

THE CELL CHURCH MODEL

In reading the authors of the House Church model (Wolfgang Simson, Del Birkey, Robert Banks, Gene Edwards, Larry Kreider, Robert Fitts, and others) there is affirmation of celebration events for several house churches to gather and worship (or an entire region of house churches to come together). There is also reporting of using such ‘alliances’ of house churches to provide training support in addition to using this fellowship for strategic ministering and multiplication. This in one sense parallels the strategy which the Cell model sets forth. Cell churches accomplish to a large extent the same objectives as house churches through cell groups (groups sometimes called or referred to as churches) being coordinated and led by a single ‘mothering’ church.

There is a lot of overlap between the cell strategy churches and that of house churches—although there are distinct philosophical strategy differences. Lawrence Khong (author of The Apostolic Cell Church) sees cell groups as being churches, except the cells are tied intentionally to a larger corporate local body of believers for the on-going accomplishment for the vision of cell reproduction. The chief difference as pointed out by Allan Karr, Nehemiah church planting professor at Golden Gate Theological Seminary, is the house church network is a voluntary cooperative fellowship compared to a single pastor led, single church-centered cell church.

But, again, similar logic is presented by those arguing house churches. They advocate the networking of numbers of house churches to help facilitate the multiplication of more house churches. In all our studies of various model considerations we need to again recognize God will use a variety of church models to accomplish His work—if indeed the model being used is seeking to honor Him in the accomplishment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. What we want to do through the study of different models is to discern which model type resonates with each student’s personal wiring, passions, and strengths coupled with discerning which model will work most effectively in a given field’s context.

The goal is to eclectically draw from various models to comprise a ministry strategy of what one intends to actually implement—i.e. taking from many healthy examples of Great Commission accomplishing models and customizing what God leads a church planter and builder to do.

God makes you a unique person and leads you to a unique place for implementing a unique plan which will reach that unique people group with His Son’s Good News.

FULL GOSPEL CHURCH—SEOUL, KOREA

We begin our study of the cell church model by looking at the church which made it a popular and much studied strategy. The cell model probably gained its greatest notoriety beginning in the 1980's when a church in South Korea starting growing past the 500,000 membership mark. The church, Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea pastored by Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho (now retired), began to attract much attention around the world through its fantastic vision and achievement of seeing so many people reached for Jesus Christ and disciplined through small groups popularly called "cell groups." Many churches have been inspired by Full Gospel's story and have adapted the cell church concept in various ways to make it work in their context of community. The following will attempt to disclose the essential components and practices which make up this cell church and explain how they function within this church model. Dr. Cho and the Full Gospel Church of Seoul have been foundationally inspirational to this model. Later, we will consider some model testimonies in the US and other parts of the world who have effectively applied this strategy for multiplying disciples and small groups of cells or church units.

Full Gospel Church began in a poor section of Seoul, South Korea, in 1958. **Dr. Cho shares candidly he was an ambitious young pastor and wanted to build a great church for Jesus Christ—perhaps the largest ever. But his ambition was marred by becoming impressed with himself and God allowed him to experience a heart attack. This brought Cho to a clearer understanding of and commitment to Christ's Lordship in his life. It also showed Cho how Christ wanted to build a church, *i.e. through the laity.***

Cho had understood the pastor was the primary player in doing the Lord's work. Cho shares his illness actually took ten years to recuperate from and through this trial God humbled him and put into motion the strategy He wanted Yonggi Cho to follow in carrying out Christ's work for the Seoul people (Paul Y. Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups*, p. 11). At the time his church had 2,400 members, but Cho dreamed for much more.

During the next two years Yonggi Cho spent most of his time in bed. He had to rely on others to take care of the church. Through this experience, Cho came to see God's plan of building a church through the laity—and the leaders would be the women of the church. As he studied Scripture carefully in the book of Acts, Cho began to see the church was built through the lay people in the Early Church—not the apostles or otherwise professional clergy. He began to understand something of the intent of Ephesians 4:11-16 and how this could be the answer to his dilemma for his church. The church gathering in home meetings could become a way of delegating the leadership work of the church body as Moses was challenged and encouraged by his father-in-law to do in meeting the needs of the people in the Exodus experience. Cho began to realize the laity could do the work of the ministry if properly supported by the church leaders.

When Cho presented his ideas to his board of deacons for the church work of pastoral care, prayer, and general ministry being carried out by the laity—they agreed the thinking was Scriptural, but they didn't feel trained or in a position to carry out such ministry responsibilities. Cho felt trapped. He wanted to pursue his vision, but saw no way to do so. He began to hear talk in the church he should consider resigning in order for the needs of the church to be met due to his health condition. Through further prayer and Bible study, Cho began to see a possibility of the work being accomplished through the women of the church. From Romans 16 and observing how Paul referred to Priscilla and Aquila (always placing her name first in his addresses to them, which meant she was the ministry leader in the work they carried out) Cho saw the women of his church might be the answer. So Cho launched home cell groups and gave instructions to the women leading the meetings “Watch the Christians to see that they don't backslide, and go out and win your neighbors for Jesus Christ.” (Ibid., p. 32) Through trial and error, Cho and Full Gospel learned how to penetrate their Jerusalem through small cell groups which initially began meeting in homes. He learned how to do this from the laity who were having success in their cells by seeing new people brought in and won to Jesus Christ. Initially he had given the ladies no training on what to teach in the meetings. Soon he began giving them notes from his Sunday sermons to utilize for study in the groups.

Cho and the Full Gospel Church worked through other problems like taking offerings in the cell meetings, outside speakers (traveling evangelists, Bible teachers, etc.) addressing the cell groups, size of cells, and how to administrate oversight to all the cells. But they kept their focus and purposes clear: “I told them that they had to understand the greater purpose of the cell groups, which was to evangelize the neighborhoods by providing a place to bring friends and neighbors so that they could be introduced to Jesus Christ.” (Ibid., p. 38)

Cho realized the dream he had for building a great church was taking shape, but it was taking shape according to God's design and means, not Cho's. Cho said God taught him necessary principles every leader of Christ must learn:

I now know it is very necessary for a leader to be broken. If he isn't broken, he will never be able to lead God's people as a shepherd leads the sheep, because he will always be leading out of fear. He will be thinking of money or of power, because he will be afraid of losing his authority or his position. He will never be able to put his trust in the lay people and delegate authority to them for fear of losing his own position and authority. He will be afraid that any mistake they make might reflect on him. He will do a lot of things for the Lord, but God will not be able to use him, because he will be afraid to listen.

God will use people only according to their brokenness [surrender to Him]...And so after ten years of suffering, I had become nothing more than dust. I was helpless. (Ibid, p. 43)

Cho shares as the church at Seoul Full Gospel developed during his ten years of illness,

he was not even aware of exactly how many were participating in the church. Under God's leading, the church decided to relocate and build a larger building in its present location on Yoida Island in Seoul. Part of the church family wanted to stay in the old location. 8,000 members stayed at the old campus and called a new pastor while 10,000 moved to the new location. All 18,000 were involved in home cell groups. Cho continued encouraging the cell groups "to seek more members by going throughout their neighborhoods and sharing the good news of what God has done for them." (Ibid, p. 45, Italics mine) Carefully note Cho's choice of words describing their evangelism strategy.

The inference is for the members to share first person experiences of God's good hand in their lives because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the kind of authentic witnessing which dominated the Acts accounts. The dynamic of cell church strategies which leads to this kind of witness warrants careful study of this model and the Biblical principles which can be honored through it.

After several years at their location on Yoida Island the church at Seoul, Full Gospel was seeing 3,000 won to Christ monthly. The work was not without problems as is true in any church. Several of the administrative leaders of cells decided to pull out of the Full Gospel Church to form their own separate churches. The pull out was not done in respect and love, and eventually failed. But this led Cho to design an intentional strategy of helping those in the church who wanted to become pastors of churches. He assisted them with tuition costs for Bible school training and helped with salary and start-up expenses for new church launches. They eventually began practicing sending out 3,000 members with a trained pastoral staff to plant new churches in the surrounding areas of South Korea.

Cho sees the cell approach as giving every member an opportunity for vital involvement in evangelism and ministry. Each cell is challenged to reproduce itself on a regular basis and also to practice pastoral care to one another as members of the body of Christ. The large church celebrations are simply opportunities for the members to corporately celebrate God's glory, renew their vision, receive encouragement through the Word, and to give their offerings to God. The cell groups at Full Gospel operate the charismatic gifts as traditionally employed by Pentecostal type related churches. Their emphasis is on evangelism and loving one another as modeled by the Christians in the book of Acts. The prayer ministry in the cells is very active and strategic and Bible study is based on outlines from the pastor's messages. Through this combination of feeding, ministering, and evangelizing, the members experience continual revival because they are seeing God work daily through their small group cell teams. The members share their love with unbelievers and practice a lot of ministry evangelism. Coupled with personal ministry work is the invitation for unbelievers to visit a cell group. The cells are very transparent in allowing people to talk about needs and problems and to receive prayer and encouragement from the rest of the cell team.

Their cell groups meet in many various ways. They have many women only groups—and the same is true for men. Many of the women's cells can meet during

the weekday while many men's cells hold their meetings on Saturday nights because of their work schedules. Many cells meet made up of homogeneous attendees: secretaries, factory workers, office managers and so on. There are also cells for young people and even for children. Because of the excitement of life change members receive from their cell experiences, evangelism becomes a very positive practice and potent experience.

Cho takes evangelism and the Great Commission mandate very seriously. He sees this as the key component which determines if a church is alive or dying. The evangelism they believe most effective is that of encouraging the members to see their neighborhoods as their mission fields wherever God has placed them. So they plan the cell groups to accomplish the Great Commission by complementing the work done by each of their members. Please ponder that last sentence. This is the decree and desire of our Lord for every church to do. And this is the purpose for the study of models of churches and church planting. It is to help you think through a model strategy by which you can accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and raise up disciples who do the same. Cho states the cell system they have practiced at Full Gospel has caused the members to be like the Christians described in Ephesians 4:11-16.

When a home cell is full of life, and when people are happy and sharing their faith and witnessing to what the Lord has done in their lives, other people are drawn to them. Unbelievers become curious. They want to know why this little group of Christians is so joyful when all around them there are so many troubles.

Now, even though such groups become magnets in their neighborhoods, our members still have to work at evangelizing. Unbelievers infrequently come beating on the doors to find out what is happening. **Our members have to go out looking for prospective converts.** But we have other ways of helping them to become caring evangelists.

One way is through what we call "holy eavesdropping." Our cell leaders instruct the members of their group to be on the lookout for anyone who is having troubles. Many of us overhear conversations every day in which someone is speaking about the problems in his life. Whenever we overhear such conversations, we should immediately ask the Holy Spirit, "Is there some way I can witness to this person? Is there some way I can introduce him to Jesus, who can really solve his problems?" (Ibid., 58-59)

Cho cited how his members have used their creativity to reach people for Christ and share His love and Good News with others. **In high rise apartment buildings one lady began to simply ride the elevator a couple of hours each Saturday afternoon.** Her purpose in doing so was to meet new friends by offering a helping hand with groceries, opening a door, arranging for her husband to fix a leak for someone's plumbing, etc. As she had encounters with each person she prayed. Eventually she was obtaining phone numbers and inviting friends to a cell meeting in her apartment.

One couple in the Full Gospel Church moved about twenty miles out from Seoul

and started a cell group in their home for their new neighbors. Cho had encouraged them to join a church in the new area they had relocated to. But the couple wanted to continue with Full Gospel. In time, 2,000 people were meeting in 130 cells all multiplying from the first cell planted by this couple. (This could be described as a house church movement—in this case, the movement is connected to and motivated by a central vision coming from a single church’s ministry.) They began chartering buses to come into Seoul on Sundays for services. Now this area is a district of cell groups with a licensed minister shepherding the work under the vision of the Full Gospel Church. (The organization and administration of cells will be discussed later.)

Cho and the Full Gospel Church were able to come to the place in their thinking and practice that cell division and multiplication is how they would continue to live and be healthy. (It became their *Hedgehog Concept* as described by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*.) So the cells came to embrace and welcome the opportunity of birthing new cells out of existing cells. **When groups came to have fifteen family units, they started a new cell.** [*Maybe fifteen or so adults; children and youth in their own cells.*]

Full Gospel decided to have the organization for their cells to be a geographic practice
Along with this arrangement is the practice of districts. In the various districts of cells,
they will have special meetings for prayer, recreation, and other special events for all the
cells in the district to come together and participate in. Permeating the entire cell
network is an honest heart commitment to see after the welfare of every member. If
someone misses from the cell meeting, that person is followed up on the very next day to
see what their need is and to address it faithfully.

Cho and Full Gospel have engaged themselves in church planting. They have arranged training at a Bible College for those in their church who are called to vocational full-time ministry. Once these people have had three years experience as a licensed minister in the Full Gospel Church (have led cell groups and have helped in the multiplication of cells and the administration of existent cells), they are sent out with a salary of six months to a year to start new churches. The church has engaged in planting in foreign as well as home areas. The strategy is simple: “All the planter has to do is begin looking for needs, loving people and helping them, and very soon he has the nucleus of a home cell group. As each cell grows and begins to divide, he soon has a church!” (Ibid., p. 78) By 1981 Full Gospel had started fifty-five churches in South Korea and another fifty outside of Korea—including one in New York City which had more than 500 members in it by that time. (Forty of the churches were in North and South America with ten more in Europe.) In each case, the six month to a year’s salary support was sufficient with every planter and new church being self-supporting after this time.

