

# *The W.E.D. Principle*

*by Karen Gray*

The W.E.D. principle describes how three *essential* Christian activities, in the correct balance, can produce not only a healthy heart in individuals, but a healthy church as well. First off, please note: I did not invent this, nor do I know its origin, though it is implicit within the Word of God. I first saw it simply as “W.E.D.” but the balance that was proposed was highly out of whack, and became merely a tool to shame people into street witnessing. However, when I simply looked at church data, I discovered something important about the correct balance and hence, I called this new iteration, the “W.E.D. Principle”.

What is the W.E.D. Principle? Obviously, W.E.D is an acronym. It stands for these three essential Christian activities which are simply: Worship, Evangelism and Discipleship.

Unfortunately, if you try to search for “W.E.D.” online to obtain more research material, it is not listed. Instead, what you’ll find is a great many sites that describe **evangelism** and **discipleship** as essential partners, but leave out worship & intimacy. (I did, however, find a couple of sites that listed five essential activities for every Christian’s life, which did include worship, which was heartening. Although, they listed five essentials, on closer investigation, these essentials could really be boiled down to just the above three activities, but far less heartening was that there was no balance or interdependence mentioned.)

On most sites, “worship” seems to be “*a given*”, relegated to Sunday’s church activity or something you do in your own quiet time, but it is not included in the essential every day, every Christian list. The attitude is something like, “*Yeah, we all know we should do that, but let’s talk about more important activities! We can’t always sit on the mountain top when there are people needing the gospel in the valley below.*” Ever heard that? This attitude is not only wrong, but is detrimental to building churches and people. To be blunt, there is no reason why we can’t do both, i.e., be in communion with God at all times, even when witnessing – *especially* when witnessing.

Look at Smith Wigglesworth as an example. He only prayed for 20 minutes at a time, but would only let half an hour go by before he prayed again. He was always seen reading the word as well, and yet he was an amazing evangelist, and worker of miracles.

Of course, the ultimate example is Jesus! He was always in communion with His Father and only did what He saw the Father doing. The point is, **all** three - evangelism, discipleship AND worship/intimacy - are essential and further, need each other to be truly successful!

Now before I lose some of you, this is not another guilt piece to shame people into witnessing more. Rather, I want to clarify just how these activities do and should fit together in order to operate successfully. They are in fact, interdependent, and almost have a synergy when in correct balance. The correct balance, however, seems to be the **key**, and that really depends on our own attitudes and understanding of the three. So let’s dive in and take a look at how the W.E.D. principle operates.

## **The principle is this in essence:**

- From worship (private or congregational) and **intimacy with God**, love begins to flow. It flows from God to us and from us to God, (a Divine exchange).
- While it is true that God’s love has been shed abroad in our hearts, when we are intimate with God, that love is *activated* and begins to flow out from us to others. It flows

- a) to the people within our sphere of influence – **the lost**
  - b) to our **fellow Christians** (both those newly birthed into the Kingdom, and our brothers and sisters already in the Kingdom).
- If disciplined well, the newer Christians will develop their own lifestyle worship and continue the cycle.



Who are the brethren and who are the lost?

### *The Brethren*

- Those newly saved
- Those on their way
- Mature Christians
- Those from Other Churches

### *The Lost*

- Our Family
- Our Relatives
- Our Friends
- Our Workmates
- Our Schoolmates
- People from our Groups/Clubs
- People we see regularly
- People God Shows Us

Jesus told the lawyer when He was asked what was the most important commandment,

*‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.*” – Mark 12:30 NKJV

That is, **intimacy with God**. That’s loving God with all that we are. It speaks of an intensity and passion – like we couldn’t exist without Him. Note: It was quoted as the first or greatest commandment.

Jesus then told the lawyer the second command which is also to love. That is:

*“And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”* – Mark 12:31 NKJV

We must also love our neighbour – those people all around us.

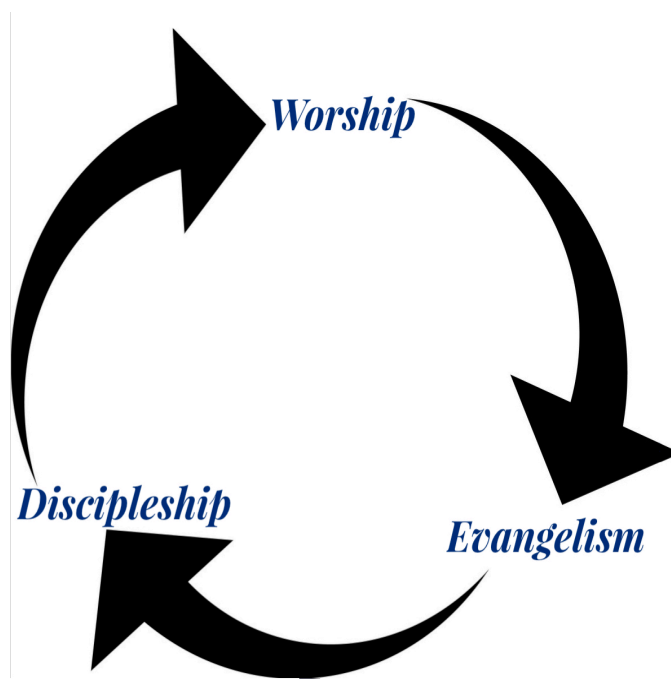
Added to that, Jesus also gave us a new commandment that we love one another as He loved us, completely unconditionally, and that that love would distinguish us as Jesus disciples.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* – John 13:34 NKJV

