

CHAPTER TWELVE

Impact!

Publisher's Note: Pastor Ray Stedman retired as pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in 1990, and went home to be with the Lord on October 7, 1992. Most of this chapter, like the rest of this book, contains Ray's original insights and convictions, carefully edited and updated from the original 1972 edition of *Body Life*. As Dr. Billy Graham observed in his foreword to the original edition, this chapter is where "the author relates how his interpretation of the church has worked effectively in the crucible of practical experience."

For this revised and updated edition of *Body Life*, we have also added new material, drawn from interviews with people at Peninsula Bible Church, both in the pastorate and the laity. These new "Update" sections are separated and indented from Pastor Stedman's words. They offer a perspective on how the *Body Life* principles have found new modes of expression over the years. Our society has changed greatly in the decades from the 1950s to the 1990s--and PBC has changed, too! Though the core concepts of *Body Life* are as unchanging as the New Testament itself, there are endless ways in which the exciting vibrancy and vitality of *Body Life* can be expressed. Even though Pastor Stedman is no longer with us, the body life of PBC goes on in ever new and creative ways.

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What happens when a church in the twentieth century chooses to operate on these principles? Will they work today as they did in the early church? The answer is a resounding Yes! Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, KJV). When He said those words, our Lord had all the centuries of future history in view, until His return.

Dr. E. M. Blaiklock, Professor of Classics at Auckland University in New Zealand, has said, "Of all the centuries, the twentieth is most like the first." Today, as in the first century, Christians are a minority group, representing a minority viewpoint in the midst of a hostile, despairing, pagan world. Now as then, Christians are hemmed in on every side by violence, ignorance, immorality, and existential despair. Christians today find themselves thrust back into the very climate where the persecutions and triumphs of the book of Acts occurred.

The Christianity of the book of Acts is not unusual Christianity--it is normal, usual, typical Christianity, functioning as it was designed to function. The sterile Christianity of our times is the distortion, with its coldness, its bureaucratic structure, its perfunctory ritual, and its bland conformity. Every century has had its distorted forms of Christianity, but every century has also known something, at least, of the vital transforming power of Jesus Christ at work through His body. That power has been manifested in the twentieth century also, strongly at certain times and places, weakly elsewhere, depending on the degree to which individual churches have discovered and implemented (deliberately or accidentally) the biblical pattern of church life that we have explored in this book.

To manifest life

This would be a good place to summarize that biblical pattern so that we can keep its essential features before us. A church which operates on the New Testament body life model should display these features:

A pervasive spirit of love and unity, resulting in an attractive, persuasive evangelistic witness to the world (see Eph. 4:3; John 13:35).

A celebration of spiritual gifts; all members of the body are encouraged to discover and use their gifts.

A horizontal rather than vertical "command" church structure; a recognition that Christ alone is the "head" of the church; while the leadership and pastoral gifts are respected and acknowledged, the gifts, creativity, and initiative of all the people (the laity) are utilized and all members of the body are honored (see 1 Cor. 12).

A recognition, drawn from Ephesians 4, that all believers are ministers, not just the pastor-teachers; those with the gift of ruling elder or pastor-teacher are to build up and equip the entire body of believers to be ministers in the church and in the world.

An emphasis on scriptural truth rather than human wisdom, social expectations, or religious traditions.

Frequent opportunities for believers to confess their sins and hurts, to share one another's burdens, to care for one another in koinonia-fellowship and agape-love, and to speak the truth in love.

This, in a nutshell, is body life.

And this is a radical departure from the attitudes, priorities, and institutions of this world. Sadly, it is also a radical departure from the agenda and structure of most churches in our culture! All too many churches today have more in common with the patterns of this world than with the body life pattern of the New Testament.

We all too easily forget that the church is not on earth to do what other groups can do, but to do what no other group of human beings can possibly do. It is designed to manifest the life and power of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the ministry which was given him by the Father, as He stated in the synagogue at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to preach good news to the poor, ... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19).

