

What is great about this, is that these same principles are applicable with *all servants of the Lord*, not just those in vocational ministry. What you apply now will also apply to your church, regardless of how or where they are serving.

Each of these chapters offer questions in the back of this book (including this introduction). I want to highly encourage you to get with two or three other ministers that are also reading the book, and get together once or twice a month, and really process each of these chapters together.

One final note: No doubt you've had some bad experiences, reading this may have brought up some past pain. I want to stop and encourage you for just a moment. I have felt the deep pain of not only leaving a church but also doing so in an unhealthy way. Remember that God can use any situation for good. God can certainly use your past pain to learn from and lead better in the future. I believe in you, God has a great purpose for you in your ministry, and I know that if you follow these steps, regardless of your past pain, you will find great stability in your current and future ministry as you lead others to Jesus and bring God all the glory. You've got this!

Before proceeding, get with a friend in ministry that is also reading this book, and check out the first set of questions on page 79.



STEPPING STONE 1 **Fall In Love With the Lord**



MY STORY

When I was younger, my brother got me plugged into church, and he was a key person who led me to Jesus. I was on fire for God as a young teen. I played guitar leading worship with the youth, and just loved serving any way I could. Oddly enough, I was in seventh grade when I first caught a glimpse of my purpose and mission that God laid out for me. I was challenged by our youth leaders to be reading in the Word every day. So, I read a chapter a day, starting in Matthew. I made it to Matthew 28, and I came across this:

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. – Matthew 28:18-20

I have only had a handful of moments in life where God made something so crystal clear to me that it was just barely shy of an audible voice (I’ll share those moments later in this book). This was one of those moments. As I read, this passage

made it clear to me that God was calling me into youth ministry. This is my favorite passage to this day because it is so clear cut as to what God wants us to do: GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, BAPTIZE, and TEACH. We're called to lead people to Jesus all around the world!

From that night in seventh grade, all the way through high school, I essentially trained in church to learn and grow as much as I could, with the sole intent of leading students to Jesus. In my senior year of high school, I did an internship with the youth minister at that time, who prepped me for college. Even back to that night when I read The Great Commission, I had a clear vision for what God was calling me to do, and with that, I knew my next steps after high school were to attend a Christian College to get a solid foundation of Biblical education.

I attended Ozark Christian College years ago to be trained and sent out for Christian service, wherever God was leading me. I remember walking in as a freshman with my amazing, permed mullet (I wonder why I couldn't get a date that first semester?). I was in this new season of life with all these others wanting to go into ministry. Don't get me wrong, there are many that are still in ministry today, doing amazing work and living out their calling. But after that first year of college, many simply dropped out.

Why? No doubt some intended on going for only one year to get a Biblical foundation before entering another college campus. But for many, I suspect that they entered college thinking they would enter ministry, but not really catching the vision or the purpose God had for them. Imagine how flighty and unstable you can be when being hired into a ministry, not truly knowing your purpose!

Our Purpose

What is our greatest purpose on earth? Here it is: *To carry out the will of the Father and to bring Him glory.* Carrying out the will of the Father will look different for each one of us, based on the needs of those around us as well as the unique gifts God has given us. What God has in mind for you is not likely going to be the same for me. On top of that, God may have a specific mission for you in this season of life, and then it might change to something else in even a year or two. As we build a foundation for ministry, we have to be actively aware of our well-defined purpose, God's will for us. So, how can you know the will of the Father? And how can you carry out His will and bring Him glory?

You can find a whole host of passages on our purpose, but let's look at just a few. Jesus said this:

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” – John 6:38-40

It’s clear that Jesus wanted to lay aside His own will for the will of the Father. He even specifically laid aside His will in the Garden of Gethsemane, right before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion; saying ‘*not as I will, but as you will*’ (see Matthew 26:39). We have to lay aside our own personal desires to carry out the will of the Father. Jesus also said this:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” - Matthew 5:14-16

The whole purpose of shining the light is about bringing more praise, more glory, to our Father in heaven. We’re called to shine light to “*everyone in the house*”. If we’re always considering God’s will (as seen in John 6:40), we should always bear in mind how we can shine the light of Christ everywhere we go, and with everyone we encounter.

This purpose of ours is unchanging regardless of who we are, where we are from, or what we have done. Just consider this: while we all have the same purpose, we all get to carry out that purpose *in a different way*. Every one of us in this life gets the amazing opportunity to have and use our variety of gifts, talents, and abilities to bring God glory in a unique and personal way.

UNEXPECTED IDOLS

It might seem unnecessary to say this, but if you expect to lead in ministry, you need to love the Lord. However, there are many times where our priorities are elsewhere. Imagine if your greatest focus is *not* on loving the Lord, but on the church or organization you are leading. Perhaps it is focused on how many people are attending your services, or the engagement in your classes, or the excitement in your events. Does this sound a little familiar?

Regardless of the amount of time you've been in ministry, we all have to stay on guard against this. Anything that takes the place of God as the central focus of our life is no different than an idol. We have read the stories in the Old Testament about the devastating punishments for the Israelites choosing to replace God by creating and worshiping golden calves, Asherah poles, and a whole host of other false gods (for one of many examples, read Exodus 32). Idols are detestable to God and in clear defiance of His commands. It's easy to look at their situation and look down on them for their sin, and yet we are committing similar acts today. Let's explore some common modern-day idols, starting with one of the most clear and obvious ones in our society today.

Device Usage

Think about your daily device usage, whether it is tracking your ministry pages or checking for emails or messages, or maybe you are literally just wasting time (I'm ashamed to admit, but I've certainly been guilty of this). Most phones today have the ability to track how many times you unlocked your phone, how many times you signed in on each app, and even how much time you spent on each app. Go ahead... take a guess before looking, then check out how much time you spent on your device(s) today. You may not want to but go ahead and look anyway. For further reading on this particular topic, check out our Bible Reading Plan on YouVersion, "De:Vice"¹.

Performance-Driven

What about your "ministry performance"? I have caught myself far too many times comparing, complaining, and competing. Being a numbers nerd like I am, if I am not careful, I tend to look at everything from attendance metrics, post views, likes, and shares... like it's an obsession. On top of that, don't forget you better comb your hair just right, and you need to make sure the shirt is tucked in. When you are recording something that's going online, you had better do that over about twenty times so that it comes out "perfect". Good luck with that! We absolutely need to give our first fruits in everything we do; but having the "right performance" isn't how you do it. All that hard work is for nothing if your focus is on anyone or anything other than God. It might even be appealing to large crowds, but it's empty and hollow inside, and unacceptable to God. That's not the type of leader I ever want to be.

Getting Rid of Idols

Regardless of the idols pulling at you, they control your habits, but worse yet, they also have a vise grip on your hearts. Regardless of what has a grip on you, how do you get rid of them? It starts by the recognition that there's a problem coupled with needing to change a heart. God has given you the free will to choose Him or to choose the fleeting things of this world. Are you choosing wisely?

If you have the heart to change, then it is time to turn your heart back to Him. God is ready and waiting to receive you with open arms and offers forgiveness freely. What a mighty God we serve! In addition, God has given us each other in the church to encourage, to mentor, and to offer Biblical discipline:

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. – Hebrews 10:24-25

Have you been “spurred” before? It hurts! While it is no fun at the time, it is certainly necessary at times to get us back on track with God. If you're dealing with an idol in your life, it's time to make a change, get with a wise and godly brother or sister, and get some accountability in your life. Whether these idols are forged by our hands or forged in our hearts, idols rob us of our purpose, but most importantly: *idols rob God of His glory.*

As a leader in the church, Satan wants nothing more than to put your focus on anything or anyone other than God. A person seeking to expand the Kingdom of God is certainly going to be marked as Satan's enemy. A wise and godly friend will point you to the Scriptures and lead you back on the fastest route with God.

THE FASTEST ROUTE?

I live near the wonderful town of Tulsa, Oklahoma. If I were to travel by road from Tulsa to Oklahoma City, which road should I take? A quick web search would tell you that I-44 West is currently the best option. Why? Because interstates overall have a higher speed limit than other roads, they are generally maintained better than any side road or state highway, and they can generally host higher amounts of traffic. With that in mind: *there is currently no faster route by road to get from Tulsa to Oklahoma City.*

Now consider this: What is the “fastest route” to fulfill our purpose, that is, of carrying out the will of the Father and bringing Him glory? You might not think there is one, but in reality, Jesus made it crystal clear in what is widely known as “The Greatest Commandment”. Jesus was teaching and He was approached by a lawyer, who of course was testing Him. This is the dialogue that was exchanged in Matthew 22:36-38:

³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. – Matthew 22:36-38

In other words, love the Lord your God with all of who you are, love Him with every ounce of your being. If you want to take the fastest route to the very heart of God, then follow this command. Why? *If you love God with all of who you are, you will do all that God has commanded you to do.*

The Heart of the Matter

This is why our love for the Lord should be at the very foundation of everything we do. Sure, you could *try* to get closer to God by taking some side roads by following so many other commands, but they pale in comparison. The reality is, if God doesn't have your whole heart; then following the other commands is futile.

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. – Hosea 6:6

You can preach all the sermons, lead community events, go on mission trips and lead various projects in and around the church that you want; but it all is meaningless if your heart is not desperately chasing after God's heart. When you follow the Greatest Commandment, you're on the fastest track to the very heart of God, and with that you will naturally grow the desire to follow all the rest; you'll be following His will, and you'll be bringing Him glory. *Stepping Stone 1* is “*Fall in Love with the Lord*”, because then (and only then) will you fulfill your purpose!

Our Greatest Goal

The Greatest Commandment should be our greatest goal. If this command is not first in your life, your spiritual foundation is slipping off to shifting sands. Now imagine your ministry. How can you possibly expect to lead others to do something you are not personally doing? That is why it is so important to regularly examine how you are living: have you fallen in love with the Lord, or are you a lover of the world? The author of Hebrews put it this way:

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. – Hebrews 12:1-3

FINAL NOTE ON STEPPING STONE 1

This is the first Stepping Stone but really it's the biggest step. It gets to the heart of why you're doing all the rest, not just in ministry, but all areas of your life. So what is it going to take for you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? What is hindering your daily walk with Jesus? What is it that has you deeply entangled with sin? It's time to fix our eyes on Jesus. After all Jesus has done for us, there should be no question in giving all of our time, talents, and energy to Him. We'll fulfill our purpose of following His will and bringing Him glory. If you start with this one stepping stone, you'll be standing on the healthiest foundation you could possibly have for your ministry, as it will lay the groundwork for all the rest.

But what will loving God look like? With all our various gifts, roles, and situations, it will undoubtedly be very different for us all. With that in mind, look at your Stepping Stone 1 questions for discussion. My prayer is that as you look through this first stepping stone, as well as the questions on page 81, that this will open up your heart to the very heart of God, laying the foundation for everything that will follow.



STEPPING STONE 2 **Fall In Love With the Church**



⁶Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) ⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God." – Revelation 19:6-9

The Bride of Christ

What a day! This passage in Revelation is one of several that gives us a glimpse of the overwhelming excitement of the wedding of the Lamb. Dressed in righteousness, the bride is presented to Christ pure and without blemish. Best of all: as God's holy people, we get to witness this enormous event!

It's a good thing that the church is preparing for that right now and is just as perfect as could be here on earth... no power struggles or divisions, no denominational divides, no arguments over the color of carpet, or whether to use pews or chairs, traditional or modern worship, or that fleeting pagan divide of

whether the kiss was “sloppy” and “wet” or “unforeseen”. The Church here on earth is just perfect... right?

The sad reality is that churches are far too often comprised of either inactive or misguided leadership, flooded with selfish hearts and unholy motives among members. Power struggles or divisions are so common, they’re expected. It’s terrible to even think about how many have walked away from the faith simply because we weren’t *being the church*, walking in unity and doing everything in accordance with God’s will. But Jesus declared a promise about the church to the Apostle Peter:

¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” – Matthew 16:18-19

There is certainly brokenness in the Church (what many refer to as the global “Capital ‘C’ Church”) all across the world but in the end, through Jesus Christ, the Church will prevail. I’m not giving excuses for our brokenness, rather, this brokenness shows our desperate need for Him.