If we truly love the brethren well, we will be a **sign** to the non-believers. Let’s look at the next verse:

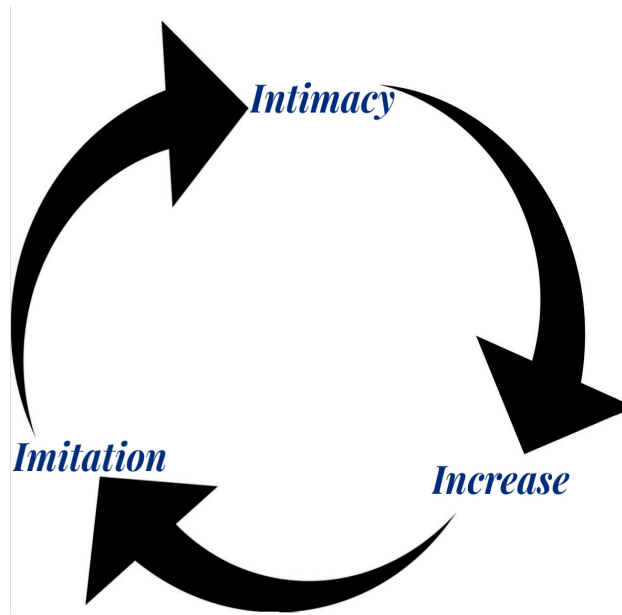
*“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* – John 13: 35 NKJV

As you can see, loving God, loving the lost and loving the brethren are all commanded, and they can be summed up as W.E.D., Worship, Evangelism and Discipleship, and they are all interdependent. Let’s take a look at how it works.



As we mentioned earlier, when we are intimate with God, love automatically flows from God to us to others. When the lost come to know God and are saved through His love, they must be disciplined. (Note that Jesus instructed us to make disciples of men, not converts. (Matthew 28:19-20). If disciplined well, the new convert will draw close to God and be intimate with Him as well.

Below I've attached some different labels that may make it clearer for some.

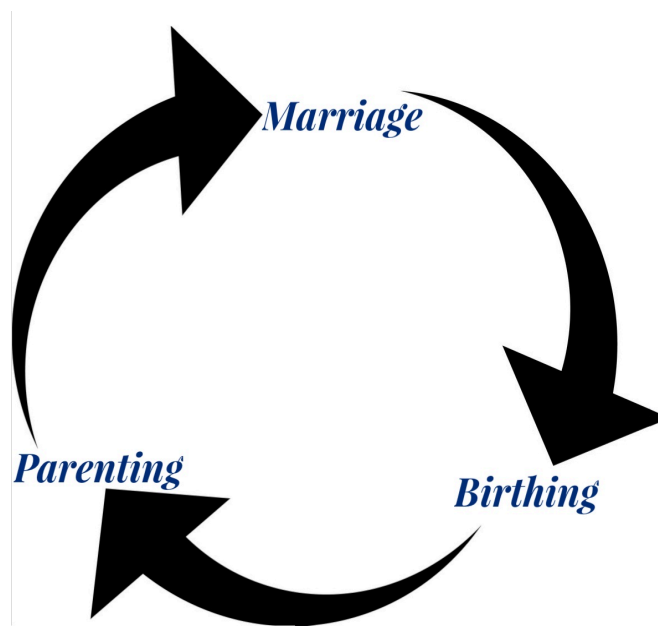


I believe the word “intimacy” is far more understandable because, while it includes our Sunday worship, it speaks of spending time in the secret place just loving God and being loved. Not only that, but intimacy is not only crucial to our Christian walk as individuals, it also effects the success of the other two in a major way.

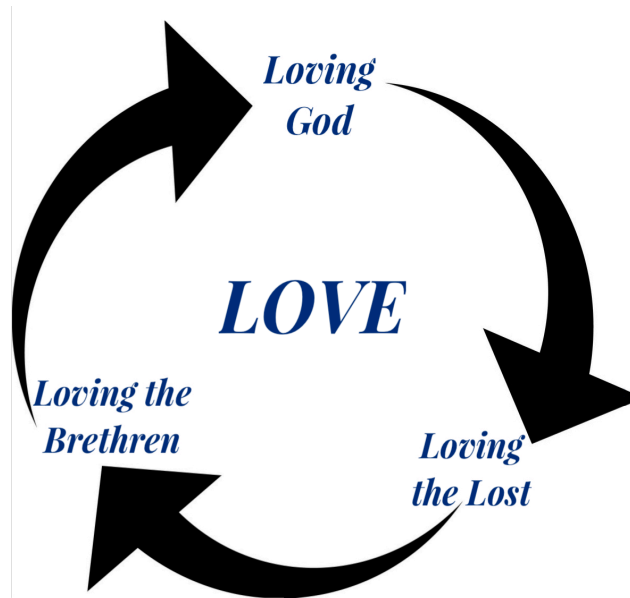
The word “increase” obviously speaks of lasting fruit and church growth, but it also brings joy and spiritual growth to the individual who is loving the lost into the Kingdom.

“Imitation” does not refer to “fake” or “false” or “pretence” as Jehane taught us, but to imitating Christ. (We all share that goal.)

Another way of looking at this principle is as a family.