To illustrate the dynamic of the cell groups and their multiplication ministry through the work of Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, the following are comments Dr. Cho made during 1981 about their goals for that year and beyond:

I have explained that the growth of our church is based upon goal-setting and the establishment of home cell groups. I have more than realized the goals I have set thus far. At the beginning of 1980 we had 100,000 members in Full Gospel Central Church. Now I have set 500,000 as my goal to be reached by 1984, the year in which we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Christianity in Korea.

When people heard I had set a goal of 500,000 for 1984, many asked me, “Are you going to have a big campaign? Are you going to have a city-wide soul-winning program?”

I don't need any of those things, because I have a completely different philosophy of evangelism. Before I knew the biblical way of evangelizing, I thought the only thing to do was have a big revival meeting with all sorts of special speakers and programs. But with the cell system, we don't need any special programs at all. We are having revival every day, and it hardly takes any effort. [Christians just doing their natural, normal work as Christians.]

But with 8,000 cells, that would mean 8,000 more families by the end of the year. The average family size is about four persons. Therefore, adding 8,000 families to our church would actually bring in 32,000 new members during the remaining six months of 1980.

That's a great revival! And there's no fanfare, no need to push, no need to advertise. I simply motivate the cell leaders. Each cell group has only one family to lead to Christ. That's no problem. The ten to fifteen families in each cell group select one unbelieving family and begin to pray for them and witness to them. It's not difficult to understand that many of these cell groups will lead more than one family to Christ during that time; they will lead two or three.

So it is easy to see why we ended the year 1980 with 150,000 members and 10,000 home cell groups. Now I have increased the goal for 1981—to four families per cell. That will mean 80,000 new members in the first half of the year and 80,000 more in the second half. By the end of the year we will have 310,000 members. So it is easy to see how we can reach 500,000 members by 1984—with no problems, no fanfare, no television thrust, no mass distribution of tracts, just person-to-person contact through the home cell groups.

Because of the way this system works, there should be no plateaus to church growth. Too many churches grow to 500 to 1,000 members and then settle down and begin to mark time. It isn't that there are no more people to be won to Christ in their area; the minister simply becomes satisfied and loses the vision for evangelism. Then the work of the Holy Spirit begins to cool.

But with cell groups that evangelize, the church can continue to grow and thrive, no matter what circumstances it faces. Today we have an oil problem because of the situation in the Middle East. When any place is faced with a real oil shortage, and there is a lack of public transportation, church attendance will drop, unless the people live near the church building.

But that does not have to be a problem for our church. If the people cannot get transportation to come to church on Sundays, they will still receive

ministry in the cell meeting, and they continue to be just as much a part of the church as if they were in the main church building every Sunday. For a larger meeting, groups of cells can get together for a district worship service in their own area, and the district pastor will do the preaching. There they will worship and take up offerings for the use of the mother church. If the oil shortage is a long one, I can make video cassettes of my message and have it shown to the district worship meetings....***The church in China has survived with just this kind of pattern....They are very similar to the cell groups in our church....Another thing I learned about the cell-group churches in China is that 99 percent of the leaders are women. They took the leadership when the men were afraid to expose themselves as Christians.*** (Ibid., pp 82-85)

Cho's remarks are of interest regarding the various discussions by house leaders and cell advocates about each one's benefits and strengths—which there are many indeed. But Cho compares the ministry of Full Gospel Central Church strategy to that of the house church movement in China.

To be able to more fully understand Cho's beliefs about goal setting, the student is encouraged to read *More Than Numbers* which Cho wrote in 1984. I will give some of the key insights for church planters and builders from this book.

Yonggi Cho agrees heartily with what Charles Spurgeon laid out to his Pastor's College students in his Friday afternoon class held weekly with these aspiring planters and church builders. Spurgeon lectured on the many responsibilities of the pastor in order help his students develop their understanding and competence. But the number one focus of his attention was his students devoting themselves to a healthy walk with God. Whatever else they did in life, it would flow out of this heart condition between them and their Master. (A student can study what Spurgeon taught in these Friday lectures by reading the book *Lectures to My Students*—a collection of the Friday sessions he taught covering the years 1866 to 1879.) Cho gives the following counsel to planters and church builders:

- **To grow out you must first grow in—the larger the church, the stronger a leader's foundation must be.**
- **Changing your attitude—the growth of the church first begins in the pastor's heart. The Bible says “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) Cho says “If you have the wrong vision or if your vision is too small for the ability God has granted you, your heart attitude is also going to be wrong and you will find yourself discouraged, bewildered and depressed.” (Idem, *More Than Numbers*, Word: Waco, Tx, 1984, p. 17.)**
- **A man's vision will limit his fruit—Cho states, “We can never be any more than we dream of being. As we set our eyes on God's Word and develop a deep fellowship with the Holy Spirit, our vision is changed. How can you change your vision? You can't, but the Holy Spirit can and will.” (Ibid., p.**

18) A leader given a vision by the Holy Spirit will not be stopped by any obstacle. Too often planters and pastors allow their visions to be limited by their circumstances.

- ***Visions and dreams are the language of the Holy Spirit***—Paul shares in 1 Corinthians 2: 9-10 the Holy Spirit reveals the deep things of God. **A planter and church builder will not have a clear vision of what God wants to do in his ministry unless he has entered into a deep and loving fellowship with the Holy Spirit.** Cho feels strongly that if a church is not increasing through conversion growth, the cause is the leadership's lack of vision through not receiving *goals of faith* (and the drive to accomplish them) through real fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. Cho says,

The greatest hindrance to the fulfillment of God's desire to see his church grow is the lack of vision within the leadership of the church. "It can't happen here. This is too hard a field." These negative statements must be put out from our vocabulary, once and for all. We are to begin using the language of the Holy Spirit and building a new success consciousness in the minds of all our people. (Ibid. , p. 24)

- **Change your self-image**—Cho asks the penetrating question "What is your self-image? How much do you feel you are worth? Can God use you to make a significant change in the world?" (Ibid.) This is important because a person gives out what they've got in. A planter and church builder can only motivate people to believe and serve God according to his own relationship with God. One leadership maxim is that a leader must put higher numbers on people's foreheads than they put on themselves or said differently *'the leader has to see people for what they can become, not for what they are.'* A leader will only love and value people as he sees and knows himself to be loved and valued by God. His ability to lead and motivate people to be used by God largely depends on how he understands God's desire and ability to use people—including himself.
- **Poor appearance**—Cho feels strongly there is a strong relationship between one's physical appearances and how one feels about himself. So to help improve your self-image, take care of yourself. Follow good diet and exercise disciplines. "People will first look at you before they listen to you. What they see will affect how they hear." (Ibid. , p. 26)
- **Education**—be the best prepared instrument for Jesus Christ you can be. If His message is important, it is important enough to speak it well.
- **Self-discipline**—Cho sees the principle of "the members do what the leaders model" to be an important item in regarding self-discipline. It's a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the leader must model a Spirit-controlled life. Cho writes:

Living a life of discipline will help you to develop discipline in others with whom you work...If I am not disciplined in my prayer life, social life, study time and business, they will not be as dependable as they need to be in accomplishing our mutual goal of building God's church...What you watch and dwell upon will affect what you become. (Ibid. , p. 27)

- **Family background—everyone is affected by their family heritage and upbringing. When we compare ourselves with other people and think we have to be a certain personality type to accomplish a special work for God, we’re in trouble. What we need to do is to compare ourselves to the goal God has for us. Cho says “abilities may differ but success is for all. “He never leads us to do anything that He has not given us the grace and the strength to accomplish successfully.” (Ibid. , p. 28)**
- **Overall health—Cho means by this our total attitude toward others and ourselves. Cho says the greatest disability one can have is in his own mind and attitude. The way we view challenges and opportunities is what determines our influence on others. Related to the church and it’s growth, Cho shares,**

Sometimes we pray that God would do something in our church and then we stand back to see what God does. This is a great mistake. If God is going to work in the church, He is going to work through us. If God was going to bring about church growth without using us, the church would have completed its task centuries ago and Christ would have already come. If God is going to work, he will work through you and me. This is why our personal resources are of utmost importance. *What would we be like if we had the success we are believing for? The answer to that question is very important.* (Ibid., p. 29)

The foregoing discussion of the ministry of the laity at Full Gospel Central Church is a very key theological understanding of New Testament doctrine. For Cho, it became a revelation he received from God only through being placed flat on his back. He had to depend on the laity to accomplish God’s work. But through this God taught Cho important New Testament principles regarding how churches are to be planted and built.

The teaching of Ephesians 4:11-12 and the recorded history of the laity in the book of Acts make clear God plans to use every believer. If a student of Scripture will do a careful study of the words “called,” “calling,” and “call” as used in the New Testament, she or he will realize the immensity of their implications upon Christian ministry. Cho wisely suggests sometimes the most troublesome members in a church are only people who have not been recognized, challenged, and engaged. Spurgeon shared a similar comment when fellow pastors tried warning him about certain former members of theirs transferring into the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He found most of the time these formerly disgruntled members became champion models for Christ when given a suitable role and challenge for serving Christ in the church.

Cho gives four steps for training lay people:

Step 1: Teach lay people how important they are to the church for accomplishing God’s work through the church. This principle is amazingly profitable when applied carefully and consistently. It can virtually accomplish miracles in Christian’s lives. Those who plant and lead churches often forget how long it took for them to come to healthy positions of confidence and faith for God to use them. We forget that normally

as church leaders we have had many, many years of professional training for ministry, numerous experiences in service, and multiple affirmations of our abilities and promise in serving God. And then we think lay people should be ready to step up to the plate to avail themselves for God's service without realizing how many fears and doubts they are struggling with about God being able to use them. Added to this are their fears of incompetencies regarding anything related to doing ministry works. This is especially heightened when it comes to doing evangelistic ministries. We must build their self-esteem in the Lord by teaching them the truths of Scripture and what God says about them. We must believe in them and build into them as to their ability to serve Christ effectively. People attempt new things when others believe in them and affirm them.

Step 2: Motivate the lay people. The planter and church builder must be learning to motivate the people Christ adds to his church. You can only motivate others if you are motivated yourself. This is accomplished through the attitudes discussed above and piecing together a process of training and service opportunities giving them actual experience in God using them. (An excellent example and story of how one church has put together a process and strategy that works for them is Robert Lewis and the Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. They have put together a great process for wise training and leading the lay people into being used by God. Please see *The Church of Irresistible Influence* by Robert Lewis, Zondervan Publishers, 2001.)

Step 3: Recognize them. The historic and record setting coach John Wooden of the UCLA Bruins said “It is amazing how much can be accomplished if no one care who gets the credit.” (John Wooden, *They Call Me Coach*, p.104) **From the thoughts above in Step 1, the pastor-planter must be secure enough to let others be recognized in the church. And he must make sure he models ‘recognizing’ others.** Affirming, applauding, appreciating done often and from the heart will produce plenty of wholesome attitudes and atmosphere in the church. If the planter/pastor will do this, people will practice this encouragement towards him—and one another. There should be celebrations of the members' accomplishments and efforts. Recognize and affirm them in their efforts of obedience to Christ which support the church's vision.

Step 4: Praise them. Similar to Step 3, but the specific need of encouragement and appreciation is so key to a person's development and performance—especially when they are trying to follow and serve Christ, the greatest leader and champion in history. This is no small task. Because of this challenge, church planters and builders want to establish an atmosphere of praise and appreciation toward people in the church. This becomes a wonderful team building discipline if the members are doing this to one another. William James, the renowned Harvard psychologist and philosopher said “the deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.” (Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936, p.19) Charles Schwab was one of the first people in American business history to be paid a salary of one million dollars—and this was in the early part of the twentieth century. He said he was paid this kind of money because of his ability to work with people. Schwab explained,

I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among my people,...the greatest asset I possess, and the way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement.

There is nothing else that so kills the ambition of a person as criticisms from superiors. I never criticize anyone. I believe in giving a person incentive to work. So I am anxious to praise but loath to find fault. If I like anything, I am hearty in my approbation and lavish in my praise. (Ibid., pp. 24-25)

Cho gives this comment about the lay people who will make up the membership of new church plants and who will help churches reproduce (some of them going out to be lead church planters someday from the home church):

You are told by Paul that your main purpose in ministry is to train the saints to minister. If you do not follow the admonition of the Holy Spirit, your church will not grow to its full potential. God has not made lay ministry optional. He expects your members to be active witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The next time you speak before your people, take a good look at them. Look at their faces. Notice their eyes. Right out there, in your congregation, lies your greatest ministerial resource. Love them, feed them, but don't forget to train them. [And then Cho asks] "Are you as committed to your lay people as you expect them to be committed to you?" (Cho, More Than Numbers, p. 35)

What Cho emphasizes without apology is that for a cell strategy to work in any church, it must have the support and championing of the senior pastor. If this does not happen, the church will read this work as just another program—and not the heart and soul of the church's vision and direction. He expresses this belief as follows:

If cell groups are to succeed, the pastor must become so convinced of their necessity in the church that he will see them as the key to the life or death of his church. Once he becomes convinced, the program will move.

A lot of groundwork needs to be laid before the system can be implemented. I believe the pastor needs to commit his energy and leadership to lay the ground-work. And even after the program is rolling, he needs to remain the obvious leader, training the cell leaders and motivating them to reach the goals that have been established for each group.

The nitty-gritty can be delegated to an associate, but the leadership must remain with the pastor. He must continue to have an active relationship with the cell leaders.

I always say that a minister should put his total energy into this system to make it successful. That calls for a concentration of power and enthusiasm. (Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups, p. 109 *emphasis mine*)

To begin a cell system strategy in a church, Cho recommends the pastor begin with a small group of leaders in the church and training them as cell leaders. Then have them begin their own home cells meetings. The pastor must stay close to these 'beginning cell

leaders' to give them coaching and support—and learning what needs to be adjusted to make the system effective in the given context of the church's ministry.