The healing ministry of the church is to be carried out through the activity of many, not just a few. It takes the whole body to do the work of the church. Every Christian is endowed with certain gifts which were promised by the resurrected Christ when he ascended on high to the Father's throne and took over the reins of the universe. Our task as members of the body is to discover our gifts and put them to work. If anyone neglects his or her gift, the whole body suffers.

The power by which these gifts operate is reliance upon the imparted life of the indwelling, resurrected Lord. God has made full provision for every Christian to discover, develop, and use these spiritual gifts in resurrection power through the "shaping up" ministry of apostles, prophets (who lay the foundations of faith), evangelists, and pastor-teachers (who use the word of God to motivate, cleanse, and strengthen the people for their tasks). As we carry out this biblical pattern, the church will function as salt and light in the midst of a world of corruption and darkness. At the same time, the church will increasingly manifest the wholeness and beauty of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

One church's body life

With considerable reluctance, I now turn to the experience of a single church in order to demonstrate from real life how these principles work in today's world. The church I am qualified to discuss is the one I served as pastor from 1950 to 1990: Peninsula Bible Church, located on the San Francisco peninsula, in Palo Alto, California. There are many churches that could serve to illustrate the principles in this book, but my experience forces me to write only about the church I know best, the church known to its members as PBC.

Is PBC a perfect church? By no means! We've made many mistakes through the years--some merely embarrassing, some absolutely grievous. We are still learners, led by the Holy Spirit into continually unfolding vistas and clearer understanding of the principles we seek to follow. We have learned much from the experience and teaching of others, and feel most keenly our debt to members of the body of Christ in many other churches for their ministry to us. It has been exciting to see the growth and changes at PBC over the years. PBC has been a thrilling adventure in ministry and, I think, a successful experiment that continues to grow and change. Compared with the New Testament standard, of course, we often fall short, but God is gracious and He covers our mistakes with His love. I believe PBC can best be described by the word of Jesus to the church at Philadelphia in Asia Minor: "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

PBC was begun by five businessmen in 1948. These five men and their families felt the need for a warmer time of informal fellowship and Bible study than they were obtaining in the churches they were then attending. They didn't intend to start a new church--just a supplemental experience of close caring and fellowship to add onto their more traditional church experience. They rented a small room in the Palo Alto Community Center and began holding Sunday evening meetings, while still attending their own churches in the mornings.

Looking back, it's clear that these five families were hungering for the koinonia, the body life, of the early church. They achieved this experience to a considerable degree, and the meetings were so enjoyable that they attracted many others who dropped in regularly for the Bible teaching (often by visiting pastors), the songfests, and the inviting, informal atmosphere.

As the group grew, an evening Sunday school class was added, so that children could receive Bible instruction while their parents were in the evening meeting. By the fall of 1950, the number of people attending--both adults and children--was running around a hundred per week. The demands of such a large and fast-growing group became more than the five original leaders could handle in their spare time. It was clear that what had started as a Sunday evening Bible study had somehow become a church! It was clear to everyone involved that God was leading this church to find a shepherd. So, in September 1950, I was privileged to be called as the first full-time pastor of this fledgling church.

Now most of the principles we have explored in this book were either unknown or vaguely understood by me when I first arrived as pastor of what would eventually become Peninsula Bible Church. However, there was one principle discussed in this book that was a clear conviction in my heart, even back then. It was the conviction, derived from Ephesians 4, that the work of the ministry belonged to the people, not to the pastor. I was rather uncertain as to precisely what that ministry was, but I felt right from the beginning that my task as pastor was to unfold the Word of God in its fullness, as best I could understand it, and leave the major ministry responsibilities to the laypeople. Those lay responsibilities included visiting the sick, leading church services, and evangelizing the world--all ministries that were traditionally associated with the role of the pastor!

We determined from the start that we would do no direct evangelizing in the regular services of the church, or within the church building. Instead, our plan was that all evangelization would be done in homes, in backyards, on the campus, in rented halls, or in other public meeting places.