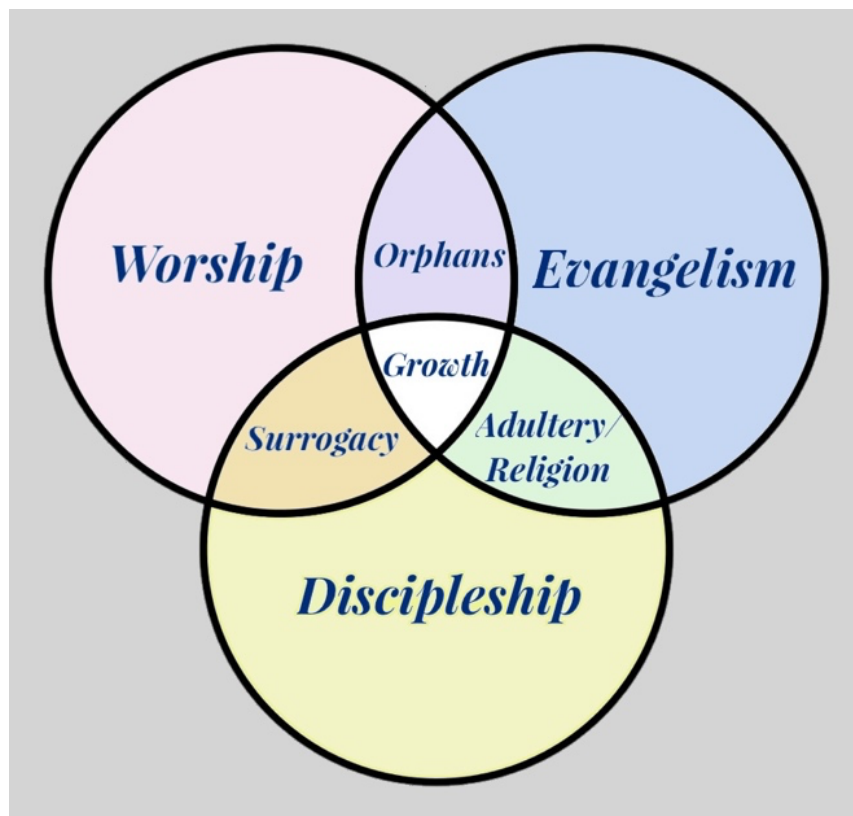


While this is a great picture, I personally don't like the word “parenting”. It conjures images of being above or lording over someone, rather than being siblings in the same family. So, in the end, I think the best way by far to look at this is simply as everything revolving around love.



Most of this so far, has been self-evident. What is probably not so obvious, however, is the interdependence between them, i.e., one cannot operate without the others. It's like trying to outsource the responsibility, but it ends badly. In fact, if we try to outsource:

- intimacy, we get *adultery* (idol worshippers).
- birthing, we get *surrogacy* & illegitimacy.
- parenting, we get *orphans* who don't understand their true identity & heritage.



This isn't just some smart play on words. Let's take a closer look.

- If we have **evangelism** and **discipleship** without *worship and true intimacy* with God, we are converting people to a creed and religious dogma, instead of bringing them into a family where they'll begin to know the true love of God and the importance of intimacy in their own lives. They may believe they are God's people, but they can't really

understand who their Father truly is, or who they really are in Christ Jesus. Instead, it's easier to follow a creed whilst still loving other earthly things and pleasures – religious *adultery*. It's a false/substitute religion that gives a false sense of security.

- If you have **worship** and **discipleship** and/or teaching without *evangelism*, the church will become insular, ineffective. You may have people from other churches join the flock and enjoy the family for a time – like *surrogate* children, but the family will eventually die out without more true children.
- If we have **worship** and **evangelism** without *discipleship*, we have *orphan* babies left at the church doors. We don't see that as our responsibility and assume someone else will take care of them, but just not us. If someone else sees them and cares enough about them to take them under their wing, they might continue on in the faith, but if they are not adequately discipled, they will lack understanding about God's true nature and just how much they are loved. This can result in an orphan mentality, i.e., always trying to please God because they don't truly feel valued or good enough or accepted by Him. It might also cause them to eventually walk away, not knowing how loved they really are.

As you can see, all three activities are important, but the key which is often overlooked, is that **love** is what binds all three together.

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, it is difficult to get the balance correct. Quite often we are cajoled into witnessing, instead of it becoming a natural outflow of love. In fact, when we think of evangelism, most people get a knot in the tummies and begin to feel pressured or ashamed, but it was never meant to be a noose around anyone's neck. The main problem here is that we have the wrong idea about evangelism. When I say the word "Evangelism" most people straight away think of street evangelism, but street witnessing is such a **small** slice of the "saving souls" pie.

We have all seen bad witnessing, or even done it ourselves, and as a result, even been on the receiving end of equally undesirable responses to the gospel message. It can make us fearful of it happening again.

Needless to say, when we talk about evangelism many people defensively say, "*Ok, I know it is important, but I'm not an evangelist!*" That's probably true! An "Evangelist" label is saved for one of the 5-fold ministers (Ephesians 4:12). It is not listed as a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) nor one of the various "activities" giftings as listed in Romans 12:6-8. However, the *function* of a 5-fold minister is to **equip** the saints. This means that a true evangelist ministry includes teaching the brethren *how to* evangelise effectively.

An Evangelist already operates powerfully in that area. They can talk to anyone anywhere and people will get saved. They are also passionate about witnessing, enough to hold large teaching summits / seminars on how to effectively evangelise. Then as part of that teaching they offer a hands-on demonstration, that is, they take people to the streets to try it out for themselves and this is where the problem lies.

