COMPLETE BIBLE STUDY



A Deep Biblical Study on God's Promises, Spiritual Formation, and the Power of Expectation

Based on the message preached by Pastor Vinny Azzolini at Tampa Life Church

CONTENTS

INTRO	When God Is Preparing to Birth Something New	3
01	Before the Formation, There Was a Word	8
02	The Visitation That Changes Everything	21
03	The Power of Agreement: When Faith Says Yes to God's Word	41
04	The Gestation of a Promise: What God Develops While We Wait	57
05	Protecting the Promise: The Spiritual Diet of a Birthing Church	72
06	Possession Requires Population: Preparing for Spiritual Multiplication	89
07	The Contractions Before the Birth: Understanding Pressure, Discomfort, and Spiritual Transition	104
08	The Delivery Is Only the Beginning: Nurturing What God Has Brought to Life	120
09	Born to Reach Beyond Our Walls: The Mission of a Multiplying Church	135
10	Becoming the Birthing Church: From Spiritual Expectation to a Lasting Legacy	150
11	Personal Examination, Spiritual Reflection, and Our Commitment to the Next Generation	165

INTRODUCTION + ELEVEN PARTS / SCRIPTURE + REFLECTION + APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

00

When God Is Preparing to Birth Something New



Foundational Scriptures: Jeremiah 1:4-5; Jeremiah 29:10-11; Luke 1:26-38

There are seasons in our walk with God when we can clearly recognize His hand moving in our lives. Doors begin to open, prayers receive answers, and circumstances align in ways that remind us of His faithfulness. However, there are other seasons when God's activity is not nearly as visible. We continue praying, serving, believing, and remaining faithful, yet the promises we have carried seem distant. We know what God has spoken through His Word, but our present circumstances appear disconnected from what we believe He is preparing to accomplish.

These seasons can become some of the most challenging moments of our spiritual journey because they confront a fundamental question: Can we continue trusting God's promises when we cannot yet see their fulfillment?

The message The Birthing Church, preached by Pastor Vinny Azzolini, introduces a powerful biblical perspective on this tension between promise and fulfillment. Through the experiences of Jeremiah, Israel, Mary, and Elizabeth, we discover a recurring spiritual pattern. God speaks, His Word establishes an expectation, a process of formation follows, and eventually what He has purposed is brought into manifestation.

This pattern teaches us that God's promises are not always fulfilled immediately after they are spoken. Sometimes the Word arrives long before the circumstances necessary for its fulfillment have developed.

Consider the experience of the prophet Jeremiah. Before Jeremiah ever understood his calling, before he developed the ability to communicate God's message, and even before he was born, God already knew him and had appointed him for a particular purpose.

Jeremiah 1:5 (KJV)

> *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

This passage reveals something extraordinary about God's relationship with His creation. Jeremiah's calling did not begin when he discovered it. His purpose existed in the knowledge and intention of God before Jeremiah had the capacity to recognize it.

The distinction is significant. Our awareness of God's purpose does not determine when that purpose begins. God can be preparing something long before we understand what He is doing.

We often interpret our lives through the limitations of the present moment. We evaluate our future according to our resources, our experiences, our failures, and the opportunities currently available to us. Yet God's perspective is not restricted by those limitations. He sees what has not yet developed. He understands the process required to prepare us for responsibilities we have not yet imagined.

This does not mean that every personal ambition represents a divine promise, nor does it suggest that every difficulty is evidence of an approaching breakthrough. Rather, Scripture invites us to recognize that God's purposes unfold according to His wisdom, and our responsibility is to remain faithful throughout that process.

The difference between receiving a promise and being prepared for it

One of the most important principles in this study is that receiving a promise and possessing the maturity necessary to steward its fulfillment are not always simultaneous experiences.

We may desire spiritual influence without yet understanding the responsibility that accompanies it. We may pray for greater opportunities to serve without recognizing the sacrifice those opportunities will require. We may ask God to restore our families while He is simultaneously teaching us forgiveness, humility, patience, and the importance of rebuilding trust.

Sometimes our prayers focus exclusively on what we want God to change around us, while God's Word is challenging what must change within us.

This brings us to one of the central themes of the sermon: the waiting season must not become a wasted season.

A mother expecting a child does not simply wait for the day of delivery. During pregnancy, preparation is taking place. The child is developing, the mother's body is adapting, and the family begins making room for a new responsibility.

In a similar way, spiritual expectation should produce spiritual preparation.

If we are praying for our children to develop a deeper relationship with God, we should also examine the spiritual environment we are cultivating in our homes. If we are believing God for revival in our church, we must consider whether we are developing the discipleship structures, relationships, and servant leadership necessary to care for those who respond to the gospel.

If we are asking God to expand our ministry, we must also be willing to grow in character, accountability, biblical understanding, and faithfulness.

Expectation without preparation can become little more than religious enthusiasm. Biblical faith calls us to respond to God's Word through obedience.

A promise that reaches beyond ourselves

Another significant dimension of The Birthing Church is the recognition that God's work is not limited to our individual lives.

We naturally approach many spiritual experiences by asking what they mean for us personally. We wonder how a message applies to our struggles, how a promise might affect our circumstances, or how God might answer a particular prayer.

These questions are important, but they are incomplete.

Throughout Scripture, God's purposes frequently extend beyond the individual receiving the promise.

When God called Abraham, the promise involved generations that Abraham would never personally meet. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He was establishing a people through whom His covenant

purposes would continue. When Mary received the announcement concerning Jesus, her obedience became part of God's redemptive plan for the world.

The fulfillment of God's purposes often reaches further than the person through whom He chooses to work.

This understanding should transform how we view our families, our ministries, and our responsibilities within the church.

We are not simply seeking spiritual experiences that make us feel encouraged. We are participating in something greater than ourselves. Our prayers, our obedience, our generosity, and our willingness to disciple others can influence lives and generations beyond our immediate circumstances.

When we teach our children to pray, we are investing in the spiritual foundation of another generation. When we disciple a new believer, we are participating in the multiplication of faith. When we choose unity instead of division, we help preserve the spiritual environment in which the church can fulfill its mission.

The church is not called merely to preserve what previous generations established. We are called to faithfully carry the gospel forward.

From spiritual excitement to spiritual responsibility

Pastor Azzolini described Tampa Life as a birthing church, a congregation called to carry and bring forth what God is preparing to accomplish.

That declaration challenges us to think beyond numerical growth or institutional expansion. A spiritually fruitful church is not measured only by the number of people who attend its services, but also by the disciples who are formed, the families who are strengthened, the ministries that are developed, and the gospel witness that reaches beyond the church building.

A birthing church must therefore become a nurturing church.

New believers need more than an emotional encounter. They need biblical teaching, spiritual relationships, encouragement, accountability, and opportunities to develop their gifts. Families need more than occasional inspiration. They need the consistent application of God's Word in their daily lives.

And those who are called to lead must understand that spiritual multiplication always carries responsibility.

The birth of something new is not the end of the process. In many ways, it is the beginning of a greater commitment.

The journey ahead

Throughout this Bible study, we will examine the spiritual progression presented in the sermon, beginning with God's visitation and His Word, moving through expectation and formation, and eventually exploring the preparation, pressure, and responsibility associated with spiritual fruitfulness.

We will study how Mary responded to a Word that exceeded her understanding, how Elizabeth's experience challenges our assumptions about limitations, and how Jeremiah's calling reveals God's knowledge of His purposes before their visible manifestation.

We will also explore the spiritual dangers of unhealthy influences, the importance of guarding our hearts, and the difference between praying only for an escape from difficulty and asking God for wisdom to understand what He may be accomplishing through a particular season.

Above all, we will return continually to one foundational truth:

God's Word calls us not merely to expect something from Him, but to become people who are prepared to obey Him.

The question before us is not simply whether we believe God can do something extraordinary. It is whether we are willing to become faithful stewards of what He has already entrusted to us.

Because when God begins something in our lives, our families, and our church, we must be prepared not only to celebrate its arrival, but also to nurture its growth.

PART 01

01

Before the Formation, There Was a Word



Understanding God's Foreknowledge, Divine Purpose, and the Process of Spiritual Formation

Foundational Scripture: Jeremiah 1:4-5 (KJV)

> *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

1.1 God's Purpose Begins Before Our Awareness

One of the most extraordinary revelations in Scripture is that God's knowledge of our lives extends beyond the boundaries of our human understanding. We experience life chronologically. We remember yesterday, live in the present, and anticipate tomorrow. Our understanding of purpose develops through experiences, relationships, decisions, and circumstances. Yet God is not limited by our perception of time. He possesses complete knowledge of what has been, what is, and what is to come.

When God spoke to Jeremiah, He revealed something that would fundamentally change the prophet's understanding of his existence. Before Jeremiah had a name recognized by the world, before he developed a personality, before he could speak a single word, and before anyone could recognize his potential, God already knew him.

The Lord declared, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee."

This statement establishes a profound distinction between human recognition and divine knowledge. People often discover our abilities after observing what we accomplish. They recognize our potential through education, experience, and demonstrated competence. God, however, does not need to wait for our abilities to become visible before He understands what He has created us to accomplish.

Jeremiah's prophetic calling was not something God improvised after observing his development. The Lord revealed that His knowledge and appointment of Jeremiah preceded the prophet's birth.

This truth should produce humility rather than pride. Jeremiah did not create his calling through personal ambition. He did not earn God's attention through exceptional performance. His prophetic assignment originated in the sovereign purpose of God.

However, we must carefully distinguish Jeremiah's specific prophetic appointment from the general purposes God has for His people. Jeremiah 1:5 describes a particular calling given to a particular individual. It does not mean that every believer has been appointed to the same office or that every personal desire represents a predetermined divine assignment. Nevertheless, this passage reveals a foundational truth about God's character: God is intentional in His works, complete in His knowledge, and able to accomplish His purposes through people who initially feel unqualified.

This is especially encouraging when we consider how frequently we evaluate ourselves through our limitations.

We may look at our past and conclude that we have missed too many opportunities. We may examine our families and wonder whether our mistakes have permanently damaged what God could accomplish through us. We may consider our education, financial resources, spiritual experience, or personal abilities and decide that we have very little to offer.

But Jeremiah's encounter reminds us that our limitations do not surprise God.

He knew Jeremiah before Jeremiah understood himself. He understood the assignment before Jeremiah understood the responsibility. And He was prepared to equip the man He had called.

Our confidence must therefore rest not in the greatness of our abilities, but in the faithfulness of the God who calls us to obey Him.

1.2 The Word Precedes the Formation

Pastor Vinny Azzolini emphasized an important pattern in his message: God's Word precedes the process of formation.

In Jeremiah's experience, the Lord revealed that His knowledge and purpose existed before Jeremiah's physical formation. This becomes a powerful illustration of how God can establish His intentions before we see their visible development.

Throughout Scripture, we encounter moments when God speaks before the fulfillment of His purposes becomes evident.

In Genesis 12, God called Abram to leave his country and his father's house, promising to make him a great nation. Yet at the time of that calling, Abram did not possess the nation God had promised. He had to walk in obedience before he could witness the fulfillment of what God had spoken.

In Genesis 15:5-6, the Lord directed Abram's attention toward the stars and promised that his descendants would be exceedingly numerous. Scripture then records that Abram believed the Lord, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness.

The promise was real, but its fulfillment was not immediate.

Abraham and Sarah would experience years of waiting, moments of uncertainty, and even attempts to accomplish God's purposes through their own understanding. Their journey demonstrates that receiving a divine promise does not eliminate the need for patience, obedience, and continued dependence upon God.

This pattern appears again in the life of Joseph. As a young man, Joseph received dreams that pointed toward a future position of authority. Yet the path between those dreams and their eventual fulfillment passed through betrayal, slavery, false accusation, and imprisonment.

The circumstances of Joseph's life frequently appeared to contradict the future represented in his dreams. Nevertheless, God was working through events Joseph could not fully understand.

When Joseph eventually stood before his brothers in Genesis 50:20, he recognized that although they had intended evil against him, God had brought good from their actions, preserving many lives.

We should not conclude that every painful event was directly caused by God or that suffering automatically proves we are approaching a particular promise. Scripture does, however, demonstrate God's ability to work faithfully even through circumstances that seem contrary to His purposes.

The lesson is that the absence of visible fulfillment does not necessarily mean the absence of divine activity.

There may be seasons when God is developing the character, relationships, understanding, and spiritual maturity necessary for the responsibilities ahead.

We may be praying for opportunities while God is teaching us faithfulness in ordinary responsibilities. We may be asking for greater influence while learning to serve without recognition. We may desire a larger ministry while discovering how to love and disciple the people already entrusted to our care.

The formation process matters because the responsibilities associated with God's purposes require more than enthusiasm.

They require maturity.

1.3 Formation Is Not the Same as Fulfillment

There is a difference between being formed for a purpose and seeing that purpose fulfilled.

When God spoke to Jeremiah, the prophet was already alive and capable of receiving the Word. Yet he still had to develop in his understanding of what obedience to that Word would require.

Jeremiah's calling did not exempt him from difficulty. In fact, his ministry would involve rejection, opposition, loneliness, and tremendous emotional suffering.

God's appointment established Jeremiah's responsibility, but it did not remove the challenges associated with fulfilling that responsibility.

This challenges a common misunderstanding about divine purpose. We sometimes assume that when God calls us to something, the path toward it should become easier. We expect favorable circumstances, immediate provision, and visible confirmation at every stage.

But Scripture consistently demonstrates that God's calling and life's difficulties can exist simultaneously.

Consider Moses. Although God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses initially questioned his own ability to speak and lead. In Exodus 4:10, he described himself as slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

God did not respond by telling Moses that his limitations were imaginary. Instead, He reminded Moses that the Creator of the human mouth was capable of helping him fulfill the assignment.

In Exodus 4:12, the Lord declared:

> *Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*

The answer to Moses' insecurity was not self-confidence alone. It was dependence upon God's presence and instruction.

This distinction is essential for our spiritual development.

God does not necessarily wait until we feel completely prepared before calling us to obey. Sometimes obedience becomes part of the preparation itself.

We learn to pray by praying. We learn to serve by serving. We develop spiritual discipline through consistent practice. We become more patient as we choose patience in difficult circumstances. We learn to forgive when we surrender our right to hold bitterness.

Formation is not merely something that happens to us while we remain passive. It involves our willing response to God's Word.

This is why spiritual growth requires intentional participation.

We cannot expect to develop a deep understanding of Scripture while consistently neglecting its study. We cannot expect strong spiritual relationships while refusing fellowship and accountability. We cannot expect our families to develop habits of prayer if prayer remains absent from our homes.

God supplies the grace, wisdom, and strength necessary for spiritual growth, but He also calls us to respond through faith and obedience.

The process of formation is where our profession of faith begins to become a pattern of life.

1.4 God Forms the Vessel Before Entrusting Greater Responsibility

The imagery of formation becomes even more significant when we examine Jeremiah 18.

The Lord instructed Jeremiah to visit the potter's house, where he observed a craftsman working with clay.

Jeremiah 18:3-4 (KJV)

> *Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.*

In its original context, this passage communicates God's sovereign authority over Israel and His dealings with nations in response to their conduct. The following verses emphasize that God's warnings and promises must be understood alongside the people's response to Him.

Yet the imagery also provides an instructive picture of the importance of surrender.

Clay does not determine the shape of the vessel. The potter possesses the understanding, intention, and skill necessary to produce something useful.

As believers, we must recognize that spiritual maturity requires us to surrender our preferences, attitudes, and ambitions to the authority of God's Word.

Sometimes we want God to fulfill His purposes without allowing Him to confront the attitudes that would prevent us from stewarding those purposes faithfully.

We may desire leadership while resisting correction. We may want spiritual authority without developing humility. We may ask for a greater platform while neglecting private devotion. We may pray for our children to follow God while failing to demonstrate consistency between what we teach and how we live.

The formation process confronts these contradictions.

It invites us to examine whether our character is developing alongside our expectations.

The Apostle Paul reinforces this principle in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, where he describes vessels within a great house and emphasizes the importance of cleansing ourselves from dishonorable things so that we may become vessels prepared for good works.

Paul's emphasis is not merely on being chosen for usefulness, but on living in a manner consistent with the Master's purposes.

This is especially important for those of us serving in ministry.