We didn't feel we were inventing anything new. In fact, we were consciously trying to return to the original blueprint of the church, as found in the New Testament! Amazingly, however, what emerged was a church unlike any church any of us had experienced before!

Koinonia at PBC

The Sunday evening Body Life service at PBC was born as the decade of the violent sixties faded into history and the more hopeful year of 1970 came into being. At a New Year's Eve service, held till midnight on December 31, 1969, the sharing of the people was so warm and moving that the pastoral staff, meeting the next week, asked themselves, "Why can't we have meetings like this all the time? How can we keep this beautiful spirit of love and mutual ministry going in our church?"

Out of those questions a determination grew to have a service where people could bear one another's burdens and confess their sins and pray for one another as the Scripture commanded. So we made Sunday evenings our regular time for this special experience we called the "Body Life service."

After the Body Life service had been a fixture in our congregation for over a year, I wrote a special column for the May 21, 1971, issue of *Christianity Today*, describing what takes place in a typical Sunday evening Body Life service:

It happens every Sunday night. Eight hundred or more people pack into a church auditorium designed to seat comfortably only 750. Seventy per cent are under twenty-five, but adults of all ages, even into the eighties, are mingled with the youth, and people of widely varying cultural backgrounds all sit, sing, and pray together.

A leader stands at the center front, a microphone around his neck. "This is the family," he says. "This is the body of Christ. We need each other. You have spiritual gifts which I need, and I have some that you need. Let's share with each other." When a hand goes up toward the back of the center section a red-haired youth runs down the center aisle with a wireless microphone. It is passed down the pew to the young man, who stands waiting to speak. "Man, I don't know how to start," he says, his shoulder-length hair shining as he turns from side to side. "All I know is that I've tried the sex trip and the drug trip and all the rest but it was strictly nowhere. But last week I made the Jesus trip--or I guess I should say that He found me--and man, what love! I can't get over it. I'm just a new Christian, but man, this is where it's at!" A wave of delight sweeps the auditorium, and everyone claps and smiles as the leader says "Welcome to the family. What's your name?"

Other hands are waving for recognition. The leader points to a well-groomed, attractive woman in her mid-thirties. "I just wanted to tell you of the Lord's supply to me this week," she says into the mike. She is a divorcee with small children. Her income had dwindled to the point that she'd had only forty-two cents to eat on that week. But unsolicited food had come. The family had eaten plenty, and she wants to share her thanksgiving. Another enthusiastic round of applause.

Then a sensitive-faced girl with waist-long hair: "I just want the family to pray with me. My brother's blowing his mind with LSD, and it's killing me to watch him coming apart, but we can't get him to stop."

"Phil, go over and stand by her and lead us all in prayer for this real need," the leader requests. "You were on LSD, you know how it feels." A tall, thin youth with a scraggly beard crosses to the girl, takes the mike. "O Father," he prays, "you know how Ann feels and you know how her brother feels. Show him the way out, through Jesus, and show him that you love him just the way he is." He goes on, his prayer eloquent in its simple earnestness, the whole audience listening quietly, with bowed heads.

Then a clean-cut college boy is on his feet, his Bible in his hand. "I just want to share something the lord showed me this week." For five minutes he expounds a verse from the first letter of John, and the crowd laughs with delight at his practical application.

Other needs are shared. One youth asks for prayer that he might be able to buy a car cheaply so he won't have to depend on hitch-hiking to get to his college classes on time. When the prayer is finished, a middle-aged housewife stands at the back and says, "I don't know how this happened, but just this week the Lord gave me a car I don't need. If Ernie wants it, here are the keys."

She holds up a ring of keys, and the crowd applauds joyously as the boy runs to pick up the keys.

Then an offering is announced. The leader explains that all may give as they are able, but if anyone has immediate need he is welcome to take from the plate as much as ten dollars to meet that need. If he needs more than ten, he is warmly invited to come to the church office the next morning and explain the need; more money would be available there. While ushers pass the plate, a young man with a guitar sings a folk song that asks, "Have you seen Jesus my Lord? He's here in plain view. Take a look, open your eyes, we'll show Him to you."

