

L E A D E R ' S   G U I D E

**IN THE  
SHADOW  
OF THE  
STEEPLE:**

THE VITAL ROLE OF  
THE SMALLER CHURCH IN  
A MEGACHURCH WORLD

**GENE WILLIAMS**

Copyright 2007

By Gene Williams and Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

Printed in the  
United States of America

All Scripture quotations not otherwise designated are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*<sup>®</sup> (NIV<sup>®</sup>). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Permission to quote from the following additional copyrighted version of the Bible is acknowledged with appreciation:

The *New King James Version* (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version.

# INTRODUCTION

It is very important for the pastors and members of smaller churches to take an honest look at themselves. In preparing this study such questions as these will need to be addressed honestly:

- ▶ Are we the church God wants us to be?
- ▶ Why are we the size we are?
- ▶ Can we do better in presenting God's plan for His people?

A church is much like a vegetable or flower garden. A seed is planted in great faith that it will become what God wants it to be. The seed sprouts and shows promise of reaching that goal. However, before it becomes what it is intended to be, it needs some serious attention. It will need water, fertilizer, and probably weeding. If ignored and left to the elements, most seeds never reach their potential. They never produce either fruit or flower. However, when given some loving care and attention, they make their gardener proud.

The church is like that. Ignored and left to weeds and drought, it will struggle to stay alive. When given some loving care and attention, it will bring honor to the Father who is the Master Gardener.

In doing this study with an honest and prayerful heart, the leadership of a smaller church is watering, weeding, and feeding what God has planted. It is critical that the church be given this attention.

Not every church is intended to be mega or even large. Some will be like the backyard gardens at many homes—relatively small. However, every church can be healthy and fruitful.

## PLEASE HEED THIS WARNING

This study should only be undertaken by church leaders who are serious about growing the Kingdom. It will call for some frank and honest appraisals of the entire congregation and of the leaders themselves. This can be uncomfortable and even painful. However, the churches that do participate will greatly improve their spiritual health. Except in very unusual cases, healthy churches grow.

Prior to beginning this study, each participant should read my book *In the Shadow of the Steeple: The Vital Role of the Smaller Church in a Megachurch World*.

# SESSION 1

## AN HONEST LOOK AT OURSELVES

- I. Discuss your feelings about the size of your church
- II. What is the potential for your church?
  - ▶ How large can you realistically expect to grow?
- III. Where are you as a congregation in relationship to where you should be?
  - ▶ What is your purpose?
  - ▶ How are you doing?
  - ▶ Make a list of your strengths.
  - ▶ Make a list of your weaknesses.
  - ▶ How can you strengthen your weaknesses and exploit your strengths?
  - ▶ Take an honest look at the past five years:
    - Attendance
    - People saved
    - Finances
    - Discipleship of new people

# SESSION 2

## PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL

- I. Review responses from Session 1.
- II. What is your mission statement?  
If you do not have one, prepare one.
- III. What are you doing that is helping you fulfill or complete this mission?
  - ▶ List what is working.
  - ▶ What is happening to prevent you from fulfilling your mission?
  - ▶ List recognizable problems.
  - ▶ Discuss possible solutions.
  - ▶ How can you improve the atmosphere that exists in your church body?

# SESSION 3

## THE PLEASURE OF BEING PART OF THIS CHURCH

- I. List some of the pleasures you enjoy because you are a strong smaller church.
- II. Are you giving birth to new believers?
  - ▶ Who was the last one born into the Kingdom? How long ago?
- III. What could you do to bring more joy to your people?
- IV. Where are the most fertile fields for harvest in your community?
- V. Identify some prospects.

# SESSION 4

## LIFTING YOUR HEADS AND HEARTS

- I. How do most of your people feel about your church?
  - ▶ Are they proud and anxious to tell others where they worship?
  - ▶ Are they reluctant to invite others to visit?
- II. Are the physical conditions of your church plant conducive to attracting new people?
  - ▶ What can be done to make your venue more attractive?
  - ▶ Who will take the responsibility of making that happen?
  - ▶ How can you improve your image in the community?
  - ▶ How can you have a greater impact?
  - ▶ Is your church a sanctuary where people can feel safe and experience God's presence?
  - ▶ If not, what can be done to create that atmosphere?
- III. What is the relationship between your church leadership and the pastor?
  - ▶ How can this be enhanced?