The Body of Christ

Not only is the Church referred to as the “bride of Christ”, but also the “body of Christ”. Christ, being the head, has already told the body where to go and what to do. Sure, you are undoubtedly doing a lot; between preaching, teaching, instructing, rebuking, disciplining, encouraging all the members of the body. At the end of the day, however, you are simply carrying out your orders. You just need to make sure you are following the *right orders*. That’s why it is so important to be in tune with God and His Word.

So what exactly is the role of the body of Christ? I can’t think of a better picture in the New Testament than the description given by the Apostle Paul:

¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the

fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. – Ephesians 4:11-16

OUR JOB

What are we called to do as leaders in the church? Equip God’s people, build up the body, reach unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus, become mature, build up the church in love, with each part of the body doing its work. In other words, God has given leaders in the church a big job to do! Being a leader in your local church is a blessing, it is ordained by God. Given that it is a part of the Bride of Christ, this a role that should never be taken lightly. And the church is full of broken people (just like you) that need to continually be led back on the holy foundation, where we are all called to stand.

With that in mind: *You can’t effectively lead those you don’t love.*

You are going to face challenges within your church body. It is a societal plague to cut off those who have wronged us, to block them out of our life, to be impatient with one another, to have the “one and done” attitude when it comes to failures or mistakes. Leaders: Don’t let this mindset be the case in the church! I have faced many challenges as a leader, and undoubtedly you have too. You have to learn to lead through those struggles; but you’ll never effectively lead them if you don’t truly love them.

That’s why this Stepping Stone in *The Total Ministry Makeover* is necessary before entering into ministry or leadership in the church. The local church is comprised of broken people just like us. We get cranky and we have attitudes and unpleasant mannerisms. Some have a loud voice and know how to use it (and of course, not in a good way). Others silently bury their problems to the point of a fault. Many are considered “misfits” by society (and even within your church) and require a little extra grace and patience to bring them along. *All of us* will face some type of failure at one point or another, and with that, there’s going to be some level

of hurt. Whether that pain is small or large, you get to lead your church through it!

For the most part respect is given; but trust is earned. You might have stellar credentials through your education and your years in ministry, but all that will mean very little to your church until they can get to know you. It's normal (and to an extent healthy) to be guarded about trusting a new leader. After all, *how long would it take you to trust someone to lead you in your spiritual formation?* When considering a leadership position, you need to keep that in mind.

Stepping Stone 1 is calling us above all else, to *fall in love with the Lord*. Moving on to Stepping Stone 2, what does it mean to *fall in love with the church?*

What Does It Mean to Fall in Love with the Church?

Over the years I have led in various roles as a volunteer, part-time, and full-time. I had heard about this church near the college I attended that was looking for a youth minister, and I called them up to visit a few Sundays and interview for the position. Each Sunday a family in the church was so hospitable and welcomed me into their home for meals just so we could get to know each other. Shortly after I was hired part-time. As small a church as they were, they helped me to get out of college almost completely debt free. More importantly they left a deep imprint on my life and leadership to follow. I had stepped down after about eighteen months to get a business degree, but I never stopped attending. Why? Because I loved the church dearly. I stepped back but assisted as a volunteer as needed.

Christina and I got married in 2010 and in 2012 had our first child. During that time, I had *returned to the role* as their youth minister. Being new parents, we were struggling financially, but also emotionally, because we did not have family in the area. Throughout the first year of parenting, we had people in our local church that offered to help us. Being new to the whole parenting gig, we wanted to prove we could do it on our own, and we also didn't want to be a burden by asking for help.

In hindsight we certainly should have because, over the course of that year, I was working long hours at another job. With the weight of being a new parent and having no breaks, I unfortunately got burned out in ministry. My heart grew cold, my relationship with God just became distant, my attitude became toxic and the ministry I led unfortunately suffered for it. After about a year, I got burned out. Even though I loved the church dearly, I should have been more open and let them help more often, rather than trying to do it all on my own. After all, we are there to help them along just as much as they help us on our way.

The Move

We always had the goal in mind to move to Tulsa where I grew up to be near my family and have a network of support nearby. As burned out as I was, it expedited our move. I loved the entire church body dearly, and I still remember the deep pains of the day that we left and moved back to my hometown. I remember that day very well, because I came to the point of saying “I will never enter ministry again”. That was one of the darkest moments in leadership that I can recall to this day, and it is certainly a place no one wants to be. Maybe this is where you are right now? Hang in there and keep reading.

I was burned out and thought I was completely done. Obviously, that changed over time. But we moved to the town where I grew up, and we actually attended this church for several years as church members *before* stepping into my current role. God used that situation as a time to learn and grow, and not just to rest but also to work on some much-needed growth personally before reentering ministry. I was able to share with the leadership that I was burned out, that I needed a break. I requested of them to just let me attend for a time of respite and to get back on track with God and really spend time with our family. During that time, I learned to lean on these great, godly leaders for help, guidance, wisdom, and all the while I truly fell in love with the church body here.

A Question for Reflection

With all that being said about my situation, here’s a question for you. I think on this question often. It is good to reflect on it regularly: If you are leading in a church right now, would you still be there if you weren’t paid? Go ahead and write your answer off to the side. Answering this question honestly is a good way to indicate where your heart is. It’s worth noting that there is nothing wrong with making a salary, but it’s time for a change of heart if it’s the only reason you’re there. If you are struggling with your purpose, go back a few pages to the heading that says “Our Job” and read it again.

You can’t effectively lead those you don’t love, and as we said in Stepping Stone 1: *If you love God with all of who you are, you’ll do all He has called you to do.* Knowing that the Church is the precious bride of Christ, it’s time to look at the Church through the eyes of Christ. How does He feel about her? He left the perfect place of Heaven to come to this imperfect and broken world, only to die in the most painful way known to man. Why would He do all that? This is why:

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38-39

There would be no barriers too big, no distance too far, no divisions too great, no attitudes too grievous. There is *absolutely nothing* that would separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ. Church leaders, how much more effective a leader would you be if you had that same level of love for your local church that Jesus has for us? How much more would your congregation respond to you if they catch a good glimpse of Jesus every time they see you? How much more effective would your church be in reaching the community for Jesus if they knew how much they were loved by God through your love for them? How many more would come to Christ if we as leaders would follow *just these first two Stepping Stones*?

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

Oddly enough, getting to know your church family happens more often *outside of the church*! To follow this Stepping Stone requires life together, not just Sunday or midweek studies (or whatever meeting times look like in your church). It will look different for each person, but for Christina and me, we love to host families for dinner. From my experience, food is one of the easiest ways to connect with people, and God has gifted my wife with some great cooking skills. With that in mind, some of the best ways we have gotten to know our church family is by inviting them into our home and around our table.

But maybe hosting people doesn't quite fall into your gifts and passions. That's OK! Use *whatever God has gifted you with* to connect with your congregation. It may be sitting together and playing cards, going to local sports events together, doing a project with a few people or your whole small group, or serving a young family by offering to babysit their kids just so they can have a date night.

Whatever that looks like for you, remember that it is in the "little moments" like these, that you can have some of the biggest impact in the church. If they've connected with you outside of the church walls, it makes it a lot easier for them to connect with you on stage (or in whatever area and capacity you're leading). If you have followed Stepping Stone 1 fully but are finding that you have trouble

leading in a local church, I would suspect that you are not connecting with them on a personal level.

When someone knows that you care about them (that you're not just there for a paycheck, or for fame, but following God's leading in your life), they know that you don't just think about them as another number for the attendance. You see them as a person that's loved by you, and more importantly, that they are loved by God.

As you start bridging these connections within the church, you're going to find that they're going to start doing the same over time. It isn't always you checking on them, but they're checking on you too. When your congregation becomes more of a family than a community, that's when things really start taking shape in the church as you lay the foundation for this ministry. Not only are you fulfilling your purpose by following Stepping Stone 1, but as you follow Stepping Stone 2, you'll be pointing others to follow Stepping Stone 1! Now that they see you *just as you are*, loving God with every ounce of your being, they're going to be naturally drawn to do the same.

Let's look at the earliest glimpse of the New Testament church. Despite open persecution and potentially being killed for their faith, this is what they did:

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. – Acts 2:42-47

They did life together. It wasn't about coming for worship services but an everyday longing to be together, like that of a family. It changed their church, it changed their community, and in all actuality, what they did then truly had an impact all around the world; they loved the church like Jesus did!

Now back to you. What kind of impact will be made as a result of what some consider those "little moments" you can make with your church? Imagine if you fell in love with the church like Jesus did: There would be no barriers too big, no

distance too far, no divisions too great, no attitudes too grievous that would stop us from loving the church. You'll be planting seeds that you didn't even know you were sowing, your job becomes a calling, Mondays in the office become a joy because you're doing what you love (this sounds crazy I know, but I *really* love Mondays). Every week you'll watch God move in a mighty way in your church!

My prayer is that we all, regardless of denominational backgrounds, regardless of obstacles that are in the way, would fall in love with the Lord and His Church to the point that we could *restore what was lost* in former divisions. We could walk in unity as leaders all around the world, and we could reach the lost together. They can become part of the body of Christ, dressing the bride of Christ with the righteous acts of God's holy people.

Let's continue this conversation with a friend as you look in your Stepping Stone 2 questions for discussion on page 83. Let's do this: Fall in love with the church!

STEPPING STONE 3 **Assess Your Strengths and Weaknesses**



³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. – Romans 12:3-8

SOBER JUDGMENT

Now you have made it through the first two Stepping Stones in *The Total Ministry Makeover*. Now that you have become outward focused on the Lord and His Church, it is time to focus *just for a short time* on yourself. As we have talked about before, God has given everyone certain gifts, talents, and abilities to be used

to expand His Kingdom and to bring Him glory. Some have been given many gifts, and others very few. Many don't even know their gifts simply because they're not yielding to God and allowing Him to work through them.

It's reasonable to think that there are gifts God has given you that you didn't even know you had. It's also reasonable to say that you are just one person, and you can't do everything in every area of your ministry well (especially with your responsibility for a wide variety of tasks). This is why it is so important to know what areas God has gifted you, and the areas God *did not bless you*. So how do you know your gifts? It must be done through sober judgment. What is sober judgment? It's the idea that you can be humble enough to recognize your strengths without having an over-inflated view about it. You can also be wise enough to recognize the things you lack (without beating yourself up over it).

Personally, anytime I do a self-assessment, I almost always ask someone to verify it. I have a friend in the church that literally does not care if you like his opinion or not. When he tells me something, it is exactly as he sees it; not sugarcoated and also not intentionally harsh. He is analytical enough to look at issues from multiple angles and caring enough to communicate any issues effectively. On top of that, I have never seen malice in his heart. He is the kind of guy that you want in your closest circles, because he is going to call you out on anything he has an issue with and at the same time encourage you to continue in your strengths. Do you have a friend like that?

It's important when asking someone else's opinion that you have the right mindset and the right heart (but if you've truly followed Stepping Stones 1 and 2, then you already do). You have to be ready for an answer you won't necessarily like. That's what happened to me one time with my friend.

A Healthy Start

You see, we had a healthy start when I came on staff, and I can assure you it wasn't because of me. Before I came on staff, we were without a paid youth pastor for about a year. During that year, God blessed our church with a team of wise and caring people leading our youth group. This team of people exemplified what it means to follow Stepping Stones 1 and 2. They were volunteers, so you know the answer to the "would you be here if you weren't paid?" question, and they loved the Lord and loved the church so much that they wanted to keep the youth program going while they were without a youth minister. So when I came on staff, they intentionally planned that I would join with them ready to follow and agree with

whatever changes the next youth pastor would make.

As you can imagine, when we gave it further structure and life, the youth program just flourished. We had new students coming in, new volunteers ready to serve and lead, and a lot of excitement within the church. I could not possibly take credit for that (and shouldn't anyway), because God had orchestrated all of that through these believers using their gifts and yielding to anything God called them to do. As much as the program grew, I quickly found myself having major struggles during certain events.