Full Gospel Central Church has followed the homogeneic principle with their cell ministry. Some from the G-12 (Principles of 12) school claim Cho's was based on geographic principles. They claim the G-12 strategy developed out of the International Charismatic Mission, Bogota, Columbia, by Cesar Castellanos was more homogeneically driven. The confusion is whether you are discussing the management systems used or the actual cell systems used. From the literature, all cell systems follow the homogeneic principle. And this is key. Rick Warren's PDC philosophy of ministry argues this principle for churches to use in preparing their Sunday morning "attraction evangelism" services, i.e. targeting the peoples your church can relate to best at the present.

Cho offers this reasoning and guidance for operating cells on a homogeneic system:

I have discovered that groups based on geographical considerations alone tend to bring people together who have little in common. This is what we call heterogeneous cell groups. So much time and energy will be spent trying to develop a feeling of oneness, that the main purpose of reaching the lost and caring for the sheep will not be as effective.

Yet, we must remember that the principle I have just stated is used in the developing of our cell system, not the developing of our entire church. In our church, we don't differentiate between rich and poor, high and low, or well-educated and uneducated. We are all one in the Body of Christ. But in the developing of our cell system, we try to use this natural principle for the sake of more efficiently reaching the lost for Jesus Christ. (Idem, More Than Numbers, p. 46 *emphasis mine*)

This is a key concept to understand: the cell groups target peoples who share affinities in life. The corporate church is a celebration of everyone's value and equality at the foot of the cross of Christ.

Cho offers the following insights for choosing cell leaders:

1. **Look for people with enthusiasm**—this can include new Christians. Look for people with an infectious testimony.
2. **Testimony**—people who have a solid walk with God and who demonstrate the reality of Christ. People are drawn to these kinds of Christians.
3. **Dedication**—people who are team players and who are committed to the church's team. They are ones who are exemplary in their attendance, tithing, and the unity of the church.
4. **Holy Spirit filled**—dependence upon the Holy Spirit is an evident characteristic in their life. For Full Gospel Central Church they require the evidence of speaking in tongues. For them this is a benchmark sign that the person can lead others to Christ and also pray powerfully for people's spiritual and physical

healing. *(This same character quality has been recorded in Christian's lives throughout church history who did not speak in tongues. But the point is clear, people wanted as cell leaders must have a proven walk with God.)*

5. **Time and money**—this does not mean they deny poorer people to serve as cell leaders, but they have found those who are not as pressed financially are more freed to spend time doing ministry deeds. (The idea is to look for those who have stability and maturity in financial stewardship.)

Beyond the selection is the cell leader's training. For Cho this has essentially meant four things are instilled into all cell leaders to be practiced in the cell meetings:

1. **They learn from the pastor and then pass onto those in the cell meetings an expansion of the pastor's weekly message**. All cell leaders receive a weekly review of the Dr. Cho's upcoming weekend message. Additionally the outline is printed in the church's weekly newspaper for all members to prepare for the cell meeting in advance.
2. **In addition to the study of God's Word through the pastor's message outline, there is always worship** through singing of hymns and choruses and a time of open prayer in each cell meeting.
3. **There is ministry to one another**. Needs are openly shared and intercessory prayer is entered into. This is where healing of spirit and body occur in the meetings.
4. **Cells and their meetings are required to be evangelistic**. The lesson and testimonies are oriented to help newcomers to the person of the Lord Jesus. Cho states, "To me, evangelism is essential in home cell groups if they are to provide real life for the church." (Idem, Successful Cell Home Groups, p. 114) Cho says their cell meetings are directed to never be only fellowship meetings. The members can certainly fellowship together, but this is to be done at another time—not to seek this only at cell meetings. "I believe the meetings need to be highly disciplined if they are to produce the kind of evangelism and growth we have seen....Groups that meet without having evangelism as a goal...is a great danger that they will only feed themselves." (Ibid., p. 118)

Cho believes God wants every church to grow and there is a key to revival for every town or city. ***By spending time with the Holy Spirit and developing an intimate fellowship with Him, He will reveal the key to you*** (i.e. the methods, models, and strategies). God is going to use you the planter, the leader of the church. He is not going to do it without you. "It won't come through angels. It won't fall from the sky like rain. It must begin in your heart." (Cho, More Than Numbers, p. 54)

Cho believes, without reservation, the key to revival is through prayer. He references Luke 11: 5-9 as the Scriptural paradigm to guide a church planter and builder's life. These principles are to be understood, believed, and applied:

- First, the man requesting bread is a friend of the one who has the bread. God is not a stranger and we should not be a stranger to Him.
- Second, we are not asking just for ourselves, but for hungry sinners who need the Lord.
- Third, the hour is very late—there is no other help for the lost of our world who do not know where to find the bread of life they so desperately need and cannot find.
- “Fourth, the door may be shut, but it can be opened....Although the door seems to be shut now, you must believe that the God who is behind the door will open it if you will not faint but will persist in prayer.” (Ibid. , p. 97)
- Fifth, there must be an attitude of intense desire in order for someone to persist in prayer, i.e. he must be desperate to receive what God can give him.

The prayer practice of FGC has been to meet for prayer every Friday night and to pray all night through. There is also an early morning prayer meeting each week day before the work day begins. In the 1970’s the church bought a sixty acre mountain five miles from the North Korean border originally for the purpose of being a cemetery for the members. But God impressed upon them to use it instead for a designated prayer and fasting place. By 1982 they had 630,000 people who had used the mountain for prayer and seeking God.

Dr. Cho and Full Gospel are committed to prayer and to fasting. He says,

...I always tell our people that they must have a goal when they fast. They must not fast just to be fasting, for that accomplishes nothing. When people have been praying for a definite answer and the Lord does not seem to be answering, I tell them to fast and pray until they have the assurance from God that He is answering. In fact, 90 percent of the prayers that have resulted in definite answers in our church have been those prayers that have been combined with fasting.
(Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups, p. 133)

The Full Gospel Church is a model of what can happen when there is an intentional strategy of believing God and mobilizing the lay people to go to unbelievers for Christ. The model they have demonstrated in using cells is a great encouragement to other churches of the potential harvest for Christ through this strategy. They have learned how to multiply both disciples and cells as a part of their on-going ministry of sustained conversion growth. They have also learned how to train and deploy church planters from their church with a strategy of “jump starting” the church plant by sending core groups out with the planters they have equipped from their church family.

Principles of character:

1. What was key character quality God taught Cho early in his ministry?
2. What additional character qualities do you observe in Cho's life for a planter and church builder to seek to grow in?

Principles of planting:

1. What are some basic principles exercised by FGC to plant and multiply cells?
2. What are practices and principles used by FGC in planting other churches?

Principles of model selection:

1. How did Cho arrive at using the cell model?
2. What made this so effective for this church?

Principles of multiplication:

1. Discuss the elements of atmosphere and leadership in how the multiplication of cells and other churches are accomplished at Full Gospel?

FAITH COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH, Singapore

The cell model has predominantly taken hold in Pentecostal type churches. Dale Galloway while serving in Portland, Oregon at New Hope Community Church was able to see some 5,000 participants in small (cell) groups in this “non-Pentecostal” ministry. But the large application of the cell structure strategy has occurred in the churches where the gifts expressions of the Holy Spirit are more practiced and this has been more occurrent in foreign lands. It has proved challenging for North American churches to approximate a pure cell church model.

Faith Community Baptist is a unique study in that its pastor, Lawrence Khong, was raised in a Southern Baptist church. In fact, Lawrence was raised in Singapore and in the Southern Baptist church he would eventually be called to pastor following seminary. What makes this story even more interesting is that Khong was sent to the US to school at Dallas Theological Seminary. This writer also schooled at Dallas and knows the theological position as well the strengths of this school. It is a solidly Biblical-centered school and is firmly dispensational in theological posture, i.e. the first century miraculous gifts ceased with the early church.

Before going further into the story of Faith Community Baptist and its use of the cell structure and strategy, it would be helpful to gain an overview of the basic philosophical framework of the cell church practiced by FCBC. In the introduction to the book *“The Apostolic Cell Church”* authored by Lawrence Khong which gives his personal journey and the development of this church planted in 1986, Peter Wagner shares a perspective indicating the cell church baton is being passed from Yongghi Cho to Lawrence Khong. The reason for this observation is in the way the cell strategy is being executed by this newer generation of cell churches—which is inspired to a great degree by the findings of Cesar Castellanos and the International Charismatic Mission (MCI) in Bogotá, Colombia. They have experimented for years in tweaking and discovering what works best for them in accomplishing evangelism and discipleship. Their “Principle of the Twelve” has been adopted and adapted by churches around the world. It is purported to be more homogeneically focused than what Cho and Full Gospel Church at Seoul had practiced in cell work—and it has a system strategy for keeping on-going relationships between cells and their ‘offspring’s,’ i.e. as they multiply they continue in a supportive/coaching relationship.

What follows is an overview of the strategy practiced at FCBC under Khong’s leadership. (The following information, is available from the church’s website at www.fcbc.org.sg)

The G-12 Strategy:

God made a covenant with Abraham to increase his numbers so that he could be a father of many nations (see Gen 17:2-4). This Abrahamic covenant is still relevant to us as a church of Jesus Christ (see Gal 3:6-9). We are called to “father the nations”. The

Government of 12 (G12) Vision is essentially this – to make each of us in FCBC a father or mother of multitudes. The strategy to achieve this is To Win, To Consolidate, To Disciple and To Send.

The Government of 12 (G12) is a cell church model started by Cesar Castellanos, Senior Pastor of International Charismatic Mission (MCI) in Bogotá, Colombia. The G12 model enhances the current FCBC cell church system and allows it to disciple leaders and multiply groups.

The basis for the number 12 is the example of Jesus and his 12 disciples. He chose 12 to be his helpers in ministering to the masses (see Matt 9:35-10:1). He stayed with them continually; hence, there is a permanence of relationship. He imparted himself and modeled his life for them to follow so that in turn they were able to lead and disciple others.

Interestingly, after the death of Judas, the 11 disciples filled the position of the 12th disciple in the person of Matthias (see Acts 1:20-26). Only then, did the Holy Spirit descend and empower them.

Other major reasons for the number 12 are that it is the Biblical number for governance:

- Israel was organized into 12 tribes (see Num:1-2)*
- Solomon had 12 governors (see 1 Kgs 4:7) (interesting how different matters from Scripture grab people's hearts for ministry guidance—Cho, women; Castellanos, 12—my comment.)*

The G-12 Characteristics:

FCBC is transitioning into the G12 model with effect from 2002 starting with Senior Pastor mentoring his 12 and leading a cascade of these relationships. For starters, our previous districts have been re-organized into broadly three Networks, namely, the Men's Network, the Women's Network and the Youth Network. In so doing, members will no longer be confined to think within geographical boundaries. Instead, evangelism and discipling will now take place in homogeneous settings across geographical borders.

Characteristics of G12

The corporate mission, which is synonymous with the personal mission, is to win people to Christ, make them disciples and enable them to become fathers of multitudes.

Everyone can be a leader and should be developed into one, in fulfillment of Christ's calling to be a disciple-maker. (This is Matthew 4:19; 28:19-20)

Everyone is mentored so that, in turn, he can mentor others. (This is 2 Timothy 2:2)

G12 cells and open cells are organized along homogeneous lines, i.e. Men's Network, Women's Network and Youth Network.

Long term relationships are encouraged. Members are committed to each other and each other's success for as long as possible.

This is a patriarchal system of lineage, with everyone tracing their roots back to the Senior Pastor.

G12 cells and other variations

The G12 cell is a leadership development group. It is made up of people who are currently leading cells. Up to 12 of these leaders will be grouped together and mentored by a leader. In turn, each of these will be helped to disciple their own group of 12. G12 meetings are held once a week with the emphasis on mentoring.

Open cells. The main emphasis of the open cell is evangelism. It is made up of a leader and several members who are committed to meeting on a regular basis to evangelize, edify, and form character and values.

*The G-12 Strategy to **Win***

We must recognize the urgency of winning people to Christ, as we discover that the Christian life is not a breeze but a battle. We are all engaged in a war to plunder hell and populate heaven.

The 3x3 model of prayer

It begins with a group of three Christians. Each one comes up with three names of their pre-believing friends and/or loved ones to be prayed for.

1st Week: An intense time of daily synchronized prayer and fasting for the nine persons which continues for the whole month.

2nd Week: Each member begins to make phone contact with the prebelievers.

3rd Week: The Christian shares about Jesus and invites the prebelievers to the cell meeting.

4th Week: The Christian invites the prebelievers to the celebration service.

*The G-12 Strategy to **Consolidate***

Upon the prebeliever's decision to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior, the consolidator or cell leader should get and verify his particulars, pray for him with genuine concern, win his confidence and arrange for a home visit. At the home visit, it will be good to assess his needs. He is then led to go through the pre-encounter stage.

Pre-Encounter

The Pre-Encounter consists of four lessons designed to prepare the new believer for the Encounter Weekend. The Pre-Encounter is essential for the new believer to receive maximum impact and value at the Encounter Weekend. The four lessons will walk the new believer through the basics of the Christian faith, covering topics such as the new birth, our salvation, and the power of Scriptures and the principles of deliverance.