A growing church requires more than talented individuals. It requires spiritually mature disciples who can be trusted with responsibility. It requires leaders who value integrity more than recognition, unity more than personal preference, and faithfulness more than public applause.

If we are asking God to raise up new teachers, ministry leaders, missionaries, and servants, we must also create an environment where spiritual formation is taken seriously.

Training must involve more than teaching people how to perform a ministry function. We must help one another develop biblical convictions, healthy relationships, prayer habits, humility, and a genuine love for people.

A church prepared for multiplication must first be committed to discipleship.

1.5 When God's Word Challenges Our Understanding

One of the most significant moments in Jeremiah's calling occurred immediately after God revealed His purpose.

Jeremiah responded with hesitation.

Jeremiah 1:6 (KJV)

> *Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*

Jeremiah's response reveals the tension between God's calling and human self-perception.

God had declared what He intended Jeremiah to become, but Jeremiah immediately focused on what he believed he could not accomplish.

He saw his youth and inexperience. God saw the assignment He had given him.

This tension is not unique to Jeremiah.

We frequently measure God's purposes against our present abilities. When a responsibility exceeds our experience, our first response may be to identify every reason we are not prepared.

We may say that we are too young, too old, too inexperienced, too busy, or too limited in our resources. Sometimes these concerns reflect genuine practical considerations that require wisdom and planning. At other times, they become excuses that prevent us from responding to clear biblical responsibilities.

The Lord's answer to Jeremiah is remarkable.

Jeremiah 1:7-8 (KJV)

> *But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

God did not build Jeremiah's confidence by exaggerating his abilities. He redirected Jeremiah's attention toward divine instruction and presence.

Jeremiah's responsibility was to go where God sent him and speak what God commanded.

This reveals an important principle for our lives: obedience does not require us to possess unlimited ability. It requires us to trust the One who has given the instruction.

When we consider the mission of the church, this becomes particularly meaningful.

Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel, make disciples, and teach obedience to His commandments. The early church did not possess the financial resources, communication technology, or institutional structures available to us today.

Yet they possessed the Word of God, the power of the Holy Ghost, and a willingness to obey.

Their confidence was not rooted in the greatness of their organizational resources. It was rooted in the presence and authority of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus promised that the disciples would receive power after the Holy Ghost came upon them, enabling them to become witnesses in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The mission was greater than their natural ability, but the promise of divine empowerment accompanied the responsibility.

For us, this means that spiritual formation must always remain connected to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

We do not become spiritually fruitful through human effort alone. We need the transforming work of God within us.

Our planning matters. Our preparation matters. Our training matters. But none of these can replace dependence upon the Holy Ghost.

1.6 The Word Must Form Our Families Before It Shapes Our Future

One of the most practical applications of this teaching concerns the spiritual environment of our homes.

We often speak about God's promises for our families. We pray for our children, our marriages, our relationships, and the generations that will follow us. We believe that God desires to work in our households and that His grace is sufficient to transform lives.

But spiritual expectation should lead us to examine what we are cultivating today.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 teaches that God's commandments were to remain in the hearts of His people and be diligently taught to their children throughout ordinary daily life.

The instruction was not limited to formal religious gatherings. It extended to conversations at home, during travel, at bedtime, and at the beginning of the day.

This reveals that spiritual formation is not an occasional event. It is a continual process.

Our children are influenced not only by the lessons we teach but also by the priorities we demonstrate.

They observe how we respond to disappointment, how we speak about other people, how we handle conflict, and whether our faith remains consistent when circumstances become difficult.

If we want the next generation to develop confidence in God's Word, we must demonstrate what it looks like to trust that Word ourselves.

If we want our children to value prayer, they should see prayer as a natural part of our family life rather than merely an emergency response.

If we want them to understand forgiveness, we must be willing to apologize when we are wrong.

If we want them to develop a love for the church, we must be careful that our conversations about the church reflect the grace, honor, and responsibility Scripture calls us to demonstrate.

This does not mean that faithful parenting guarantees every decision our children will make. Each person must respond personally to God. Nevertheless, we are responsible for cultivating an environment where faith is taught, modeled, and encouraged.

The same principle applies to our marriages.

We cannot continually pray for stronger relationships while refusing to practice patience, communication, humility, and forgiveness.

The Word of God must be permitted to shape our conduct.

When we allow Scripture to correct our attitudes and guide our decisions, we are participating in the process of spiritual formation.

And that formation prepares us to carry greater responsibility with maturity.

1.7 The Danger of Wanting the Promise Without the Process

There is a temptation within human nature to desire the results of spiritual maturity without embracing the disciplines that produce it.

We admire people who demonstrate deep faith, but we may overlook the years of prayer, obedience, and perseverance that helped shape their character.

We celebrate ministries that influence thousands, but we may fail to recognize the unseen sacrifices, difficult decisions, and consistent service that preceded their growth.

We desire the fruit while resisting the cultivation.

Yet Scripture teaches that spiritual growth requires perseverance.

James 1:3-4 (KJV)

> *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James teaches that the testing of faith can develop endurance and spiritual maturity.

The purpose is not suffering for its own sake. Rather, believers are encouraged to remain steadfast so that trials do not destroy their confidence in God.

The word translated perfect in this passage communicates the idea of maturity or completeness. James is describing believers who become spiritually established through perseverance.

This perspective challenges our desire for immediate results.

We live in a culture that values speed. We want quick solutions, immediate answers, and measurable progress. Technology has conditioned us to expect information and services almost instantly.

But spiritual maturity cannot be downloaded, purchased, or manufactured through shortcuts.

A deep prayer life develops through consistent communion with God. Biblical understanding grows through study, reflection, and obedience. Trust is strengthened as we continue walking with God through changing circumstances.

Even the development of meaningful relationships requires time.

A church cannot produce mature disciples simply by attracting large crowds. It must invest in teaching, mentoring, fellowship, accountability, and opportunities for service.

When we attempt to bypass formation, we risk creating an appearance of spiritual success without the foundation necessary to sustain it.

This is why we must learn to value the process rather than treating it as an obstacle.

God is not merely interested in what we accomplish. His Word continually calls our attention to who we are becoming.

1.8 Our Responsibility While God Is Forming Something

If God's purposes often unfold through a process, how should we respond during seasons when fulfillment is not yet visible?

The answer is not passive waiting.

Biblical waiting involves continued faithfulness.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:9:

> *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Paul connects the expectation of a future harvest with perseverance in doing what is right.

The emphasis is not on controlling the timing of the harvest, but on refusing to abandon faithful obedience.

This principle should shape our understanding of spiritual expectation.

We continue praying even when answers are delayed. We continue teaching our children even when their spiritual development appears slow. We continue serving even when our efforts receive little recognition. We continue sharing the gospel even when people do not immediately respond.

We remain faithful because our obedience is rooted in God's Word, not merely in visible results.

For Tampa Life Church, the message of becoming a birthing church carries a significant responsibility.

If we believe God is calling us to reach more people, then we must be willing to strengthen our discipleship. If we desire to influence our community, we must cultivate compassion for the people who live within it. If we expect God to raise up new leaders, we must intentionally invest in the spiritual development of those already among us.

If we pray for multicultural and multigenerational revival, we must be prepared to welcome, teach, and care for people whose backgrounds and experiences differ from our own.

The responsibility of a birthing church is not simply to celebrate spiritual growth. It is to create a healthy biblical environment in which that growth can continue.

This requires unity, patience, sacrifice, and an understanding that every member of the body of Christ has a role to fulfill.

We must resist the temptation to measure success exclusively by what is happening on the platform. Much of the most significant spiritual formation takes place in conversations, Bible studies, prayer meetings, homes, and relationships that may never receive public recognition.

These ordinary expressions of faithfulness are essential to the health of the church.

The promise of future growth should never distract us from the people God has entrusted to our care today.

1.9 When the Process Is Longer Than We Expected

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of spiritual formation is that we rarely know how long a particular season will last.

We may begin with enthusiasm, believing that the fulfillment of our expectations is near. Yet as months or years pass, discouragement can begin to influence our thinking.

We wonder whether we misunderstood God's direction. We question whether our prayers have been heard. We may even begin comparing our lives with others who appear to be progressing more quickly.

But comparison is a dangerous foundation for spiritual confidence.

God's dealings with individuals throughout Scripture were not identical.

Abraham experienced a long period between the promise of a son and Isaac's birth. Joseph endured years of adversity before assuming leadership in Egypt. David was anointed before he became king, yet he experienced significant opposition before ascending the throne.

These accounts do not establish a universal timetable for divine promises. They demonstrate that God's purposes are not necessarily fulfilled according to our preferred schedule.

During prolonged seasons of waiting, our greatest challenge may not be understanding what God is doing, but remaining faithful when we do not understand.

Proverbs 3:5-6 calls us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts rather than relying exclusively on our own understanding.

Trust does not mean abandoning wisdom or refusing to make responsible decisions. It means acknowledging that our perspective is limited and submitting our ways to God.

We can make plans while remaining surrendered to His direction. We can pursue opportunities while recognizing His authority. We can pray with confidence while accepting that His wisdom exceeds our own.

Sometimes the most significant evidence of spiritual growth is not that our circumstances have changed, but that our relationship with God has deepened while circumstances remain difficult.

We discover that prayer is valuable even before an answer arrives. We learn that worship is appropriate even when life is uncertain. We recognize that obedience matters even when it requires sacrifice.

And gradually, our understanding of God's faithfulness becomes less dependent upon immediate outcomes.

1.10 The Word That Begins the Process Must Continue to Guide It

The central lesson of this section returns us to Jeremiah's encounter with God.

Before Jeremiah's ministry began, God spoke.

But the Word that initiated Jeremiah's calling would also have to sustain him throughout his assignment.

Jeremiah could not depend upon one spiritual encounter while neglecting continued obedience to God's instructions. His ministry required him to keep listening, keep speaking faithfully, and keep trusting the Lord through opposition.

The same principle applies to us.

We cannot build our spiritual lives exclusively upon memories of previous encounters with God.

Yesterday's encouragement cannot replace today's prayer. A powerful church service cannot substitute for a consistent relationship with the Lord. A prophetic message must never become an excuse to neglect the written Word of God.

Our expectations must remain anchored in Scripture.

This is particularly important when we consider the difference between God's revealed promises and our personal interpretations of what He may be doing.

We can confidently affirm what Scripture teaches about God's character, His salvation, His faithfulness, and His ultimate purposes. However, we must exercise humility when interpreting personal impressions or predictions about specific future events.

The Apostle Paul instructed believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 not to despise prophesyings, but also to prove all things and hold fast to what is good.

Spiritual expectation and biblical discernment belong together.

A healthy church does not abandon expectation because it values discernment. Neither does it abandon discernment because it values the moving of the Holy Spirit.

We need both.

We must remain sensitive to God's presence while allowing Scripture to establish the boundaries of our beliefs and practices.

When the Word remains central, spiritual formation becomes grounded in truth rather than emotional excitement alone.

And when our lives are shaped by that truth, we become better prepared to fulfill the responsibilities God places before us.

Section 1 Conclusion: The Promise May Be Future, but Our Obedience Is Present

Before Jeremiah understood his calling, God knew him. Before he could recognize his assignment, God had already declared His purpose. Yet Jeremiah still had to respond, grow, persevere, and remain faithful.

This is the tension we must embrace as we consider the message of The Birthing Church.

We believe God is able to accomplish extraordinary things, but we also recognize that spiritual fruitfulness requires faithful participation in His work.

We cannot control every circumstance or determine the timing of every outcome. We cannot manufacture revival through human effort or guarantee that every personal expectation will unfold exactly as we imagine.

But we can respond to God's Word.

We can surrender our attitudes to His correction. We can strengthen our homes through prayer and biblical instruction. We can develop spiritual discipline. We can invest in discipleship. We can protect the unity of the church. We can serve faithfully while trusting God with the results.

Perhaps the most important question is not simply what we are expecting God to do next.

Perhaps we must also ask what God is calling us to become today.

Because a church prepared to carry new life must be a church willing to be formed by the Word that gives life.

We cannot separate the promise we desire from the spiritual responsibility required to carry it faithfully.

And before we can fully understand the process of spiritual birth, we must understand what happens when God's Word enters our lives and calls us to respond.

PART 02

02

The Visitation That Changes Everything



When God's Presence Meets His Word and Awakens Divine Expectation

Foundational Scriptures: Jeremiah 29:10-11; Luke 1:26-38; Genesis 18:9-14; Acts 2:1-4

2.1 Every Divine Purpose Begins With God

Throughout Scripture, we discover that some of the most significant transformations in human history began when God intervened in ordinary circumstances. People were living their lives, fulfilling their responsibilities, confronting their limitations, and navigating situations they could not fully understand. Then, through a divine encounter, a revelation of His Word, or a manifestation of His presence, God redirected the course of their lives.

Abraham was living in a world surrounded by idolatry when God called him to leave his country and follow a promise he could not yet see. Moses was tending sheep in the wilderness when God revealed Himself through a burning bush. Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress, attempting to protect what little remained from the Midianites, when the angel of the Lord announced a calling that exceeded Gideon's understanding of himself. Mary was living an ordinary life in Nazareth when an angel appeared with an announcement that would forever change human history.

These encounters were different in their circumstances, but they shared an essential characteristic: God initiated something that human ability alone could never have accomplished.

This is where we must begin our understanding of spiritual visitation.

A visitation from God is not merely an emotional moment or an unusual religious experience. In the biblical accounts we are examining, it involves God making His presence, will, or purpose known in a particular way. Sometimes that encounter brings instruction. Sometimes it brings correction. Sometimes it announces a promise. At other times, it calls people into responsibilities they never anticipated.

But genuine encounters with God always direct our attention toward Him and His purposes.

In the message The Birthing Church, Pastor Vinny Azzolini introduced a powerful progression that connects divine visitation with the fulfillment of God's promises. He identified a pattern in which God visits, His Word is communicated, expectation is awakened, formation takes place, and eventually the purpose He has established comes into manifestation.

This pattern is especially meaningful because it reminds us that spiritual fruitfulness begins with God's initiative rather than human ambition.

We cannot manufacture the presence of God. We cannot manipulate His purposes through emotional intensity. We cannot force divine promises to unfold according to our preferred timetable.

But we can cultivate hearts that are attentive to His Word, surrendered to His authority, and willing to respond when He calls.

This distinction is essential for the spiritual health of our families and our church.

We should never confuse a powerful atmosphere with genuine transformation. A service can be emotionally moving without producing lasting obedience. We can feel deeply encouraged by a message without allowing its biblical truth to change our behavior.

The purpose of an encounter with God is not simply to give us a memorable experience. It is to bring us into a deeper relationship with Him and a more faithful response to His Word.

When God's presence becomes central to our lives, our priorities begin to change. We become more sensitive to His correction, more attentive to the needs of others, and more willing to surrender the areas of our lives that resist His authority.

A church that desires to become spiritually fruitful must therefore seek more than occasional moments of inspiration.

We must become a people who continually welcome the transforming work of God.

2.2 The Visitation That Arrives After a Long Season of Waiting

One of the foundational passages Pastor Azzolini used was Jeremiah 29:10-11. These verses reveal the relationship between God's promised visitation and the future He had established for His people.

Jeremiah 29:10-11 (KJV)

> *For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.*
>
> *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

These verses are frequently quoted as expressions of encouragement, particularly when we are facing uncertainty about the future. Yet their historical context gives them a much deeper significance.

Jeremiah was speaking to a people who had experienced tremendous national disruption. Jerusalem had suffered under Babylonian domination, and many of its inhabitants had been carried into exile. Families were separated from their homeland, familiar structures of life had been interrupted, and the future of the nation appeared uncertain.

The exile was not merely an unfortunate political event. According to the prophetic testimony of Scripture, it was connected to Judah's persistent disobedience and covenant unfaithfulness.

Nevertheless, even in the midst of judgment, God communicated a promise concerning the future of His people.

He declared that after seventy years, He would visit them and fulfill His good Word by bringing them back.

The promise did not eliminate the seventy-year period.

This is an important detail.

God did not tell the exiles that their circumstances would change immediately. In fact, earlier in Jeremiah 29, the Lord instructed them to build houses, plant gardens, establish families, and seek the peace of the city where they had been taken.

They were expected to live faithfully during a season they would not have chosen.