A Sobering Truth

You see, I have a huge struggle: it's the uncanny knack of *not* being able to recruit new volunteers. I guess the word "struggle" isn't a strong enough word, because over the five years I have been on staff here, I have yet to recruit a single volunteer directly. I was getting discouraged and asked my friend what in the world I was doing wrong. In all of his holy wisdom, he thought about it for a moment and said, "You're preaching and teaching well, you're really good at organizing and communicating the expectations well. You're not abrupt or anything like that when you ask people to volunteer. So... after prayerful consideration, I truly believe it must be your face!"

Good thing I have him around, right? His joke (at my expense of course) actually helped me realize that I'm just not good at recruitment, and more importantly, *that's OK*. That's why He gave us each other in the church! There are plenty of people in the church that are fantastic at recruiting people for various tasks; God has just gifted them in that way. They could go to the same people that told me "no" and somehow get a "yes" answer! It must be my face! Once I learned about my weakness, it really helped me to concentrate on my strengths when it came to future activities and events. I realized the people I needed to surround me. I didn't have to be the person to directly do everything, especially in those particular areas that God gifted someone else.

God has given you gifts too, but He has also *not* given you certain gifts. Once you find out both, you will start to see clearly what you should be spending the majority of your time doing. For me personally, preaching and administration are two of my strongest gifts. I love to see the big picture of things; not just how it is now, but what it could be in a few years (or many years). I love developing content that helps point people to Jesus. I mentioned as well that I'm a numbers nerd, and with that, I love learning about financial management and teaching others how to manage their finances well, too. Those are my strengths; they're gifts that God has

given me to be used for His Kingdom.

When it comes to my weaknesses, that's a *much* longer list. You already know that I cannot recruit new people for a task or event. I'm also not a relationally driven person. Sure, I can have a conversation with anybody, but my tendencies as an introvert often try to take over. If I'm not on guard, I can also be very complacent about the needs of others. I can preach a sermon anytime, but if you put me with a group of people for a teaching session that requires actual conversation (like leading a small group for example). I will do it, but will also *gladly* hand over that responsibility to someone else; not because I don't want to teach, but because I'm not a relationally driven person. But that's enough about me; what are your strengths and weaknesses?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

How do you assess your strengths and weaknesses? There are plenty of spiritual gifts assessments out there, which are very helpful in seeing what your gifts might be. In this assessment, I wanted to keep it as simplified as possible, because if you can set foot in the right direction, you'll start to see clearly what your gifts are. In this assessment, we're going to focus on our strengths more than our weaknesses. After all, once you find your strengths it should become clear *what you're not good at*. We're going to look at your **pain, passion, and perception**.

Pain

- Out of all the brokenness and injustice (the pain) in this world, what breaks your heart more than anything else? If you have a close 2nd or 3rd thing, write those down too. _____

If I asked you to go and tell someone else about what pains you the most (and why), it would come very easily wouldn't it? God wants us to see what He sees; He wants us to see the brokenness in this world and use our gifts to address it.

- Why does this issue (or issues) break your heart more than any other problem in the world? _____

It just comes naturally; God has instilled it in you to care about others in some way. Our hearts *should* break for the things that break God’s heart, and when you draw closer to God, that pain is naturally going to increase about that issue. Now let’s talk about our passion.

Passion

We are passionate about what brings us the most pain, but that’s not what this is about. This is about the things you just love to do; whether it’s a skill you have, a place you go, it’s the thing that makes your work seem more like play. I know this is crazy, but I actually love Mondays! Why? Because I get to go back to work doing the things I love the most. I’m very passionate about creating content, to the point that I can hardly sleep on Sunday nights because I’m so excited to get back to work. And yes... I’ll call myself crazy, I’m an odd duck for sure!

Look through the following questions about your passion:

- What are some things that you are really passionate about? What do you love to do the most? (whether it’s places you go, things you do, being with certain people, etc.) _____

- Connect the dots: Out of all that you just listed, what do they have in common? Is there one thing in particular that they all have in common? ____

So for me it looks like this: I am passionate about preaching, I am passionate about developing group questions, I am passionate about writing for Bible Reading Plans and books, I am passionate about Mondays. These are just a few of the things I am passionate about, but what do all these have in common? For me, it's this: I'm passionate about producing content that helps point people to Jesus. God has deeply instilled these passions in me.

Perception

Now if you would, take a step back and get a drone's-eye view of your life and see the big picture of it all. Maybe you could picture it like a mural, on one side is your past, you're in the middle (wherever you are right now), and on the other side is where you'll be in the future. Perhaps it's more like a timeline with specific dates of major events that shaped who you are. It's typically difficult to look into the future you. After all, the rest of today isn't even promised. But I want to challenge you to think bigger than what you are doing now as you look through these questions.

- What are three or four of the biggest events in your life that led you to the desire of entering into ministry? _____

- Now connect the dots across all three. How does the **pain** you talked about before connect with your **passions** and your **perception** (your future)? ___

If you can connect the dots across your pain, passion and perception, you'll start seeing the connections of what your greatest strengths are. Let's put it this way:

PAIN + PASSION + PERCEPTION = POWER

As you see clearly what your strengths are, your weaknesses will start becoming clear too. I have far more weaknesses than strengths. I'm thankful for a loving God who would call even the weakest of people (yes even those weirdos who *love Mondays*) to be used for His glory.

This isn't a short task by any means. To be honest, it may take years for you to find your true strengths; and over time, God may use you for a totally different purpose in a completely different setting. Regardless of where He leads us, we need to constantly be aware of the tools He has given us, as well as how those tools can be used to help those in the world around us. More specifically, as you lead in ministry, you're going to be given an opportunity to serve in various ways. The question is: What is the pain, the passion, and the perception God has put in front of you in this moment, and in the foreseeable future? How do these things fit in your current church setting?

Get ready, because in the next step of *The Total Ministry Makeover*, you're going to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your church. I suppose I should preface the next chapter for you; this next step is like an amphibian. You're on dry ground now, but you're about to get your feet wet. Stepping Stone 4 is the crossover point: You love the Lord with a fervent passion. You've fallen in love with the church. When you complete Stepping Stone 3, you'll assess your strengths and weaknesses. You're finding out how your gifts, talents, and abilities will fit into this particular church setting. You're setting the healthy foundation for a thriving ministry.

Go ahead and continue the conversation with a friend as you look in your

Stepping Stone 3 questions for discussion on page 85. Give this friend permission and authority to speak into your life. If you truly love the Lord and His Church, you're going to do whatever it takes to fill out your purpose and further the Kingdom. Part of that means that you need to be willing to listen with an open mind as to what could be getting in the way of your purpose. Listen well, and also give them your honest (and loving!) assessment of them, too.

You're putting yourself on the right foundation when you:

Fall in love with the Lord.

Fall in love with the church.

Assess your strengths and weaknesses.



STEPPING STONE 4

Assess the Church



²⁰*As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

²¹*The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”* ²²*On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

²⁷*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. – 1st Corinthians 12:20-27*

²³*Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. – Hebrews 10:23-25*

SEEING THE CHURCH CLEARLY

We've laid the foundation *before entering into ministry*, now with God's provision, let's start building something great together in the church. In Stepping Stone 4, you are now going to assess the church. This particular task shouldn't be taken lightly. After all, this is the Bride of Christ! As you assess the church, you need to see how God is fitting you into the equation, and also what potentially needs to change.

As you take on this stepping stone, remember; you're not addressing, you're assessing (addressing the issues will come later). If you're following the Stepping Stones in order, you are just now entering into ministry and you need to build trust with your congregation in order to lead them well. Building trust takes time and God-honoring consistency.

Why is this step so important? Because regardless of how healthy or dysfunctional the church leaders or congregation is, we're going to point people to their purpose (remember our purpose: To carry out the will of the Father and to bring Him glory). So we're going to share how their strengths serve that purpose, and we're going to share how to use that purpose and those strengths to have the greatest impact *together as one body of believers*. So now that you've gotten a drone's-eye view of your own strengths and weaknesses, let's do the same with the church.

Assessing the church will reveal a wide variety of issues. If you have factions and divisions within the church, then you need to remove spiritual strongholds. If you have a church that is inward-focused, you need to soften hardened hearts for the lost. If they're spiritually immature, you'll need to determine how to effectively lead them from spiritual milk to spiritual meat. If they've had a bad experience with a former leader, there's baggage to help them release. If there are "golden calves" or "sin in the camp", you better check, do you have the full Armor of God strapped on and ready (Ephesians 6:10-18)? Are you fully equipped and ready to address these issues head-on? All of these problems are common in the church; but they all have the same solution. We'll get to that in a bit. Let's talk about how to assess your church in a healthy way: it starts with having the right mindset.

Seeing Clearly

I'll say it again because it is so crucial in this step: *you're not addressing, you're assessing*. So how can you begin on such a delicate and important task? The wrong mindset will produce the wrong results. We must have the right mindset

in order to see clearly. Jesus talked about how to have the right mindset before looking at others' issues:

¹“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. – Matthew 7:1-5

Here I am, saying for Stepping Stone 4 that you need to look at the flaws in others, but here we see Jesus saying “do not judge, or you too will be judged”. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? But Jesus never said to ignore the speck in others' eyes; we just need to see clearly first. So let's test your “vision” to find out if you are seeing clearly and capable of handling this important task of assessing the church. Look at the following questions:

“Vision” test:

- 1) Do you love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Y N
- 2) Have you truly fallen in love with the church? Y N
- 3) Is there a stronghold that you're struggling with? (I would define a “stronghold” as a *perpetual sin issue that's actively hindering your relationship with God.*) Y N
- 4) Do you personally have divisions or malice against anyone in the church (including church leaders? Y N

(If you answered “yes” to questions 3 or 4, I'd like to challenge you to read questions 1 and 2 again.)

- 5) Are there people in the church that have issues with you personally? Y N
 - a. What is the nature of the issue? _____

b. In what ways *could* this issue have any bearing on your assessment of the church? _____

6) Are you “mostly” stress-free and resting well? Y N

7) Is the “plank” out of your eye? Are even the “specks” out of your eye? Y N

8) Ask a wise leader in the church if they agree with how you answered above questions. _____

Did you pass the test? If not; for the sake of your church, spend lots of time giving all of the issues over to God that you’re dealing with, so that you can give this assessment a healthy foundation. If you passed this little test and your wise leader is in agreement with you, great! You’re ready to proceed.

Next, you need to get with a wise leader (probably the one you discussed the first part with). If you’ve followed Stepping Stone 2, you’ve fallen in love with the church already. With that, you’ve hopefully gotten to know some of the wisest leaders in the church. These are the very people that you need by your side as you assess the church. They’ve hopefully walked for years (maybe decades) alongside the flock. They’re engrained in the needs of the church as well as the community;

their spiritual heartbeat is already in rhythm with the church. Frankly, they probably know the questions we’re about to answer, and they probably have *pages of notes* to add to this assessment, based on the individual needs of the church. Make sure that this assessment remains private at this time. Reach out to the wise church leader(s) in your life, and go through the following questions together:

Church Assessment:

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being “fully disagree”, 10 being “fully agree”), answer the following:

This church...