Encounter Weekend

The Encounter is done over three days in a retreat setting. The Encounter is the new believer's first experience of coming face to face with God and His Word. During the weekend the believer is confronted with his past and is led to deal with all the negative influences in his life. It is also here that the believer receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Post-Encounter

Fresh from the Encounter Weekend, the believer goes through the ten lessons of the Post-Encounter so that he is equipped with the Word of God to deal with the attacks of Satan. The Post-Encounter teaches believers how to relate to the world, friends and problems and how to overcome temptation, the flesh, sin and the devil. The Post-Encounter teaching will produce greater fruitfulness in the disciples and will result in an unprecedented increase in the retention of new believers.

*The G-12 Strategy to **Disciple***

Three Levels of the "School Of Leaders" are conducted through of lectures and seminars.

Level One

The lectures in Level One cover doctrines such as salvation, repentance, the word of God and the Holy Spirit. There are different seminars for the Men's, Women's, and Youth Networks catering to their different needs. Level One focuses on theology and Christian living.

Level Two

The lectures in Level Two cover topics such as the G12 vision, cell group and strategies for growth. It also teaches the cell leader how to solve problems and how to choose a leadership team. The seminars are on intercession, evangelism and service. This level focuses on cells and ministry.

Level Three

The lessons in Level Three are on leadership. They cover topics such as the call to leadership and the cost of leadership, principles of excellence in leadership and types of leadership. The lecturers also cover practical advice for preaching. The seminars are on consolidation, Holy Spirit and counseling. Level Three focuses on establishing and developing the disciple as a leader.

*The G-12 Strategy to **Send***

In this part of the G12 strategy, the Christian begins to lead his own open cell, be invited to be part of a G12 cell and works towards developing his G12 cell (made up of leaders whom he will mentor). In G12, we believe the most effective way of multiplication is done through the cells thereby allowing each leader to reach his spiritual potential. The cells fulfill Jesus' statement, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt 18:20). Within the cells, there will be specific purposes to evangelize, edify, form character and form values. A new believer joins the open cell and goes through the stages of Win, Consolidate and Disciple till he is ready to lead his own open cell (Send). Once he becomes a cell leader, he is in turn invited to join a G12 cell. [Three things: 1) the leader is developing/growing in his/her cell, 2) he/she participates in a G12 for leadership development, support, coaching, and 3) he/she will start their own G12 from their cell members who have started their own cells—this is doing 2 Tim. 2:2]

How are Leaders Selected?

Leaders and disciple-makers during the transition period will be selected by their mentors—from the Senior Pastor to his Network Pastors, to the Pastors to the Leaders.

What happens to the other Members?

They will remain in the open cell. The main emphasis of the open cell is to evangelize members' pre-believing friends. As the members continue in the open cells and win people to the Lord while undergoing the G12 equipping track, they will eventually become cell leaders and become part of a G12 cell.

The exciting work of the cell strategy and structure for a church is that every member is equipped to do evangelism. **The basic philosophy and belief presented in G12 as well in what Cho practiced is every member has the potential to be a leader and every Christian can be a spiritual parent.** *This is very, very key to all this work strategy.*

Lawrence Khong openly shares his journey of growing up in a Southern Baptist church in Singapore and then being sent to Dallas Seminary in order to prepare for a vocation in ministry. Upon returning to Singapore from his training at DTS, Khong was called to pastor his home church. The church had been a solid Bible-believing church and had seen consistent growth. He served this church for five years as their pastor and together they saw the church grow from 300 to 1,600. But during his fifth year as pastor Khong had what he calls "an unexpected encounter with the Holy Spirit that opened my heart to the reality of God's power. In that encounter, I began speaking in a new tongue." (Lawrence Khong, The Apostolic Cell Church [Singapore: Touch Ministries, 2000], p. 19)

Khong had been approached by a young woman for counsel and in his office she related her immoral involvement and accompanying emotional problems. When Khong worked through the sin issue and began working on the emotional/psychological need of forgiving herself after receiving forgiveness from the Lord—her eyes rolled back and a

man's voice expressed clearly she was possessed and would not be allowed to go free. Because of his dispensational theological training, Khong recommended she go see a trained counselor who could perhaps assist her with her problem. The young lady came back several weeks later and was markedly different in demeanor and spirit—possessing a freedom and joy. When Khong asked if the therapist had helped and what had happened to her, the young woman shared how she had simply gone into a little Pentecostal church down the street during one of their prayer meetings. This church prayed over her and she was healed of her oppression. This placed in Khong a deep hunger to know God and His power. He wanted to understand why he had not been spiritually able to deal effectively with the challenge the young woman had presented. As Khong sought God's purpose and power for his own life, he experienced speaking in tongues—and as he shares, “My experience completely devastated my neat and tidy theology.” (Ibid. , p. 20)

Khong went through deep soul struggle internally and externally. He had taught his church the miraculous signs of the Holy Spirit were only for the first century church to help in substantiating and establishing it as an agency of God in the world. He had so trained his church in this teaching that when he started changing his understanding they eventually asked him to resign his pulpit. This was devastating to Khong because it was the only church he had known and attended (outside of seminary days in the US).

But God was doing more than just working on Khong's theology; He was working a new heart along with a new head in Khong. Khong had been not only critical of other believers and their beliefs, but also had been ambitious for building a great church with other than the purest of motives. God was using this experience to teach Lawrence to love Him rather than the ministry—to fear Him rather than people.

From these experiences, Khong tried to lead his church into a “freer” and more open worship and expressive faith. But tension mounted and he was finally asked to resign the church by the deacons—friends he had grown up together with in the church. Khong was devastated, but God was faithful and would not let him go. Two years later God led him to begin a new church in Singapore in a rented auditorium. He wasn't sure exactly what and how to do this new ministry, but he knew he wanted a healthy and peaceful church fellowship.

Through much prayer and planning with core leaders, it was decided the cell ministry would be the primary strategy for the new work. Khong shares “Because the cell's built-in genetic code propels it toward growth, I believe the cell church is far and away the best model for expanding a body of believers through outreach.” (Ibid. , p. 11) This structure became for the Faith Community Baptist Church the basic and central way of doing church. They found it allows for greater mobilization of the members for service and evangelism—as well as facilitating pastoral care, discipleship, and leadership development. Additionally, it provides an effective system of assimilation into the church family and body life of the church for those won to Christ through the evangelism

efforts of the church. In fact, through the cell structure, every member is trained to be a minister of the Gospel and a strong commitment to Jesus Christ is called for. It's reflected in the giving by the church—25% of the total income of the membership is given in tithes and offerings for Christ's work through FCBC.

From Khong's dismissal from his first church and the spiritual transition into starting a new church, Khong realized a new meaning of surrender and commitment to Christ. The Lord impressed on him four things would be key in the new church: (1) a clear vision and strategy for growth, (2) powerful visitations of the Holy Spirit in signs and wonders [The best signs and wonders are changed lives. Khong is referring to sign gifts from the Holy Spirit, but he clearly discusses the need for changed lives in order to effectively impact unbelievers.], (3) a strong and anointed leader [Khong believes he has been called to the apostle role in the church and with it comes great responsibility and authority. Khong likes the army metaphor as presented in 2 Timothy 2 for describing the function and direction his leadership is to offer the church.], and (4) a cell structure—a totally new wine skin from his past church experience. (All stories of current ministry realities are impacted by past ministry experiences.)

First, in leading his church to a commitment to clear vision and a growth strategy, Khong realized the cell approach offered an unlimited opportunity for evangelistic growth and multiplication—as long as the members and leaders were equipped well. He realized this work is never finished. It must be focused on continuously. The vision must be so clear and so constantly communicated in an effective manner that members are continuously motivated to give and serve sacrificially.

For FCBC, the vision has been so focused and consuming and the benefits have been clearly seen in lives changed and leaders developed, it has created a united teamship among all the church family. It has also filtered away peoples who would not want to pay the price to be willing to do the work involved with the cells.

Secondly, FCBC has come to be very accustomed to supernatural workings and sign gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is very interesting considering the fact the church has a strong Southern Baptist background and that Khong was trained at a Presbyterian based seminary in the US. From his book, the primary expressions of gifts in the cell meetings are healing and words of knowledge and prophecy. It is very kin to the power evangelism philosophy introduced by John Wimber in his book by that name *Power Evangelism*.

But Khong is not reticent in the least about his openness and willingness for the Holy Spirit to move in power in worship services and in cell meetings. For them, this has been very strategic in winning the lost and in confirming to the church body certain directions God wanted them to head in ministry.

Third, because Khong sees the cell structure much in the mindset of a military action

taking ground for Christ in human hearts, he believes the need for a strong, anointed leadership. The vision must be stayed steadily in the hearts and minds of the people and the leader must be that vision caster. And he must do it with effectiveness, i.e. wisdom and accuracy of reading the needs of the people and opportunities the field.

As Khong studied churches following the cell strategy, he consistently observed those churches which experienced fast-growth through multiplication of believers and cell reproduction were led by strong leaders. They were not domineering in their style in an insecure or fleshly, manipulative way. But leaders who were sold out to the cause and who were very participative in the ministry right along-side the members.

What is the cell church? Khong defines the cell church with five statements:

1. **In the cell group church, the cell is the church.**
2. **In the cell group church, every cell multiplies or plants new cells by evangelism.**
3. **The cells in the cell group church are well structured for close supervision.**
4. **Cells are linked together in congregations.**
5. **Cells come together in celebration under one leadership.**

(Ibid., p. 35)

First, the above definition is simple, but also unique in his reference to what is the church. The following adds further insight,

*The cell group church is quite different. In a cell group church, **the cell is the church.** There is no buffet menu of options open to members except that they be in a cell group. The cells, not just the worship services, become the open front door to the church. Every department of the church is designed to serve the cell ministry. Indeed, departments do not have any constituency of their own. **No program of any department competes with the activities and functions of the cell. All resources of the church are designed to support the ministry of the cells.** The cells, in turn, provide the structure through which members may become involved in various church programs.* (Ibid., p.36 emphasis mine)

In a cell, a person is cared for spiritually, they are equipped for ministry, and they are mobilized to share the Gospel.

Second, the cell grows through evangelism. Every cell group is expected to reproduce themselves in 12 to 18 months. This is the DNA implanted into every new cell group formed and into each member coming into the life of FCBC. For most, they come into FCBC through the ministry of the cells.

Khong sees this as a distinctive characteristic of the cell church. By faith, the members of each newly formed cell set a date by which time they will birth another cell. They can do this by multiplication or by sending members into unchurched sectors of the city to

plant a cell ministry. The philosophy of cell ministry is to keep the cell members constantly in contact with the world for evangelism opportunities (how this is done at FCBC will be explained later).

Third, structuring cells for good coaching and support is critical for multiplication to happen. **The following quote is significant in reflecting on difference between churches which meet in homes (the house church model) and the cell group church: “Cell groups in the cell church structure are not independent ‘house churches’ but basic Christian communities linked together to penetrate every area of our society.”** (Ibid., p. 39)

Khong believes a solid structure of supervisorial relationships which provide coaching, vision communication, and strategy support are key to maintaining focus and unity for the vision of reproduction. The following gives how FCBC structures its relational network for on-going maintenance of the vision:

Approximately three to four cell groups cluster to form a sub-zone. A volunteer zone supervisor pastors these four cells and their cell leaders. Up to ten sub-zones network to create a zone of 300 to 600 people pastored by a full-time zone pastor. Five or more zones form a district, with a seasoned district pastor shepherding 1,500 or more people. (Ibid. , p. 39)

Fourth, cells are also linked together geographically for purposes of further support and evangelism strategy implementation. The church transitioned to organizing the cells in zones covering the city by assigning four quadrants covering the city (east, west, north, and south). In the past they had eight districts serving as congregations. Every Friday night a congregation would meet for a prayer and praise service on rotational basis—meaning one congregation met every eight weeks.

Within the district congregations, vision took place to formulate evangelism events and cell planting opportunities. Khong states, “The vision of FCBC is clearly cast, concretized, and communicated to every member of the church. The district further develops its own vision under the umbrella of the total vision of the church.” (Ibid. , p. 40) The annual planning process of FCBC involves the cell leaders, zone supervisors, and zone pastors meeting to plan the programs of the coming year per the overall direction of the church’s vision. This allows for a much greater level of ownership by the church of the vision of the church’s work and future direction.

FCBC began transitioning into the G12 model used at Bogotá, Columbia in 2002. The previous districts have been re-organized into broadly three Networks, namely, the Men’s Network, the Women’s Network and the Youth Network. In so doing, members will no longer be confined to think within geographical boundaries. Instead, evangelism and discipling will now take place in homogeneous settings across geographical borders.

Fifth, all cells come together in weekly celebrations. The cells meet individually every

week, but there is also the practice of all cells coming together for corporate weekly celebrations. This is accomplished through multi-services scheduled throughout each weekend.

This corporate celebration time allows the senior pastor (what Khong describes as “the apostolic leader”) to share what God is doing through the combined efforts of the church body and to realign the church with God’s vision. It is a time to rekindle afresh enthusiasm and commitment to the church’s vision.

The cells and the corporate celebration times are designed to complement one another. The message is further discussed in the weekly cells and the four components of cell meetings are modeled in the corporate celebration time (discussed later in paper).

One clear distinction prevails in cell churches compared to churches operating “with cells.” Churches with cells place other ministry programs on a par equal to or greater in priority than the cell program ministry. In other words, churches with cells have many programs going on competing for the attention and allegiance of the people. But cell churches are only concerned with the cell ministry because it facilitates each member’s involvement in evangelism, pastoral care, spiritual development, and ministry service.