Their hope for the future did not remove their responsibility in the present.

This challenges how we sometimes approach the promises of God.

We may believe that if God has promised something, we should immediately experience relief from the circumstances that oppose it. We may interpret delay as abandonment or assume that prolonged difficulty means God has forgotten us.

But Jeremiah 29 demonstrates that God's faithfulness can remain certain even when fulfillment is delayed.

The people of Judah were not instructed to deny the reality of their exile. They were called to remain faithful while trusting the Lord's declared intention to restore them.

We must also recognize that this was a specific covenant promise to the exiles of Judah. It should not be transformed into a universal guarantee that every personal plan will succeed after a particular period of waiting. Its enduring significance lies in what it reveals about God's faithfulness, His authority over history, and His ability to accomplish what He has spoken.

For our lives, the application is deeply meaningful.

There may be seasons when we are praying for restoration in our families, renewed spiritual passion, healing in relationships, or greater opportunities to serve. During those seasons, we must not allow our anticipation of tomorrow to become an excuse for neglecting today's responsibilities.

We continue loving our families. We continue serving the church. We continue practicing generosity, forgiveness, and obedience.

We do not suspend our faithfulness until circumstances become favorable.

The promise of God's future faithfulness should strengthen our present obedience, not replace it.

2.3 "I Will Visit You": The God Who Has Not Forgotten His People

The words "I will visit you" in Jeremiah 29:10 carry tremendous significance.

For the exiles, God's visitation meant that their present condition would not have the final word over their national future. The Lord had established a period of judgment, but He had also declared His intention to fulfill His promise of restoration.

The people could not reverse the exile through their own strength. They could not simply decide that seventy years had passed because they were tired of waiting. Their hope rested upon the faithfulness of God.

This reveals a principle that is essential to spiritual maturity: God's promises depend ultimately upon His character, not upon our ability to control circumstances.

Human beings are limited in knowledge, strength, and perspective. We cannot predict every challenge that lies ahead. We cannot guarantee the decisions other people will make. We cannot prevent every disappointment or remove every obstacle.

But God is not limited in the way we are.

His knowledge is complete. His authority is supreme. His faithfulness does not fluctuate according to our emotions.

When Scripture reveals God fulfilling His Word, it invites us to develop confidence in His trustworthiness.

Yet this confidence must remain rooted in what God has actually promised.

There is a difference between trusting God's faithfulness and assuming that He is obligated to fulfill every expectation we develop.

Our desires may be sincere without necessarily representing divine instruction. Our plans may be meaningful without being guaranteed by Scripture. Our understanding of a particular situation may be incomplete.

For this reason, spiritual maturity requires both faith and discernment.

We must learn to distinguish between the unchanging promises of God's Word and our personal interpretations of what He may be doing.

This distinction does not weaken faith. It protects faith from becoming dependent upon assumptions God never required us to make.

When our confidence rests upon the character of God, we can remain faithful even when our expectations need to be corrected.

The greatest assurance we possess is not that every circumstance will unfold according to our preferences, but that God remains worthy of our trust.

2.4 The Word Creates an Expectation That Circumstances Cannot Produce

Pastor Azzolini emphasized that God's Word produces expectation.

This is one of the central theological themes of the entire message.

Before the Word arrives, we may see only the limitations of our circumstances. We evaluate possibilities through experience, available resources, and what appears reasonable. But when God speaks, He reveals what is possible according to His wisdom and power.

Consider the experience of Abraham and Sarah.

In Genesis 18, the Lord reaffirmed the promise that Sarah would have a son. At that moment, both Abraham and Sarah were advanced in age, and the ordinary biological expectation of childbirth appeared impossible.

Genesis 18:13-14 (KJV)

> *And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?*
>
> *Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.*

Sarah's reaction reflected the tension between God's promise and her understanding of what was naturally possible.

She had lived long enough to know the limitations of her circumstances. She understood her age. She understood the years that had passed without the child she desired.

But the Lord challenged the assumption that human limitations could determine the boundaries of divine ability.

"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"

This question reaches beyond Abraham and Sarah's circumstances.

It confronts our tendency to evaluate God's power according to the limitations of what we have previously experienced.

We may look at a family member who has resisted the gospel for years and begin to believe that change is impossible. We may observe a struggling marriage and assume that reconciliation can never occur. We may consider the spiritual condition of our communities and conclude that meaningful revival is beyond reach.

But Scripture repeatedly reminds us that God possesses power beyond human ability.

However, we must also recognize that God's power does not mean every outcome we desire has been promised. The question is not whether God is able to accomplish the impossible. He is. The question is whether we are willing to trust His wisdom, submit to His Word, and remain faithful regardless of the outcome.

This is the foundation of healthy spiritual expectation.

We do not deny reality. We do not pretend that obstacles do not exist. We do not confuse optimism with faith.

Instead, we acknowledge our limitations while trusting the limitless power and wisdom of God.

Biblical expectation is not confidence in our ability to predict the future. It is confidence in the God who holds the future.

2.5 Mary's Visitation: When God's Word Interrupts an Ordinary Life

The account of Mary in Luke 1 provides one of the clearest examples of divine visitation, revelation, and response.

Mary was living in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was espoused to Joseph, and her life was moving toward the ordinary expectations associated with marriage and family.

Then the angel Gabriel appeared with a message that would transform everything.

Luke 1:30-33 (KJV)

> *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*
>
> *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.*
>
> *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:*
>
> *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Mary received an announcement that exceeded every natural expectation.

She was not being invited merely into a new personal opportunity. She was being told that she would become the mother of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.

The significance of this moment cannot be overstated.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is a unique event in redemptive history. It is not simply an illustration of human potential or a general pattern that can be reproduced in every believer's life.

God was accomplishing His eternal purpose of salvation through the coming of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, Mary's response provides a profound example of how faith responds when God's Word exceeds human understanding.

She did not possess all the answers. She could not fully anticipate the social consequences, emotional challenges, or personal sacrifices that would accompany her calling.

Yet she was invited to trust the Word she had received.

This is where the account becomes deeply personal for us.

We may not experience an angelic visitation, and we should never assume that our circumstances are equivalent to Mary's unique role in salvation history. But we do encounter the Word of God calling us to obedience that sometimes challenges our expectations.

Scripture calls us to forgive when resentment feels justified. It calls us to love when relationships become difficult. It calls us to generosity when selfishness seems easier. It calls us to holiness when the surrounding culture encourages compromise.

The Word frequently challenges our natural preferences.

And in those moments, we face a decision similar in principle to Mary's response.

Will we allow God's Word to govern our lives, even when obedience requires us to surrender our own understanding?

2.6 "How Shall This Be?": Faith Is Not the Absence of Questions

Mary's response to Gabriel is particularly instructive.

Luke 1:34 (KJV)

> *Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

Mary asked a question.

This detail is important because we sometimes assume that genuine faith never struggles to understand.

We may believe that asking questions demonstrates spiritual weakness or that uncertainty automatically reveals unbelief.

But Scripture presents a more nuanced picture.

Mary's question concerned how the announced event would occur. She did not claim to possess the ability to accomplish it. She recognized that the promise exceeded the ordinary possibilities of her circumstances.

The angel answered by explaining that the Holy Ghost would come upon her and that the power of the Highest would overshadow her.

Luke 1:35 (KJV)

> *And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

The answer did not provide Mary with a complete explanation of every future event.

It revealed the divine power through which God's purpose would be accomplished.

This distinction teaches us something important about faith.

Faith does not require us to understand everything before we obey what God has clearly revealed.

There are moments when we need wisdom, clarification, and counsel. Scripture encourages us to seek understanding and to test what we hear.

But there are also moments when we must recognize that our knowledge will remain incomplete.

We may understand that God calls us to forgive without knowing whether reconciliation will be immediately possible. We may understand that He calls us to share the gospel without knowing how another person will respond. We may understand that He calls us to serve without knowing where that service will eventually lead.

Our responsibility is to obey the truth we have received while trusting God with what remains unknown.

For our families, this principle is particularly valuable.

Parents frequently face circumstances for which there are no immediate solutions. We may pray for children who are struggling spiritually, emotionally, or relationally. We may seek wisdom concerning decisions that will influence their future.

Faith does not mean pretending that these situations are simple.

It means continuing to seek God, apply His Word, make responsible decisions, and trust Him with the matters beyond our control.

We can have questions and still possess faith.

We can acknowledge uncertainty and still remain obedient.

We can recognize our limitations without questioning God's ability.

2.7 The Holy Ghost: The Power Behind God's Redemptive Work

The angel's announcement to Mary introduces the work of the Holy Ghost in a remarkable way.

The conception of Jesus Christ was not the result of ordinary human ability. It was the miraculous work of God.

For Apostolic Pentecostal believers, this passage also reminds us of the central importance of the Holy Spirit throughout the biblical narrative.

From the opening chapters of Genesis to the establishment of the New Testament church, Scripture reveals the Spirit of God actively accomplishing His purposes.

In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit empowered individuals for particular assignments, including leadership, prophetic ministry, and service.

In the New Testament, the Holy Ghost is central to the conception of Jesus, the ministry of Christ, and the birth and expansion of the church.

Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power through the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:8 (KJV)

> *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The purpose of this empowerment was not merely to provide an extraordinary spiritual experience.

It was to equip believers to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ.

The disciples were called to become witnesses.

They would proclaim the gospel, demonstrate obedience to Christ, and carry the message of salvation beyond the boundaries of their immediate community.

In Acts 2, the promised outpouring of the Holy Ghost became a defining moment in the history of the church.

Acts 2:4 (KJV)

> *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

From an Apostolic Pentecostal understanding, this passage establishes the biblical pattern of Spirit baptism accompanied by speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

Yet we must also recognize that the experience of Pentecost was connected to a continuing mission.

The believers did not receive the Holy Ghost so they could remain isolated in an upper room.

They were empowered to proclaim Jesus Christ.

Peter stood before the multitude and preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. When the people asked what they should do, he declared the message recorded in Acts 2:38.

Repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost became central to the apostolic proclamation.

The Spirit-filled church was born into a mission of evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual multiplication.

This connection is essential to the message of The Birthing Church.

We cannot separate spiritual empowerment from spiritual responsibility.

If we desire a greater moving of the Holy Ghost in our services, we must also be willing to respond to the mission the Spirit empowers us to fulfill.

If we pray for revival, we must be prepared to share the gospel.

If we pray for new believers, we must be prepared to disciple them.

If we desire spiritual gifts to operate within the church, we must also pursue the love, maturity, and biblical order that Scripture requires.

The power of the Holy Ghost is not given to magnify our importance. It is given to glorify Jesus Christ and empower His work through His people.

2.8 Elizabeth: When God Works Beyond the Limitations of Our Season

After announcing the miraculous conception of Jesus, Gabriel directed Mary's attention toward Elizabeth.

Luke 1:36-37 (KJV)

> *And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.*
>
> *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

Elizabeth's story adds another important dimension to our understanding of divine visitation.

She and her husband Zacharias had lived faithfully before God, yet they had experienced the sorrow of being unable to have children.

Luke 1:7 explains that Elizabeth was barren and that both she and Zacharias were advanced in years.

Their circumstances appeared to place them beyond the ordinary possibility of having a child.

Yet God intervened.

Elizabeth conceived John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Azzolini emphasized a powerful thought from this account: some promises are fulfilled in seasons of maturity rather than at the beginning of our journey.

This observation challenges our assumptions about spiritual timing.

We sometimes believe that the most significant opportunities in life belong exclusively to the young. We may assume that as we grow older, our usefulness diminishes or that opportunities we have not yet experienced are permanently lost.

But Scripture does not support the idea that age alone determines spiritual usefulness.

Moses was eighty years old when he confronted Pharaoh. Caleb, at eighty-five, continued expressing confidence in God's promise concerning his inheritance. Anna, an elderly prophetess, remained devoted to worship, fasting, and prayer, and she recognized the significance of the infant Jesus.

These accounts reveal that spiritual fruitfulness is not limited to a particular stage of life.

There are responsibilities that require youthful strength and enthusiasm. There are others that benefit from decades of experience, wisdom, and perseverance.

A healthy church needs both.

We need the passion and energy of younger generations, but we also need the stability, wisdom, and spiritual experience of those who have walked with God for many years.

When generations honor one another, the church becomes stronger.

Younger believers receive guidance and encouragement. Older believers continue finding meaningful opportunities to serve, teach, mentor, and invest in the future.

The church should never treat spiritual maturity as an obstacle to participation.

Neither should it assume that youth is incompatible with meaningful service.

God is able to work through people at every stage of life.

2.9 Barrenness Does Not Define Our Identity

Elizabeth's experience also introduces the theme of barrenness.

In the biblical narrative, her barrenness was a literal inability to conceive a child. We must be careful not to minimize the emotional reality of infertility by treating it merely as a spiritual metaphor.

For Elizabeth, this was a deeply personal experience.

Yet her circumstances did not determine her worth before God.

Luke 1:6 describes Elizabeth and Zacharias as righteous before God, walking in His commandments and ordinances.

Their inability to have children was not presented as evidence that they lacked faithfulness.

This distinction is essential.

We must resist the tendency to interpret every unfulfilled desire as a sign of spiritual failure.

A family experiencing infertility is not necessarily lacking faith. A believer facing financial hardship is not automatically living outside God's will. A church experiencing slow numerical growth is not necessarily spiritually unhealthy.

Circumstances alone do not provide a complete measure of spiritual faithfulness.

When we apply the imagery of barrenness to our spiritual lives, we should do so with care.

There may be areas where we feel unproductive, discouraged, or uncertain about our usefulness. We may look at our past and believe that our opportunities have disappeared. We may compare our lives with others and conclude that we have nothing meaningful to contribute.

But our value in God's kingdom is not determined exclusively by visible accomplishments.

Faithfulness matters even when results are difficult to measure.

A parent who consistently prays for a struggling child is demonstrating spiritual faithfulness. A believer who quietly encourages someone in distress is participating in meaningful ministry. A church member who serves without recognition contributes to the health of the body of Christ.

The kingdom of God includes countless acts of obedience that may never attract public attention.

We must not allow the absence of visible results to convince us that our lives have become spiritually insignificant.

God sees what others overlook.

And He is able to accomplish His purposes through people whose circumstances appear limited.

2.10 "Be It Unto Me According to Thy Word": The Response That Changes Everything

Perhaps the most important moment in Mary's encounter comes at the conclusion of Gabriel's announcement.

Luke 1:38 (KJV)

> *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

Mary's response reveals the heart of biblical surrender.

She did not demand control over every future circumstance. She did not insist upon understanding every challenge that would accompany her calling.

Instead, she identified herself as the servant of the Lord and expressed her willingness to receive what God had spoken.

Her response was not an attempt to create the promise through personal determination.

It was an expression of submission to the Word of God.

This is a crucial distinction.

We do not possess authority to bring divine purposes into existence merely by declaring what we desire. God's Word carries authority because God is its source.

Our responsibility is to receive, believe, and obey what He has revealed.

Mary's response therefore provides a model of surrendered faith.

She acknowledged God's authority. She accepted His Word. She submitted herself to His purpose.

For our lives, this becomes a profound spiritual challenge.

We may enjoy hearing sermons about divine promises, but are we equally willing to receive biblical instructions that confront our attitudes?

We may celebrate messages about spiritual multiplication, but are we willing to make the sacrifices necessary for discipleship?

We may pray for our families to experience restoration, but are we willing to practice forgiveness, humility, and patient love?

We may desire a greater move of God in our church, but are we willing to surrender personal preferences for the sake of unity and mission?

Agreement with God's Word cannot be reduced to enthusiastic verbal affirmation.

It must become visible through obedience.

Jesus addressed this principle directly in Luke 6:46 when He asked why people called Him Lord while refusing to do what He commanded.

The question remains relevant.

It is possible to admire the teachings of Jesus without consistently applying them.

It is possible to participate in worship while resisting His correction.

It is possible to express excitement about the future while neglecting present responsibilities.

But biblical faith calls us beyond agreement in words alone.

It calls us to surrender our lives.

The strongest evidence that we have received God's Word is not merely what we declare, but how we respond to what He commands.

2.11 A Visitation Must Produce More Than a Moment

Throughout the history of the church, believers have experienced powerful moments in prayer, worship, preaching, and spiritual renewal.