After the song someone calls out a hymn number, and everyone stands to sing it together. Then the teacher for the evening takes over. There is a rustle of turning pages as hundreds of Bibles are opened. For perhaps twenty-five minutes the teacher speaks, pacing the platform, Bible in hand. He illustrates with simple human incidents, some humorous, some sobering. The crowd is with him all the way, looking up references, underlining words, writing in the margins. A few hands are raised with questions on the study. The teacher answers briefly or refers the question to an elder or pastor in the congregation. Then the people stand for a closing prayer. They join hands across the aisles and sing softly, "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord."

When the meeting is dismissed, few leave. They break up into spontaneous groups, some praying, some rapping about a Bible passage, some singing quietly with a guitar, some just visiting and sharing with one another. Gradually the crowd thins down, but it is a good hour or more before everyone is gone and the lights are turned out.

The gathering is called a Body Life Service, a time for members of the body of Christ to fulfill the function of edifying one another in love. It began in January of 1970 when the pastoral staff of Peninsula Bible Church met to discuss the spiritual status of the church. Concern was expressed about the Sunday evening service, which at that time followed a conventional pattern of song service, announcements, Scripture, special music, and preaching. Attendance was rather sparse, running about 150-250 with only a handful of youth present. The major concern was whether we were fulfilling the admonition of Scripture to "bear one another's burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Other texts haunted us, such as, "Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed, [admonish] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Where was this occurring among our people? Where could it occur?

We determined to make a place for this ministry by wiping out the traditional structure of the evening service and using the time to invite a sharing of needs and gifts by the people. We began with the question, "Where are you hurting? Not where did you hurt ten years ago, but now, where are you right now?"

Predictably, it was slow getting started, but soon a climate of honest realism began to prevail. When that was noised abroad, without any particular invitation youth began to appear--many long-haired, barefoot, and in bizarre dress. Our middle-class saints gulped at first but were determined to be genuinely Christian. They welcomed the young people, listened to them, prayed with them, and opened their hearts. The kids did likewise.

The numbers increased by leaps and bounds. For over a year now it has been going on with no sign of a let-up. Every service is different. Love, joy, and a sense of acceptance prevail so strongly that awed visitors frequently remark about a spiritual atmosphere they can almost scoop up in their hands. Koinonia has come! (1)

The Jesus movement of the tie-dyed, flower-power '60s and '70s is gone now, and many of the features which characterized body life at PBC have changed with the times. In fact, the Sunday evening Body Life service is no longer held at PBC--but genuine body life goes on. Peninsula Bible Church continues to be committed to the principles of ministry found in Ephesians 4. Many other churches across the country and around the world demonstrate body life in their own way, through their own forms of expression, in the midst of their own unique regional and cultural context. Whenever a church is ready to take Ephesians 4, 1

Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 seriously, the Lord of the church is ready to heal and to bless.

Update:

In recent years, people have come to Peninsula Bible Church for the first time as a result of reading a prior edition of *Body Life*. They often ask, "When is the *Body Life* service?" And they look stunned and disappointed when they hear, "We don't have *Body Life* services anymore." It's easy to understand why people might mistake the lack of a *Body Life* service for a lack of body life--but the fact is that body life is alive and well at PBC!

Body Life services were only one expression of New Testament body life, as lived out at PBC. But true body life--the caring, vulnerable, accepting, forgiving, life-together experience that is celebrated in this book--has always been a pervasive part of every corner, nook, and cranny of Peninsula Bible Church.

"The *Body Life* service was a phenomenon of the '70s and '80s," recalls one pastor at PBC. "The leadership changed, and the gifts of the new leaders were different than before. Also the society and the needs of our congregation and community changed. Finally, we realized that it was time to make a change. We couldn't allow the fact that there was a book out there called *Body Life* to keep us from doing what is best for our church ministry. This church has always placed current needs and effective ministry over tradition--even a wonderful tradition like the *Body Life* service."