There was a study done a few years ago where Christians from all over were surveyed, and it was found that a whopping 95% of Christians were converted through a friend or relative or at least someone they knew from work and so on (friendship or relational evangelism). The other **5%** of conversions came via church programs and events, *of which* street preaching, street witnessing, door knocking, and leaflet distribution was a part. (I'll just add an addendum here, that many people who are converted on the street without follow-up are like the seed that falls on the wayside. They are often talked out of their new faith by others, or begin to rationalise it away, or if they've experienced a healing, to attribute that healing to things such as "mind over matter", or "the universe intervening", or some other weird explanation. They are like new-borns but generally there's no one to feed them and care for them, and the devil comes and steals what they have.

I'm not against street preaching or street evangelism. I've even done quite a bit in my time, but without follow-up and discipleship, it's not that effective as the statistics prove beyond any shadow of doubt. I hope as revival builds, things will change in that department, but for the moment, most people (i.e., 95%) are won to the Lord by being loved into the kingdom, and that's something we all can do.)

So here again we see the need for intimacy to enable us to love the lost. We all have influence and are all able to love others around us without walking the streets or door-knocking (though if God puts doing that on your heart you certainly must). Yes, even those of us with the most battered of hearts can love because His love can flow through us if we allow it.

It's not about bashing people with Scripture, or telling them how bad they are and that they are going to hell. Some rare people might respond positively to that, but the majority definitely won't. Jesus demonstrated His love for us whilst we were yet sinners....

True evangelism is about loving the lost and following the prompting of the Holy Spirit. While it is true that God loves us all and is not willing that any one should perish (Matthew 18:14) everyone's heart is at a different stage of readiness to receive the God News of the Gospel. Jesus instructed us in John 6:44, "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*" It only makes sense then, that we follow the Holy Spirit's lead in this.

It's like the king in the story of Esther. No one could approach the throne unless the king first pointed his sceptre at that person. In the same way, God looks upon our hearts and see those that are ready to receive, and draws them to Him. Just what they are able to receive may manifest as a couple of words spoken by a friend, or by a friend's example, but whatever it is, it will be tailor made just for that heart. (Remember: One plants, another waters and another harvests.) But how can we know what they need, or what to say to them? We can't but the Holy Spirit knows! That's why we need to follow His lead and walk in step with Him (Galatians 5:25). This requires intimacy and time spent in His presence.

Believe me, trying to herd the lost into the Kingdom instead of love them, is a chore and simply doesn't work, but when we allow God to shine love through us; when we listen to His heart for people, and keep in step with the Holy Spirit, it doesn't just take the pressure off, but it becomes much easier, and *far* more fruitful. No one has to cajole you when you operate out of His love. No one has to make you feel guilty in order to talk to people. If we love the people in our sphere of influence, if we love the people we know or see regularly, we can respond to their needs and to *their* timing because of the Holy Spirit knows exactly their state of heart. They may not accept what we have to say straight away, but because they know us as people of genuine love for them, and this love has been demonstrated through our lives, they will think about what we have said.

If God is highlighting some random person on the street to you, you can be sure they *will* receive it because His word never comes back void!!

*"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;  
It shall not return to Me void,  
But it shall accomplish what I please,  
**And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**" – Isaiah 55:11 NKJV*

Now, I'm not pretending that we will never be persecuted. On the contrary, Jesus told us that persecutions would come, but what I am saying is that when we follow the Holy Spirit's prompting, and with love, we never know just how much impact our lives, our actions, or our words will have on them further down the road. When people recognise Christ in us, and that we genuinely and unconditionally care about them, that they are not just some kind of trophy that makes us look good in the church's eyes, they will be more likely to ask us questions when the time is right for them, and further be open to the answers we have to give them in return. The caveat here is for

us **not** to talk **at** them when they ask, or to try to convince them with long involved arguments, but to listen to their voice and heart, and to treat them with God's love and respect, always listening for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

**Evangelism is simply responding obediently to the Holy Spirit, because you love Him and are intimate with Him.** When you respond in love, it's no longer dutiful "works", but a joy from the heart. When we are obedient, God is also overjoyed, and He lets you experience that joy too.

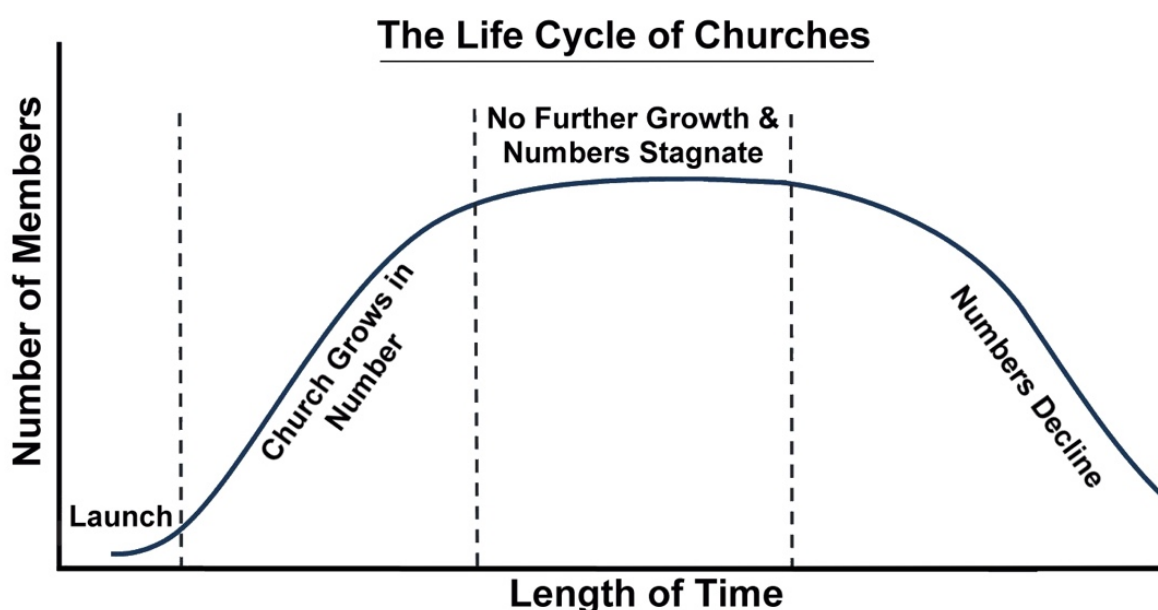
Please, don't misunderstand me here. I'm not advocating that we never say anything. No way! We are not ashamed of this hope we have in Jesus! We do not hide our light under a bushel, but are there to let our lives so shine before men that they can see the true heart of Christ for themselves – no matter who they are or where they're at. **BUT** what we say and do, must come from a heart of love, and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, if we are to be effective witnesses.