These experiences can be deeply meaningful.

They may bring conviction, encouragement, renewed commitment, or a clearer understanding of God's Word.

But the lasting significance of such moments is revealed through what follows.

Consider the disciples after Pentecost.

Acts 2 does not conclude with the experience of speaking in tongues.

The chapter continues by describing a growing community of believers who devoted themselves to apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

The outpouring of the Holy Ghost was followed by a pattern of spiritual commitment.

The believers continued in doctrine.

They developed relationships.

They prayed together.

They practiced generosity.

They became a community whose faith influenced everyday life.

This is one of the most important lessons for a church expecting spiritual multiplication.

We cannot measure the lasting impact of a spiritual encounter exclusively by the intensity of the moment.

We must also examine whether it produces deeper obedience, stronger discipleship, healthier relationships, and greater commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ.

If we experience powerful worship but remain unwilling to forgive, something is incomplete.

If we celebrate spiritual gifts while neglecting love, we have misunderstood their purpose.

If we pray for revival while refusing to care for new believers, we are failing to prepare for the very growth we desire.

A birthing church must understand that spiritual encounters create responsibilities.

The people who respond to the gospel need instruction and encouragement.

Those who receive the Holy Ghost need continued discipleship.

Families experiencing restoration need healthy relationships and ongoing support.

New leaders need training, accountability, and opportunities to develop.

Spiritual multiplication requires intentional care.

The church must not become so focused on celebrating new beginnings that it neglects the responsibility of nurturing what has begun.

2.12 From Personal Visitation to Corporate Responsibility

The message The Birthing Church was directed specifically toward Tampa Life Church.

Pastor Azzolini was not simply encouraging individuals to believe for personal blessings. He was challenging the congregation to recognize its collective responsibility.

This introduces an important distinction between individual spiritual experiences and the mission of the church as a body.

God works in individual lives, but He also brings believers together into a spiritual community.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (KJV)

> *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

Paul describes the church as a body composed of many members, each possessing a role within the whole.

No single member represents the entire body.

No individual possesses every gift.

No ministry can fulfill the church's mission independently.

This means that spiritual multiplication requires cooperation.

A person may receive a burden for evangelism, but the church must also be prepared to welcome and disciple those who respond.

A teacher may feel called to develop biblical instruction, but that ministry becomes stronger through accountability, leadership, and a community committed to learning.

A family may experience spiritual renewal, but continued growth is strengthened through fellowship with other believers.

The mission is collective.

This is particularly important for a multicultural church.

As God brings together people from different nations, languages, generations, and cultural backgrounds, we must learn to value the diversity of experiences represented within the body.

Unity does not require everyone to share the same cultural background or personal preferences.

It requires a shared commitment to Jesus Christ, biblical truth, mutual love, and the mission of the gospel.

The church becomes spiritually stronger when we recognize that our differences can create opportunities for service rather than reasons for division.

Those who speak different languages can help communicate the gospel across cultural boundaries.

Those with teaching abilities can strengthen discipleship.

Those gifted in hospitality can help newcomers feel welcomed.

Those experienced in prayer can encourage others to develop deeper spiritual disciplines.

Those who possess organizational and administrative abilities can help establish structures that support sustainable ministry.

Every member has something meaningful to contribute.

And when the body functions together in love, the church becomes better prepared to fulfill its calling.

2.13 Expectation Must Be Rooted in God's Presence, Not Our Preferences

One of the dangers associated with spiritual expectation is the possibility of confusing our desires with God's direction.

We may become so emotionally invested in a particular outcome that we assume our expectation must represent a divine promise.

But Scripture repeatedly calls us to submit our desires to the will of God.

Jesus Himself demonstrated perfect submission in Gethsemane.

Facing the suffering of the cross, He prayed:

Luke 22:42 (KJV)

> *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

This prayer reveals that surrender is not the absence of desire.

Jesus expressed the reality of the suffering before Him while remaining completely submitted to the Father's will.

For us, this establishes an essential principle.

We can pray boldly while remaining surrendered.

We can believe God for healing while acknowledging His wisdom.

We can ask for restoration while recognizing that other people possess responsibility for their own decisions.

We can seek growth in our church while refusing to compromise biblical principles in pursuit of numerical success.

We can desire opportunities while trusting God when doors remain closed.

Our expectations must never become more important than our relationship with the Lord.

The greatest purpose of spiritual visitation is not to convince us that God will fulfill every personal ambition.

It is to draw us into deeper fellowship with Him and greater alignment with His Word.

When our relationship with God becomes the foundation of our expectation, we discover that faithfulness is possible even when outcomes differ from what we anticipated.

We remain anchored because our confidence rests upon Him.

2.14 Preparing Our Hearts for What God Wants to Accomplish

If spiritual visitation awakens expectation, then we must consider how to prepare our hearts to respond.

The first requirement is humility.

We must recognize that God's wisdom exceeds our own and that His Word possesses authority over our preferences.

The second is attentiveness.

We need consistent time in Scripture and prayer, not because these practices force God to act, but because they help us develop spiritual sensitivity and biblical understanding.

The third is obedience.

When Scripture reveals an area of our lives that requires change, we should respond rather than continually postponing correction.

The fourth is unity.

A church divided by gossip, jealousy, competition, and unresolved bitterness will struggle to nurture healthy spiritual relationships.

And the fifth is preparation.

If we believe God is calling us to reach people, we must be willing to develop the ministries and relationships necessary to serve them.

These responsibilities belong together.

We cannot substitute emotional enthusiasm for biblical maturity.

We cannot replace prayer with organizational strategy.

Neither can we neglect practical preparation while expecting spiritual growth to sustain itself automatically.

A healthy church recognizes that prayer and preparation are partners.

We pray because we depend upon God.

We prepare because we take seriously the responsibilities He has entrusted to us.

We remain surrendered because the outcome belongs to Him.

This is the spiritual posture of a church ready to grow.

Not a church that claims to control the future, but a church that is faithfully preparing to serve whatever people and opportunities God brings.

Section 2 Conclusion: When God Visits, We Must Be Ready to Respond

The accounts of Jeremiah, Mary, and Elizabeth reveal different expressions of God's faithfulness.

Jeremiah announced a promised visitation that would bring restoration after a long season of exile.

Mary received a divine announcement that called her into a unique role in God's redemptive plan.

Elizabeth experienced God's miraculous intervention in a season when childbirth appeared naturally impossible.

Each account demonstrates that God's purposes exceed the limitations of human understanding.

But these passages also remind us that divine encounters are not intended to produce passive admiration.

They call for a response.

The exiles were instructed to live faithfully while awaiting restoration.

Mary surrendered herself to the Word of the Lord.

Elizabeth and Zacharias became part of God's preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

And the New Testament church, empowered by the Holy Ghost, moved from an upper room into a world that desperately needed the gospel.

The question for us is not simply whether we desire another powerful spiritual encounter.

The question is whether we are willing to embrace the responsibility that follows.

Are we prepared to allow God's Word to challenge our assumptions?

Are we willing to surrender our personal preferences to His purposes?

Are we developing the spiritual maturity necessary to disciple others?

Are we preparing our homes to become environments where prayer, Scripture, forgiveness, and faith are consistently practiced?

And as a church, are we ready to care for the people we are asking God to bring into our fellowship?

A birthing church cannot survive on expectation alone.

It must be grounded in God's Word, empowered by His Spirit, and committed to faithful obedience.

The visitation awakens expectation, but our response reveals whether we are willing to carry the responsibility that follows.

The Word has been spoken. The invitation to trust has been extended. Now we must consider what happens when that Word begins to shape our expectations.

Because receiving a promise is one thing.

Learning to carry it faithfully is another.

And that brings us to the next stage of the journey.

PART 03

The Power of Agreement: When Faith Says Yes to God's Word



Understanding Spiritual Agreement, the Responsibility of Faith, and the Power of Collective Obedience

Foundational Scriptures: Luke 1:38; Hebrews 11:1-6; Romans 10:17; James 1:22-25; Ephesians 4:1-6

3.1 The Moment When Hearing Becomes Believing

There is a significant difference between hearing the Word of God and allowing that Word to transform the direction of our lives. Throughout our spiritual journey, we may attend countless services, participate in Bible studies, listen to powerful preaching, and become familiar with the promises recorded in Scripture. We may even experience moments of tremendous spiritual excitement when a particular message speaks directly to our circumstances. Yet familiarity with God's Word does not automatically mean that we have surrendered ourselves to its authority. There comes a moment when the truth we have heard must move beyond intellectual understanding and become a conviction that shapes our decisions, influences our relationships, and determines how we respond to the challenges of life. This is where spiritual agreement begins, not merely in the words we speak during a worship service, but in the willingness of our hearts to embrace what God has revealed.

In his message The Birthing Church, Pastor Vinny Azzolini emphasized that a spiritually fruitful congregation must possess three essential characteristics: it must come into agreement with the Word, expect what it has heard, and carry the promise to full term. These three principles establish a progression that reaches far beyond the excitement of receiving an encouraging message. Agreement establishes our response to God's authority, expectation shapes the way we approach the future, and perseverance determines whether we remain faithful throughout the process. The preacher's emphasis was particularly meaningful because he was not describing a church that simply enjoys spiritual experiences. He was describing a congregation willing to accept the responsibility of participating in what God is accomplishing. A birthing church must therefore become a community where the Word of God is not only preached with conviction but also received with humility and demonstrated through obedience.

One of the greatest challenges we encounter is that God's Word does not always agree with our existing understanding. Sometimes Scripture confirms what we already believe, but at other times it confronts the assumptions we have developed through years of experience. We may believe that our past failures have permanently disqualified us from meaningful service, while the gospel reveals the transforming power of God's grace. We may assume that certain relationships are beyond restoration, while Scripture challenges us to practice forgiveness, humility, and reconciliation wherever possible. We may convince ourselves that our resources are too limited to contribute to the work of God, while the biblical testimony repeatedly demonstrates that faithfulness is not measured exclusively by the size of our contribution. In each of these circumstances, we must decide whether our understanding will remain the final authority or whether we will permit the Word of God to correct and reshape our perspective.

This is why spiritual agreement must never be confused with simply expressing enthusiasm about something we desire. We are not agreeing with God when we insist that He fulfill our personal ambitions. We are agreeing with Him when we willingly surrender those ambitions to His wisdom and authority. Genuine faith does not attempt to make God's Word conform to our expectations; it allows our expectations to be transformed by God's Word. This distinction is essential because a church can become excited about the possibility of revival, multiplication, or spiritual expansion without being equally committed to the biblical responsibilities that accompany those desires. We may celebrate the thought of reaching hundreds of new families, but are we willing to invest the time necessary to disciple them? We may pray for new leaders to emerge, but are we prepared to mentor them patiently and provide opportunities for their development? We

may desire a powerful move of the Holy Ghost, but are we willing to surrender the attitudes, divisions, and personal preferences that hinder unity within the body of Christ?

The evidence of spiritual agreement is ultimately found in the way we respond to God's instructions. A church that agrees with the Word must become a church that practices the Word. Our worship should influence our conduct, our prayers should shape our priorities, and our understanding of Scripture should become visible in our relationships. When agreement becomes a pattern of life rather than an occasional declaration, we begin developing the spiritual foundation necessary to carry greater responsibility. This is where the message of The Birthing Church becomes deeply personal, because before we can participate in the spiritual multiplication of a congregation, we must allow the Word of God to produce genuine transformation within us.

3.2 Mary's Agreement: Surrendering to a Word That Exceeded Her Understanding

The account of Mary in Luke 1 provides one of the clearest biblical illustrations of what it means to respond to God's Word with genuine agreement. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he announced something that exceeded every natural possibility she could comprehend. She would conceive and give birth to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, whose kingdom would have no end. This was not an ordinary announcement concerning the future of her family. It was the revelation of a unique event in God's redemptive plan, one that would change the course of human history. Mary was being called into a responsibility she had never anticipated, and the implications of that calling extended far beyond her personal circumstances.

Luke 1:38 (KJV)

> *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

Mary's response becomes even more remarkable when we consider the uncertainty surrounding her future. She was espoused to Joseph, and the announcement of her pregnancy would introduce circumstances that others might struggle to understand. She could not fully anticipate the challenges that would accompany her obedience, nor could she know every detail of the journey that awaited her. Nevertheless, she identified herself as the servant of the Lord and expressed her willingness to receive what God had spoken. Her agreement was not based upon possessing a complete explanation of the future. It was grounded in her recognition that God's Word was worthy of trust, even when the fulfillment of that Word exceeded her ability to understand.

There is something profoundly challenging about this kind of surrender because we naturally desire certainty before accepting responsibility. We want to know how circumstances will unfold, what sacrifices will be required, and whether the outcome will justify the difficulties we may encounter. We often approach God's direction with a desire to negotiate the conditions of our obedience. We are willing to serve, provided the responsibility does not become too demanding. We are willing to forgive, provided the other person acknowledges every wrong. We are willing to trust, provided the circumstances begin moving in a direction

that makes sense to us. Yet Mary's response confronts this conditional approach to faith. She did not claim to understand everything, but she was willing to submit to the One who did.

It is important to recognize that Mary's agreement did not create the promise through the independent power of her declaration. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was the sovereign work of God, accomplished through the power of the Holy Ghost. Mary's response demonstrated her willingness to participate in what God had already announced. This distinction protects us from misunderstanding spiritual agreement as a method of controlling divine outcomes. We cannot create promises by speaking confidently about our desires, nor can we obligate God to fulfill expectations that He has not established. Biblical agreement means submitting ourselves to what God has revealed, trusting His character, and responding faithfully to His instructions.

When we apply this principle to our lives, we discover that genuine agreement often requires us to surrender the desire to control circumstances. We may be praying for our children to develop a deeper relationship with God, but we cannot control every decision they will make. We may be asking God to restore relationships, but we cannot force another person to respond with repentance or reconciliation. We may desire greater opportunities in ministry, but we cannot determine when those opportunities will become available. What we can do is remain faithful to the responsibilities Scripture places before us. We can cultivate loving homes, practice forgiveness, strengthen our prayer lives, and continue serving with integrity. Like Mary, we must learn that agreement with God's Word begins with surrender to God's authority.

For a church expecting spiritual multiplication, Mary's response establishes an essential principle. We cannot ask God to accomplish His purposes through us while refusing to surrender our own preferences. Spiritual growth will require adjustments, sacrifices, and responsibilities that may challenge our familiar routines. New believers will need attention, struggling families will need care, and emerging leaders will require patience and guidance. If our agreement is genuine, we must be willing to embrace the responsibilities associated with the future we are praying to see. The words "be it unto me according to thy word" should therefore challenge us to consider whether we are truly prepared to submit ourselves to God's purposes, even when that submission requires more than we originally anticipated.

3.3 Faith Is Born Through the Word and Strengthened Through Obedience

The Apostle Paul establishes an important connection between hearing God's Word and developing faith. In Romans 10, he explains the necessity of proclaiming the gospel so that people may hear the message of salvation and respond to it. His argument reveals that faith is not merely a product of human optimism or emotional encouragement. It is grounded in the revelation of God's truth. When we hear the gospel, we encounter the message of Jesus Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection, and the salvation made available through Him. This message calls us to believe, repent, and respond to the grace of God. The Word provides the foundation upon which genuine faith is established.

Romans 10:17 (KJV)

> *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

This passage challenges the idea that faith can be sustained exclusively through spiritual excitement. Emotional experiences may encourage us, but they cannot replace a growing understanding of Scripture. If our confidence in God depends entirely upon the atmosphere of a particular service, we may struggle when that atmosphere is no longer present. If our expectations are built only upon encouraging statements without biblical understanding, we may become discouraged when circumstances do not unfold as we anticipated. But when our faith is rooted in God's Word, we develop a foundation that remains steady through changing circumstances. We begin to understand not only what God is able to do, but also who He is, what He has promised, and how He calls us to live.

Yet hearing the Word is only the beginning of spiritual formation. James warns believers about the danger of becoming hearers without becoming doers. His concern is that people may possess knowledge of God's instructions while failing to allow those instructions to influence their conduct. This produces a form of spiritual self-deception in which familiarity with biblical truth is mistaken for genuine maturity. We may know the importance of forgiveness without practicing it. We may understand the necessity of prayer without developing a consistent prayer life. We may recognize the biblical responsibility of discipleship without investing in the spiritual growth of another person. In each case, the problem is not necessarily a lack of information, but a failure to respond to the information we have already received.