People are often surprised today to learn that Peninsula Bible Church is not one but two churches. Over the years, PBC has planted a number of churches, but in 1985, a decision was made to divide PBC into two distinct congregations--not one church with two locations, but two completely independent churches, both operating on the Ephesians 4 principles of equipping the laity and living in close, caring, *koinonia*-community with one another. The original church in Palo Alto is the "north church," and it serves a community that is largely a mix of older people and Stanford University students. The "south church" is located in Cupertino, at the heart of Silicon Valley, and serves a largely thirty-something community of high-tech engineers and professionals with families.

Dividing into two churches was a ministry decision, not a "church split." PBC has never wanted to be a megachurch, believing that a supermassive size can often work against the sense of intimate body life the church wanted to foster. A large size is also unwieldy in a horizontal structure with widespread lay involvement; a megachurch tends to need top-down, "control"-oriented leadership in order to manage its many far-flung departments and ministries. Deliberately keeping PBC from growing too large has enabled the church to continue focusing on discipleship, the expression of gifts in the laity, and training people to leave and start new ministries rather than focusing on ever-more-ambitious building programs.

Music at both churches remains an eclectic mix of praise songs and choruses, traditional hymns with deep theological content, and contemporary and classical choral works. The focus is on congregational involvement. The rock and folk-rock music of the '70s was attractive to the flower children of the times, but it was essentially concert music, and the congregation tended to be spectators rather than participants.

Today, there is a strong emphasis in both churches on involving the entire congregation in all phases of worship, including the ministry of music. While many churches may legitimately choose to offer different styles of music in different services in order to draw in different "audiences"--one service for the Silent Generation, one for Baby Boomers, one for Generation X--PBC maintains a long tradition of uniting rather than segmenting the congregation. The goal of body life is to blend all believers, all groups and sub groups, into a single body--and the wide range of music employed at PBC is used to support this tradition and draw everyone together in a shared experience of worship.

Body life continues to find new expressions at both churches in the 1990s. Since it comes straight from the New Testament, body life is an elastic concept, stretching across societal and generational changes. Caring and sharing functions of the original *Body Life* evening service have been incorporated into aspects of the morning worship service: a monthly body life sharing time, plus a weekly needs-sharing section in the bulletin--a place where people can seek prayer or practical help if they need work or housing, in home assistance, financial

assistance, transportation, and so forth. Caring, sharing, confession, and holding each other accountable also takes place in the many Bible studies, recovery groups, and other small groups in the church.

The original goal of the Body Life service was to charge up and stimulate the body of Christ to live and minister effectively throughout the week. Christians are to be loving, caring, thoughtful servants of others--not merely at a Body Life service once a week, but at all times, wherever they are. That is still the goal of PBC today, and the spirit of Body Life continues to be practiced throughout the week in the communities served by PBC-Palo Alto and PBC-Cupertino.

Is the Body Life service gone forever? Maybe--or maybe not! American culture in the 1990s shows many of the same features as American culture in the '60s and '70s: political and cultural polarization, generational warfare (Generation X versus the Baby Boomers), distrust of government and other institutions, deep environmental concerns, rising drug abuse, widespread longing for community and healing, and so forth. Could it be that Body Life services, which flourished in the days of the flower children, might actually come back--revived and revised--in the days of Generation X? God alone knows.

A church of small groups

PBC began with a small group, and small groups have been a prominent feature of our ministry since the beginning. Typical of our early small groups were the Home Bible Classes. The primary goal of Home Bible Classes was not to teach Christians, but to attract nonChristians and interest them in the themes of the Bible and in spiritual truth. These groups were deliberately low-key and non-threatening in approach. There was a total absence of activities with a "churchy" flavor, such as hymn-singing, opening prayer, chairs lined up in rows, or a speaker standing behind a lectern. Each group had a host and hostess who opened their home to friends and guests, giving the class the welcoming feel of a purely social occasion. A lay teacher taught from the Bible, seeking to capture the biblical concepts and express them in contemporary terms. Discussion was invited--free-wheeling and no holds barred. Anyone was free to challenge what was presented if they cared to, and their challenges were listened to carefully and courteously. An answer was sought from the Scriptures themselves.