Essential Components of each Cell and Cell Meetings

Cell leaders are constantly encouraged to make the meeting focus be the people, not the program. There are two objectives for cell meetings: edification and evangelism. For FCBC the cell meetings are aimed to accomplish the verse “God is really among you!” (1 Corinthians 14:25b). When cells come together, they expect the Lord to move among them speaking revelations, opening His Word, and touching lives with His power. This is what they look for in edification. In evangelism, cells engage in much prayer warfare over the lives of the unsaved. “Every person is accountable to the group for living out an evangelistic lifestyle.” (Ibid., p. 46)

Four things are always carried out in the cell meetings:

Welcome—this is time used as “icebreakers” and it helps people to relax and become acquainted. This helps them participate more in the meetings.

Worship—each cell spends at least thirty minutes in worshiping and delighting in the Lord. The Lord begins to speak to His people in prophetic utterances. Revelation and words of knowledge are shared—this allows members to minister to one another’s lives as needs are surfaced. (This includes demons being cast out when needful.)

Works— when the worship has peaked, the cell begins to engage in spiritual warfare. It is during this time the members intercede for unsaved friends. Each cell member keeps a list of names of unbelievers for whom they are praying.

Word— during this time the text from the previous week’s celebration service is studied further with the aim of application in the cell member’s lives. This

time is concluded with a special prayer of blessing upon the lives of each other in light of the Bible study.

Khong shares six imperatives he feels must be believed and practiced in order to be an effective the cell church:

1. Learning takes place through experiences in the cells.
2. Leaders are chosen and equipped through the cells.
3. Every member must be mobilized through the cells.
4. Cells penetrate the community through “body evangelism.”
5. Cells experience body life through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
6. All functions of the church are integrated within the cells.

First, learning: Because of Khong’s studies at Dallas Seminary, he has a good handle on life change and the objective of Truth application. Being schooled under Howard Hendricks he appreciates prof’s maxim “interpretation without application is abortion.” He understands that if cells are led by mature Bible practicing believers, then they will help effect atmosphere which is conducive to helping members honestly examine the application of Scripture to their lives.

Members rub shoulders within cells and life values become changed. Cells become the hotbed dynamic of “people do what people see.” As mutual love and acceptance is practiced, people feel welcome to share their successes and failures. People become real with each other. Hearts are touched and impacted at a deeper level.

Second, leaders: Khong states “I am careful not to allow anyone into leadership who has not come through the rank and file of cell life.” (Ibid., p. 55) Khong understands the ministry principle—“the members do what the leaders model.” So he has been wise to set up a system and structure which incubates solid leaders who are respected by the followers. With the vision of the church inspiring and charging members to focus on Christ and commitment to His cause, the members are ‘on board’ with the strategy of the church. Khong wants everyone in leadership to have come through the ranks of cell ministry and to have been coached and observed by seasoned zone pastors

Khong understood from the beginning there would have to be a natural internal process of multiplying leaders. Without this, the church could not sustain the multiplication of believers. There would have to be a strategy for the multiplication of leaders as well. Khong shares he spent many years designing a basic equipping system for every person in the cell.

At FCBC they begin their leadership training process as soon as one becomes a believer. A young believer is assigned to a sponsor to begin discipling them using basic materials on Christian growth. As soon as a believer has worked through the material, that person is then assigned to another newer believer to do the same with them. They have created an atmosphere of members continually growing, i.e. following each training

step, there are more steps to take—along with on-going supervisorial guidance. Each cell leader understands his or her responsibility is to lead so that believers and leaders are reproduced.

Third, mobilization of members: Khong feels the cell church is the strategy and structure which honestly intends to fulfill the teaching “every member is a minister.” At FCBC they do this by having all ministry to members (or pastoral care) be carried out by the cell members. If a cell member is hospitalized, the whole cell gathers in the hospital room. Cell members are fully mobilized to be effective lay evangelists too. Cell leaders baptize new converts from their cell’s evangelism ministries. The following report by Khong gives a good look at how mobilizing is carried out at FCBC:

As members get released into ministry, many sense the call to career ministry or missions. I believe God continually calls workers into the mighty harvest, yet few hear His summons because many churches encourage believers to sit and soak...In Faith Community Baptist Church, many zone supervisors [the volunteer supervisors who care for three to four cell groups] spend considerable time winning their community to Christ and shepherding new believers. Their ministry gives them a far greater sense of fulfillment than their successful career, so they do not find it difficult to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to full-time ministry. Most of the more than 120 paid pastoral staff at FCBC, including many of the top-level pastors, gave up secular jobs and careers to join our team. Since FCBC’s launch, we have sent out more than 20 career missionaries [this reporting was 1999], raised within the church to plant churches within the 10/40 Window. (Ibid., p. 59 emphasis mine)

Fourth, penetrating community: The strategy for evangelism through the cell church will be explained later in this paper. The philosophy of evangelism through cells is explained in the following:

The best way to draw the unsaved into God’s kingdom is for them to experience Him within the God-centered community of the cell. In order for them to be willing to risk strained or even severed relations with their own community, they must be convinced that this alternate community provides loving and God-centered relationships with the presence and power of the Lord. (Ibid. , p. 63)

Khong’s remark is their application of the principles of “you must love them before you can lead them” and “they must be able to trust you (the Christian) before they will trust your Savior.” As has been wisely said, “Unbelievers will not trust the Someone they don’t know when told about Him by someone they don’t know.” We know God can work through a Phillip in an Ethiopian moment, but there was only one other story in Acts which rivaled this account—and Paul’s conversion didn’t include a witnessing believer. Most accounts in Acts describe believers getting into the daily lives of unbelievers and living and sharing Christ with them.

Fifth, experiencing the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Khong's experience with the supernatural gifts will not identify with many who read him. But his bottom-line is right on as to seeing lives changed by Jesus Christ. And to that, we can all agree. If lives are being changed by Christ, then Jesus is being exalted and lives drawn effectively to Him. I like Khong's comment:

In FCBC, we instruct the cell leaders to spend considerable time in prayer laying hold of God for the cell meetings and seeking His anointing. We believe that if God does not show up in power, the whole meeting will be a washout. When the cell meets, we expect God to speak supernaturally, to reveal the secrets of the heart, to expose sin, to bring light into darkness, and to work signs and wonders. [Spurgeon said the greatest signs and wonders was when a person turns from following self to fully following the Savior.] (Ibid., p. 66. Emphasis mine.)

Sixth, cells fully integrate all functions of the church: Khong repeats several times in his book 'the cell is the church.' He sees the cell being the center place of action for all the church is about. He states correctly that "every believer should be deeply committed to prayer, the Word, and the spread of the Gospel. The cell provides an environment in which members develop and exercise all these spiritual disciplines." (Ibid., p. 67)

When all cells of a church are going after a shared common vision, there is great morale and momentum. As long as there is good leadership, the right equipping, sound strategies, and grateful affirmation of the members—much, much fruit can come forth for the glory of God.

I find the whole work of FCBC and Lawrence Khong very intriguing because of the models and mentors who have directly impacted this ministry. Khong has been directly mentored or impacted by Ralph Neighbor (a Southern Baptist creative leader from Houston, Texas), Bill Yaeger (who pastored for over twenty years at First Baptist, Modesto, California and who developed a thorough mentoring/training strategy for the lay members in this church and grew a strong church through evangelism and discipleship), Peter Wagner (former professor at Fuller Seminary during and beyond the Donald McGavran years there), John Wimber (who began the Vineyard church planting movement), Cesar Castellanos (served as senior pastor of IMB in Bogotá, Columbia), and the fact Khong did a ThM at Dallas Seminary studying under such professors as Howard Hendricks and Dwight Pentecost.

Khong brings a multiple theological perspective to the table which is very helpful. He has pieced together with his church leaders a vision which is focused on fulfilling our Lord's last instructions: "Make disciples!"

Bill Hybels starting sharing back in the 1980's "Every church has to determine its own

‘thumb print.’ Every church has to go through the exhilarating and excruciating experience of determining its own thumb print.” Hybels was simply saying each church has unique strengths—weaknesses, opportunities—challenges. And you have to plan and match this to the field God has placed you in for His work. So Khong understands that every church has to determine its own vision. He doesn’t expect other churches to do ministry just as FCBC does it. “I have no intention that other churches should adopt this vision. In fact, each church must hear from the Lord individually in order to discover, commit to, and pursue the unique vision to which God calls that congregation.” (Ibid. , p. 70)

The one matter Khong feels every church must do is eliminate all activities which do not lead to the church bringing lost unbelievers into the family of God. To do this, a church must have a common vision—a corporate sense of where it is going. There must be a common strategy for getting there. Khong shares during the first year of FCBC, he and the leaders sought God with all their hearts for a blueprint which would enable them to take their city for God.

Khong shares “I began to write down my dreams for the church. I sensed God saying He would give to me according to my faith.” He goes on to say “It is important to write down the vision and strategy, to concretize them.” He then quotes Habakkuk 2:2 “Then the Lord answered me and said: ‘Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it’ “(NKJV). (Ibid. , p. 74) Jerry Falwell counseled young pastors to “write and re-write their personal ministry visions every day. I tell them to commit early in their ministries to spend their total lives capturing their cities for Christ.” (Jerry Falwell, Capturing Your Town for Christ, update edition [Lynchburg, VA: Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2002], p. 45)

Khong goes on to say,

A vision not written down will not happen, because the leadership will find it difficult to keep the church motivated without clear goals. In addition, the inclusion of specific target dates makes the vision measurable. The vision can always be revised when the church is ready to grow beyond it. (Ibid. , p. 74)

I close this discussion about vision with Khong sharing their vision to equip other pastors for developing cell churches around the world. This quote is not to denigrate professors, but to share the felt needs of planters and pastors:

“I felt strongly that we needed to establish our own training program so that pastors could receive an impartation of leadership. Seminary professors with a gift of teaching can impart knowledge, but to learn to be a leader one must follow a person who is actually leading.” (Ibid., p. 75)

Khong adds about vision “We cannot truly believe for what is humanly impossible until God births in us a vision.” (Ibid., p. 82)

The Holy Spirit

Khong practices the sign gifts and understands God has used this in their church to move them forward in trusting Him and following Him in the work of Jesus Christ. When Khong first spoke in tongues he felt the experience was foolish initially, but he humbled himself to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. He had preached openly against miraculous gifts.

He knows spiritual gifts are something no one can work for. They are simply gifts. He believes you can gain them through a certain level of holiness or through study or as a reward for maturity.

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit's gifts are a central part of the cell meetings. As these are displayed through believers, unsaved participants are impacted by the reality of Jesus Christ. Khong says "We cannot run our lives, our cells, or our churches without Him and expect to see lasting fruit." (99) Spurgeon said something similarly,

Miracles of grace must be the seals of our ministry; who can bestow them but the Spirit of God? Convert a soul without the Spirit of God! Why, you cannot even make a fly; much less create a new heart and a right Spirit. Lead the children of God to a higher life without the Holy Ghost! You are inexpressibly more likely to conduct them into carnal security, if you attempt their elevation, by any method of your own. Our ends can never be gained if we miss the cooperation of the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, with strong crying and tears, wait upon Him from day to day.

(Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, new ed. [London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1954], p. 187.)

I cannot deny another man's experience. I believe God will work through different peoples in different ways to accomplish His work. As long as leaders are focused on God's purposes and glory, following His principles, and fired by God's heart—he has courage and character. In this condition, people want to follow such a leader and want to cooperate with such a leader's vision. Definitely, there must be signs and wonders of changed lives through the workings of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Gospel. This can happen even if miraculous gifts do not occur. This can happen because of people being molded and led more and more by Jesus Christ. There has to be uncompromising love and obedience to the person and work of the Son of God.

Pastoral Leadership

As alluded to earlier, Khong likens the church to military metaphors—which is Scriptural in light of 2 Timothy 2. Khong believes in the five-fold ministry roles discussed in Ephesians 4: 11-13 and that he himself has been called into the role of an apostle. In this role, he sees the responsibility of an apostle is to provide authoritative and visionary God-anointed leadership.

But Khong has some good insight into the what and how of serving as the point leader for a local church—even as an apostle. He explains his understanding of pastoral leadership:

In a community, people matter most of all. In a corporation, process matters. In a cause, purpose matters. The shepherds of a community provide strength and build trust. The managers of a corporation provide structure and empower people. The leaders of a cause provide strategy and align people in common purposes.

Each of these components has strengths and weaknesses, so all are needed to fulfill God's plans for a strong, balanced, and effective church. Focusing on only one side of these truths will lead into falsehood. A nurturing community makes its members feel great, but families by nature are not geared to grow to unlimited size. Communities may become so inwardly focused that they never accomplish the purposes of God. The military structure of a cause works well at advancing the group's purposes, but without the care and support of family relationships, those soldiering on will eventually feel used and manipulated. A corporation can become impersonal when it focuses on tasks more than people, but without its organization, not much gets done. As in a motor vehicle, the engine must be connected to the transmission, or you will have a lot of noise but little forward movement!

When a problem arises in a church, the pastor needs to discern the nature of the problem—whether the issue is shepherding, managing, or leading. The pastor may have to dig for the true answer, but it will provide insight as to how to deal with the situation. (Khong, The Apostolic Cell Church, pp. 105-6)

The prior quote from Khong is a good explanation of the tasks of a pastor as outlined by the Apostle Paul in Acts 20:28. The pastoral office should accomplish the work of oversight and management (Paul uses the Greek *episcopos* to indicate this responsibility), the pastor is also to facilitate the care of the good shepherd (*poimen*), and he is to give healthy spiritual leadership (*presbuteros* as Paul uses it here in this text, 28:20).