James 1:22 (KJV)

> *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

This principle becomes especially important when we consider the mission of the church. We can develop excellent teaching programs, organize meaningful worship services, and provide countless opportunities for people to hear the gospel, but if those opportunities do not lead toward obedience and spiritual maturity, something essential is missing. The goal of discipleship is not simply to produce people who can repeat biblical information. It is to help believers develop a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ, understand His Word, and apply His teachings to everyday life. A spiritually fruitful church must therefore measure its health not only by the number of people who attend, but also by the depth of the disciples who are being formed.

When we think about our families, the application becomes even more personal. We may desire our children to possess strong biblical convictions, but those convictions are influenced by the example they observe within our homes. If we teach the importance of prayer while consistently neglecting it ourselves, we create a contradiction between our words and our priorities. If we speak about forgiveness while allowing bitterness to dominate our relationships, we weaken the credibility of our teaching. If we encourage our children to trust God but continually respond to difficulty with hopelessness and fear, we communicate a message that conflicts with the faith we profess. Our families need more than biblical instruction. They need to witness the transforming influence of that instruction in our daily lives.

Faith grows as we continually expose ourselves to the Word and respond through obedience. This does not mean that our obedience earns God's favor or that spiritual maturity is achieved through human effort alone. We depend upon the grace of God and the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, Scripture consistently calls us to participate in our spiritual development through prayer, study, fellowship, repentance, and faithful living. As we practice these disciplines, our relationship with God becomes more

deeply established, and our understanding of His character grows stronger. We begin to recognize that the Word of God is not simply information intended to encourage us. It is truth intended to transform us.

3.4 When Faith Must Continue Without Visible Evidence

One of the most challenging dimensions of spiritual agreement is learning to trust God when the fulfillment of His purposes is not yet visible. We naturally find confidence in what we can observe. When circumstances improve, when prayers receive immediate answers, or when opportunities begin to open, it becomes easier to believe that progress is taking place. But there are seasons when the evidence available to our senses seems disconnected from the promises we find in Scripture. We continue praying, serving, and believing, yet the circumstances around us remain difficult. During these seasons, our faith is challenged to rest upon the character of God rather than upon the immediate appearance of our situation.

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

> *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews introduces a remarkable collection of individuals whose faith became visible through their response to God's Word. Noah prepared an ark in obedience to a warning concerning events that had not yet occurred. Abraham left his homeland without possessing a complete understanding of his destination. Sarah received strength to conceive because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Moses rejected the temporary privileges of Egypt and identified himself with the people of God. These individuals did not demonstrate faith merely by expressing confidence. Their faith influenced the decisions they made and the responsibilities they accepted.

Consider Noah's experience. According to Hebrews 11:7, he responded to God's warning concerning things not yet seen by preparing an ark for the preservation of his household. His faith did not eliminate the need for preparation. Instead, his confidence in God's Word motivated the work necessary to respond to that Word. This becomes a powerful illustration for a church expecting spiritual growth. We cannot simply declare that we believe God will bring people into our congregation while neglecting the responsibility of preparing to receive them. If we are praying for new believers, we must develop discipleship opportunities. If we are expecting families to experience restoration, we must cultivate relationships and ministries capable of supporting them. If we desire spiritual multiplication, we must be willing to invest in leadership development, biblical teaching, and the practical structures necessary for healthy ministry.

Abraham's journey provides another important perspective. When God called him to leave his homeland, Abraham did not receive a complete description of every challenge he would encounter. His obedience required him to move forward while trusting the One who had called him. Yet the fulfillment of God's promises unfolded through a lengthy process that included uncertainty, disappointment, and moments when Abraham and Sarah struggled to understand how the promise would be accomplished. Their experience reminds us that faith is not always accompanied by immediate fulfillment. Sometimes we must continue walking with God while the visible circumstances remain unchanged.

This becomes especially meaningful when we consider the prayers we carry for our families. We may have children who are struggling spiritually, loved ones who have distanced themselves from the church, or

relationships that appear resistant to reconciliation. In these situations, we must be careful not to confuse faith with the assumption that we can determine another person's future. We cannot guarantee the decisions others will make, but we can continue loving, praying, communicating truth, and demonstrating the character of Christ. Our confidence rests in God's ability and faithfulness, while our responsibility remains grounded in obedience.

Faith does not require us to deny reality. It does not ask us to pretend that suffering is insignificant or that every difficulty is merely an illusion. Rather, it invites us to recognize that our understanding of reality is incomplete without acknowledging the sovereignty and wisdom of God. We may not know how a particular situation will unfold, but we can know that God remains worthy of our trust. We may not understand the timing of His purposes, but we can continue practicing what His Word commands. We may not possess visible evidence of every outcome we desire, but we can remain faithful in the responsibilities entrusted to us today. This is the kind of faith that prepares a church to carry spiritual responsibility through seasons of uncertainty.

3.5 Agreement Is Tested When the Word Challenges Our Preferences

There is a significant difference between agreeing with a biblical principle when it is convenient and remaining committed to that principle when it requires personal sacrifice. We may enthusiastically affirm the importance of unity until unity demands that we surrender a personal preference. We may celebrate the value of forgiveness until someone deeply disappoints us. We may recognize the importance of generosity until giving requires us to reconsider our priorities. We may support the idea of discipleship until someone needs more patience, attention, and encouragement than we originally expected. These moments reveal whether our agreement is rooted in genuine conviction or temporary enthusiasm.

Jesus addressed this tension when He challenged those who acknowledged His authority verbally but refused to obey His instructions. In Luke 6:46, He asked why people called Him Lord while failing to do what He commanded. The question exposes the contradiction that occurs when our religious language does not correspond with our behavior. It is possible to participate in worship, affirm sound doctrine, and express enthusiasm about spiritual matters while resisting the practical implications of following Jesus. But the authority of Christ cannot be confined to the moments when His instructions agree with our preferences. If He is Lord, His Word must govern every dimension of our lives.

This challenge becomes particularly significant within the context of church growth. As a congregation expands, new responsibilities emerge. Different generations may bring different expectations concerning ministry. Families from various cultural backgrounds may introduce unfamiliar traditions and perspectives. New believers may require patient instruction in areas that mature Christians have understood for years. Ministries may need to adapt their schedules, structures, or methods to serve people more effectively. These developments can create discomfort because growth often requires us to move beyond familiar routines. Yet discomfort does not automatically indicate that something is wrong. Sometimes it simply reveals that our preferences are being challenged by responsibilities we have not previously encountered.

We must be careful, however, not to confuse biblical faithfulness with unquestioning acceptance of every proposed change. Spiritual agreement does not eliminate the need for discernment, accountability, or wise

leadership. The church must continually evaluate its practices according to Scripture, and leaders must remain humble and willing to receive counsel. Nevertheless, when a decision is consistent with biblical truth and supports the mission of the church, we should examine whether our resistance comes from genuine spiritual concern or from an unwillingness to release what is familiar. A birthing church must learn to distinguish between principles that cannot be compromised and methods that may need to change.

The Apostle Paul addresses the heart of this issue in Philippians 2:3-4, where he calls believers to reject selfish ambition and consider the needs of others. His instruction challenges us to recognize that the body of Christ cannot function properly when every individual insists upon personal preference as the highest priority. Healthy spiritual relationships require humility, patience, and a willingness to serve beyond our immediate interests. When we understand that the church belongs to Jesus Christ rather than to any individual or ministry group, we become more willing to cooperate in the work He has entrusted to us.

For Tampa Life Church, this principle carries particular importance because a multicultural and multigenerational congregation must continually practice the kind of unity that Scripture describes. We may come from different nations, speak different languages, and possess different experiences of church life, but our shared commitment to Jesus Christ must remain stronger than those differences. Agreement with God's Word does not erase our diversity. It gives us a common foundation upon which that diversity can contribute to the mission of the gospel. When we learn to value one another, listen with humility, and prioritize the spiritual well-being of the entire congregation, we become better prepared to receive and nurture the people God brings into our fellowship.

3.6 Spiritual Agreement Must Become a Shared Commitment

The message The Birthing Church was not directed exclusively toward individual believers. Pastor Azzolini was speaking to Tampa Life as a congregation, emphasizing that the church must collectively embrace the responsibility associated with spiritual multiplication. This corporate dimension of agreement is essential because the mission of the church cannot be fulfilled through the efforts of one person or one ministry. Scripture describes believers as members of one body, each possessing responsibilities that contribute to the health and effectiveness of the whole. When we recognize this truth, we begin to understand that spiritual growth requires cooperation, mutual encouragement, and shared submission to the authority of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:3-6 (KJV)

> *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
>
> *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*
>
> *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*
>
> *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Paul's instruction reveals that unity is not something believers create merely through organizational agreement. It is rooted in the spiritual identity we share through Jesus Christ. Yet this unity must also be

actively preserved. The word endeavouring communicates the importance of intentional effort. We must be willing to protect relationships, resolve conflict, practice humility, and refuse the attitudes that produce unnecessary division. Unity is not maintained automatically simply because people attend the same church. It requires consistent spiritual maturity and a shared commitment to the principles of God's Word.

This becomes especially important when a congregation begins experiencing growth or transition. New people bring new needs, and new responsibilities can create pressure upon existing structures. Teachers may need additional support, ministry leaders may require training, and volunteers may discover that the demands of service are increasing. During these seasons, the temptation to compare, criticize, or withdraw can become stronger. We may begin focusing on what others are not doing rather than recognizing our own opportunities to contribute. We may interpret the success of another ministry as competition rather than celebrating it as growth within the same body. But spiritual agreement challenges us to recognize that the mission is greater than any individual role.

A church that genuinely agrees with God's Word must learn to celebrate collective fruitfulness. When someone receives the Holy Ghost, the entire church has reason to rejoice. When a new believer begins developing spiritual maturity, every ministry involved in that person's journey has contributed to something meaningful. When a family experiences restoration, the prayers, teaching, encouragement, and relationships that supported them become part of a shared testimony. When a new leader emerges, we should recognize that their development strengthens the entire congregation. This perspective protects us from the destructive assumption that ministry success belongs exclusively to the person whose work is most visible.

Agreement also requires us to recognize that spiritual multiplication cannot be sustained without discipleship. The church must become more than a place where people encounter powerful preaching. It must become a community where people are taught, encouraged, corrected with love, and equipped for service. This means that every ministry has a role in creating an environment where spiritual growth can continue. Hospitality helps people feel welcomed, teaching provides biblical foundations, prayer strengthens dependence upon God, pastoral care supports those facing difficulties, and fellowship creates relationships that encourage perseverance. None of these responsibilities should be treated as insignificant because each contributes to the health of the body.

When our shared commitment to God's Word becomes stronger than our personal ambitions, we begin to develop the kind of unity necessary for lasting spiritual fruitfulness. We stop asking only how a particular decision affects our individual responsibilities and begin considering how it contributes to the mission of the church. We become more willing to support ministries beyond our immediate involvement, more patient with those who are still developing, and more intentional about preserving relationships. This is the kind of agreement that prepares a congregation not merely to experience moments of spiritual excitement, but to carry the ongoing responsibility of caring for the people God entrusts to it.

3.7 Our Words Reveal Whether Our Hearts Are in Agreement

During his sermon, Pastor Azzolini emphasized the importance of protecting the expectation that God has placed within the church. He encouraged the congregation to reject conversations that would undermine faith, introduce unnecessary fear, or create division. This principle is deeply connected to the biblical teaching concerning the power and responsibility of our speech. Words are not insignificant. They communicate what we believe, influence the attitudes of those around us, and contribute to the relational environment in which spiritual growth either flourishes or becomes hindered. A church that desires to carry God's purposes faithfully must therefore become intentional about the way its members communicate.

Proverbs 18:21 (KJV)

> *Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*

This proverb reminds us that our words can produce consequences that extend far beyond the moment in which they are spoken. A careless comment can damage trust that took years to develop. Repeated criticism can discourage someone who is already struggling. Gossip can create suspicion between people who previously enjoyed healthy relationships. Conversely, truthful encouragement can strengthen someone who is losing hope, a sincere apology can begin restoring a damaged relationship, and a word of biblical instruction can help someone recognize a direction they had not previously considered. Our speech carries responsibility because it influences both our own hearts and the people who hear us.

James develops this theme in the third chapter of his epistle, where he compares the tongue to a small fire capable of influencing something much larger. His warning is particularly relevant to the church because spiritual communities depend upon trust, love, and mutual encouragement. When our conversations become dominated by jealousy, competition, criticism, and suspicion, the relationships necessary for healthy ministry begin to weaken. People become hesitant to serve, leaders become discouraged, and new believers may encounter attitudes that contradict the gospel being preached. A birthing church cannot afford to ignore the spiritual consequences of unhealthy communication.

However, we must also distinguish between destructive negativity and legitimate discernment. Protecting spiritual expectation does not mean refusing to acknowledge problems or silencing people who raise genuine concerns. Biblical unity is not maintained through denial. Sometimes faithfulness requires difficult conversations, correction, accountability, and honest evaluation. The difference lies in the spirit and purpose of our communication. Are we speaking because we desire restoration, understanding, and growth, or because we want to undermine, embarrass, or divide? Are our words grounded in truth and love, or are they being driven by resentment and personal frustration? These questions help us evaluate whether our speech reflects the character of Christ.

Within our families, the influence of our words is especially significant. Children often develop their understanding of faith through the conversations they hear at home. If our discussions about church are consistently filled with criticism and bitterness, we should not be surprised when they struggle to develop a healthy appreciation for spiritual community. If we continually describe our circumstances as hopeless, we may unintentionally teach them to approach difficulty without confidence in God's faithfulness. But when we speak honestly about challenges while maintaining prayer, gratitude, humility, and trust, we demonstrate a

more mature understanding of faith. We show that believing God does not require pretending that life is easy, but it does require refusing to allow bitterness and despair to become the dominant voices in our homes.

A birthing church must cultivate speech that strengthens the mission rather than undermines it. We should become people who encourage those who serve, pray for those who struggle, correct with compassion, and celebrate the spiritual development of others. Our words should reflect the truth we claim to believe. If we expect God to work in our families, we should speak about our loved ones with hope and dignity. If we desire unity, we should refuse conversations that unnecessarily damage relationships. If we believe in discipleship, we should use our words to teach and encourage rather than merely criticize weakness. In this way, spiritual agreement becomes visible not only through public declarations but also through the ordinary conversations that shape the culture of our church.

3.8 Agreement in Our Families: When Faith Becomes a Daily Example

One of the most important places where spiritual agreement must become visible is within our homes. It is possible to participate actively in church while allowing our family relationships to remain disconnected from the principles we profess. We may demonstrate enthusiasm during worship but respond impatiently to those closest to us. We may speak confidently about God's faithfulness while allowing fear to dominate our decisions. We may teach our children the importance of biblical values without consistently demonstrating those values through our conduct. These contradictions remind us that spiritual agreement cannot be confined to the environment of a church service. It must influence the relationships and responsibilities that occupy most of our daily lives.

Joshua's declaration in Joshua 24:15 provides a powerful example of intentional household commitment. Standing before Israel during a moment of covenant renewal, Joshua challenged the people to reject idolatry and serve the Lord faithfully. His statement that he and his house would serve the Lord communicated a clear spiritual direction. He understood that faithfulness required more than acknowledging God's existence. It demanded a deliberate decision concerning whom the people would worship and obey. For our families, this principle challenges us to consider whether our homes possess a recognizable commitment to God's Word.

A spiritually healthy home is not necessarily one where every relationship is free from conflict or where every member has reached the same level of maturity. Families experience disagreements, disappointments, emotional struggles, and changing seasons. Even sincere believers make mistakes. The difference is that a home shaped by God's Word learns to respond to those challenges through repentance, forgiveness, humility, and love. When we are wrong, we should be willing to acknowledge it. When conflict arises, we should seek understanding rather than immediately assigning blame. When someone is struggling, we should demonstrate compassion without abandoning truth. These ordinary expressions of faith may have a greater influence upon our children than many formal lessons because they reveal what biblical principles look like in real life.