These meetings were an instant success and became so popular that the discussion would sometimes involve scores and even hundreds of people (we had some very large homes available!) and would often continue until the wee hours of the morning. No mention was ever made of PBC at these home meetings, for they were regarded as the personal ministry of the Christians involved. There were soon many new converts coming from these classes, who were then urged to become active in a local church, preferably one close to them. Thus the whole body of Christ in our area began to profit from these classes, and many of the new converts naturally ended up at PBC.

Another "group experience" at PBC which employed many of the same principles as the Home Bible Classes was the young adults group called the Career Class. Since this group often numbered 300 to 400 strong, it could hardly be called a "small group"--yet it truly was "small," intimate, and "non-churchy" in the way it operated. It was, in many ways, a church within a church--but this was a church for mostly single adults. It met in a restaurant every Sunday morning, using the teaching gifts not only of Pastor Ron Ritchie, but of a large staff of lay teachers. There was a significant dynamic of koinonia in the Career Class, of needs being met, of people being vulnerable and available to one another, of disillusioned, broken, and searching people finding their way into a caring, loving, supportive family. Many young adults have found their way to Christ by walking through the doors of that restaurant.

These group experiences--the Home Bible Classes and the Career Class--accomplished three important ends: (1) They were an effective tool for reaching unchurched "worldlings" right where they were (in neighborhood homes and in a restaurant--not a church building), and to introduce them personally and directly to the Lord of glory who had come into the world to call the lost, and not the righteous, to repentance. (2) They were a visible demonstration to our Christian people that the Gospel still has power to transform lives, and that the Gospel could be tremendously attractive to nonChristians when presented without all the religious trappings of a church service. (3) These classes gave many Christians an opportunity to become personal channels of God's Spirit at work, and showed them what an exciting adventure it can be to discover and use your spiritual

gifts in a group setting. Gradually, the turned-on spark of exciting, vital Christianity began to spread throughout the congregation at large.

These group ministries helped to overcome what we came to call "the huddle syndrome"--the tendency of Christians to huddle together, avoiding anything but the most superficial contact with worldlings, avoiding close friendships or extensive hospitality with nonChristians. If we lose contact with worldlings, we lose our ability to influence and reach them with the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Home Bible Classes and Career Class, Christians recovered their confidence in the power of the Gospel and they lost their fear of the world. Instead of relying on a programmed approach to evangelizing, we found that witnessing and evangelizing was being done, powerfully and effectively, through personal friendship and hospitality.

Update:

The emphasis of PBC continues to be *relationships over program* , and the people of PBC recognize that relationships are best developed and strengthened in smaller, more intimate settings. Small groups are also used as a place where laypeople can discover and use their own spiritual gifts, while observing and affirming each other's gifts. For example, one of PBC's men's groups went to Eastern Europe as a short-term mission project, and many of these men discovered ministry gifts they never knew they had--and one even became a fulltime missionary to Romania!

PBC's small groups are under the Care Ministry umbrella, and consist of:

Men's Growth Groups, small groups for men who desire to grow together in Christ in an atmosphere of honesty, accountability, and mutual encouragement.

Women's Growth Groups, small groups for men who desire support and encouragement in applying God's truth to the issues of women in today's changing society.

Special Needs Groups, small groups focused on specific needs and issues, including recovery from sexual abuse, recovery from co-dependency, twelve-step recovery from substance abuse.

All of these groups have a strong evangelistic dimension, since they are aimed at attracting nonChristians and getting them involved with believers in applying the Scriptures to everyday problems.

The Career Class, which met for many years in a local restaurant, has a counterpart in today's PBC as the Twentysomething group, which holds midweek meetings in homes. Twentysomething continues to attract young career-age people, many of whom go on to become involved in either the Palo Alto or Cupertino church.