## Tying it all together

OK. So far so good. By now you have the general idea, and probably know most of this already. All three activities are important and close to the heart of God. The problem is not only getting the balance correct, but on a personal level, how we view each, or our attitude towards them. So, to help with the latter, I want to now bring some relevant data about the life cycles of churches into the discussion.

There was some research done some years back, that studied a great many churches and their attendances from launch to closure, to ascertain if there was any commonality. What they discovered was that nearly all churches followed similar life cycle curves. Please note: This curve does not take into account some of the ups and downs, nor does it factor in those churches that have suffered church division, attendance reductions due of things like Covid, or war, or persecution. And also please note, this is a general finding across the board. It has nothing to do with individual pastors, but more the expectations of the members of the church.

If you were to draw a graph of the findings with the number of attendees on the left-hand vertical axis, and time on the horizontal bottom axis, the general curve for every church was basically a flattened bell curve.

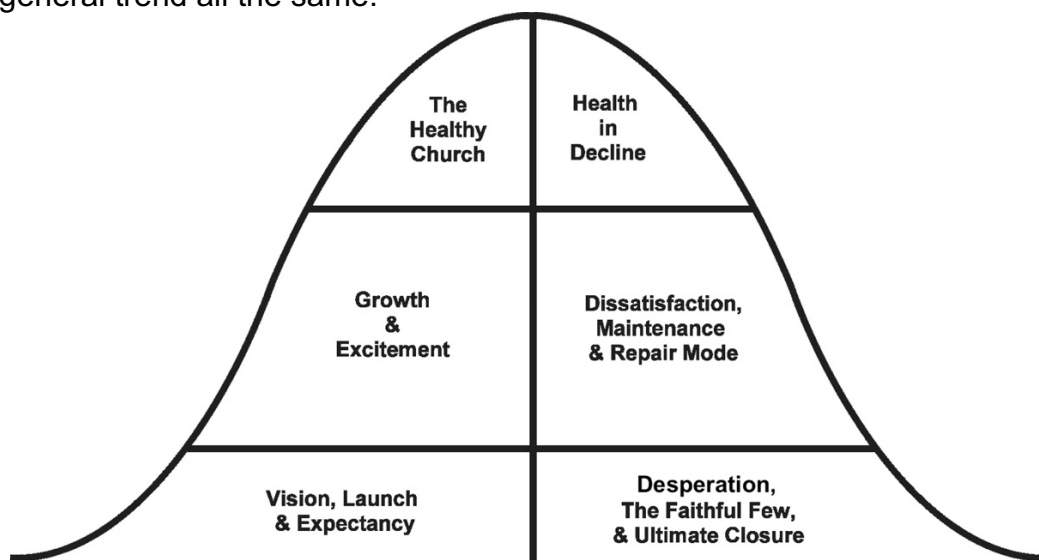


In the early days the small fledgling church is healthy and loving, with a the right balance of loving God, loving the brethren and loving the lost. There is momentum and excitement as the church