We must also remember that spiritual agreement within a family cannot be forced through pressure or manipulation. Every person must respond personally to God. Parents have a responsibility to teach, guide,

and model biblical truth, but they cannot control every decision their children will eventually make. Spouses can encourage one another spiritually, but genuine faith must remain rooted in personal conviction. When family members are struggling or have distanced themselves from church, our responsibility is to continue loving them, praying for them, communicating truth with wisdom, and maintaining appropriate boundaries. We must resist the temptation to confuse control with spiritual leadership.

This understanding is particularly important when we are carrying long-term expectations for our families. We may have prayed for years concerning the salvation of a loved one, the restoration of a relationship, or the spiritual direction of our children. During these seasons, we must not allow disappointment to destroy the very relationships through which we hope to demonstrate the love of Christ. Our words and actions should communicate that our love is not dependent upon another person's immediate spiritual response. We can remain committed to biblical truth while also demonstrating patience, kindness, and compassion.

When our homes become environments where Scripture is respected, prayer is practiced, and forgiveness is demonstrated, we begin creating a foundation for generational spiritual growth. This does not guarantee that every family member will make the decisions we desire, but it fulfills an important responsibility entrusted to us. We are called to be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ within our households. If we desire to see our children and future generations develop a genuine relationship with God, we must allow that relationship to shape the way we live today. A birthing church is strengthened by families that understand this responsibility, because the spiritual health of a congregation is deeply influenced by the spiritual habits practiced beyond its walls.

3.9 Carrying the Promise Requires More Than an Initial Yes

Pastor Azzolini's statement that a birthing church must carry the promise to full term introduces one of the most challenging dimensions of spiritual agreement. It is possible to respond enthusiastically when we first receive an encouraging Word, but remaining faithful throughout a prolonged process requires a deeper level of commitment. The excitement of a new beginning often creates energy and motivation, yet as responsibilities increase and difficulties emerge, that initial enthusiasm may begin to diminish. We discover that the promises we celebrate can involve sacrifices we did not fully anticipate. This is where perseverance becomes essential, because agreement that exists only while circumstances are favorable is not sufficient to sustain long-term spiritual responsibility.

Hebrews 10:36 (KJV)

> *For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging believers who had experienced hardship because of their faith. They needed endurance so that they would not abandon their confidence in Christ. The passage reminds us that spiritual perseverance is not simply the ability to tolerate inconvenience. It is the willingness to remain faithful to God even when obedience becomes costly. This principle is particularly meaningful because we often associate divine promises with the joy of fulfillment while overlooking the responsibility of remaining obedient during the process.

The imagery of pregnancy used in The Birthing Church helps us understand this responsibility. A mother does not carry a child for only the moments when pregnancy feels exciting. The process involves physical changes, discomfort, preparation, and increasing responsibility. The expectation of new life gives meaning to the process, but it does not remove the challenges associated with it. In a similar way, spiritual commitments often require us to remain faithful long after the emotional excitement of their beginning has faded. A ministry may begin with tremendous enthusiasm, but its continued effectiveness will depend upon consistent service. A discipleship program may launch with strong participation, but its lasting impact will require teachers who prepare faithfully, leaders who remain accountable, and believers who continue investing in others.

This is where the church must learn to value consistency as much as inspiration. We naturally celebrate extraordinary moments, and there is nothing wrong with rejoicing when God moves powerfully. But much of the spiritual health of a congregation is sustained through ordinary acts of faithfulness that rarely attract public attention. Someone prepares a Bible lesson after a demanding week of work. Another person visits a family experiencing difficulty. A volunteer arrives early to prepare a classroom. A parent spends time praying with a child. A mature believer encourages someone who is struggling to remain connected to the church. These actions may appear small when considered individually, but together they create the environment in which spiritual growth can be nurtured.

We must also recognize that perseverance does not mean stubbornly maintaining every plan regardless of circumstances. Sometimes wisdom requires adjustment, correction, or a change in direction. The key is remaining faithful to God's revealed principles while exercising humility concerning our own methods and expectations. We should never confuse personal determination with divine instruction. If a particular strategy is ineffective, we can evaluate it honestly without abandoning the mission of discipleship. If a ministry requires restructuring, we can make necessary changes while continuing to serve faithfully. If circumstances develop differently than anticipated, we can seek God's wisdom rather than assuming that every adjustment represents failure.

A birthing church understands that spiritual multiplication requires endurance. We cannot build healthy discipleship through occasional enthusiasm alone. We must remain committed to teaching, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, and pastoral care throughout changing seasons. The willingness to carry responsibility when it becomes demanding is one of the clearest expressions of genuine agreement. We are not merely saying yes to the possibility of growth. We are saying yes to the work necessary to nurture that growth faithfully.

3.10 When Agreement Becomes the Culture of the Church

The ultimate goal of spiritual agreement is not to produce a congregation that simply repeats the same declarations during worship. It is to develop a community whose shared convictions influence its relationships, priorities, and mission. When the Word of God becomes the foundation of our collective identity, we begin to approach ministry differently. We no longer measure spiritual success exclusively through attendance or public recognition. We become more concerned with whether people are growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ, whether families are being strengthened, whether new believers are receiving biblical instruction, and whether our church is faithfully fulfilling its responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

The early church provides a compelling example of this kind of shared commitment. Following the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Their spiritual experience did not remain confined to the upper room or to the moment of Peter's preaching. It developed into a pattern of life that influenced their relationships, possessions, worship, and daily responsibilities. Acts 2 describes a community where believers shared resources, cared for one another, and continued gathering with unity and gladness. Their faith was not merely a collection of individual convictions. It became a shared way of life.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

This verse reveals that the spiritual vitality of the early church was sustained through consistent commitment. The believers did not simply experience Pentecost and then return to unchanged lives. They continued learning, praying, fellowshipping, and serving together. Their agreement with the gospel produced a community where spiritual growth could develop. This should challenge us to consider what kind of culture we are building within our own congregation. Are we developing an environment where new believers can ask questions without fear of embarrassment? Are we encouraging mature Christians to invest in those who are still learning? Are we creating opportunities for people from different generations and cultural backgrounds to develop meaningful relationships? Are we helping individuals recognize that they possess a valuable role within the body of Christ?

For Tampa Life Church, the message of becoming a birthing church should inspire a renewed commitment to these responsibilities. We should desire to see people repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. But our responsibility does not end when someone responds to the gospel. That moment marks the beginning of a journey of discipleship in which the entire church has an opportunity to participate. New believers need encouragement, biblical understanding, healthy relationships, and opportunities to develop spiritual maturity. Families need support as they learn to establish habits of prayer and obedience. Emerging leaders need guidance and accountability. A spiritually fruitful church must be prepared to provide this care consistently.

As our congregation grows, we must also guard against the temptation to allow organizational expansion to replace spiritual depth. Programs and structures are valuable when they support the mission, but they

cannot become substitutes for genuine relationships or dependence upon the Holy Ghost. We may develop excellent systems for welcoming guests, organizing classes, and coordinating ministry, yet these systems must remain connected to the biblical purpose of making disciples. The church is not simply an institution seeking greater efficiency. It is the body of Christ, called to proclaim His gospel and demonstrate His love.

When agreement becomes a culture of faithfulness, the church develops the capacity to nurture spiritual life across generations. Older believers invest their wisdom in younger disciples. Families encourage one another. Ministry leaders cooperate rather than compete. People from different cultural backgrounds find unity in their shared faith. New believers are not treated as temporary visitors but welcomed into a spiritual family where they can grow. This is the kind of environment that reflects the mission of the New Testament church.

The conclusion of Acts 2:47 reminds us that the Lord added to the church those who were being saved. This statement establishes an important balance between divine activity and human responsibility. The believers were committed to doctrine, fellowship, prayer, and shared life, but God remained the source of spiritual increase. We can prepare, teach, organize, and serve, yet we must never assume that human effort alone produces spiritual life. Our responsibility is faithfulness, and our confidence rests in the Lord who builds His church.

Section 3 Conclusion: Agreement Must Become a Way of Life

The message of The Birthing Church challenges us to recognize that receiving God's Word is only the beginning of our spiritual responsibility. Mary demonstrated agreement through surrender, Noah expressed faith through preparation, Abraham responded through obedience, and the early church revealed its commitment through continued devotion to apostolic doctrine, fellowship, and prayer. These examples remind us that genuine faith is never intended to remain an abstract belief disconnected from everyday life. It must influence our priorities, shape our relationships, and guide our response to the responsibilities God has entrusted to us.

For our families, this means allowing Scripture to become more than a collection of verses we quote during difficult moments. God's Word must shape the way we communicate, resolve conflict, demonstrate forgiveness, and guide the next generation. We cannot control every decision our loved ones will make, but we can faithfully cultivate an environment where the character of Christ is consistently demonstrated. When our children see humility, integrity, patience, and prayer practiced within our homes, they encounter a living example of the faith we profess.

For our church, agreement means embracing a shared commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ. We must be willing to support discipleship, invest in leadership development, protect unity, and make room for the people God brings into our fellowship. Spiritual multiplication will require more than powerful services and inspiring declarations. It will require patience, sacrifice, cooperation, and the willingness to serve faithfully when the work becomes demanding. We must understand that the responsibility of nurturing spiritual life belongs to the entire body, not merely to those who occupy visible positions of leadership.

Above all, we must remember that agreement with God's Word is not an attempt to control the future through our declarations. It is a response of faith to the One who possesses authority over the future. We

can pray boldly, expect God to work, and remain confident in His power while still submitting our desires to His wisdom. Our confidence is not rooted in our ability to predict every outcome, but in the faithfulness of the Lord who has called us to follow Him.

A birthing church is therefore not simply a congregation that expects something extraordinary to happen. It is a church willing to become spiritually prepared for the responsibilities that accompany God's work. It is a community that values obedience more than excitement, unity more than personal recognition, and faithfulness more than immediate results. It is a people who understand that the promises of God should not merely inspire our imagination but also transform the way we live.

The depth of our agreement with God's Word is revealed not only by what we believe He can accomplish, but by our willingness to obey Him while His purposes are unfolding.

And this brings us to the next essential stage of the journey. Once we have received the Word, embraced its authority, and committed ourselves to faithful obedience, we must learn how to navigate the season between promise and fulfillment. We must understand why waiting is not necessarily wasted time, how spiritual maturity develops through perseverance, and why preparation is essential when we are expecting God to accomplish something greater than what we currently see.

PART 04

The Gestation of a Promise: What God Develops While We Wait



Understanding Divine Timing, Spiritual Maturity, and the Hidden Work of God Between Promise and Fulfillment

Foundational Scriptures: Genesis 21:1-7; Hebrews 6:12-15; James 1:2-4; Galatians 6:9; Ecclesiastes 3:1; Isaiah 40:31

4.1 Every Promise Has a Process

One of the most difficult lessons we must learn in our relationship with God is that receiving a promise does not necessarily mean experiencing its fulfillment immediately. We naturally associate the Word of God with action, transformation, and visible results. When we hear a message that strengthens our faith or discover a promise in Scripture that speaks directly to our circumstances, something within us begins to anticipate change. We imagine what our lives might look like when that promise becomes reality, and we often develop expectations concerning how and when God will accomplish His purposes. Yet Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that there can be a significant period between the moment God speaks and the moment His Word is fulfilled. During that interval, our faith is challenged, our understanding is expanded, and our spiritual maturity is developed.

In his message The Birthing Church, Pastor Vinny Azzolini introduced a powerful illustration drawn from the natural process of pregnancy. He reminded the congregation that a promise has a gestation period. Just as a child develops within the womb before birth, there are seasons in which God's purposes are unfolding even though their fulfillment is not yet visible. The preacher described the experience of watching his wife carry their children, remembering the discomfort, anticipation, physical changes, and preparation that accompanied each pregnancy. The arrival of a child was a moment of tremendous joy, but that moment was preceded by months of development. The child did not begin existing on the day of delivery. Life had already been developing long before the family could hold the baby in their arms.

This illustration introduces an important spiritual principle: the absence of visible fulfillment does not necessarily mean the absence of divine activity. We often evaluate progress according to what we can observe, but God's work is not limited to what our natural senses can immediately recognize. There are seasons when He is developing our character, strengthening our convictions, deepening our understanding of Scripture, and preparing us for responsibilities that we have not yet encountered. We may interpret these seasons as periods of inactivity because the circumstances around us appear unchanged, but spiritual formation can be taking place even when external results remain limited.

However, we must approach this illustration with biblical discernment. Pregnancy follows a recognizable biological process, but Scripture does not teach that every personal expectation possesses a predetermined spiritual gestation period. Neither does every delay guarantee that a particular outcome is approaching. The metaphor is valuable because it helps us understand patience, preparation, and development, but it should not become a formula through which we attempt to predict God's timing. Our confidence must remain grounded in what God has revealed through His Word rather than in assumptions concerning the meaning of every circumstance.

The deeper lesson is that God is concerned not only with what we receive but also with who we become. We may desire greater opportunities in ministry while God is teaching us to serve faithfully in responsibilities that appear small. We may pray for stronger families while learning to practice forgiveness, patience, and consistent love. We may ask God to expand the influence of our church while discovering the importance of discipleship, leadership development, and unity. In each of these situations, the process itself becomes an opportunity for spiritual growth. We are not simply waiting for something to happen around us. We are being challenged to allow God's Word to accomplish something within us.

A birthing church must therefore learn to value spiritual formation as much as visible multiplication. We cannot become so focused on the excitement of future growth that we neglect the responsibilities of the present. If we believe God is calling us to reach more people, we must become intentional about strengthening our ability to disciple them. If we desire to see families restored, we must cultivate a community where biblical counsel, prayer, compassion, and healthy relationships are available. If we expect new leaders to emerge, we must invest in the development of those already serving among us. The waiting season should never become an excuse for inactivity. It should become an opportunity to prepare faithfully for the responsibilities associated with the mission God has entrusted to us.

4.2 Abraham and Sarah: When the Promise Outlives Our Expectations

The story of Abraham and Sarah provides one of the most significant biblical examples of the relationship between divine promise and prolonged waiting. When God called Abram in Genesis 12, He promised to make him a great nation and to bless the families of the earth through him. Yet at the time of that calling, Abram and Sarai did not have the child through whom the promised family would continue. The promise established an expectation that appeared increasingly difficult to reconcile with their circumstances as the years passed. Their journey demonstrates that receiving a genuine promise from God does not eliminate the challenges associated with waiting for its fulfillment.

In Genesis 15, God reaffirmed His promise by directing Abram's attention toward the stars and declaring that his descendants would be exceedingly numerous. Abram believed the Lord, and Scripture records that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Nevertheless, the birth of Isaac did not occur immediately. Abraham and Sarah continued growing older, and the natural possibility of having a child became increasingly remote. The passage of time intensified the tension between what God had spoken and what their circumstances appeared to indicate. They had received a promise concerning future generations, but their present reality remained marked by childlessness.

The biblical account does not present Abraham and Sarah as people who navigated this process without difficulty. In Genesis 16, Sarah proposed that Abraham have a child through Hagar, her servant. This decision reflected an attempt to address their circumstances through human initiative, but it introduced painful complications into their household. Their experience reveals a danger that remains relevant to us: when fulfillment appears delayed, we may become tempted to accomplish through our own methods what we believe God has promised to do. We may begin manipulating circumstances, forcing opportunities, or making decisions motivated more by impatience than by biblical wisdom.

This does not mean that faithful waiting requires us to avoid taking action. Abraham himself demonstrated active obedience throughout his journey. The distinction is between responsible action that remains submitted to God's instructions and attempts to control an outcome through methods that contradict His will. When we become impatient, we may begin treating the promise as something we must manufacture rather than something we must steward faithfully. We may compromise our convictions to achieve ministry growth, pressure people to produce the spiritual responses we desire, or make financial and organizational decisions that exceed our responsibilities because we believe the desired outcome justifies the risk. Abraham and Sarah's experience reminds us that sincere belief does not make every strategy wise.

Eventually, the Lord fulfilled His promise.

Genesis 21:1-2 (KJV)

> *And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*

The wording of this passage is especially significant. Scripture emphasizes that the Lord acted as He had said and as He had spoken. The fulfillment of the promise rested upon God's faithfulness. The passage also identifies the birth as occurring at the appointed time. Abraham and Sarah had experienced years of waiting, but the timing of Isaac's birth was not ultimately determined by their anxiety, impatience, or attempts to control the situation. God accomplished what He had declared.