- 1) Loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. _____
- 2) Has what you would consider “healthy spiritual leaders”. _____
- 3) Has no divisions or factions going on”. _____
- 4) Has no spiritual strongholds among the body _____
(see definition on #3 of the “Vision Test”).
- 5) Is spiritually mature overall. _____
- 6) Loves the community it has been planted in (like Jesus loves us). _____
- 7) Actively gives to help the needs of the community. _____

Strengths:

- 1) Which questions had the highest numbers? Explain why. _____

The following are in lieu of the formula (PAIN + PASSION + PERCEPTION = POWER):

- 2) Knowing the heartbeat of this church, what is the greatest PAIN? Why? ____

- 3) Knowing the skills of this church, what is the greatest PASSION? How do those passions play a role in filling the needs of this community? _____

- 4) Knowing the goals of this church, what is the greatest PERCEPTION? What direction is this church headed in 1, 3, or 5 years? (Is it a good thing, or a bad thing?) _____

- 5) See Galatians 5:22-23 (Fruit of the Spirit). Explain how well this church "bears fruit". _____

- 6) What would you say is the greatest strength (or strengths) of this church? _____

Weaknesses:

1) What are the “specks” and “planks” that you see within the church body? _

2) Read the “thorns” of the flesh (see Galatians 5:18-21). Does this church bear thorns? If so, discuss what those thorns are, and why they are there. __

3) From the first set of seven questions, which questions had the lowest numbers? Explain your answer. _____

4) What would you say is the greatest weakness of this church? Is there something you could do to one day make this greatest weakness their greatest strength? _____

SEEING THE PATH CLEARLY

This definitely isn't an easy task, but in order to effectively carry out the mission God has set before the church, we have to remove any obstacles that could get in the way and strengthen the already wonderful strengths God has blessed your church with. And remember (yes, I'll say it a third time); *you're not addressing, you're assessing*. For this recent assessment, give it plenty of time to pray over these matters. Pray that God would allow you to continue seeing the strengths of your church clearly and how those strengths can be used to further the Kingdom. But also pray for the weaknesses, the thorns, all those specks and planks in your life. Pray for anything that is hindering your church from carrying out its mission.

Use this as a time to discipline yourself and learn patience in the process. Pray that God would continue to reveal the truth. Pray that you can see clearly what God is telling you to do with this information. Ask your leader(s) that you took this assessment with: what would be the most effective way to present this to the church leadership? Frankly, it may be a leader in the church that is *the cause of* some of the issues you discussed. You as a newcomer in the church would likely face great difficulty trying to convince them they're in the wrong about something. A fellow leader that's been there for many years would have a far greater opportunity to reach out to them, point them to the Scriptures, and bring them back into reconciliation, holiness, and unity.

Dealing with Division

What about those that have personal issues with us (or vice versa)? We need to be very intentional about loving them like Jesus loves. Just consider: How much would it change the dynamics and overall health of the church if the greatest adversaries *against* the church body became the greatest fighters *for* the church? And unfortunately, it is far too often that the greatest adversaries of the church can be found as members within the body.

Jesus said "*if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand*" (Mark 3:24). Over the years you'll run into issues of division many times. I was dealing with a member of the church that was actively causing division in the body several years ago. An elder of mine gave some really wise instruction, he asked: "How can you do everything in your power to love them like Jesus loves, to bend over backwards to bring them along? You need to do everything possible with prayer, patience, and love. If you do this, then you know at the end of the day, if they still choose to walk away, you did everything to the best of your ability and

with a clear conscience”.

You can either have a “win” or a “loss” in this. The biggest “win” is if they’re brought back into the fold and working in unity with the congregation. Next in line would be if you did absolutely everything you could to bring them along, and they still chose to walk away. But the biggest “loss” is if you reacted in an ungodly manner and they left *as a result of your actions*.

Let’s suppose they disagree with you to the point that they choose to leave: they may be gone, but they’ll remember how you treated them (whether that’s a good or a bad thing). Following this principle in handling division in the church has been such a blessing! With God’s hand of mercy on us, I’ve had more “wins” than “losses” when it came to bringing people along to what the Scripture says, as well as bringing them back into unity with the church. But even with the “losses”, I held a clear conscience knowing that I gave it my very best shot.

I’ve had years of experience handling things this way in the church, and I’m not bragging by any means (after all, God gave me this wise elder in my church with wise and godly instruction). The whole church knows that if there’s any issues in the church, that *this* is how it will be handled. It tells the church that we’re not here as leaders to spiritually smack them upside the head when they’re in the wrong. It tells the church that we want to work together. It tells the church how to handle issues when *they* have issues with one another.

That being said... it’s not so easy is it? But it’s necessary. When you follow these Stepping Stones, it will exponentially impact how you bring your greatest adversaries along and point them to the Scripture. Don’t be dismissive of them! They might be your greatest fighters *for* the church one day (see Saul’s conversion in Acts 9).

You’ve just looked at your church as clearly as possible, for all the strengths and weaknesses. I want to challenge you to stay humble throughout this process. Having that extra bit of knowledge and holding a leadership position can be used by Satan for you to become arrogant or proud. One of the greatest indicators of good, godly leaders is not arrogance or pride, but humility. Jesus showed humility throughout His ministry here on earth. I want to encourage you to do the same, and to always remember to have humility as you continue these Stepping Stones.

One final thought: *Every weakness is an opportunity in disguise*. One of the greatest things you can do in your church is to pray for clarity on how to turn that weakness into a strength. So look for the opportunities in disguise. Get a drone’s-eye view of the big picture of what God is leading you to do, as you continue building

on this healthy foundation for a healthy leadership and a thriving church! Go ahead and continue the conversation with a friend. Before starting the conversation, make sure you're both in agreement that the discussion goes no further than the two of you. If you truly love the Lord and His Church, then you know the importance of the information you give (and are given). It's not a session to bash your church, and certainly not one to gossip about. You'll find your Stepping Stone 4 questions for discussion on page 87.



STEPPING STONE 5 **Start Leading Your Teams**



¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. – Acts 6:1-7

KEEPING A HEALTHY FOUNDATION

You've fallen in love with the Lord, and with the church. You've endured some eye-opening assessments on both yourself and the church. If you really are following these Stepping Stones and on a healthy foundation, I have to say that Stepping Stone 5 really is a lot of fun. If not, however, *you're going to have a tough time following this step.*

These are the times where you see those "lightbulb" moments in volunteers as they step up and lead in ways they've never done before. Working with a healthy team turns those not-so-fun (or let's face it... terrible) tasks into a great time of bonding. The greatest relationships you'll have over the years in the church start to truly take form during this step.

Before proceeding... what's your job? Not your job title or what *people think you were hired for*; what is the job description, as given by those that hired you for your current position? Go find it and look through it.

Don't have a job description? This can be frustrating, especially if tasks continue to get dumped on you that are *outside* of what you thought was your hired role (and frustrating for your leadership if they have unmet expectations, simply because it wasn't communicated well).

If you don't have a job description, I strongly recommend that you ask for one, because you want to stay focused on the job you were hired for but also to stay within the bounds of the job description that they gave you. Please note that job descriptions will change over time. It's wise over time to review with your leadership how your job description might need to be changed.

Taking Care of Business

So what are the tasks that you are required to do? Do these tasks specifically require *you* to do them, or are you required to oversee them and ensure that everything's running smoothly? As you lead in the church, there are going to be various needs to be met. Here's the deal, though: you're just one person. Realistically speaking, you can't do it all (at least, not for long). If church leaders aren't carefully in tune with the job they're hiring a minister for, they might dump a major amount of responsibility on you without even realizing how many hours a week such a responsibility would take.

On the flipside, if you're not spiritually healthy and in tune with your own needs, you might very well take on that responsibility *alone* and find yourself biting off more than you can chew, continually exhausted, and unable to do what you

really *need* to be doing. Sound familiar? If so, you need to meet with a wise leader (probably the same one you took the assessment with from Stepping Stone 4), and talk with them about the problems you’re facing, and how to come up with a solution together.

If you know your POWER (the PAIN + PASSION + PERCEPTION), then you’ve hopefully defined your greatest strengths, and how to use those for the greatest impact in your church. You’re naturally going to gravitate towards the tasks that look the most like your “POWER” that God has placed in your heart. But no matter who you are, there’s going to be tasks that you’re responsible to take care of that truly do not fit into your “POWER”. We all have things that we’re not necessarily good at, or we’re just not passionate about. That’s OK. What’s *not* OK is letting those tasks overrun the most important thing God is calling you to do.

The early church had the issue of Hellenistic Jews being neglected in food distribution. Imagine the damage that would’ve done, not only from those that were being neglected, but also how those in their community viewed the early church! It would’ve actively hindered their ability to reach many people for Christ. This issue required a solution, and fast. The Apostles already had a major responsibility to continue reaching people for Jesus and ensuring the church was staying healthy. By all rights, I would completely understand if they complained about how much responsibility they had on their shoulders... *but they didn’t*. What did they do? They didn’t complain, they found a solution.

Finding Solutions

The greatest responsibilities of the Apostles are stated in Acts 7:3-4 when they said they’ll turn this responsibility (of food distribution) over to the church, to “*give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.*” With all the pressure they were facing every single moment, they needed to stay connected to God, in tune with Him in prayer. Also, handling the Word of God is far too important for them to be doing what God called *someone else* to do. They didn’t complain, though; they found a solution.

They gathered a very diverse team of people together that had two simple credentials: They’re *known to be* **full of the Spirit** and **full of wisdom** (see verse 3). Notice the credentials of being “skilled in serving food” wasn’t even mentioned. Why? Because they’ve fallen in love with the Lord and with the church! Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

If they have those credentials, the skillsets needed for the task will follow.

They might mess up (maybe they'll burn the bread or not cook enough food for the day), but if you find the right people with the right credentials, they'll come up with solutions for the problems that arise within their delegated responsibility. It's the POWER God has instilled in them! Because they were able to start leading a team, they were able to be laser-focused on what God laid before them. Guess what happened when they did just that? See Acts 7:7: "So the Word of God spread."

They laid a healthy foundation for ministry, they appointed people and gave clear communication, the team saw the need and they met the need. Imagine how much fun this group was having, serving the Lord and taking care of *all* of the widows. Imagine the bonding that took place while they were spending time doing meal prep and serving together. Imagine the unity that it created as they took care of this great need. It was all because the Apostles had a healthy foundation, they were in tune with God's will; because of that, they didn't complain, they found a solution.

A New Perspective

For the first few summers in full-time youth ministry, I would personally lead VBS and attended church camp. That was fine, because I was developing relationships with our students and really starting to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the church. As years went on, however, we have added a mission trip in the summers, where we lead a weeklong church camp for students on a Native American reservation. Guess who leads that too? Not only do I work out the scheduling and planning for the event, I also have preached each night for it.

This is a lot of work, but so rewarding, and a definite need to further the Kingdom on the reservation where we serve. Over time, however, you can imagine that in order to give our first fruits for all of these things, I needed other people to lead what I'm *not called* to do. So I gathered a team of people that were **full of the Spirit and full of wisdom**, and asked them to lead the VBS event in its entirety so I could be laser-focused on God's calling for me specifically: *Developing content that helps point people to Jesus.*

This pleased the whole team and they worked out a plan together, and guess what? Not only did they get to know each other better, but they also came up with ideas for that event that turned out *far better* than if I had continued to lead it by myself.

Because I was able to do that, I've been laser-focused on *developing content that helps point people to Jesus.* We have weekly sermons, group questions, artwork

(logos/videos) all available online that we offer for free to any churches. Because I'm able to stay laser-focused, now our content is being used in other churches at their midweek programs, and even by other countries in Africa. (It's available for your church too.)

But that's enough about us. What is needed the most in your church today? Are there any major needs currently being left unaddressed? Are there ministries you would like to add... but don't have the time, skills, or passion to handle it personally? Are there tasks that continually pull you away from being laser-focused on what you're called to do? This is why you need to start leading your teams.

FORMING A TEAM

Especially if you're still new to the church (and depending on how healthy or unhealthy the church is), it's not going to be as simple as how the Apostles started a team. It took me years to get to the point where I could fully delegate a team to lead VBS. If that's where you're struggling too, don't sweat it! We're not going to complain; we're going to find a solution. As you grow (**full of the Spirit and full of wisdom**), you're going to see clearly what you should be laser-focused on, too. It's different for every person based on the gifts God has given and the mission He has for you. So how do you start a team? Keep three things in mind: See the big picture, start small, and be patient.

See the Big Picture

If you've followed the Stepping Stones so far, you're already seeing clearly of where you want to be in three months, six months, or a year. You already know how your own strengths and the strengths of the church fit into that plan. If you haven't done so already, you need to be communicating that plan with your church leadership so they can see clearly what you believe the Lord wants you to do, and to be praying about it alongside you. Go ahead and write it out below:

This is my:

PAIN: _____

PASSION: _____

PERCEPTION: _____

POWER: _____

Because of that, I think this is where God is leading me in:

3 months: _____

6 months: _____

1 year: _____

If you don't know the answers to all of that quite yet, that's OK. Because whether you can see where God is leading you clearly or not, you will always need to start small.