Khong does state “Jesus’ description of shepherding in John 10 shows that the greatest authority belongs to those who lay down their lives for their sheep...Humility and servant leadership characterize the best leaders and enhances their authority.” (Ibid., pp. 106, 112)

None of us ever feel we have enough anointing or the authority of God to do the tasks as church planters and church builders and multipliers. But the God who calls us is faithful to give us all we need to do all He wants done with us. Our greatest need is to humble ourselves before Him and hunger from His hand the spiritual refreshment needed to do what, in Jesus' name, we are called to do by Him.

Evangelism and cell multiplication

Khong approaches the challenge of mobilizing every member to be ministers of the

gospel of Jesus Christ by asking four questions:

1. What is a good map to use to understand evangelism?
2. What are the strategies we can adopt?
3. How do we equip members of cells to evangelize?
4. How do we keep evangelism going?

First, understanding evangelism: Khong and FCBC understand there will be many people reached by relationships which already exist directly and indirectly with the members of the church—or who have similar life circumstances to them. They also know there are many people who are distant relationally and ideologically who will have to be reached in a different intentional manner.

Second, doable strategies: In order to reach all peoples, FCBC has taken focus on community or body evangelism, relational evangelism, and servant evangelism. Body evangelism involves cells united in praying for specific unbelievers and they also reach out to these individuals in a unified, strategic means.

Through relational evangelism every member is taught to pray for all unbelieving members of their families. As well they are encouraged to pray for and to share the gospel with other friends in their relationships who are unsaved. The average believer has eight to ten unbelievers in their regular relationships and contacts. FCBC members are encouraged to never engage in recreational activities (in their groups and district times arranged for this) without unbelievers being involved.

Servant evangelism has members using all the creative ideas and talent available to practically demonstrate God's love to the unsaved with no strings attached. Again, the principle of life is that you must love people before you can lead them.

Third, equipping members to do evangelism: if the cells are healthy, they become an automatic and natural breeding ground for personal evangelists. In every cell during the “Works” segment of the meeting, the members pray for unbelievers by name. Along with the on-going cell encouragement to bring unbelievers into the cell meetings to check out Christianity, there are periodic harvest events which members invite unsaved friends to. Khong describes the cell life at FCBC:

The cell literally breathes, talks, dreams, and does evangelism, modeling it for newcomers. Anyone in a cell long enough will be “infected” by a highly contagious, incurable, and almost terminal case of “evangelitis”! The cell causes its members to cultivate a lifestyle of evangelism and gain confidence that God can use them in this way. (Ibid. , p. 127)

FCBC provides weekend training seminars in oikos evangelism (those in the believer's relational web), one-minute testimony, and John 3:16 gospel presentation. They also train how to read unbeliever's receptivity and the progression grid one follows on his/her

way to the cross. There is also training in spiritual warfare which is offered over a period of two weekends. (FCBC has found offering training during a packed weekend schedule accomplishes more than many one hour sessions spread over many weeks.) During spiritual warfare training, members are taught how to be filled with the Holy Spirit and how to pray over the sick including demon expulsion.

For the evangelism training which seeks to reach people who are more distant relationally and ideologically, FCBC relies heavily upon prayer walking. This enables them to sense and discern local contextualized strategies for effective evangelism to these peoples. And they realize areas of opportunity for planting new cells through prayer walking.

Fourth, how to keep evangelism going: FCBC has worked hard on creating an environment and culture for evangelism to flourish as a lifestyle. FCBC seeks many different venues into the community to connect with the unchurched. The closer their activities are to the community, the less religious they are in nature. Some are exclusively non-religious in nature and aim almost totally on meeting people's felt needs.

FCBC uses “cycles of harvest” to continually fuel the fires of evangelism—

Each year, FCBC builds into the calendar three cycles of harvest. The first cycle begins in January and ends at the Easter weekend in early spring. The second cycle commences in June and finishes with a large evangelistic campaign in a sports stadium toward the end of August. The third and final cycle of the year begins in October and runs until Christmas. These harvest cycles serve as both a powerful tool for in gathering the lost as well as an effective equipping and motivating strategy for the cells. They constitute the heartbeat of the church, enabling them to maintain a vibrant momentum for evangelism.

A typical cycle of harvest has three components: (a) a culminating harvest event, (b) an initial weekend of type “A” evangelism training, and (c) about ten weeks of practice, prayer, and preparation in the cell. (Ibid. , pp. 134-5)

One example of the harvest events was having every cell to organize a Good Friday service in the home meetings. The cell members invited unsaved friends for this special meeting. The meetings were carefully planned so that it would present the gospel in an effective manner. At the end of these meetings each cell member shared the gospel one on one to the friends each one had brought to the meeting.

In order to prepare the members for evangelizing, equipping is carried out for every member to be confident in sharing the gospel. During the ten week interim period leading up to the special harvest event, the beginning weekend to the period is spent in evangelism training. Following this weekend, the cell members are led to practice presenting the gospel with other members and during the week with friends. Sharing is arranged under coaching supervision. The culmination of the training is climaxed in the harvest event where members share with friends they have prayed for and lovingly

invested themselves in. Equipping and enthusiasm is continually provided to the cell members for the cause of seeing more people come to know and serve Christ.

In addition to special harvest events and on-going evangelism ministries through the cells, FCBC has a plethora of ‘ministry evangelism’ opportunities. These include child care centers to after school latch key programs for children. They perform community welfare ministries by which Christian volunteers carry out the bulk of the work led by professionals. The church offers programs ranging from pre-school to delinquent youth services to marital and individual counseling to home care for the aged. They also provide programs for the handicapped, for the deaf, a diabetes support association, and health care services for the poor. Through these varied “touch points” as Khong refers to them, the church is continuously expanding its relationships with the lost for Christ.

Cell Planting

After a few years into the cell evangelism strategy which relied heavily upon oikos relationships, growth began to wane. Those within the existing relationship webs of the members had been saturated with gospel sowing and reaping. As Khong and the church prayed they realized intentional cell planting to new unreached people groups throughout Singapore was needed.

FCBC began to realize many people would not be assimilated into existing cells and that new cells with new wine skins would be needed in order to reach them. Through a plan and strategy for cell multiplication the church began to see this was a way by which they could target evangelizing their entire city. Homogeneous cells would be planted throughout the city. Khong writes,

Cell planting enables the church to target the whole city cell by cell. Research will help us discover what demographic groups and locales still need their own cells. Then believers can begin to move out of their communities into new communities with a systematic plan of planting cells to reach every neighborhood, every housing complex, every school, every military camp, every work group, and every age group. (Ibid., p. 147 emphasis mine)

Cell planting is accomplished by several means:

1. **An existing cell sends out a cell planting team.** Those members of a cell who are burdened and ready to spread into new unreached people groups are sent out by the cell group. They survey and work and build relationships with unsaved ones in various people groups. As people began to come to Christ, a new cell group is formed. The sending cell remains in constant prayer and support of their mission cell planting team until the new cell is well on its way.
2. **Sometimes a whole cell group commits to being a missionary team.** When initial converts are won, the whole cell team will go and plant themselves around

these new believers and support them in their locale to “jump-start” this new cell group. In time the new cell grows and goes on to plant new cells within their own community and people group.

3. **Sometimes a cell member will be live in a community where no one else in a cell.** This could be a military unit or a college campus and so on. The cell member goes in and establishes a prayer point within this new community perhaps joining up with a Christian from another church. Through cooperative efforts of believers from different churches, people are won to Christ and a cell is formed. FCBC will provide leadership and support if the cell is initiated by one of its members. The cell members reached through such satellite planting are welcomed to join whatever church they wish. If enough people are won who become members of FCBC, then the church will consider this a cell fully under the vision and leadership of the church.

The church looks to plant new cells in several contexts: (1) **common location** (housing complexes, office buildings, schools, etc.), (2) **common function**, i.e. people who work in same industries or profession—tailored outreach to meet these particular needs are developed, and (3) **common needs/interests** (the aged, latchkey kids, enthusiasts of a particular sport, newly weds, cancer patients, etc.).

The critical steps to planting include: (1) pray and discern the time—this involves the practice of prayer walking...the requisite is to hear from God and see through His eyes, (2) prepare a core group—planting should be done by a team rather than an individual, (3) promote a vision—a cell planting team must develop a vision from the get-go of what God wants them to do, (4) plant a cell—the objective is to plant a healthy functioning cell which will multiply, (5) provide pastoral leadership—this is where the functions of zone pastors and district pastors become strategic, (6) preserve the parent cell relationship—this provides accountability and prayer support to the cell-planting team.

The following extended quote gives a view of city and nation reaching that has developed in the mind and heart of the leaders of FCBC in light of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9: 19-27,

This passage illustrates the essence of an incarnational ministry. When reaching out to the lost, we cannot expect them to come to us or become part of us. We must go to them and meet them wherever they are. If they speak Chinese, we must speak Chinese. If they live in one-room flats, we must go there and spend time among them. But if they are wealthy, we don’t invite them to a one-room flat for a cell meeting; we find businesspeople with posh places to open their homes. We must become all things to all people.

Whenever we cross cultural boundaries to extend the gospel of Jesus Christ, we engage in missions. Evangelism, whether type “A” [similar to us] or type “AB” [different from us], ordinarily takes place within one’s own culture. But many cultures do not have a living witness of Jesus Christ within their midst.

For the gospel to reach them, someone outside the culture has to make a deliberate effort to penetrate those barriers and connect with people on the other side. This is the essence of missions.

The cell church must have a vision beyond its own culture. Otherwise, the growth and extension of the kingdom of God will stop at the edge of the community of people who are like the church. In most cities, this limit means the church will not even reach everyone in its own area.

Almost all cities have subcultures distinct from the majority. These cultures may differ according to race or ethnicity, age, social class, education, occupation, or other variables. Cross-cultural missions start the moment a church catches a vision for these people and sends a team to plant a cell among them. A church with this kind of missions experience on its doorstep will then find its vision expanded for planting whole churches among unreached peoples in other parts of the nation or world. (Ibid., p. 154)

All the above Khong says “requires a greater faith, a greater love, and greater effort than just conveniently inviting our friends to a cell group.” (Ibid. , p. 158) But it is the heart of God—and it is what we are called to do in obedience and love for His Son Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The cell church strategy depends upon effective training and development of the laity. The church must give the members what will enable them to be successful in serving Christ and accomplishing their part in achieving the corporate vision of the church.

Equipping is practical application of Godly wisdom. Imparting knowledge alone will never get the job done, nor offering of sporadic classes. There has to be systematic equipping of the believers (including mentoring or shadowing practices) which is focused on the desired end. Skills and equipment along with platforms for ministry opportunity have to be furnished to the people. “Knowledge unapplied is not knowledge at all.”

The cell strategy and tying all equipping into the cell life enables a total team focus on the values and visions of a church. Systems of encouragement, equipping, and engagement with accountability functions through cell groups to allow continued growth, ministry, and reproduction of believers and leaders, i.e. more cells.

FCBC and Khong have developed (as of the dating of his book published in 2000) five equipping stages which involved basic and intermediate Christian growth studies and application. They have offered Christian leadership training which developed new cell leaders. Beyond this was training for specialized ministry for particular roles of ministry. Then training was offered for on-going continuous Christian growth. All their training was designed so a continuous forward momentum was understood by every member. Each stage of training is understood to be a step to the next training. All training is tied to life and field application.

The Faith Community Baptist Church has focused on the reason for the church on earth. They have planned and put together and continue to revise what is effective for carrying out the Great Commandment and Commission of our Lord. As the harvest field and church family needs adjust, they keep adjusting structures and strategies.

You will not agree with everything this pastor and people practice. They are a model and example of how to accomplish the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which can well serve the next generation of church planters and church builders.

Principles of character:

1. What attitudinal matters did God adjust in Khong's life through his forced termination early in his ministry?
2. Discuss the thinking of Khong's attitude of a military leader and his understanding of being in an apostolic role? Is this healthy? Can it be?

Principles of model selection:

1. Why did Khong choose the cell strategy?
2. What demographical and psycho graphical factors played into this choice?

Principles of multiplication:

1. Define some of the key components which work in FCBC's strategy for raising up leaders who become planters of cells?
2. Discuss Khong's definition of church on page 35 (see notes pp. 23-24) and his comment on page 39 about groups not being independent 'house churches.' What strengths/weaknesses does this cell strategy present compared with house church network strategies bring? How does this impact coaching support for multiplication?

Principles of Planting:

1. What are some of the convictions which are consistently evidenced through the ministry of FCBC for planting more and more cells?
2. Discuss the motivations behind Khong's decision to plant a new church?

BETHANY WORLD PRAYER CENTER—Baker, Louisiana

The Bethany World Prayer Center began under the leadership of the elder Pastor Stockstill (Larry's dad) in the late 1950's as a Southern Baptist new church plant. When Pastor Roy Stockstill experienced a new prayer life in tongues, he was disassociated from the local association of Southern Baptist churches and went on to build an independent ministry. The leadership reigns passed onto his son in 1983. Roy Stockstill continues a supportive role of ministry in the church.

The church has kept up a strong missions emphasis annually raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for foreign work. By the end of 1992 the church had paid for its new 6,000 seat auditorium and 100 acres—and was giving \$1,270,000 to world missions. (Larry Stockstill, The Cell Church, [Ventura, CA: Regal, 1998], p. 14) This church started over 2500 churches on foreign soil in two years alone (2003-2004). They have eight regional coordinators encompassing the world and these men find places for planting, arrange for training of planters, and assist in launching the new churches. Individual cell groups back in Baker, Louisiana (the 100 acre home campus for Bethany World Prayer Center—they have another south campus now in Baton Rouge) fund the planters and this is how they accomplish church planting around the world.