The Care Ministry also offers seminars, Bible studies, Search for Significance groups, and other groups and services for people who are hurting, needing help, or just desiring to grow in their faith. The purity of body life, of distilled New Testament Christianity, finds endless and varied modes of expression. The vulnerability, caring, and sharing of the large Body Life services of the '70s has largely moved into smaller, more intimate contexts of small groups. This is a reflection of where we are as a culture--and of where PBC is as a congregation.

Campus and youth ministry

Being strategically located near Stanford University, Peninsula Bible Church has always had a strong commitment to an Ephesians 4 ministry within the college community. One of the first associate pastors of our church, David Roper, spearheaded our church's witnessing efforts at the university--an effort which became, in my judgment and to my knowledge, the most effective on any campus in the world. It was Christian young people who stood on the front lines at the campus, boldly and enthusiastically sharing their faith with their peers, doing the work of the ministry that God gave the church to do.

We also applied the body life principles of Ephesians 4 ministry to high school ministry. The addition of Ron Ritchie to our pastoral staff in 1969--which corresponded with the upsurge of the West Coast "Jesus movement"--gave us an opportunity to see literally hundreds of high school students baptized as new converts to Jesus Christ. So vital was their Christian commitment that they moved out in ministry and bold witnessing throughout their community, and far beyond. It is exciting to see many of these same young people return to PBC, and to see that their faith has remained stable as they matured, and that they now serve God as pastors and Christian laypeople in churches across the country and around the world.

We have used these same Ephesians 4 principles of ministry with Christians of all ages and all backgrounds, even with children. We have found that junior high and even junior age children are capable of discovering and exercising their spiritual gifts, and of learning how to rely on resurrection power to effectively serve God. As a consequence, we have seen our junior high young people helping to teach younger children with great effect. And in the summers, we have sent teams of youngsters out under adult leadership, holding week-long meetings for children in remote towns and villages of California, Oregon, and Nevada. Beside the fruit this ministry bears in the lives of many spiritually neglected children in these little towns, our own Christian young people have been powerfully impacted by seeing that God is able to use them in ministry, even though they are young. Since the young people themselves did all the planning and conducting of the meetings, they were able to learn--by their own experience!--the great lessons of trusting the faithfulness of God.

Update:

Since the 1970s, the pressures and perils of being young in America have only increased. Drugs are as prevalent today as in the '70s, and many of those drugs--such as crack cocaine--are more addictive and more deadly than ever before. Today's entertainment media are more explicitly anti-God and sex-drenched than ever before, influencing our young people toward rebellion, immorality, and self-destructive behavior at an alarming rate. Our schools no longer tell our children, "Be moral." Instead, they say, "Be careful," and thrust a condom in the child's hand. Children today fear nuclear war, terrorism, environmental destruction, social collapse, and AIDS. Most young people today come from what used to be a cultural rarity, what we once called "a broken home" (when was the last time you heard that term?). Divorce rates and teen suicide rates are at an all-time high.

Clearly, there is a greater need now than ever before to reach young people with the Gospel and bring them into a caring community where they can share their pain and fears, where they can find love and acceptance, and where they can be trained and disciplined to take part in a cause that is larger than themselves--the cause of Christ. Ministry to children and youth at both PBC churches continues to follow the Ephesians 4 plan. The kids themselves do the ministry.

For example, young people from both churches engage in mission ventures to Mexico and in the local community. They plan the trips and the events themselves. Adults are there to give guidance and answer questions, but keep hands off as much as possible, so that the young people themselves can totally own the ministry. In these settings, the young people of PBC discover their own gifts and ministry skills, and they learn to rely on themselves and each other to provide leadership rather than relying on some vertical authority to tell them what to do and how to do it. These lessons will last a lifetime and carry Peninsula Bible Church far into the next century.

Internship and training programs

The endless creativity of the Holy Spirit has produced approaches and innovations which, in our human wisdom, we could have never planned or expected at PBC. An example of this is the intern training program at PBC, called the Discovery Center. This grew out of the concern of the pastoral staff to do something to meet the need for practical ministry for seminary students during summers. The academic pressures and climate of seminary made it difficult for young ministerial students to put to work some of the principles they were learning, so PBC undertook to bring one or two young men each summer to work with the staff in outreach ministry.