Start Small

Why start small? *To give this new team a healthy foundation.* I shared before that my first team I led was our group of youth sponsors. They were already dedicated to the mission of the church and the youth group. They were already fully ready to serve under my leadership. Finding a team like that is as rare as a unicorn, right?! Even though I had a crystal-clear vision and mission before me even at that time and an extremely healthy foundation, I knew that even with all the good happening there, God wanted me to start small. So what did we do?

Christina and I love to host, as you know, so we invited all of the team over to our house, we fed them dinner, had some good laughs, you get the idea. We already had a healthy relationship with all of them because we had fallen in love with the church. So in the meeting, I shared with them our plan of DiverCity youth, and that the focus of everything we do will be on the Great Commission. I had already communicated this plan with our church leadership. Now that I presented this same plan for them, I asked for their input.

Let me tell you, *they were full of the Spirit and full of wisdom.* They shared the former framework of the youth ministry. They shared what worked and what flopped. They shared their ideas on what they would love to see happen one day. They shared about their skillsets and what they were passionate about. Through that discussion, we came up with a new solution *together* on how we would manage midweek services, and really, defining why we do everything we do.

One youth leader makes stellar logos and offered to come up with one for DiverCity Youth. Shortly after we got started, I asked our youth leaders to pray

about how we could transform our youth worship center to fully have the look of the DiverCity theme. One youth leader stepped up and led the way. Because of the relationship I built with them, they knew that they could move forward full-force with guidance from me, *but not interference*. He came up with ideas that I would've never thought of. He gathered a team of people to work the entire project, communicated it all very well along the way, and ensured its full completion.

When you start small, you can give your team a clear picture of what you're seeking to do and let them come up with the solutions. So how do you start small with a team? **You don't delegate tasks, you delegate trust.** Sure, some people need more training and guidance than others, but if you take the time to train the right people with the right credentials (**full of the Spirit and full of wisdom**), they'll eventually come up with the right solutions. As they grow, they'll start finding solutions to problems you didn't even know existed. They'll start delegating trust to another future leader, who will follow in their footsteps and eventually do the same for someone else.

That's what happened with us. We started small, and the youth group went from just a handful of students to a packed house within a year or so. I certainly cannot take credit for that. God gave us the wisdom, God provided the resources, God provided it all. We started small, and then it grew. *Just remember all through that time, you need to be patient.*

Be Patient

Your team is going to mess up. They're human. They'll forget an important task at just the wrong time. They'll delegate a responsibility to someone who shouldn't be anywhere near that responsibility. They'll lose their temper and make someone mad, and now you've got to address it. Just like in Stepping Stone 4 when it came to resolving issues of division, you have to do the same with bringing your team along. It takes grueling patience (the KJV word for "patience" is "long-suffering").

Your team member or members may have really messed up, but if you come from the framework of "I'm going to bend over backwards and do everything I can to bring them along", you're right on track! Imagine if someone on your team messed up in a major way, how do you think they would respond? Would they:

- Be scared of how you would react to them?
- Avoid you?
- Have someone else tell you what happened?

If so, you have some work to do on building their trust. You need to communicate *through your word and your actions* that you will always follow through with your commitments, and when someone messes up, that you'll be there to help pick up the pieces, not cut them down or push them out. Sure, there are extreme cases where quick and complete removal is required. For the most part, however, you're needing to bend over backwards and do everything you can to bring them along. So go ahead and have patience, "long-suffer" in dealing with their problems, build their trust, do everything you can to reassure and encourage their decision making; go ahead and delegate trust. When you do this, you're right on track to start leading your teams!

WORDS INTO ACTION

That's Stepping Stone 5! You're staying on track with a healthy foundation and onward to a healthy ministry with a healthy church. You've fallen in love with the Lord and with His Church. You've assessed your strengths and weaknesses, and you've done the same with the church. With that in mind, really think about what teams you're currently leading, and what teams *you might need to lead one day soon*. Unlike Stepping Stone 4, assess **and** address it as soon as you have a clear view of what needs to be done, and as soon as you're ready! Be patient and enjoy it while you can! This next Stepping Stone is going to hit you like a brick wall.

Go ahead and continue the conversation with a friend. You'll find your Stepping Stone 5 questions for discussion on page 89. You've got this!

STEPPING STONE 6 **Kill the Golden Calves**



¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. – Hebrews 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION

Just as a quick refresher, let's review the Stepping Stones we've covered so far as we continue *The Total Ministry Makeover*:

- 1) **Fall in love with the Lord:**
The "Greatest Commandment" is our greatest goal.
- 2) **Fall in love with the church:**
You can't lead those you don't love.
- 3) **Assess your strengths and weaknesses:**
Pain + Passion + Perception = Power.

4) **Assess the strengths and weaknesses of your church:**

Every weakness is an opportunity in disguise.

5) **Start leading a team:**

You don't delegate tasks, you delegate trust.

Just to give a fair warning once again, Stepping Stone 6 might very well hit you like a brick wall. In fact, spiritually speaking... it is a brick wall! We'll get into that in a minute. If you remember from Stepping Stone 1, we talked about idols and the damage they do in our walk with Christ. Just imagine the damage everyday idols can do in your church. We know that idols rob us of our purpose, and they rob God of His glory. If we allow these idols to have a foothold amongst our church family, it will cause damage not only to your church but will also kill opportunities for your church to reach people for Jesus. It draws the church *off the* foundation, rather than standing firm.

Defining “Golden Calves”

As you might guess, most people in the church today don't have a “golden calf” that they bow down and worship; but if we're not careful we can have those unexpected idols infiltrate our walk with Christ. Remember, Satan wants nothing more than to divide the Church. Our job as leaders is to be full of the Spirit, full of wisdom, and do everything we can to restore the church family back to purity.

So when I refer to “golden calves” in this chapter, I'm defining this as “*anything that removes God from the throne of our hearts*”. This can be anywhere from:

- an object (the pews when discussing switching to chairs)
- a person (“I liked it when _____ was the pastor?”)
- a policy (whether you can have food/drinks in the auditorium)
- a preference (like the color of the carpet, the paint on the walls, what missions to support, etc.)
- an attitude (such as anger or jealousy against another member)

I could go on, but you get the idea. These golden calves are anything that we cling to, anything that actively takes our focus off of God Himself. Here's the deal: Very few people deliberately are clinging to golden calves. They invade like

a “Trojan Horse”, unexpectedly and in the dark. They become stumbling blocks to our churches. The more influence it has over your members, the more all those factions and divisions start. Then, they become spiritual strongholds. If you have strongholds among your members, double-check that you’ve strapped on the full *Armor of God*, brothers and sisters, because the spiritual battle is brewing.

Defining Strongholds

So what are spiritual strongholds? If you remember from the self-assessment in Stepping Stone 4, we defined “strongholds” as *a perpetual sin issue that’s actively hindering your relationship with God*. Let’s unpack that idea. Imagine if someone proposed to you the diabolical change of repainting the interior of the church. You wouldn’t believe it. They want to paint it Swiss coffee, NOT country white! How could they even think of such a ridiculous idea? Only those pagans from _____ (enter other denomination here) would even think of such a thing!

This issue doesn’t stop there, though; you keep dwelling on it. Every time you think about it, it just makes you angry or defensive. It creeps into more areas of your life, it seems to always be on your mind, and you can’t seem to shake it. The idol has taken hold, and without you even recognizing it, God is no longer on the throne of your heart. Every time a thought comes up about it, it’s like you’re adding another brick to the wall.

At first, it’s a low-lying stumbling block, but brick by brick you keep adding more thoughts, and walls start forming. You’re dwelling on it more and more; it consumes your life. The bricks of resentment start stacking on too. The bricks of jealousy and hatred are soon to follow. If left unchecked, what was once a brick wall is now becoming a stronghold.

If you have a spiritual stronghold, you’ll run to it as a place of safety, but in reality, it’s a place of destruction. Your body, which is called to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, is now a temple full of idolatry. We think it’s foolish to bow down to a golden calf, but how quickly do we bow down to our strongholds?

Specks and Planks... and Strongholds

You remember that it’s important to always assess yourself before assessing others. With that in mind: Do you have any planks or specks? Do you have a spiritual stronghold that has been wrecking your relationship with God, without you even knowing it? If so, you have a deep-rooted idol, and God is no longer on the throne of your heart (if that doesn’t describe you, think back and remember a time in your

life that you were dealing with a stronghold).

If God isn't on the throne, do you know *what is* on the throne? NOTHING. *Absolutely nothing.* Those golden calves are empty and lifeless. It's no secret as to why you feel so drained and weary inside. It's why you're so calloused to the needs of others. It's why you feel lethargic in your spiritual disciplines. It's why your marriage is struggling. It's why strongholds need destroyed. It's why our top priority right now is to bust it down, brick by brick, to strap on the full Armor of God, ask God to bring a full-on assault and bust down the walls. The hunt is on to track down and kill the golden calf. So how do we do it?

Back to the Basics

Having a stronghold is a deep-rooted issue, but no matter what that issue is, thankfully the answer is always the same. Go back to Stepping Stone 1: *If you love the Lord with all of who you are, you will do all that He's called you to do.* And you know in God's Word that idols lead to destruction every time.

They're forbidden, declared to be sinful, they cause enmity (separation) between you and God. With that in mind, you know that He's called you to hunt down and kill the golden calves. There is no place for golden calves in the Kingdom of God. There's certainly no place for strongholds, either. So what should we do? The Apostle Paul put it this way:

*³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to **demolish strongholds**. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. – 2nd Corinthians 10:3-5*

THE HUNT IS ON!

It's worth saying twice: There is no place for golden calves in the Kingdom of God. We don't just let them linger or hang around for a while, **we wage war** on them! If you have a stronghold, then you know that a golden calf is leaving you empty, drained, weary, and actively destroying your relationship with God. Dear brothers and sisters, if this is you, are you going to allow this to continue? Of course not. If you follow the Apostle Paul's instructions, we're going to break

it down brick by brick, and go in for the kill on that golden calf. Let's start by demolishing the arguments.

Demolish Arguments

In a court case, the defense attorney defends the defendant. The defendant is the one that's put on the stand and accused of wrongdoing, breaking the law. If you have a golden calf, imagine that it is the defendant. And if you have a golden calf, guess who you are in this court? If you have a stronghold and you're fighting on behalf of the golden calf, *you're the defense attorney*. When someone calls you out on your sin issues, if you're not on guard about this major spiritual battle, you'll tend to defend it.

The reality is, we don't want to shine a light on our own sins, and if we have those walls built up around the throne of our hearts, we're going to find ourselves protecting the walls (and the golden calf) as much as possible. We'll defend our strongholds with our arguments. Here's some examples:

- "I know it's an issue, I'll deal with it later."
If you do this, you'll just keep adding more bricks to the wall.
- "It's not really a sin issue!"

The Serpent had a similar argument in the Garden of Eden.

- "I realize I did _____, but they did _____!"
We justify it as retaliation against what others have done to us.
- "The church just doesn't understand the direction I'm headed."
We justify our strongholds by assuming faults in others (whether that's true or fabricated).
- "There is no stronghold."
We're so blinded by our sin that we can't see into the darkness of our hearts, not even recognizing that there's an issue at all.

These arguments seem ridiculous, don't they? If you're dealing with a stronghold, I'm guessing I struck a nerve with you as you read these arguments, and you're already defending it with more arguments. I'm asking you to keep tracking with me. It's only fair to warn you that we're going to continue pressing on that

nerve. It's the only way we can begin breaking down the stronghold!

So, it's imperative to put this at the front of our minds once more: *If you love the Lord with all of who you are, you will do all that He's called you to do.* This stronghold is killing your walk with the Lord; and since idols have no place here, God is calling you to hunt down and kill this golden calf. Search your heart, identify the issue.

The arguments on behalf of our strongholds (and with that, our golden calves) can be summed up in one word: justification. We have in our minds that somehow, even though God declared it to be wrong, we have declared it to be right. Proverbs 16:18 says this: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." If you justify anything that God has declared to be sinful, you're freefalling.