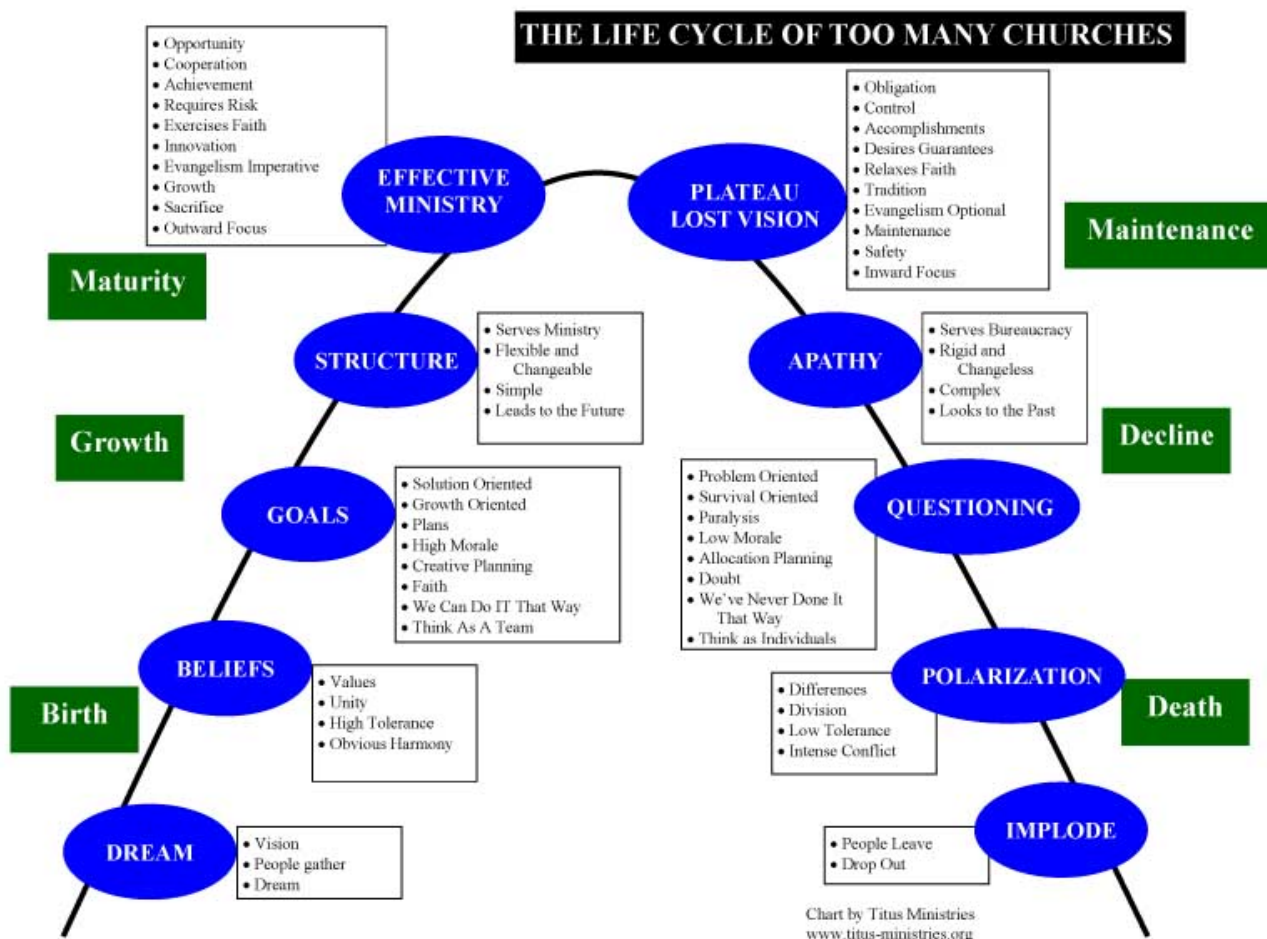


expands. After some time, the church gains more “structure” and begins to run more programs. There are youth groups and Sunday school, over 50’s groups, women’s’ groups, men’s groups and so on. Everyone is catered for. This is where the numbers begin to slow down, perhaps plateau, but while they plateau for a short while, eventually the numbers drop off. People become dissatisfied, self-entitled, picky, jealous of others, wanting more entertainment/stimulus, or become less invested and leave for another church they feel caters to their needs.

Here are a couple of other representations but these use a bell curve, which suggests that as soon as the church hits its peak it will start to decline, which is not really accurate, but it can help you see a general trend all the same.



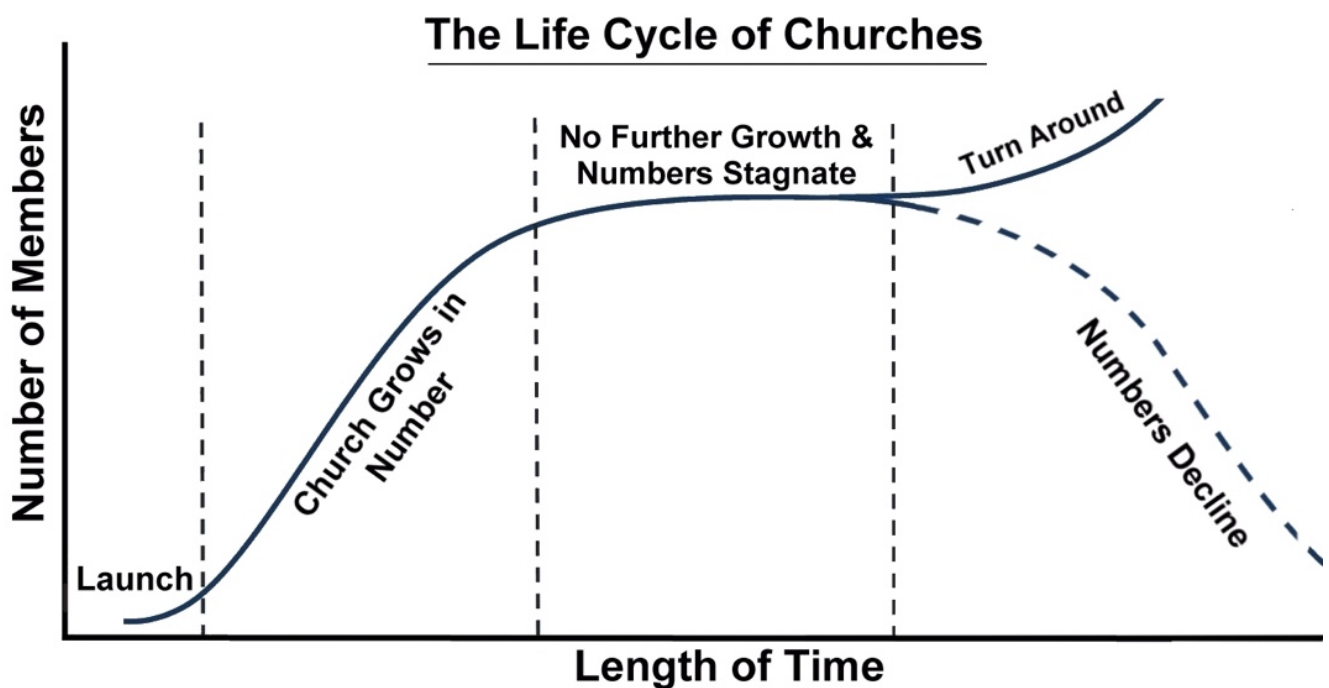
Here’s another more detailed diagram:



Some say that this is the natural cycle of every church – a bit like a church growing up to maturity and then moving on, but things do not have to be this way. Some churches don't even fit this pattern. Furthermore, for those that do, the decline can be turned around and sometimes can be avoided altogether.

So, what is actually happening here to cause this? It appears that a church that promotes parishioner comfort more than loving the lost, will produce “*entitled*” attendees. These people will attend for what they can “*get out of the service*” (whether the great preaching, or great worship, or great fellowship), but the real underlying motive or priority is not to honour God first, but personal enjoyment, comfort, and perceived personal growth. As a result, if personal expectations and standards are not met, the blame game begins. Comparisons of treatment of others can ensue. Some may even begin to feel left out, passed over, or feel unfairly treated. There will still be some people within the church who focus on loving the lost but by this time, the majority will generally prefer to ignore that activity because of the fear of rejection and losing friends. It's simply outside their comfort zone. As far as they are concerned, the church's main priority should be meeting *their* needs by feeding *them* and making *them* feel loved and appreciated. Small groups of friends still exist, but overall, there's a sense of disconnect from fellow parishioners. This dissatisfaction causes, political wrangling, arguments, splits, general discontentment, and the exodus of many.

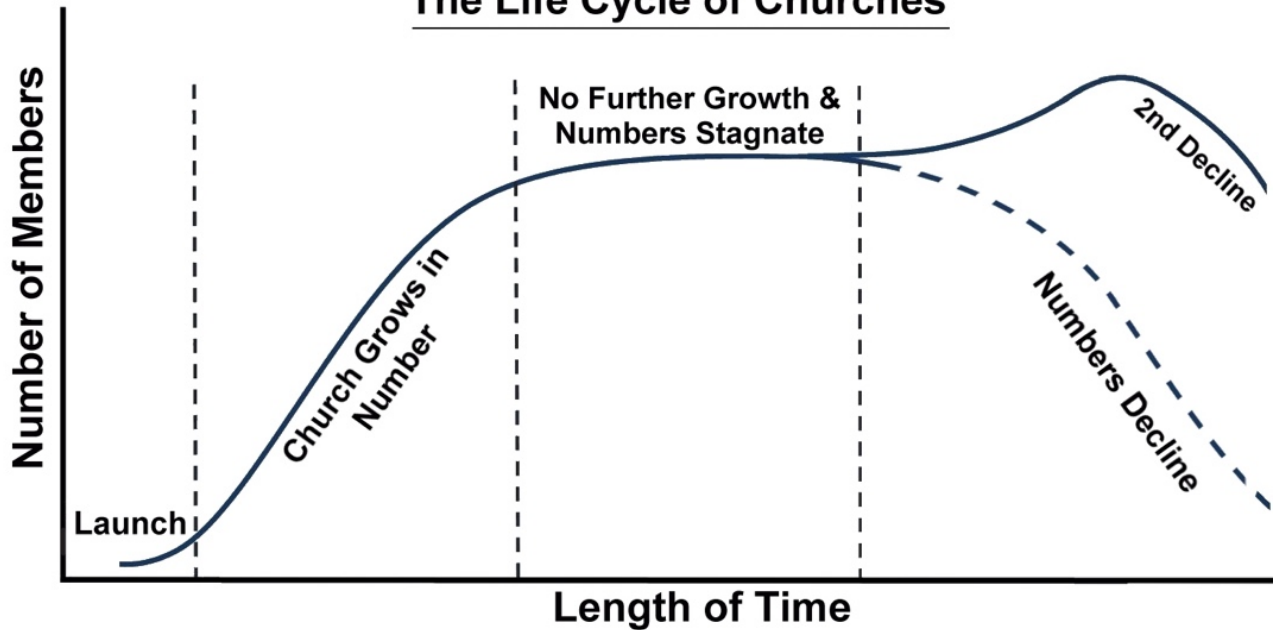
Now if people begin to realise why the downturn is occurring, they may be able to steer the church back around, provided they can encourage the remaining people to continue to love the lost and to disciple the newly converted. Things can even begin to change and growth seen once again.



Unfortunately, by the time the church is in maintenance mode, what generally happens (but not always), there is some initial enthusiasm for the new changes, but because these new changes are counter to the established culture, and not birthed out of love but from necessity, the changes don't hold. People want the old ways back, become even more discontented and leave.