When we examine this account in relation to our own spiritual lives, we must recognize both its encouragement and its limitations. Abraham and Sarah received a specific divine promise concerning Isaac. We cannot automatically apply their experience as a guarantee that every desire we carry will eventually be fulfilled in the same manner. Nevertheless, their story reveals the faithfulness of God and the importance of remaining dependent upon His wisdom. It teaches us that divine promises are not invalidated merely because their fulfillment requires time, and it warns us against allowing impatience to lead us into decisions that compromise our obedience.

For our families, this lesson becomes particularly meaningful when we are carrying concerns that have remained unresolved for years. We may be praying for loved ones who have distanced themselves from God, for relationships that need restoration, or for children who are making decisions that cause us deep concern. In these situations, we must resist the temptation to control what belongs to another person's responsibility. We can continue praying, loving, teaching, and demonstrating the character of Christ, but we cannot force spiritual transformation. Our confidence must remain in God's ability to work while our actions remain consistent with His Word.

For the church, Abraham and Sarah's experience reminds us that spiritual growth cannot be manufactured through impatience. We may desire to see greater numerical growth, expanded ministries, and increased influence within our community, but we must never sacrifice biblical faithfulness in pursuit of those outcomes. A church that becomes obsessed with immediate results may begin measuring success through appearances rather than genuine spiritual maturity. We must remember that the Lord calls us to make disciples, not merely to produce impressive statistics. The process of building healthy spiritual relationships requires patience, consistency, and a willingness to trust God with the increase.

4.3 The Hidden Season Is Not Necessarily a Wasted Season

One of the most discouraging experiences in life is investing time and effort into something without seeing immediate results. We live in a world where progress is often measured through visible accomplishments, completed projects, financial growth, and measurable achievements. This way of thinking can influence our spiritual lives, causing us to assume that seasons without obvious progress are seasons without purpose. We may begin questioning whether our prayers matter, whether our service is making a difference, or whether the responsibilities we have accepted are producing meaningful fruit.

Yet Scripture repeatedly challenges us to recognize the value of faithfulness even when its results are not immediately visible. The development of spiritual maturity often takes place through ordinary acts of obedience that appear insignificant when considered individually. A believer who consistently studies Scripture may not recognize how deeply that practice is shaping their thinking until they encounter a situation requiring biblical wisdom. A parent who faithfully prays with their children may not immediately see the long-term influence of those moments. A teacher who invests in a small group of disciples may not know how those individuals will eventually influence others. Much of the work that produces lasting spiritual fruitfulness occurs quietly, beyond the attention of the larger congregation.

Jesus used agricultural imagery to explain the mysterious development of the kingdom of God. In Mark 4:26-29, He described a man who scatters seed upon the ground and then continues his ordinary routine while the seed grows. The farmer does not fully understand every aspect of the growth process, yet the seed develops until the harvest arrives. The parable emphasizes that the kingdom of God possesses a dimension of growth that cannot be reduced to human control. The farmer participates through sowing and harvesting, but the life and development of the seed are not produced merely through his effort.

This illustration helps us understand why we must remain faithful even when progress is difficult to measure. We may teach a Bible study without knowing how deeply the message has influenced the person listening. We may offer encouragement to someone who appears unaffected, only to discover later that the conversation helped them remain faithful during a difficult season. We may invest years in developing a ministry before seeing the kind of growth we originally anticipated. These experiences remind us that our ability to measure results is limited, and that faithfulness should not be abandoned simply because immediate evidence is unavailable.

At the same time, we should not use the possibility of hidden growth as an excuse to ignore genuine problems. If a ministry is consistently struggling, wise leadership should evaluate its methods, relationships, and effectiveness. If a family relationship is deteriorating, we should seek appropriate help rather than assuming that the situation will improve automatically. Biblical patience does not require passivity or the refusal to acknowledge reality. It calls us to remain faithful while exercising wisdom and responsibility.

For Tampa Life Church, the hidden season may include the quiet development of disciples who will eventually become teachers, ministry leaders, missionaries, or faithful servants within the congregation. It may involve families learning to establish consistent spiritual habits or new believers developing their understanding of Scripture. These processes are not always visible from the platform, but they are

essential to the long-term health of the church. If we focus exclusively on what can be celebrated publicly, we may overlook the very work that makes sustainable spiritual multiplication possible.

A church prepared for lasting fruitfulness must learn to value the unseen work of discipleship as much as the visible moments of spiritual breakthrough.

4.4 Waiting Reveals What We Truly Trust

Waiting has a remarkable ability to expose the foundation of our confidence. When circumstances move according to our expectations, it is relatively easy to speak about trusting God. We feel encouraged because our plans appear successful, our prayers seem to receive immediate answers, and our efforts produce visible results. But when progress slows or circumstances become uncertain, we begin discovering whether our faith is rooted in God's character or in the outcomes we desire. The waiting season confronts our assumptions about control and invites us to examine what we truly believe concerning the faithfulness of the Lord.

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of faith and patience when describing Abraham's experience.

Hebrews 6:12 (KJV)

> *That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

This instruction was given to believers who needed encouragement to continue growing in spiritual maturity. The writer challenged them not to become sluggish or careless in their commitment, but to imitate those whose faith was demonstrated through perseverance. The connection between faith and patience is significant because it reveals that genuine trust is not limited to moments of immediate fulfillment. Faith must remain active even when the process requires endurance.

In Hebrews 6:13-15, Abraham is presented as an example of someone who patiently endured and obtained the promise. The emphasis is not upon Abraham's ability to control the timing of God's purposes, but upon the reliability of the One who had spoken. God had established His promise, and Abraham was called to trust Him. This becomes a powerful reminder that the strength of biblical faith is not found in the intensity of our personal determination. It is found in the character of God, whose Word remains trustworthy.

There is an important distinction between waiting with faith and waiting with resentment. We may continue fulfilling our responsibilities outwardly while allowing bitterness to develop inwardly because circumstances have not unfolded according to our expectations. We may begin comparing our journey with others, questioning why their opportunities appear greater or why their prayers seem to receive answers more quickly. We may become frustrated with the very responsibilities that once brought us joy. When these attitudes begin developing, the waiting season reveals areas of our hearts that require renewed surrender.

This is why spiritual maturity involves learning to trust God without making our relationship with Him dependent upon immediate results. We must recognize that His goodness is not measured exclusively by whether our circumstances improve according to our preferred timetable. The Lord remains worthy of

worship when life is difficult. His Word remains true when we do not understand what is happening. His grace remains sufficient when our strength is limited. As we develop this perspective, our faith becomes less vulnerable to the emotional fluctuations that accompany changing circumstances.

For our families, this kind of trust becomes especially important because some of the most meaningful spiritual concerns we carry involve people whose decisions we cannot control. We may desire our children to develop a deeper relationship with God, but their spiritual growth involves personal choices and individual responsibility. We may pray for restoration in a marriage or reconciliation within an extended family, but those outcomes may require the willing participation of others. Faithful waiting means continuing to demonstrate love, truth, and integrity while refusing to allow uncertainty to destroy our own relationship with God.

A birthing church must cultivate this same spiritual maturity. We should not become discouraged simply because every ministry does not grow at the same pace or because every initiative does not produce immediate results. We must remain willing to evaluate, improve, and adapt, but our commitment to the gospel cannot depend exclusively upon visible success. We are called to remain faithful because Jesus Christ is worthy of our obedience, not merely because obedience produces outcomes we can immediately celebrate.

4.5 The Process Develops the Character Required for the Responsibility

One of the central themes of The Birthing Church is that the period between promise and fulfillment should not be wasted. Pastor Azzolini used the imagery of pregnancy to emphasize that development is taking place before delivery. The child is growing, the mother's body is adapting, and preparations are being made for a responsibility that will soon become visible. In the same way, spiritual waiting can become a season in which God develops the character necessary for greater responsibility. The process may expose weaknesses, challenge our priorities, and require us to develop disciplines that we previously neglected.

James addresses the relationship between difficulty and spiritual maturity in the opening chapter of his epistle.

James 1:2-4 (KJV)

> *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James is not suggesting that suffering is enjoyable or that believers should pretend difficulties do not hurt. His instruction concerns the spiritual perspective we develop when our faith is tested. The word translated patience communicates endurance or steadfastness, while the description of becoming perfect and entire points toward spiritual maturity and completeness. The testing of faith can become an environment in which perseverance develops, but this growth requires us to respond faithfully rather than allowing hardship to produce bitterness or abandonment of our convictions.

This principle becomes especially meaningful when we consider the responsibilities associated with ministry. We may desire opportunities to teach, preach, lead, or serve in greater capacities, but those

responsibilities require more than enthusiasm or natural ability. They demand integrity, patience, humility, biblical understanding, and a genuine love for people. A person may possess remarkable communication skills while still needing to develop the character necessary to handle criticism. Someone may demonstrate organizational ability while struggling to practice patience with others. A believer may feel passionate about evangelism while needing to learn how to disciple people whose growth is slower than expected.

Spiritual formation addresses these areas because God is concerned with the character of those who serve Him. We must resist the temptation to assume that greater responsibility automatically produces greater maturity. In reality, responsibility often reveals the maturity we already possess. When pressure increases, unresolved attitudes become more visible. When expectations grow, weaknesses in communication or accountability can become more damaging. When influence expands, the consequences of poor decisions can affect more people. This is why the development of character must remain central to leadership preparation.

The Apostle Paul emphasized this principle when instructing Timothy concerning the qualifications of church leaders. In 1 Timothy 3, he described characteristics such as self-control, hospitality, good conduct, and the ability to manage one's household responsibly. These qualifications reveal that spiritual leadership is not determined exclusively by public ability. The condition of a person's character and relationships matters deeply. A church preparing for multiplication must therefore invest in the spiritual development of its leaders rather than simply filling positions with available volunteers.

Within our families, the same principle applies. We may desire greater peace in our homes, but peace requires us to develop patience and self-control. We may want stronger marriages, but healthy relationships require humility, communication, and forgiveness. We may hope that our children will demonstrate spiritual maturity, but we must also be willing to model the disciplines and attitudes we want them to develop. The process of formation challenges us to become examples of the principles we teach.

The waiting season can therefore become an opportunity for honest spiritual examination. Instead of asking only when God will change our circumstances, we can also ask what His Word is teaching us about our attitudes, habits, and responsibilities. We can examine whether our prayer lives are becoming more consistent, whether our relationships are becoming healthier, and whether our understanding of Scripture is deepening. These areas of growth may not produce immediate public recognition, but they prepare us to carry responsibility with greater maturity.

4.6 When We Try to Accelerate What Requires Maturity

One of the greatest temptations during prolonged seasons of waiting is the desire to accelerate the process. We become impatient with gradual development because we want to experience the results without continuing through the responsibilities that precede them. This temptation is particularly strong when we compare ourselves with others whose progress appears faster or whose opportunities seem greater. We may begin believing that something is wrong with our journey because it does not resemble the experiences of those around us. Yet spiritual formation is not a competition, and the timing of another person's development does not establish the timetable for our own responsibilities.

The life of David provides a meaningful example of the relationship between calling and preparation. In 1 Samuel 16, the prophet Samuel anointed David, identifying him as the one God had chosen to become king. Yet David did not immediately ascend to the throne. His journey included years of service, conflict, danger, and uncertainty. During that period, he developed experiences that would influence his understanding of leadership, dependence upon God, and responsibility toward others. The anointing identified his future calling, but the responsibilities of kingship unfolded through a much longer process.

David's experience also reveals that possessing a calling does not justify taking authority through unrighteous methods. On multiple occasions, David had opportunities to harm Saul, the reigning king who was seeking his life. Yet David refused to seize the throne through violence against the Lord's anointed. His restraint demonstrated that he understood the importance of remaining submitted to God rather than attempting to force the fulfillment of his calling through personal ambition. Although David was not without failures, these moments reveal an important principle concerning the relationship between promise and obedience.

We must learn that a good objective does not justify an ungodly method. We may desire to see our church grow, but we cannot compromise biblical truth to attract greater attendance. We may want to develop new leaders, but we should not place people into responsibilities for which they are spiritually unprepared merely because positions need to be filled. We may hope to expand ministry opportunities, but we must exercise responsible stewardship rather than making decisions driven exclusively by excitement. When our desire for results becomes stronger than our commitment to biblical principles, we risk damaging the very work we hope to accomplish.

This is especially relevant in a culture that celebrates speed and immediate achievement. We are accustomed to receiving information instantly, communicating across continents in seconds, and evaluating progress through constant measurements. These advantages can be valuable for ministry, but they can also create unrealistic expectations concerning spiritual growth. Discipleship cannot be reduced to a quick process in which people receive information and immediately develop mature character. Relationships require time. Biblical understanding deepens through continued study. Trust develops through consistency. Leadership maturity emerges through instruction, experience, accountability, and correction.

A birthing church must therefore resist the temptation to confuse rapid expansion with healthy multiplication. Growth is valuable when it reflects genuine spiritual life, but numerical increase without adequate discipleship can create significant challenges. If people are welcomed into the church without receiving biblical instruction and meaningful relationships, they may struggle to develop lasting spiritual foundations. If ministries expand without sufficient leadership preparation, volunteers may become overwhelmed and discouraged. If organizational structures grow faster than the church's ability to provide pastoral care, important needs may be overlooked.

The goal is not simply to grow quickly. It is to grow faithfully.

4.7 Preparing During the Waiting Season

Perhaps one of the most practical statements in Pastor Azzolini's sermon was his warning that the season of expectation must not be wasted. He described the preparations he made before the birth of his children, including arranging the nursery, assembling furniture, gathering supplies, and learning what would be necessary to care for the new life entering their family. These responsibilities were not postponed until the child arrived. They were completed because the family understood that expectation required preparation.

This illustration challenges us to consider whether our actions correspond with what we claim to be expecting. If we believe that God is calling us to reach more people with the gospel, we should be strengthening our ability to welcome and disciple them. If we desire to see greater participation in ministry, we should be developing clear opportunities for training and service. If we are praying for families to experience spiritual restoration, we should be cultivating relationships and resources that can provide biblical encouragement. Preparation demonstrates that we take our responsibilities seriously, even while recognizing that the ultimate outcome remains in God's hands.

Consider the experience of Nehemiah. When he learned about the condition of Jerusalem's walls, he responded first through mourning, fasting, and prayer. Yet his response did not end there. When the opportunity arose, he approached the king with a specific request, sought the necessary resources, and eventually organized the work of rebuilding. His dependence upon God did not eliminate the importance of planning and practical action. Prayer and preparation functioned together as expressions of his commitment to the responsibility before him.

This principle is especially important for church leadership. We may pray for revival while neglecting the structures necessary to care for people who respond to the gospel. We may ask God to raise up teachers while failing to provide opportunities for biblical training. We may desire stronger families while overlooking the need for consistent discipleship and pastoral support. We may hope to expand multicultural ministry while failing to develop effective communication across language and cultural differences. In each of these situations, the issue is not whether God possesses the power to work. The issue is whether we are faithfully stewarding the responsibilities already entrusted to us.

Preparation also involves the condition of our hearts. We cannot become spiritually ready for greater responsibility through organizational planning alone. We must cultivate humility, prayer, integrity, and healthy relationships. A church may possess excellent facilities and well-developed programs while still struggling with division, competition, or spiritual complacency. These attitudes can undermine the very growth the congregation desires. For this reason, preparation must involve both practical readiness and spiritual maturity.

Within our homes, preparation takes a different but equally meaningful form. If we are praying for our children to develop a lasting relationship with God, we can begin establishing consistent opportunities for prayer and biblical conversation. If we desire stronger marriages, we can intentionally develop habits of communication, forgiveness, and mutual encouragement. If we hope to influence future generations, we can examine the spiritual values our current decisions are communicating. We cannot guarantee every future outcome, but we can faithfully cultivate an environment that reflects our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Expectation should not make us passive observers of the future. It should motivate us to become faithful stewards of the present.