So what should we do? We have to stop and look at the big picture. We have to recognize this is a spiritual battle, and that Satan will do anything to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:8-10). We have to get equipped once more to fight the battles, and the only way we can do that effectively is when we run back to the Father. You need to be in agreement that all those arguments are foolish and fleeting. You need to be in agreement that you're going to demolish every one of those arguments; and you won't see clearly if you don't see the issues as God sees them.

As you dismantle *all* arguments, you're going to start tearing down the wall (see the questions for this chapter). But the wall is made up of more than arguments, there's also pretensions.

Demolish Pretensions

What are pretensions? Break down the word: "pre" and "tension". Because of your past issues with this stronghold, it's left some major hurt. You're tearing down the argument and Satan wants those arguments back where they were on the wall. Because of the weight that strongholds have, our default tendencies will be to *go back to* building up the wall with those arguments again. If you've sat on a couch for long enough you'd understand; eventually the cushions break down in the center. If you try to sit on the side of the cushion, there will be a natural lean to sit back into the center where it's *comfortable*. Keep that in mind!

In the original Greek, the word used is *hupsóma* (ὑψωμα). In its original usage, it is a "height, barrier, bulwark; presumption"¹. What are our presumptions when we are dealing with a stronghold? That our stronghold is in its rightful place. Pride takes over and we go back to what is comfortable and start defending it again. We're just lifting that brick and putting it as high as we can. That's why we have to

demolish these pretensions, because those pretensions are going to let you continue building up your stronghold, and that golden calf that you're trying to hunt down will stay safe. Keep breaking down the wall and stay on guard against the enemy's schemes to build it back up again.

Take Captive Every Thought and Make It Obedient to Christ

Going right along with that “default position” is in your thoughts. With something that is actively defending your sin and actively hindering your relationship with God, don't you think Satan is going to start putting thoughts and temptations in your mind? You bet he is! He doesn't want you to win this battle. You're going to have thoughts about _____ (insert idol here) and have this default tendency to keep defending it.

As you continue running to the Father, you're going to find yourself seeing clearly. You need to pray for God's provision to help you fight off the enemy. This isn't easy, but it's necessary in order to win the battle. Every time a thought comes into your mind, the Apostle Paul says to take it captive! Wrestle it to the ground, put it under arrest, strap those handcuffs on it and hand it over to God. Every time you have an argument, pretension, or even just a “little” thought, that's your cue to pray.

Moving in for the Kill

As you break down the walls, that golden calf becomes exposed all the more. It's time to move in for the kill. You may not have even known what the real issue was because it was so buried behind that brick wall, but now that you are running to the Father, you can see it clearly now. It's time to remove that empty, lifeless golden calf and hand it over to God. Surely by this point you're dealing with remorse, surely as God's presence floods your soul, you realize how far you've turned away from God. Keep running to the Father. He's not only going to slaughter that golden calf (darn, you thought you were going to kill it yourself, didn't you?), but He's also going to welcome you back with open arms!

If you can do this, you'll find all that weight of the stronghold being lifted, all that emptiness you had now being filled by God's presence. This isn't easy, and it certainly takes a lot of time, patience, and consistency; but it's the only way to get back on the right foundation! It's time to break out in praise of Almighty God that He rescued you from a deep and dark pit of destruction.

THE STRONGHOLDS OF OTHERS

If you can see (no specks, planks, or strongholds), now you can see others' strongholds clearly and with the right foundation. What are the "golden calves" in your church? Let's look again at the list we gave before:

- an object (the pews when discussing switching to chairs)
- a person ("I liked it when _____ was the pastor")
- a policy (whether you can have food/drinks in the auditorium)
- a preference (like the color of the carpet, the paint on the walls, "unforeseen" or "sloppy wet" in the lyrics, etc.)
- an attitude (such as anger or jealousy against another member)

Do any of those sound familiar? If not, I'd respectfully question whether you're really following Stepping Stone 2 (Fall in Love with the Church), because everyone deals with strongholds at some point or another; you might need to get to know your church family better. It's not always the case, but I'm guessing that your church is dealing with strongholds in some form or fashion.

What's Happening?

Assuming there is a golden calf in the church: The members of the flock clinging to it are being gravitated off the healthy foundation that we all need. If one person is gravitating off, what do you think will happen with their inner circle? It can become three or four people. Or perhaps, depending on their level of influence, it can be a large percentage of the church. Just think back on the last time you heard of a church splitting; what was the reason for it? It started with someone's stronghold, which then led to a group with a stronghold, which then led to people being drained, divided, and eventually leaving. Jesus said that a kingdom divided cannot stand (Mark 3:24). You can't possibly expect for the church to effectively reach people for Jesus when there's golden calves building up strongholds among the hearts of those in the church!

Assessing and Addressing

Finally, you get to address it, right?! Slow down, soldier, we'll get there soon. You've addressed the strengths and weaknesses in Stepping Stone 4. You hopefully

still have that wise leader that's been walking alongside you throughout these steps. Now you need to assess the big picture of the situation once more, but specifically regarding the golden calves in your church. Take some time with your wise leader and really seek to identify the issues. You probably already have a good idea of what those are, but you should keep digging deeper, asking "is that the real root of the issue, or is it stemmed from something deeper?"

Let's address this issue in the healthiest way possible. It requires being in tune with the Holy Spirit. It requires the full Armor of God. It requires knowing the individual very well. If they don't have that foundation of trust in you, they won't hear you out. Remember from Stepping Stone 4, we talked about how to deal with divisions (see page 44). What's the biggest win? Bringing them back into the fold and in unity with the congregation.

You're going to have some difficult (but necessary) conversations about why this is an issue in the first place, as well as what needs to be done. You know that you're going to have to bend over backwards and do everything you can to bring them along in order to have the greatest win.

Prayer is a powerful weapon. What if God answered your prayers to soften their hearts? What if God answered your prayers to remove certain "bricks" from their stronghold, just enough that they could see that something is wrong? What if God answered your prayers to have the Holy Spirit convict their hearts to change? You need to run to the Father and hand all of this over to Him too.

If you have that healthy relationship with whoever is struggling, then over time you should be able to walk with them through the content from earlier, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. It's a sure bet that spiritual battles will come, but the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. The battle belongs to the Lord. The hunt is on. The golden calf needs to be destroyed. It's the only way that the church body can move forward in unity together. It's the only way to get back on the right foundation!

Finish Strong

Over the years, you'll deal with new strongholds (or old ones in a new way). You have to constantly turn that over to God, or you're going to be setting up the bricks again and again. Remember: *We don't follow our desires; we discipline our desires!* Taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ is not an easy undertaking. We will fight the flesh every day of our lives. If we follow our desires, we'll quickly find ourselves building up a new stronghold. If we discipline

our desires, we'll hand it all over to Christ and win the battles before they start gaining a foothold.

That's Stepping Stone 6! That was painful, wasn't it? My prayer is that as you learn to lead through these devastating strongholds, that you'll stand firm in the faith, continue running to the Father, and continue moving forward on a healthy foundation for ministry.

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” – Hebrews 12:11

Go ahead and continue the conversation with a friend. You'll find your Stepping Stone 6 questions for discussion on page 91. The hunt is on. Let's kill those golden calves!

STEPPING STONE 7

Transition to Purpose-Powered Ministries



*⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴**All the believers were together and had everything in common.** ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. - Acts 2:42-47*

*³²**All the believers were one in heart and mind.** No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. - Acts 4:32-35*

INTRODUCTION

If you have successfully completed Stepping Stone 6, congratulations! You have thrown off “everything that hinders” and now you’re able to be laser-focused on the mission God is calling you to do as a church. Let’s just be honest, Stepping Stone 6 is a grueling step (horrible, really), but it’s necessary. And once you’ve made it past that step, now you’re on the other side and starting the healing process. You’re hopefully working together in unity. Maybe you had a major win where they came back into the fold and in unity with the Lord and the church. Or, maybe you had a minor win; you did everything you could, and they still chose to walk away. Either way, *stay on guard!* Satan will do everything he can to put you right back where you once were.

Through the Stepping Stones so far, you’ve fallen in love with the Lord, and the church. You’ve assessed yourself and your local church. You started leading a team, and you’ve killed the golden calves (well, God did). Now that your church is laser-focused on the mission, you should start looking at all the ministries your church offers and ask “What, if anything, needs to change in how we serve our church and our community?” Spoiler alert: *more often than not, something needs to change.* But changing for the sake of change isn’t what we need to do. We need to gravitate towards something very specific when it comes to our ministries. That’s exactly what Stepping Stone 7 is all about.

Ministries at a Glance

Think about the ministries that your church offers, whether it’s for those in the church, or for those in the community. Let’s put this a different way: What does your church do to serve? Whether there’s a clear mission or vague tasks that you do as a church, every church serves in some way, whether they’re intentional about it or not. With that in mind, think about the *current impact* that the various ministries your church has, as you look through the following examples:

- 1) **Worship services:** What are your service days/times? _____

2) **Classes:** What classes do you provide? (Sunday School, evening classes, midweek classes, small groups, etc.) _____

3) **Demographics:** Whom do you serve the most in each of those classes? _____

4) **Service Projects:** What does your church do to get hands-on experience serving others, such as meal provisions, cleaning someone’s yards or homes, building ramps for the disabled, etc.? _____

5) **Unique Services:** What are some unique services you offer as a church? Maybe an after-school program, drug/alcohol rehab, counseling services, etc.? _____

6) **Age-Focused Programs:** Does your church have a youth or children’s ministry, programs for young adults, newly retired (the list goes on)? What are some key elements of those programs? _____

- 7) **Others:** There's no doubt there are other things churches do that *do not* fall into any of the former categories. Go ahead and list other ways your church serves below! _____

- 8) **What is your mission as a church?** _____

FOCUSED & INTENTIONAL

It's amazing watching what God's people can do to make a holy impact on this world. As we've discussed, *the church is called to carry out the will of the Father and to bring Him glory*. If we're not getting a drone's-eye view, however, we'll potentially be missing out on some big opportunities where God is leading us next. We can also fall into the trap of "keeping busy". You might think to yourself: "as long as we're doing *something*, then we're on track". That's not always the case.

A few years back, our church was going through some major changes and growth at the same time. We were making strides in ways we would have never expected. One thing that caught many of us off-guard was *busyness*. Even though our church was growing in almost every area, we were focused so much on the growth of the programs themselves, that we lost focus of why we were doing them. I can't stress this enough, because this was a huge struggle we had to work through: *Busy does not equal holy*.

We had too many "irons in the fire" and we were overwhelmed with the tasks at hand; to the point that we couldn't take a step back, look at the big picture, and get

visionary. Why? We were too engulfed in the week-to-week operations; there was no time for anything else, let alone to figure out how to do those week-to-week tasks more efficiently. Between printing out materials to setting up lessons, events and meals, and everything else we were doing, *our busyness caused us to gravitate away from our purpose*. Just what Satan wants for us, isn't it? Busy does not equal holy.

In whatever ways each church does ministry, if we're not being intentional about the way we serve as a church, we'll quickly gravitate to an unhealthy, unbalanced foundation (both individually and collectively). You'll have what we had... exhausted workers. Spiritually depleted, cranky (no offense to any of our church members reading this!), and unable to give our first fruits in carrying out the church's mission. This is why it is crucial to take a step back and look from God's perspective, because then you can see the big picture, and make the changes needed to gravitate your ministries where they need to be, back on the foundation again!

It Starts with Your Mission

I asked earlier, "What is your mission as a church?" Our *purpose* will always be the same (to carry out the will of the Father and to bring Him glory), but our mission is going to look different in each local church. To clarify, *your local mission is how your local church can use the gifts, talents, and abilities to carry out its purpose*. How does your church carry out the will of the Father? How does your church bring Him glory? For example:

- If your local church is near a tribal reservation, then your local mission at this time *might be* to evangelize and equip those on the reservation for Christ.
- If you're near a college town, your local mission *might be* to give college students a Biblical foundation as you send them out for adulthood.
- If close to a prison, your local mission *might be* to show ex-convicts how to be on the *right foundation* with the hope of Jesus Christ.
- If your local church is in a heavily impoverished area, your local mission *might be* to help lift people out of poverty as you lead them to Jesus.