Many of these students were found lacking in three major areas of scriptural understanding: the spiritual walk

of an individual in reliance on resurrection power; the understanding of spiritual gifts and how the body of Christ functions; and the position and power of the church in relationship to society and social problems. Summer after summer these concepts were taught to young seminarians, with PBC bearing the expense of their ministry, involving a monthly salary of \$250 for single students, and \$300 per month for married. The number varied from two to a maximum of twelve in any given summer.

Then young people began coming to us and saying, "We've heard of your training program and we want to get in on it. We will come for a year or so, and pay our own expenses, if you will let us join this program." We discouraged this at first, feeling it would put too much strain upon the pastoral staff, but several were so persistent that we made a venture and took two young people on for one year. When word of this got out we were flooded with applicants, and finally were forced either to make due provision for this influx or abandon the effort entirely. We went ahead, trusting God to lead, and thus began our internship program.

Out of this program evolved the Scribe School. Scribes were chosen from lay applicants in all age groups and from varied backgrounds. It was a kind of informal seminary for laypeople with a desire to understand and teach the Scriptures. For two years, they were plunged into the Greek and Hebrew languages, guided in the discovery of practical teaching skills, and introduced to matters of theology and church history. Each scribe maintained a close association with individual pastors in a tutorial capacity. Scribes, unlike interns, worked at regular jobs to maintain their own support.

Update:

The Scribe School no longer exists in the same way it once did. Its functions have been folded into the Discovery Center internship program, which continues in both churches to this day. The Discovery Center holds quarterly sessions for interns and anyone else who wishes to attend. The internship program changes focus and emphasis over time, but is consistent in its commitment to on-the-job ministry training for laypeople and seminarians. The two PBC churches are never without interns.

Pastor Stedman always believed that the church ought to equip all the saints for ministry the children, the teenagers, the college students, the laity, and the seminarians. It is not the pastors who are on the front lines of ministry; it is the people--all the saints--whose job it is to go out into the world, to land on the beachheads of the world, to take the territory, to win the world by the quietly transforming resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

Discovery Publishing

Still another development that was never planned or promoted but grew from small beginnings is that of Discovery Publications (which, by the way, is not connected with [Discovery House Publishers](#) of Grand Rapids, Michigan). This publishing arm of PBC began with the interest of a young graduate student in geology at Stanford, Peter Irish, who found his eyes opened to fundamental spiritual realities through a series of sermons preached on Ephesians 6, entitled "Spiritual Warfare." He determined to make these messages available in printed form for the benefit of others, and on his own he organized a group of volunteers to transcribe tapes of the messages, edit them, type them on stencils, and run off mimeographed copies. These proved so popular he was encouraged to treat other sermon series in the same manner. He eventually found it necessary to devote his full time to this work.

The messages were advertised by word of mouth, and a large mailing list was gradually built up. Soon, copies of these messages were going out across the country and around the world. Today, these messages are offset printed and include a catalog of messages in stock which cover large areas of the Scriptures, as well as many topical studies of great practical importance, such as studies on sex, marriage, family relationships, parenting, the occult, social issues, and so forth. Even though the two churches, Palo Alto and Cupertino, are completely independent, Discovery Publications serves both churches, providing tapes and transcripts from both pulpits to a vast worldwide mailing list.

This, then, is the state of Body Life at [Peninsula Bible Church](#) today. Who are the ministers at PBC? The people of PBC! What is our job as pastors? To equip the saints "for the work of ministry, for building up of

the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12)! In the shadow of the ivy-clad walls of Stanford University, and in the fast-paced, high-tech world of Silicon Valley, this is what Peninsula Bible Church continues to believe and stand for today.

This, I am convinced, is what the church must stand for, with a sense of urgency and passion and boldness, as the twentieth century draws to a close, and a new millennium begins.

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