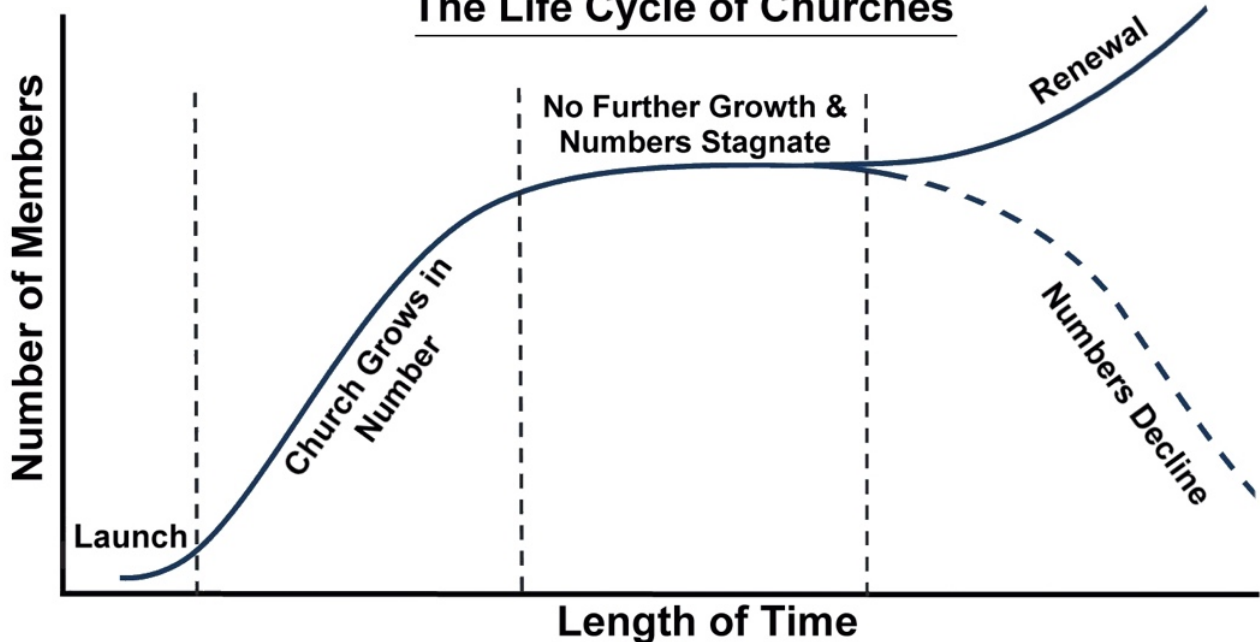
It's tough to change an established church culture. I'm not saying we shouldn't have small groups or programs. Not at all! What I'm saying is that the balance needs to be right all the way through, because it can be hard for people to change.

## The Life Cycle of Churches



Some churches, however, have beaten the stats and managed to turn things around. Those churches are generally experiencing some kind of renewal or revival. Hearts are once again full of the love of God and subsequently, love is flowing out to those around.

## The Life Cycle of Churches



Take the Ashbury revival as an example. Not only were the services packed with hungry Christians, but people were witnessing to everyone both among their own sphere of influence and to those on the street. A renewed intimate heart births others into the Kingdom because it is a natural outflow. No one had to take a stick out and tell them to do so. What's more, perfect love has cast out all fear!

While turning things around is desirable, it's better for churches (that includes all of us) to realise how things work whilst they are still small and church culture is still pliable. Please note: Again, I want to strongly reiterate that this has nothing to do with the pastor's management skills. It's about all of us, the body of Christ, realising from the "get-go", what a healthy church looks like, and what part we all play as a family together. God expects us all to be ambassadors of His great love – both to the lost and to the brethren. It's not about loving the lost at the expense of the brethren or

loving the brethren at the expense of the lost. The questions we need to ask are not about administration or structure, but about how well **we** all love. This means we need to check our own hearts and our own relationship with God. It's all about walking in step with the Holy Spirit and loving all men the way Jesus does.

If we want a healthy church to come to every Sunday, if we want to come to a place where we feel God's presence and feel His heart and love, if we want to come to a church that has genuine joy and genuine inclusion, then it starts with *each one of us*, and *how well we love God* and are intimate with Him. The perfect balance starts with our love for God – the greatest command, and the rest will flow from that place. If a church wants to initiate a turnaround, instead of pushing people into evangelism, a church should promote intimacy with God, for only in truly loving Him will we be empowered and motivated to do the other two essentials (i.e., witnessing and discipleship.)

Honestly, it's not that hard to love. If you feel like your heart has been too battered and bruised because of past woundings, if you feel panic any time the word evangelism is mentioned, if you don't have a clue how to disciple, He can still use you. Simply ask God *to love through you*. Our human love is simply insufficient to loving the unlovable how they need to be loved, anyway.

Every person around the globe needs to have a God encounter. That means they need God's love demonstrated to them. This wonderful unconditional love, the Bible says in Romans 5:5, has been shed abroad, or poured out in our hearts. All that God expects us to do, is to let His love out: to firstly see with His eyes and heart, and then to love in His strength.

It's not about a feeling. We often want the cart before the horse. We want to feel love for people before we're motivated. However, if we've asked God to love through us and then start acting in a loving manner, being open to and even expecting God to love through us, we may just start to feel something positive and even restorative in our own hearts.

I'm not wanting to cajole you into witnessing or whatever. Heaven knows there's enough of those teachings to make everyone in the whole of Christendom feel weighed down with guilt. Rather, I'm trying to bring clarity to how all this works together, so that we can all be a part of a healthy and thriving church. It's really not hard or frightening. It simply begins with Love – Loving God first with all that we are, and from the overflow of that love, loving the brethren, and loving the lost. This should be natural, not fearful. In the end, love is not a chore but a joy and privilege.