Even though local churches have different missions, they all have the same purpose. As you can imagine, all these missions are great for a church to carry out, and you're going to do things *outside of* your mission from time to time. There's

certainly nothing wrong with that. What creates challenges for your church is when you try to spread the focus out too much. Your mission is how you specifically carry out your purpose as a church. So, if your mission as a church is to take care of the homeless, it'll be hard for you to carry out that mission if the majority of your ministries are focused elsewhere. Make sense?

With all the ways you serve; if you want to stay laser-focused on the local mission God gave you, then you need to look from a drone's-eye view and see the church through God's lens, and clearly see the mission He has given your church. When you see your mission, you'll be able to clearly see the ministries needed. Let's look at the formula once more (PAIN+PASSION+PERCEPTION = POWER), but from the perspective of your local church.

PAIN

The more you follow Stepping Stone 1, the more you will know what breaks God's heart. The same is true with Stepping Stone 2 and your church. So, what breaks the hearts of those in your church the most? Give it some time to think about across all that your church does for its members and the community they're in (I'll refer to this as "ministries" from now on). If you can't answer this, you might not really know your church that well (Stepping Stone 2 needs review), *or perhaps* your church hasn't been following Stepping Stone 1, or it could even be a mixture of both.

When looking at the ministries your church has, there may be some common denominators across several ministries; what are they? Are many ministries serving children? The poor? The elderly? The disabled? Whatever it may be, this is a likely indicator of what causes the most PAIN within your church body.

Our church has many ministries that are centered on helping students. It is abundantly clear that the PAIN of a large portion of our church is knowing that so many of the students that enter our church are "spiritual orphans". Many are living in physical poverty as is, but on top of that the spiritual poverty is prominent. So we feed students when the doors are open, but also give them the Word of God every chance we get. We bring in as many opportunities as possible that have this in mind. That's the PAIN. Next, is the PASSION.

PASSION

These are the gifts, talents, and abilities that God has equipped your church. In our church, we are often referred to as the "church of nerds". We have so many people that are highly passionate (and skilled) on anything IT related. We have

website designers, video developers, live-stream pros, social media gurus... you name it, we “nerd” it! That flows heavily into our ministries as well. How does it connect with students? We will often times teach students (which is our church’s PAIN) about our PASSION. It’s certainly not the only PASSION our church has, but it is a common one seen in our church family.

What are some common denominators of PASSION that you see in your church? Maybe you’re in a farming community, and many members have God-given gifts of everything that comes with running a ranch. Or perhaps your church is full of hands-on folks (contractors, builders, mechanics, etc.). As we’ve discussed before, the PASSION in your church is a great way of seeing clearly how God can use us in the church to bring Him glory.

PERCEPTION

Whatever you see as a big PASSION in your church, are those passions connecting with the ministries to address the things that break your church’s heart (the PAIN)? Pray for God’s wisdom to pour into you so that you can clearly see what needs to shift in ways that have your mission as a church in mind. I should clarify, though. Not all of your church ministries *have to* have your mission in mind, but the majority should. Why? Because if you don’t stay “Purpose-Powered” in your ministries, you won’t be focused on your mission (your POWER that God has given) as a church!

POWER

If you’re wondering why it’s such a struggle to carry out the mission that God is calling you to do, go back and review all the ministries your church offers, and find out how those fit in with your church’s mission. Maybe you’re spinning your wheels (like we were) and expending our resources on things that simply don’t fit with the mission. Or perhaps you have accomplished that mission in that time, and now God’s leading you on a new one. Take time to ask for wisdom from God and get a drone’s-eye view of where God is leading you next. Get with your church leadership and pray with them asking the same. Their input is invaluable.

“Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.” –Proverbs 13:20

So look at your church from a clean slate (as if *no ministries* were currently in place). Go through the formula and define your POWER (your mission) God has

given you as a church. Once you have the mission in mind, then shift your ministries to outflow from the mission. If we're not careful, we'll get things backwards; we'll look at the ministries we're *currently doing*, and we use that as the framework for our mission.

Gravitating Fully on the Foundation

If the majority of what your church does is "inward focused" ministries (i.e., worship services, classes, church meals and gatherings, serving those inside your church), then you'll have a church full of spiritually filled up congregants that are wondering why it's not reaching new people. If the majority of what your church does is "outward focused" ministries (i.e., lots of mission trips, community projects and events, serving those outside of your church), then you'll have a group of congregants that are exhausted, frustrated, burned out, and potentially leaving.

You need a healthy balance of both to really be effective. Think about a sponge (random right? Bear with me...): A sponge absorbs water, and it gets rung out. If it just sits and holds water, it'll get moldy and stinky. If all it's doing is getting rung out, it'll be as dry as a bone. We're all like a spiritual sponge. If we don't continue getting filled up spiritually, we won't be equipped to pour out spiritually into others. It's a constant battle, and you have to constantly be aware of it and equipping your church family to do the same. While each church is certainly different, it is abundantly clear that we must have a healthy balance between inward and outward focused ministries.

When you clearly see the purpose that God has given your church, that's when you can clearly define what needs to change in the church. When you have healthy, effective, "Purpose-Powered" ministries, your church is going to exponentially gravitate toward its purpose. How much more effective would you be if your whole church family was effectively equipped to carry out its purpose? How many more souls will be won for Christ if we as the church were one in heart and mind? How much more of an impact will the "Capital C" Church have on this world if all local churches did this? How much more effective would we be in lifting people out of every type of poverty? What an amazing impact we would have together if we would walk in unity and fully transition to "Purpose-Powered" ministries!

Getting the Whole Church on Board

How do we get there as a church? Once you and your church leadership can clearly see the specific mission God has for your church, now you need to clearly

communicate this mission to your church family. It's the broad scope of the direction your church is going. If you're one in heart and mind, then you'll all be on board with carrying out this mission effectively. People within your church will start to see how their POWER plays a valuable role in this mission, and they'll be bringing up ideas of new ministries, carrying out your church's mission in ways you didn't imagine was possible. If you truly walked through Stepping Stones 1-7, God is going to really be on the move in your church and those you serve in your local community!

That's Stepping Stone 7! Not so painful as Stepping Stone 6, was it? Next, we will move on to the very last step of *The Total Ministry Makeover!*

Go ahead and continue the conversation with a friend. You'll find your Stepping Stone 7 questions for discussion on page 95. Let's seek God's wisdom to clearly see the mission He has given your church, to be Purpose-Powered, and to fulfill the calling God has given us as a church!



STEPPING STONE 8

Raise Up Leaders



¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18-20

PASSING THE BATON

You have finally made it to Stepping Stone 8! Now that you’ve walked through these Stepping Stones, it’s time to raise up the next leader, and teach someone else the same principles you’ve learned throughout this book. I can imagine if you’ve been putting these principles into practice, there’s a good chance you’re already starting to lead someone else. If so, great! Let’s get refreshed and look through all the Stepping Stones again:

BEFORE ENTERING A MINISTRY:

- 1) Fall in love with the Lord.
- 2) Fall in love with the church.
- 3) Assess yourself.

AFTER ENTERING A MINISTRY:

- 1) Assess your church.
- 2) Start leading a team.
- 3) Kill the golden calves.
- 4) Transition to “Purpose-Powered” ministries.

Finding the Next Leader

For Stepping Stone 8, you’re going to *raise up the next leader*. God has given you someone in your life to personally mentor and lead. You’ve been filled up, now it’s time to really invest what you’ve been given into someone else’s life. You may already have that person in mind, you may have sought them out or maybe they sought you out. As we carry out The Great Commission, we need to be continually raising up leaders to go through these same steps seen in *The Total Ministry Makeover*. Remember: *We don’t just want to lead followers of Jesus; we want to lead leaders for Jesus!*

If you’ve followed all seven Stepping Stones, this will come so easy, because you’re primed and on the right foundation to start leading the next leader. Why? Because you’re a leader that truly loves the Lord and the church. You’re a leader that people can depend on. You’re a leader they want to be like. You’re a leader worth following. You’re a leader who is going to lead leaders! If you would, please pause for a few minutes and pray about this question: Who is someone that God wants me to lead, so they can become a leader?

When God reveals to you who that person is, it’s time to prayerfully approach them about going through the Stepping Stones from *The Total Ministry Makeover*. But first, let’s talk about what you should expect.

Whoever this next leader is, you need to recognize that this will require more of your time, energy, and patience in order to lead them through these steps. Yes, they need to desire to become leaders. Yes, in order for them to get there, there’s a lot required of them, too. However, you need to have the right perspective too, to lead them effectively.

That being said, they’re going to mess up along the way. But you already know how to deal with issues! You need to expect that you’re going to “bend over backwards to bring them along”; you’re going to do everything in your power to ensure that they stay on the right foundation. Ideally, you can bless them with this book and offer to walk through each step, whether that’s a weekly or monthly mentorship meeting.

Let's walk through these steps, but from your perspective of leading others through *The Total Ministry Makeover*.

The Total Ministry Makeover

Stepping Stone 1 - Fall in Love with the Lord: As the old saying goes, “you can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink.” In order to raise up a leader, they need to already be a follower. Still, as you lead with these principles in their life, they're going to gravitate towards the same principles you have. Your challenge here is simply to pray that God will instill in them the same heart that you have for God. You're all in! You want them to be too.

Stepping Stone 2 - Fall in Love with the church: Perhaps they're a volunteer or they're paid staff in the church. If they're paid staff, just ask them: Would you be here if you weren't paid?

Whether they're paid or not, ask them this: Would you be here if _____ wasn't here? You fill in the blank, but this could be a person, a certain ministry, or even their current role. You'll want to lead them to get to know the entire church family and to see the beauty and the brokenness of your local church. If they don't truly love the whole church, what is it going to take for you to get them there?

Stepping Stone 3 - Assess Yourself: You want them to see clearly. No planks or specks in the way. As you lead them through this step, try to guide them to see clearly for themselves, without your direct input (initially) as to what those strengths and weaknesses are. As they find their strengths and weaknesses, now it's your time to take them from where they are, to where they need to go next. What is their POWER that God has for them? Once they've completed this, then they can assess the church.

Stepping Stone 4 - Assess the church: Now they're going to see the church clearly. Again, you want to lead them in a way that there are no planks or specks distorting their view. You likely already know those strengths and weaknesses of the church but let them first tell you what they see. There are likely things that you didn't even realize. It's important to remind them of the importance of seeing both the beauty and the brokenness of the church. Once they see clearly and in a healthy way, they're ready to start leading a team!

Stepping Stone 5 - Start Leading a Team: This is fun, isn't it? Now you're

watching them lead in ways that you haven't seen before. Whatever their POWER is, it's going to heavily influence not only *where* they lead, but also *how* they lead. You don't delegate tasks, you delegate trust. It's time to trust them with more than what you've seen them handle before. As you do this, make sure that you're accessible for them to call or visit, especially at the beginning. Everyone that starts out in something new is going to mess up or fail. How can you bend over backwards to bring them along? How can you regularly encourage them in all the good that they're doing?

They're going to mess up along the way. You're going to be there to help pick up the pieces.

Stepping Stone 6 - Kill the Golden Calves: Unlike Stepping Stone 5, this is not fun at all! The good news is you've been through it before and you know what to do. God has equipped you with those spiritual weapons to demolish strongholds! Now you're going to walk alongside them to see their golden calves or those of the church. It's time to move in for the kill (and just so you know... you *still* don't get to kill it). Just imagine how effective this next leader will be when they know how to demolish strongholds, to expose the golden calves, and to have God on the throne of their hearts once more.

Stepping Stone 7 - Transition to "Purpose-Powered" Ministries: Again, if you've completed this step in your church already, this is going to be so easy to lead them to have the same vision that you do. It's important to note, though, that you're constantly going to be growing and shifting. With that, your church's mission will likely change (a lot or a little) over time. You have to stay in tune with the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom in this area. As you work through this step together, the person you are leading is going to be bursting with input. Keep leading them, but in every way you can, be sure to hand them the reins. We're delegating trust, we're allowing them to see what you might not see. As they grow as leaders, you'll be looking to them for their input all the more. In many ways, they'll be leading you!