In the Spring of 2005 I had the privilege to visit with CMissionerett who was then in charge of the cell ministries at Bethany taking over from Billy Hornsby (Billy had founded a new equipping ministry to assist local churches in becoming cell churches). Carl graciously shared with me the ministries of the church. A large room borders the sanctuary and is dedicated to prayer. This prayer room is equipped with maps and information covering the church's ministries to the world and praying for national leaders as well their local ministries. They maintain a strong commitment to the practise of prayer and intercession along with fasting. There is a very intentional training system for continually raising up more cell leaders which will be looked at later.

Larry Stockstill has been influenced by Cho's Seoul, Korea work (Cho has spoken at Bethany), Khong and his Singapore work (attending their cell conference in 1993), and the Castellonos's from Bogota, Columbia—studying their G-12 concept which has been adapted by Khong. In 1992 Larry was challenged by another pastor to honestly assess how things were going at Bethany: how was the pastoral care really?...what was truly happening with the development of leaders, i.e. equipping believers to be servants of Jesus Christ?...and were the evangelism ministries all it could be? This pastor friend challenged Larry to read Ralph Neighbour's book *Where Do We Go from Here* (Ibid. , p. 16). Neighbor's 1990 book was updated in 2000. The book lays out many models of cell churches and digs into common principles practiced in these churches. Larry began to transition Bethany to a cell church structure and strategy in 1993. The governing body for Bethany consisted of three outside pastors, three staff members, and three deacons from the church. These men felt in agreement with Larry that the cell church model was

the way to go for Bethany in the future. They began to envision cells which were evangelistic, multiplying, and life-giving. The church had already been practicing home groups, but these were primarily fellowship small group by design—not evangelistic, multiplying units. So the cell structure began with Bethany’s 500 prayer intercessors committed to the prayer ministry of the church. These were the first participants.

Stockstill was also influenced by one other ministry—the Mision Elim in San Salvador, El Salvador. I will list at length the key components of this church and its strategy as shared by Billy Hornsby in *The Cell-Driven Church*. Six principles from Mision Elim:

1. **SERVANTHOOD**—this church is very effective for many reasons (they were experiencing an attendance of 80,000 in 2000, but they have a heart for serving others. They practice a deep desire to bless others).
2. **HUMILITY**—there is a ready willingness to share with other church leaders what they have learned from the Lord and assist in any way they can to strengthen other churches.
3. **GIVING**—they lovingly share their time and attention to other church leaders, but also give of their means to help. Their cells have sincere love to care for one another. It gives their evangelistic efforts a solid foundation to make their storying the Good News, really good news!
4. **ACCOUNTABILITY**—all levels of leadership in the church and leaders of cell groups are connected healthily. Each week there are reports reflecting the number of people participating in cells, but more importantly they measure the quality of their groups. In fact quality is more important than quantity—because it will show up in the quantitative statistics. Every member of the church is accountable for their personal evangelism, their spiritual development, their ministry to their own families and to their cell members, and helping fulfill the vision of the church to reach their city and nation. Billy says “Although there were close controls in the organizational structure [Billy and another Bethany staffer went to Mision Elim and spent nearly a week studying, questioning members, interviewing staff, and attending services to determine the ‘ins and outs’ of this ministry], the controls were obviously there for the good and the health of the cell groups. This resulted in each person feeling that he was an instrument in God’s hand being used to touch the nation of El Salvador for Christ.” Billy Hornsby, *The Cell-Driven Church* [Mansfield, PA: Kingdom Publishing, 2000], p.15)
5. **PURPOSE**—the vision of the church permeates the entire life of Mision Elim. Every member is possessed by the vision. Their vision statement follows:

- Every Christian has a purpose.
- The purpose of every Christian is to win the lost to Christ and disciple them
- That purpose is best fulfilled in groups where there is accountability and encouragement.
- The Christian will never be satisfied if he does not fulfill his life purpose.
- We have no promise of tomorrow. If the purpose of the Christian is not being fulfilled now, it may never be.

As Billy and Ron Kairdolf visited with members of Mision Elim they found every person not only knew the vision of the church, but could quote the vision statement verbatim to them. In each cell group meeting the vision statement is rehearsed over and over and committed to. The pastor of Mision Elim says they want to keep the members of the church focused and on course through having “super vision”! The church leadership accepts responsibility to constantly cast before the congregation the vision of taking their city and their country for Christ.

6. A NEW PARADIGM—this “model” for doing church allows not just effective evangelism, but the very personality of Jesus. Servant hood, humility, giving, accountability all point to His life and leadership. (Ibid., p. 13-16)

The Mision Elim church practices two cell meetings per week:

One on Tuesday and one on Saturday. The cell-meeting format alternates based upon the purpose of the meeting. The first meeting on Tuesday night is for “edification” (to edify the cell members and to plan an evangelism meeting for the following Saturday). The second meeting on Saturday night is the actual “evangelism” meeting (inviting the lost, not just believers). The alternating effect of these two different formats creates a dynamic like a piston or a rifle! The group can “recoil” (rest, minister to each other and plan) on Tuesday (as the hammer is pulled back), then “shoot” (evangelize their lost friends and neighbors) on Saturday. This alternating dynamic keeps the groups focused and powerful. Stockstill, The Cell Church, p. 20.

The Mision Elim church involves their cell members in the corporate celebration service through roles as deacons, ushers, and follow-up work in the week ahead. They keep the focus on evangelism every week by asking the members at the Tuesday night cell gatherings to name the unsaved friends they want to bring to Saturday’s evangelistic cell. At this cell gathering, the message and method of doing the meeting is all catered to the lost (like the “hook week” in the First Priority strategy used on public high school campuses). In the following Tuesday gathering, the past Saturday’s experience is evaluated and new plans are made for the coming Saturday. Roles for prayer, worship, hospitality and other needed functions are assigned to specific members. So Bethany adapted this plan—their approach became having one meeting per week in the cells and

alternating weekly between evangelism and edification meetings. The names of “three most likely” candidates for salvation are listed on a board each edification week and the group spends time in spiritual warfare for the following week’s evangelism meeting. (Ibid., pp. 50-51)

Again, the members of Mision Elim are exemplary in their focus on evangelism and making leaders for Jesus Christ. Every member is able to state readily and with heartfelt conviction: “I have a purpose. My purpose is to win souls. I can best fulfill my purpose in a group. I will not be happy until I have fulfilled my purpose. I have no promise of tomorrow.” (Hornsby, The Cell-Driven Church, pp. 35-36)

The models of cell church work studied by Bethany fully convinced the leadership of the church this was the way to do church and the way to do it better and better. Larry Stockstill states, “At Bethany, the case for the ‘cell church’ is closed. The Bethany people are being pastored better than ever. They all have a format to evangelize their friends; they are also finding places for their leadership skills. (Stockstill, p. 22)

The cells at Bethany function in pastoral care, following up new believers, helping in corporate worship services, praying for missions (church planters and new churches in foreign lands), helping in outreach, and are available to help in all other areas of church life. Cell churches allow the 80% which normally do not serve in a church to have vital roles of ministry. The cells provide platforms of ministry for members to do evangelism and member encouragement and care to do service roles in other areas of the church. This concentrated work of the cell groups contribute to effectively touching the church and lost peoples of their city and area. The cell environment provides a “safe place” for more timid believers to become involved in evangelism ministries. They can bring their unsaved friends to a place where they will be covered in caring, Christ-like love and make new friends. This caring, praying, seeker-sensitive situation will complement and help bring to culmination the ‘farming efforts’ of each Christian wanting to be used by God in seeing others come to Christ.

Bethany has learned from the International Charismatic Mision the primacy and purpose of prayer, i.e. evangelistic power. This Bogotá, Colombia church practices each cell member doing a ‘liquid only’ fast the first three days of each month. They then practice a weekly one-day fast until the evening meal. Each cell group fasts together for ten consecutive days once each year and also participates in an annual forty day fast which lasts each day until the evening meal. They have seen demonic strongholds broken in their city and regions of the city taken for Christ! (Ibid., p. 58)

The basic evangelism taught to members at Bethany and practiced in their cells is relational evangelism. Taken from Luke 5 following the Master’s example in how He went to Peter and got into his boat—members understand they must get into lost people’s *boats*. The principle is we must go to them and get to know them and their needs, interests, and hurts. Larry observes often evangelism is practiced by going to outsiders and telling them they should come and get into our boats. But that was

not the practice of Jesus. Larry says

“Believers are challenged to be ‘lizards’ by penetrating the world in which the unbeliever is most secure. Every interest an unsaved person expresses (outside of a sinful interest) is seen as a tiny hole in the stronghold of that life. The lizard aggressively penetrates that world, serving and ministering in every way possible.” (Ibid., p. 61)

Larry notes Dr. Cho, at his 1997 Church Growth Conference, recognized a cell leader who had led 365 families to the Lord in one year. This is the potential of the Christians in churches using the cell church strategy. **Nothing strengthens a church as when they unite their focus on the lost.** It incites spiritual warfare. This was the dynamic of the early church—they met together from house to house...and they also met corporately to keep themselves focused and functional to their main task.

The principle of the 12 learned from the Bogotá church allows for continuity of relationship from the former cell group to the next group. This allows more consistent momentum for multiplying cells. When a member leaves his or her cell group to form a new cell group, they continue in relation with the former cell. The new leader continues meeting with his/her former leader 30 minutes prior to the mother cell group meeting for mentoring and encouragement. Larry warns a church following the cell strategy must not focus on cell attendance, but on developing and deploying leaders who are able to multiply. Leaders properly trained and motivated will bring the attendance. (Ibid., p. 71)

One of the beauties of the cell church structure and strategy is the ample opportunities for lay development this model affords. In other church models it can be a tough hurdle to overcome—often lay people just watching the professionals do most of the ministering. But in the cell structure, the laity becomes the center of ministry. The professional ministers really do give the ministry away to lay people in this approach to ministry. The cell members do the evangelism, mentoring/discipling, administering church ordinances, planning the ministry strategies to be carried out in order to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. In fact, when the cell church is fully engaged in the strategy which has been noted in this study, lay people do more ministry—and more strategic ministry than many full-time pastors do in churches where *he is paid to do the ministry*.

Larry Stockstill identifies eight leadership qualities which should be exercised by all those in cell leadership in the church:

1. Purpose—cell leaders need to be fully convinced that their ministry and calling is greater than any problems or other priorities they will face...and this conviction and confidence needs to be instilled through the training offered by the church.
2. Priorities—prayer and fasting must be understood and embraced as essentials to ministry. He sites the fact John Wesley asked all of his pastors to fast two

- days per week. Bethany shares a plan of their cell leaders fasting weekly, monthly, and annually (probably similar to the Bogotá example cited earlier in this study).
3. Procedures—a clear system and arrangement for reporting and communicating the health and effectiveness of the cells along with coaching support and encouragement to the cell leaders and groups.
 4. Personalities—all cell leaders are trained in temperament profiles and take tests to identify their own. This knowledge aids them significantly in working with different kinds of people and improves their effectiveness in leading people.
 5. Problem Solving—the cell leaders are given training in basic counseling abilities and also how to address problems appropriately and help bring about solutions to challenges encountered.
 6. Producers—cell leaders are trained to discern who are faithful ones they can groom to take their places as cell leaders following the “Principle of the Twelve.” They are taught and motivated to reproduce themselves by multiplying themselves through other cells being birthed through the ones they mentor and coach.
 7. Principle—values of integrity, commitment, family before ministry, fiscal responsibility, purity, motives...all this must be communicated and taught to leaders so they serve as benchmark convictions which give a moral compass and example regardless of what stage or situation of life.
 8. Productivity—people live for results, i.e. to prove their worth and value. It’s a God-given desire to grow and accomplish. At Bethany leaders are taught principles of long and short-range goals, personal motivation, communication skills, encouragement skills, and delegation for the work. (Ibid. , pp. 79-83)

Bethany’s Training Strategy for Developing Cell Leaders: Preaching, Pastoring, Preparing, Planting.

Preaching—Bethany utilizes a corporate celebration weekly at which the Gospel is explained and the invitation to receive Jesus and His salvation is offered with positive response shown by coming to the front of the church at the conclusion of the message (the old altar call format). They are taken to the District Office and are shown a tape from Pastor Stockstill which rehearses what they have done and introduces them to the cell structure of the church along with the roles being explained of various leaders. A cell leader walks the new convert through his/her commitment and helps make sure the new convert is standing upon Jesus for their salvation. A personal visit is made to the new convert within 24 hours and the goal is leading them to water baptism and to cell attendance.

Pastoring—the new convert will spend the next four to six weeks learning the basics of the Christian life. This time will include a “First Step Encounter” weekend which has four goals:

1. Helping the new believer to relax and focus their minds on their spiritual lives;
2. Educating new believers about areas of bondage that may be in their souls, though the spirit has been forgiven;
3. Facilitating an intensive time of prayer, renouncing strongholds and praying for deliverance if needed; and
4. Ministering the truth to them about their position in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

At this “Encounter Weekend” the new believer is helped to understand the bondage past habits and practices have placed upon his or her life and they are led to repent from these hindrances to their walk with Christ. They also receive a vision for leadership in the church through starting a cell ministry. The person and work of the Holy Spirit, along with His gifts and fruit, is explained and studied.

Preparing—following the “First Step Encounter” weekend the new believer begins a “Discipleship Class” held at church following the worship portion of the midweek service. This is a 12-week class focusing on major Bible doctrines, Bible study habits, prayer, spiritual warfare, identity in Christ, servant hood, the local church, and finances. These 12 weeks end with the “Leadership Formation Retreat” which exposes them to the fundamentals of leadership responsibilities. This one-day seminar walks them through the vision of this cell church, personal evangelism, how to lead a meeting, the multiplication process, how homogeneous groups work, how to apply lessons, three ways to multiply a group, techniques for raising up interns, and how to put cell members onto a track toward leadership and planting a cell. (Mature believers who have transferred into Bethany’s membership can step into cell leadership training at this point and are not required to go through the prior two steps.)