Stepping Stone 8 - Raise Up Leaders: They've been led to lead. Now you can challenge them to lead leaders, and you can take a step back even more from them and move on to the next person. Maybe the two of you want to lead the next leader together. That's great! Just be sure you're on the same page with each other before beginning. Now you're on the right foundation, and so is your church.

FINAL WORDS

Imagine if church leaders all around the world would follow these steps. What kind of movement would take place if every local church around the world would gravitate right back to God’s intended purpose for them? What would happen if congregations all around the world would return to the holy foundation that God has set for us, and the “Capital C” Church would be restored back to its purpose here on earth? You’re just one leader, that’s true. As you continue these steps and continue to lead leaders in your own church and in other churches, your holy impact for the Kingdom of Heaven is going to exponentially change. You’ll constantly help lead local churches back to their holy purpose!

As you continue working through these steps, I want to encourage you to use our available sermons and discussion questions and lead a class in your local church. Invite all your leaders and those interested in *becoming* leaders. Lead a class virtually for the missionaries that you support. Invite leaders from other churches to take part too. Call in to our podcast and let’s work through any issues you have along the way. As we all continue to work through the steps together, you’ll be able to talk in a healthy way about your unique situations and get a clear view of the healthy foundation, returning right where God has called all of us to be! Let’s carry out the will of the Father and bring Him glory as one holy Church!

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” – Matthew 7:24-27

You’ll find your Stepping Stone 8 questions for discussion on page 99. Thank you for taking on The Total Ministry Makeover!



INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *The goal of The Total Ministry Makeover is to empower ministers everywhere to have the right foundation in ministry.*
- *The Stepping Stones of this book apply to all servants of the Lord, not just vocational ministers.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What makes a person a *minister*? _____

- 2) What was the biggest blunder you've seen in ministry? Examples: you or someone else leaving the church in an unhealthy way, someone leading with the wrong foundation, wrong heart, wrong motives, etc. What would have changed that? _____

- 3) Who was the biggest person in your life that led you into ministry? _____

- 4) What kind of foundation did they have? (If you haven't yet, you should thank them.) _____

- 5) What are some things in your own past that have kept you from having a healthy foundation? _____

- 6) What kind of foundation would you say you have right now (healthy, unhealthy, somewhere in-between)? Explain your answer. _____

As you continue in this book, pray that God will lead you to be a healthy leader as you go through *The Total Ministry Makeover*.



STEPPING STONE 1 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *Your purpose on earth is to carry out the will of the Father and to bring Him glory.*
- *If you love God with all of who you are, you will do all that God has commanded you to do.*
- *Idols rob you of your purpose, but more importantly, idols rob God of His glory.*
- *The Greatest Commandment should always be our greatest goal.*

¹Thacker, Shane, et al. "De:Vice." Devotional Reading Plan | YouVersion Bible, Inola Christian Church, 12 July 2020, www.bible.com/reading-plans/12714/.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Was there a moment that you just knew God was calling you into church leadership, like a change of direction, being called to enter a ministry, going to a certain college, etc.? _____

- 2) Share a time that your ministry (or personal life) suffered because you were standing on the *wrong* foundation. What safeguards do you have in place to keep it from happening in the future? _____

3) What are some potential “modern-day idols” pulling you away from God? ___

4) What is one thing that will change in your life if you *love God with all of who you are*? What is keeping you from implementing that change today? _____

5) On a scale of 1-10 this last month, how close would you say you are to the heart of God? (Very Distant) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very Close)
Explain your answer. _____

CHALLENGE

- 1) Pray that God will prepare your heart to clearly see the next steps you need to take.
- 2) Set a reminder (one year from today) to go back to this page and review the questions (and your previous answers).



STEPPING STONE 2 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *The Church is the Bride of Christ. Entering as a leader in the church should never be taken lightly.*
- *You cannot effectively lead those you don't love.*
- *Knowing that the Church is the precious bride of Christ, it's time to look at the Church through the eyes of Christ.*
- *Ministry is more than a job, it's a calling by God as a leader in the church.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) If you are a paid staff member of a church, would you still attend there if you weren't paid? Explain your answer. _____

- 2) How much more effective a leader would you be if you had that same love for your local church, as Jesus does for us? How would that change in the way you lead? _____

- 3) On a scale of 1-10 this last month, how close would you say you are to your local church? Why? (Very Distant) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very Close) _____

- 4) If you knew this was the last place you would move, how would you treat people differently in your church as well as your community? _____

- 5) The early church was heavily devoted to one another and to the Lord. Read Acts 2:42-47 again. Out of everything that you see in this passage, what is your church doing? _____

- 6) What is your one big gift or passion? How can you use that gift or passion to connect with your church family *outside of* the church? _____

CHALLENGE

Sometime this next week, take your answer from question 6 and put it into action!



STEPPING STONE 3 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *To assess your strengths and weaknesses:*
 - *Pain is what breaks your heart the most.*
 - *Passion is what you love to do the most.*
 - *Perception is what led you here and where you're heading next.*
- *Pain + Passion + Perception = Power (your strengths)*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1) Share your pain, passion, and perception with each other. _____

2) What connects your dots across all three? _____

3) With that in mind, what do you think your greatest strengths are? _____

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- 4) What do you think your biggest weaknesses are? Why are they weaknesses? (your personality, your past, etc.) _____

- 5) As you enter into a ministry, how can you be most effective in what you're hired to do? In other words, how can your strengths be used in the best way possible; and by contrast what do you need to do about your weaknesses? _____

- 6) By contrast, how will your weaknesses hinder your ministry? What do you need to do about them? _____

CHALLENGE

Take one step toward your dream you've shared. Whether it's training to prepare yourself for it, praying about it, spending time looking at others who have gone where you want to go, etc.



STEPPING STONE 4 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *In this step, you're not addressing (yet), you're assessing.*
- *To deal with division in the church in a healthy way, you'll need to bend over backwards and do whatever it takes to bring them along.*
- *Every weakness is an opportunity in disguise.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Out of all the assessments in this chapter, which part stood out to you the most? Were there any "surprise" answers that caught you off-guard? Please share.

- 2) From your findings, what do you think is the greatest strength of your church? What about the greatest weakness? _____

- 3) Did you have to deal with a plank (or speck) before taking the assessment? Please share. _____

- 4) What was the biggest blunder you've had when trying to address an issue in the church? Why? _____

- 5) What are some issues in the church that need to be addressed one day? _____

- 6) When talking through the questions with your wise leader(s), what is the best advice that they gave to you? _____

CHALLENGE

Pray about the findings of this assessment and talk to the leader you took this assessment with. Ask them: what is the best way to present these findings to your church leadership? Follow their lead, and prayerfully come up with an action plan on how to one day address the issues in your findings, as well as how to encourage and build on the (already great) strengths that your church has. They may be ready to address the issues now; that's great (as long as they're the ones addressing the issues)!



STEPPING STONE 5 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *Good leaders don't complain, they find solutions.*
- *The Apostles gave two credentials to lead the team: Being full of the Spirit and full of wisdom.*
- *You don't delegate tasks, you delegate trust.*

¹To receive full information on our free online content, including sermons, group questions, artwork and logos, videos and more, contact us at: <https://www.facebook.com/pastorshanehack>

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Tell of a time you were serving on a team (*not* the team leader), and you messed up in a major way. How did your team leader respond to that situation? _____

- 2) What did you learn from that experience as you now are starting to form and lead your own team(s)? _____

- 3) The Apostles were called by God to do two specific things: Prayer and the ministry of the Word. What are you called to do the most? _____

- 4) How much of your time are you actually spending on doing what you're called to do? What are some things that take you away from your calling? _____

- 5) Is there someone that could help lighten the load for you, and take on some responsibilities that you are *not called* to do? _____

CHALLENGE

Over this next week, identify what keeps you from being laser-focused on your calling. Pray about and consider what a solution would be for this!



STEPPING STONE 6 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *A “golden calf” as defined in this chapter is “anything that removes God from the throne of our hearts”.*
- *A stronghold is a perpetual sin issue that’s actively hindering your relationship with God.*
 - *Our arguments can be summed up in one word: justification.*
 - *Pretensions are our default go-to positions (where it’s comfortable).*
 - *When you have an argument, pretension, or even just a “little” thought, that’s your cue to pray.*
- *We don’t follow our desires; we discipline our desires!*

¹Strong’s Greek: 5313. ὕψωμα (Hupsóma) – Height, That Which Is Lifted Up, biblehub.com/greek/5313.htm.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions about *your* strongholds:

- 1) What are some potential strongholds you have in your life? _____

- 2) How can you dismantle the arguments you’ve made to defend your stronghold? _____

3) How can you demolish the pretensions that have been set up in your mind?

4) What are the biggest thoughts that keep appearing in your mind and need to be taken captive? _____

5) What are some safeguards you can put into place that will help keep you accountable to ensure it doesn't set itself up in the future? _____

Questions about the “golden calves” and strongholds in your church:

1) What are the current strongholds in your church, as you see them right now? What is one thing you can do this week to begin the process of addressing the issue and moving forward in unity as a church? _____

2) Why do you want to address this issue? Are you seeing clearly, or is there a personal matter you have left unresolved that is distorting your view? _____

3) Think back to when you knew of a church split; what was the reason for it? If you were in leadership during that time (or even heavily involved in the situation), what is something you wish you would've known back then? Would it have changed the course? If so, how? _____

4) How can you apply what you know from the past to address this in a healthier way from this chapter? _____

CHALLENGE

Make sure you're in line with all the Stepping Stones so far, and once you've identified the issue, talk with a wise leader in your church about how to best begin addressing this issue; and keep it in prayer all the way through!



STEPPING STONE 7 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *Busy does not equal holy.*
- *our purpose as a church is to carry out the will of the Father, and to bring Him glory.*
- *Your PURPOSE should POWER your ministries!*
- *Your mission (POWER) is how your local church can use the gifts, talents, and abilities to carry out its purpose.*
- *Once your entire leadership is in agreement on the church's mission, you need to communicate this well, and put it into action, with the entire congregation.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1) What ways does your church serve people? _____

2) What is your purpose as a church? _____

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- 3) Are these ministries focused and intentional on your mission as a church?
Why or why not? _____

- 4) Assuming you've spoken with the leadership about your church's mission,
would you say that you are one in heart and mind? Why or why not? _____

- 5) Assuming you're fully in agreement with the leadership, how can you clearly
communicate the church's mission with your congregation? _____

- 6) How much more effective would you be as a church if you were walking as one
to carry out your church's mission? Be specific in how that would impact not only
your church, but also your community. _____

CHALLENGE

Pray about seeing the church’s mission clearly, and once you’re all on board with it as the leadership (one in heart and mind), consider preaching a sermon (or sermon series) about your church’s vision!





STEPPING STONE 8 QUESTIONS

KEY POINTS:

- *We don't just want to lead followers of Jesus; we want to lead leaders for Jesus!*
- *In order to raise up a leader, they need to already be a follower.*
- *They're going to mess up along the way. You're going to be there to help pick up the pieces.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1) What was the most impactful Stepping Stone (or particular part of a step) for you, and why? _____

2) Who is someone that you see as a potential leader, and why? _____

3) Which Stepping Stone will be the easiest for you to lead them through? Which one would be the hardest? Explain both answers. _____

- 4) Which Stepping Stone will be the easiest for you to lead someone else to do? Which one would be the hardest? Explain both answers. _____

- 5) Do you see an “end goal” (short term or long term) for that potential leader? How are you going to lead them there? _____

CHALLENGE

- 1) Raise up the next leader.
- 2) Pray about leading a class for *The Total Ministry Makeover* in your local church!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shane Thacker has been in ministry for over 10 years. He's been on staff with Inola Christian Church in Inola, OK since May of 2016. He graduated from Ozark Christian College in 2010, where he also met and married Christina. They have 3 children together.