Planting—this is where the careful study of the practical aspects of being a cell leader takes place in a defined 12 week experience.

- Week one: basic counseling skills are reviewed and studied
- Week two: mentoring and growth relational skills are examined
- Week three: the study of spiritual gifts in the leader and the members—learning how to discern the motivational gifts each person is served by
- Week four: effective listening and speaking (communication) skills
- Week five: personal evangelism skills and how to equip others in the same
- Week six: the D.I.S.C. personality profile is studied and skills in its utilization
- Week seven: teaches the ten leadership principles Jesus used to prepare His disciples for ministry
- Week eight: training in conflict management and confrontational skills

- Week nine: effective time management principles are studied
- Week ten: pastoral skills for effective ministry in crisis needs, hospital visitation, and death.
- Week eleven: people skills are taught for building healthy working and mentoring relationships—and encouraging others
- Week twelve: attitude skills and how to keep a positive outlook in ministry (Ibid., pp. 86-91)

Stockstill shares the story of Maiwa’azi Dan Daura from Jos, Nigeria. Maiwa’azi was one of the original Campus Crusade workers in Nigeria in the 1970’s. He began his work with seven men he disciplined and challenged to find, win, and disciple twelve each and to continue this vision. In twenty years this little group planted more than 1,200 churches—every week students meet with their mentors and those they are mentoring. This practicing of the “Principle of the Twelve” is a very simple process. They are seven basic principles:

1. Everyone is a potential leader—this is the most basic principle of the “Principle of the Twelve.” Cell leaders love, listen to, and encourage cell members that they are called of God and He wants to use them to lead cells.
2. Everyone can disciple twelve people—the first principle leads to the second. Just as Jesus and Paul disciplined the ones they recruited to be with them, so we today can recruit and disciple and develop twelve. 2 Timothy 3:10 says those who traveled with Paul learned his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, patience, endurance, and love.
3. Everyone is ministered to and then ministers—this is the principle our Lord gives us in 2 Timothy 2: 2: what you are taught, you teach. It is heart-to-heart, face-to-face mentoring by investing one’s self in others.
4. A person is in your “twelve” only when that individual has planted a cell group—a person can simply be a cell member in your group without being a member of “your twelve.” **The goal of discipling cell members is to turn them into cell leaders, i.e. to plant their own cells.** This happens by you bringing a cell member through Encounter Retreat (or some similar disciple processing event), through basic discipleship, and through some kind of “Leadership School.” After planting a new cell, the leader continues to return and meet with his or her original “sending” cell for mentoring, encouragement, and training. This “Timothy” cell leader now has training, opportunity (new cell group), and support (the mother cell group). Often the original cell leader will meet with the new cell leaders the hour prior to the “sending cell group” weekly meeting time. His goal is realized when each cell member of that person’s cell group has started his or her own cell. This means the “sending cell” has now become a leadership meeting for encouragement and

training. Each of these leaders in this cell experience continue to win people to Christ and add them into new cells.

5. Everyone should win souls and develop potential leaders—this includes every pastor, staff member, and member of the church. Following the “Principle of the Twelve” every person should prayerfully seek to bring twelve people to the Lord each year. New Christians join your cell and become potential leaders, and these who plant new cells become permanent leaders in “your twelve.” When your twelve fills up the group, your cell meeting becomes a gathering for encouragement and training to keep replicating the process.
6. Cells grow most rapidly when they open homogeneously—this is capitalizing on the fact we are gravitate towards others in similar life situations. It’s more comfortable and interesting to learn from others following a like pilgrimage as ourselves. There are ample opportunities for an individual to gather others into a group because of this principle of life. By using an appropriate curriculum suited to that group’s interests and needs—this, along with the regular cell lesson (which is generated normally from the pastor’s weekly message) gives a new cell a lot of confidence to begin. They also know they can rely on their “old” cell group for support and counsel.
7. “Your Twelve” are your assistants—in the cell they are to be seen as co-laborers and you plug them into all facets of disciple-making through the cell experience. They can be assigned new believer follow-up, to lead a cell group time, to form teams of evangelism operations. Stockstill shares:

A key in finding “your twelve” is to focus on three. Jesus had an inner circle of Peter, James, and John. Your first goal should be to disciple three, and then to challenge them to find three. As we observe in Jesus’ ministry, His disciples easily recruited and disciplined those they already knew. When each of your “three” finds their “three,” your group of “twelve” is complete! It’s exciting to watch people start to focus in on the leadership potential of others so they can grow beyond just a casual relationship with them. (Ibid., pp. 97-102. Emphasis mine.)

At Bethany, they continue to stress to cell leaders to reach out and minister. The heavy focus on multiplication can be mis-interpreted and the focus can dwindle to solely building an organization or structure. Particularly this caution is needed in American churches where our culture of drivenness for success and accomplishment can cause us to shortchange the process of making disciples. Stockstill gives this warning to pastors about the cell church work:

Many pastors, however, have “Spiritual A.D.D. (“Attention Deficit Disorder”) and tend to jump from “answer to answer.” They become diverted to 25 other avenues of ministry (i.e. traveling continually, birthing personal

programs, and becoming involved in boards and other organizations), instead of remaining totally focused on the cells. As a result, the sheep grow restless and confused. (Ibid. , p. 112)

Billy Hornsby, who was tasked with managing the transition into a cell church strategy at Bethany, describes the work and results of the cell approach in the following:

Our experience has been that the cell church is the most efficient means of reaching unbelievers and pastoring believers. Because the cell groups are given responsibility for all aspects of local church ministry, except for Sunday celebration services, close accountability exists, and productivity is easily measured. If an individual cell is unproductive, the leadership of that cell is changed, or the group is assimilated into another more productive group, or special attention is given to the ailing cell until it regains its health. By carefully monitoring the health of the individual cells, the cell church thus avoids the continuation of dead programs or traditions that have outlived their usefulness.
(Hornsby, pp. 42-43)

The cell church strategy allows church members to go from only receiving ministry to giving ministry, i.e. from sitting and soaking to standing and serving. As members open their homes to host cell groups, ministry becomes not only a personal opportunity to the group members, but a greater life-style practice by the host family.

Cells allow members an opportunity to have a ready made platform for fulfilling the Great Commission. They can invite unsaved friends to attend cell meetings designed for seekers. This allows members to fulfill what Jesus talked about in John 4:35—really looking at the harvest. They know they can pray, work, serve, and share with lost friends realizing they can bring them into their cell group and find extra support to their own witness and prayers—many are praying, loving and winning these same lost friends to Jesus!

In the book of Acts, the church not only participated in house-to-house-to-house experiences together, but they also participated in corporate celebrations. The cell church strategy and structure allows for the ministry of doing church in a small house group setting alongside the opportunity of focusing church in a big celebration as all the cells come together for teaching (edification), evangelism, vision casting (dreaming), and reviving worship (encouragement).

Billy Hornsby shares insight that each church must work out a system of raising up more and more leaders. There must be a comprehensive training system which will give would-be leaders equipping which will allow them to be successful in ministry responsibilities. Billy shares,

They must be taught how to build strong relationships and how to communicate effectively within those relationships. Instruction in prayer, intercession, and

motivation of others are vital factors in the growth of a leader. Learning to be hospitable and learning how to serve are other important components of leadership development. (Hornsby, p. 94)

He then shares seven qualities of a good leader:

1. The leader must exhibit true humility via an attitude of servant hood
2. He must be a person of character, with integrity and excellence of personality
3. Spiritual maturity must be evident in the life of a true leader
4. The leader must be trustworthy having earned the confidence of others
5. There must be “above reproach” living exemplified by the leader
6. Perseverance to overcome obstacles and disappointments must make up the moral fiber of the leader
7. He or she lives honestly and earns the respect of peers and outsiders

Billy also shares several keys in transitioning into a cell church approach from another pre-existing model:

- All programs must be evaluated and fit into ministry within the cell groups
- All pastors, secretaries, leaders, and members doing the same thing=cells!
- Leaders raised up and engaged in evangelism and discipleship
- A growing leadership base
- A highly developed model which can be reproduced
- Support and encouragement
- A productive staff—vitaly involved and keeping their people healthy
- A ministry that produces consistent results
- Every member operating in their giftedness in the cells

Hornsby explains how the evangelism strategy works through the cell church structure as it is practiced at Bethany by using the five words “encircle,” “invite,” “enlist,” “intern,” “obligate”:

Encircle—this is the first step in seeing specific people come to Christ and it is intentionally encircling particular people in prayer. “Intercessory warfare-type prayer achieves spiritual purposes.”

Invite—the second step is to invite the prayer targeted individuals to spend time with us. This can be time over lunch, a golf game, a shopping outlet, etc. The time can provide an opportunity to share a testimony of God’s faithfulness in our lives or to share God’s answer to one of the problems in their lives. Just make sure some element of spiritual input is shared so that spiritual fruit begins to ripen in the relationship. Next, invite the person to a cell group. As the person begins to meet other Christians, they become more open and comfortable in considering the claims of Christ.

Enlist—as we persist in prayer and invitations, the individual will open himself to

salvation. This brings us to the third step, enlisting him into the kingdom of God. The word “enlist” means to engage for service in the armed forces.” As a newborn babe in Christ, he will need care.

Intern—the fourth step is to intern the newly enlisted believer. The word “intern” means “to work to gain practical experience, just as a graduate of medical school serves his internship at a hospital, learning how to put into practice what he has learned in school.” This is the discipling phase of fulfilling the Great Commission. The effectiveness of the cell church shines here by providing a natural platform for a mentor/protégé relationship. Additionally, through the cell group provides encouraging fellowship and instruction from the Word of God in how to grow as a Christian and become a mature believer.

Obligate—this is the phase of mentoring which gives the new believer understanding of his or her obligation to share with others what has been given to them. He/she is given practical instruction in how to lead others to a personal relationship with Christ and is challenged to look towards beginning a cell group. They are especially made aware of their circles of influence which God has sovereignly provided them—family and friends they can begin to pray for and influence into the family of God. (Hornsby, pp. 115-17)

Many times churches do not equip their members because there is no ministry provided by the church for these members to become involved in. The cell approach changes all that. Through the cell structure there is a opportunity for every member to enter into evangelism, ministering, leadership, teaching—and this is what every church has to figure out: how can we equip and involve our people in accomplishing the Great Commission?! Billy points out a significant truth to understand and believe God for:

Let me share with you one additional principle we discovered—and this is exciting. The truth is that most of the leaders you will need to grow your church, the money you will need to build new buildings, and the people you will need to send as missionaries are not in your church presently. They are in the harvest! Therefore, you must “feed the sheep,” and focus on the harvest. “Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the His harvest” (Luke 10:2b, NKJV). (Ibid., p. 26)

Billy goes on to lucidly state what is needed in every church, be it a cell church structure or otherwise, to sustain effectiveness in accomplishing Jesus’ mandate for the church:

The cell church will go nowhere without highly trained individuals who know their work and how to perform it. Cell leaders who are skilled in what they do and understand the need to train others make cell-group ministry in the local church successful. Without this level of workers functioning and the leadership base growing, you will never build a successful ministry. You must give attention to building a highly skilled and motivated work force of leaders who can bring the energy and “Know-how” to the daily tasks and functions of the cell church. (Ibid., p. 58)

The cell church strategy makes much of “oikos evangelism” i.e. being aware of and sensitive to those God has sovereignly placed in our life paths: family members, work associates, friends, neighbors. These are people you frequently encounter and they are people you have influence upon. This is a pool of people we can be evangelizing the rest of our lives. **It provides a natural and effective way for us to reach the world for Christ.**

Hornsby gives this warning in considering the possibilities God wants us to pursue in order to accomplish His work: “It could be that under these conditions [whatever obstacles you face to do cells] you consider commitment to be a hopeless case. Act otherwise. **Too much respect for problems kills our faith in possibilities.**” (Ibid., p. 90)

God promises every one of His children He will give them desires and the power to do His work (Philippians 2:12-13). He wants to give us the anointing of His Holy Spirit to accomplish His Son’s marching orders to the church. One final thought from Billy Hornsby about moving into an effective and fruitful cell church operation:

Fire is the presence of the Holy Spirit that purges us of the distractions of this world and allows us to burn with desire for the things of God. How do we get it?

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY!

As we pass through the transition process, we must endeavor to keep our goals and the model of a mature cell church ever before us. As we make decisions, we must base them on what we want our “finished product” to look like and how we want it to function. If we don’t compromise in the process, and if we pray, pray, pray, we will end up with a mature, vibrant cell church. (Ibid., p. 105)

Principles of character:

1. How does the mission statement of Mision Elim impact the character of its members?
2. What did you observe about the personal practice of the pastor and leaders of the cell church discussed in this model study?

Principles of planting:

1. How could you use the seven principles discussed on page 45 in the notes to plant a multiplying church?
2. What are the benefits of the cell church model for keeping evangelism and discipleship the bull's eye of the church?

Principles of multiplication:

1. What do you think of how Bethany accomplishes Acts 1:8 planting churches on foreign soils? Is this a practical vision for all churches?

Principles of Model Selection:

1. Can the cell church be done by any church? Why or why not?
2. This model study argues the cell church approach provides a natural and effective structure and strategy for enlightening, enlisting, equipping, engaging, encouraging laity to do the work of the Lord Jesus. Can other models of church provide just as an effective opportunity to the laity of a church—impacting as many members of a church as argued the cell church approach can?