4.8 The Danger of Becoming Weary Before the Harvest

Long seasons of responsibility can produce exhaustion, especially when our efforts do not appear to generate the results we anticipated. We may begin serving with tremendous enthusiasm, believing that progress will be rapid and visible. Yet as time passes, the demands of ministry, family responsibilities, and personal challenges can gradually weaken our motivation. We may continue performing our duties while losing the joy that originally accompanied them. We may begin questioning whether our sacrifices matter or whether the work we are doing is producing meaningful fruit.

The Apostle Paul addressed this danger in his letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 6:9 (KJV)

> *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Paul's instruction appears within a broader discussion concerning sowing and reaping, spiritual responsibility, and doing good to others. His encouragement reminds believers that faithful conduct matters even when the results are not immediately visible. The promise of reaping should not be reduced to a guarantee that every ministry initiative will succeed according to our expectations. Rather, Paul encourages perseverance in doing what is right because our labor in obedience to God is meaningful.

This passage becomes particularly important for those who have served faithfully for many years. Some of us have invested significant portions of our lives in ministry, teaching, prayer, evangelism, and caring for others. We have celebrated victories, but we have also experienced disappointments. We have watched people grow spiritually, but we have also witnessed others abandon commitments they once embraced. We have invested in relationships that became fruitful, while other efforts seemed to produce little visible progress. These experiences can create emotional fatigue if we begin measuring the value of our service exclusively through immediate outcomes.

We must learn that faithfulness is not the same as endless activity. The instruction not to become weary does not mean we should ignore physical exhaustion, neglect our families, or refuse appropriate rest. Jesus Himself withdrew from crowds to pray, and Scripture recognizes the importance of rest and human limitations. Sometimes the wisest response to prolonged responsibility is not to increase our activity, but to evaluate our priorities, establish healthier boundaries, and seek support from others. Spiritual perseverance requires wisdom concerning how we steward our strength.

This is especially important for a birthing church because spiritual multiplication can increase the demands placed upon leaders and volunteers. As ministries grow, responsibilities must be shared. New leaders must be trained. Systems should be developed that allow people to serve effectively without carrying unsustainable burdens. A church that continually expands its activities without strengthening its leadership and care structures may unintentionally exhaust the very people who are helping sustain its mission.

Healthy spiritual growth should therefore include the multiplication of responsibility, not merely the multiplication of activity. We must learn to equip others rather than assuming that a small group of faithful individuals should carry every burden indefinitely. Ephesians 4:11-12 describes the responsibility of ministry leadership to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ. This principle reminds us that leadership development is not simply an organizational strategy. It is part of the biblical pattern for building a healthy church.

When we become weary, we should return to the foundation of our calling. We serve because Jesus Christ is worthy. We teach because His Word brings life. We pray because we depend upon Him. We disciple because He commanded us to make disciples. These convictions remain meaningful even when the results of our labor are difficult to measure. Our confidence rests not in our ability to produce immediate success, but in the faithfulness of the Lord who has called us to continue doing good.

4.9 God's Timing Challenges Our Desire for Control

One of the most difficult aspects of waiting is accepting that we do not control the timing of every outcome. We may develop plans, establish goals, and organize our responsibilities carefully, yet circumstances can unfold differently than we anticipated. Opportunities may take longer to develop. Relationships may require more patience than expected. Ministry growth may occur in unexpected ways. These experiences confront our desire for certainty and remind us that our understanding of the future remains limited.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)

> *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.*

This passage introduces a reflection on the changing seasons of human life. The writer recognizes that different experiences occur at different times and that human beings do not possess complete control over the circumstances they encounter. The chapter eventually acknowledges that God has made everything beautiful in its time, while also recognizing the limitations of human understanding concerning His work from beginning to end.

This perspective encourages humility. We can plan responsibly without assuming that our plans possess ultimate authority. We can establish ministry goals without believing that every objective must be achieved according to our preferred timetable. We can pray with confidence while remaining surrendered to God's wisdom. Spiritual maturity requires us to recognize that our responsibility is to obey faithfully, while the final outcome belongs to the Lord.

The Apostle James addresses a similar principle in James 4:13-15, warning believers against speaking about future plans as though they possess complete control over tomorrow. He encourages them to acknowledge the will of the Lord in their intentions. This does not discourage planning. Rather, it establishes the proper attitude with which planning should occur. We should make decisions with wisdom, diligence, and responsibility while recognizing that our lives remain dependent upon God.

For our church, this means that vision and surrender must remain connected. We should seek opportunities to expand our influence, strengthen discipleship, and reach more people with the gospel. We should develop practical plans, evaluate available resources, and establish meaningful objectives. Yet we

must also remain willing to adjust when circumstances require wisdom and discernment. We cannot assume that every delay represents spiritual opposition or that every open door automatically represents divine approval. Our decisions must remain grounded in Scripture, prayer, counsel, and responsible stewardship.

For our families, accepting God's timing often requires us to release the pressure we place upon ourselves and others. We may have imagined that our children would reach certain milestones by particular ages or that our relationships would develop according to a specific pattern. When life unfolds differently, we may experience disappointment or uncertainty. But our responsibility is not to force every circumstance into the timeline we originally imagined. It is to remain faithful, loving, and wise as we navigate the season before us.

Waiting becomes spiritually destructive when we allow it to produce resentment toward God. But it can become spiritually formative when it teaches us humility, dependence, and perseverance. We may not understand every delay, but we can continue trusting the Lord while making responsible decisions. We may not know when circumstances will change, but we can remain committed to the responsibilities already entrusted to us.

4.10 The Promise Is Not Only About What We Receive

Perhaps the most significant transformation that can occur during a season of waiting is a change in the way we understand the purpose of God's work. We often begin with a particular expectation concerning what we hope to receive. We may desire a restored relationship, a new ministry opportunity, greater spiritual influence, or a breakthrough in circumstances that have remained difficult. These desires may be sincere and meaningful, but as we continue walking with God, we may discover that His work extends beyond the specific outcome we originally anticipated.

The Apostle Paul provides a remarkable example of this perspective in 2 Corinthians 12. He described a persistent affliction that led him to seek the Lord repeatedly for relief. Yet the answer he received redirected his understanding of divine strength.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)

> *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Paul's experience reminds us that God's faithfulness is not demonstrated exclusively through the removal of difficulty. Sometimes His grace sustains us through circumstances we would not have chosen. The answer Paul received did not correspond with his original request, but it revealed something profound concerning the sufficiency of divine grace and the power of Christ in human weakness.

This challenges the assumption that every difficult season must end with the particular outcome we desire. There are times when God changes our circumstances, and there are times when He strengthens us to remain faithful within them. There are moments when doors open, and others when we must accept that a particular opportunity is not available. There are prayers that receive answers we can immediately recognize, and others whose outcomes remain difficult to understand.

In each situation, our relationship with God must remain greater than the result we are seeking.

For a birthing church, this perspective is essential because spiritual multiplication is not ultimately about institutional recognition, numerical achievement, or the expansion of our personal influence. The purpose of the church is to glorify Jesus Christ, proclaim His gospel, make disciples, and demonstrate His love. Growth becomes meaningful when it serves that mission. New ministries become valuable when they strengthen the body and reach people with the truth. Leadership development matters because it equips believers to serve faithfully.

We must therefore examine whether our expectations are centered upon God's glory or upon our desire for visible success. Are we seeking growth because we genuinely love people and desire their salvation, or because larger numbers would make us feel more accomplished? Are we praying for greater influence because we want to serve more effectively, or because recognition has become important to our identity? Are we willing to celebrate spiritual fruitfulness in another ministry even when our own efforts remain less visible?

These questions are not intended to discourage expectation. They are meant to purify our motives.

The waiting season provides an opportunity for our understanding of success to mature. We begin recognizing that faithfulness is valuable even when it does not produce public recognition. We discover that spiritual influence is not limited to visible leadership. We learn that the formation of one genuine disciple can have significance beyond what we are able to measure.

And perhaps most importantly, we begin to understand that God's greatest work is not always what He places into our hands, but what His grace develops within our hearts.

Section 4 Conclusion: We Must Not Waste the Waiting Season

The journey from promise to fulfillment is rarely as simple as we initially imagine. Abraham and Sarah experienced years of waiting before Isaac was born. David received an anointing long before he assumed the responsibilities of kingship. Noah responded to God's warning through preparation, and the early church developed through continued devotion to prayer, doctrine, fellowship, and service. These biblical accounts remind us that faithfulness often requires perseverance, and that the development of spiritual maturity cannot be separated from the responsibilities God entrusts to His people.

The message of The Birthing Church challenges us to reconsider how we interpret seasons when visible progress appears limited. Instead of assuming that nothing meaningful is happening, we must examine whether we are using the present season to develop the character, relationships, and spiritual disciplines necessary for faithful service. We may not control the timing of every outcome, but we can remain responsible for the decisions we make today. We can strengthen our prayer lives, deepen our understanding of Scripture, invest in discipleship, and cultivate healthier relationships within our homes and church.

For our families, the waiting season must not become a period of emotional withdrawal or spiritual discouragement. We may be carrying concerns for loved ones whose circumstances have not changed, but we can continue demonstrating the love and truth of Jesus Christ. We can pray without attempting to

control others, encourage without manipulating, and remain faithful without allowing disappointment to harden our hearts. The spiritual environment we cultivate today may influence generations we have not yet seen.

For Tampa Life Church, the responsibility is equally significant. If we are expecting spiritual multiplication, we must become intentional about preparation. We should strengthen discipleship, equip leaders, support families, protect unity, and create opportunities for people to grow in their relationship with God. We cannot expect sustainable growth while neglecting the structures and relationships necessary to nurture it. The season of expectation should motivate us to become more faithful, not merely more excited.

We must also remember that waiting does not guarantee the fulfillment of every personal desire. Our confidence must remain grounded in the promises God has actually revealed, and our expectations must remain surrendered to His wisdom. Sometimes His purposes unfold differently than we imagined. Sometimes His grace sustains us through circumstances that remain unresolved. Yet His faithfulness does not depend upon our ability to understand every detail of the journey.

The waiting season is not merely about the time required for something to happen. It is also about the spiritual maturity required to remain faithful while God's purposes unfold.

A birthing church must therefore learn to carry responsibility with patience. We must resist the temptation to force outcomes, abandon commitments, or measure our value exclusively through visible results. We are called to remain faithful to the Word, dependent upon the Holy Ghost, and willing to prepare for the opportunities God places before us.

But preparation involves more than developing our abilities and organizing our responsibilities. Just as an expecting mother must become attentive to what enters her body, a spiritually expectant church must become intentional about what influences its heart. The conversations we entertain, the attitudes we cultivate, the relationships we maintain, and the spiritual influences we welcome can either strengthen or weaken our ability to remain faithful.

This introduces one of the most practical and challenging themes of Pastor Azzolini's message: a birthing church must protect what it is carrying.

PART 05

Protecting the Promise: The Spiritual Diet of a Birthing Church



Guarding Our Hearts, Protecting Spiritual Unity, and Understanding How Our Daily Influences Shape What God Is Developing Within Us

Foundational Scriptures: Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 4:29-32; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Hebrews 12:14-15; John 15:1-5

5.1 What We Carry Determines What We Must Protect

One of the most compelling illustrations in Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message The Birthing Church concerns the responsibility of protecting what is developing during pregnancy. When a mother discovers that she is expecting a child, her understanding of ordinary daily decisions begins to change. Activities that previously required little consideration may now demand greater attention. What she consumes, how she cares for her health, and the environment in which she lives become important because her decisions affect more than herself. She recognizes that she is carrying life, and that recognition produces a new level of responsibility. Pastor Azzolini used this illustration to challenge the congregation to consider whether we are protecting the spiritual work God desires to accomplish through our lives and through the church.

This illustration introduces a profound spiritual principle: when we recognize the importance of what God has entrusted to us, we must become more intentional about the influences we permit to shape our hearts. We cannot expect to develop spiritual maturity while continually exposing ourselves to attitudes, conversations, and practices that contradict the Word of God. We cannot pray for unity within the church while participating in conversations that create suspicion and division. We cannot ask God to strengthen our families while allowing resentment, dishonesty, and destructive communication to dominate our homes. Spiritual expectation requires spiritual responsibility, and part of that responsibility involves guarding the condition of our hearts.

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly calls His people to recognize the relationship between inward devotion and outward conduct. The spiritual life is not sustained merely through occasional encounters with God's presence. It develops through an ongoing relationship in which our thoughts, desires, habits, and decisions are continually submitted to His Word. This means that protecting what God is developing within us requires more than avoiding obvious wrongdoing. We must also examine the subtle influences that gradually shape our attitudes. A single conversation may appear insignificant, but repeated exposure to criticism can eventually influence how we view others. An unresolved offense may seem manageable, but when it is continually rehearsed, it can develop into bitterness. A small compromise may initially appear harmless, but repeated compromise can gradually weaken our sensitivity to biblical conviction.

The danger is that these changes often occur slowly. We may not immediately recognize how our spiritual perspective is being affected because the process is gradual. Just as physical health is influenced by consistent patterns rather than isolated decisions alone, our spiritual condition is shaped by the habits we cultivate over time. The words we repeatedly hear, the conversations we entertain, the content we consume, and the attitudes we allow to remain unchallenged can influence our understanding of God, our relationships, and our willingness to obey Scripture. For this reason, a birthing church must develop spiritual discernment concerning what it allows to influence its collective life.

We should also recognize that protecting the promise does not mean attempting to preserve a particular outcome through fear or superstition. God's sovereign purposes are not so fragile that an ordinary mistake can automatically destroy them. The biblical concern is not that our words possess independent power to cancel God's intentions, but that sinful attitudes and destructive behavior can damage relationships, hinder discipleship, and compromise our faithfulness. When we speak about protecting what God has entrusted to us, we are speaking about stewarding our responsibilities through obedience, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.

For Tampa Life Church, this principle reaches beyond individual devotion. If we are preparing to welcome new believers, strengthen families, and develop future leaders, we must consider the spiritual environment those individuals will encounter. Will they find a congregation characterized by encouragement, prayer, humility, and genuine love? Will they discover relationships where correction is offered with compassion and where people are willing to forgive? Or will they encounter competition, suspicion, gossip, and unresolved conflict? The spiritual culture of a church influences the people who become part of it, and that culture is shaped by the daily decisions of its members.

A birthing church must therefore recognize that spiritual multiplication requires a healthy spiritual environment. We are not simply preparing programs or expanding organizational structures. We are cultivating a community in which people can encounter Jesus Christ, receive biblical instruction, and develop lasting relationships. The responsibility of protecting that environment belongs to all of us.

5.2 Guarding the Heart: The Source of Our Spiritual Direction

The book of Proverbs provides one of the clearest biblical instructions concerning the importance of protecting our inner lives. In Proverbs 4, a father instructs his son to pursue wisdom, pay attention to sound teaching, and remain committed to the path of righteousness. Within that instruction, he emphasizes the importance of guarding the heart because it influences the direction of life itself.

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV)

> *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

The heart, as used throughout much of biblical wisdom literature, represents more than human emotion. It includes our thoughts, desires, intentions, convictions, and the inward orientation of our lives. To guard the heart is therefore to exercise careful attention over the influences that shape our decisions and conduct. The writer is not encouraging emotional isolation or the avoidance of every uncomfortable experience. He is calling for wisdom concerning the condition of our inner lives because what develops within us eventually influences what becomes visible through us.

This principle is especially important because we often focus more attention on external behavior than on the attitudes that produce it. We may attempt to control our words without addressing the resentment that motivates them. We may try to appear patient while continually nurturing frustration toward others. We may participate in ministry while privately comparing ourselves with those who receive greater recognition. Outward conduct matters, but Scripture repeatedly reminds us that lasting transformation must also reach the heart.

Jesus reinforced this truth in Luke 6:45 when He explained that a person's speech reveals what has been stored within the heart. His teaching demonstrates that our words are not disconnected from our inward condition. When criticism, jealousy, bitterness, or pride continually appear in our conversations, we should not treat them merely as communication problems. They may reveal deeper attitudes that require repentance and spiritual correction. Likewise, when our speech becomes characterized by gratitude, compassion, patience, and truth, it often reflects the ongoing influence of God's Word upon our thinking.

This is why guarding our hearts requires intentional spiritual examination. We must be willing to ask whether our attitudes are becoming more consistent with the character of Christ. Are we becoming more patient with people who are still developing spiritually, or are we growing increasingly critical of their weaknesses? Are we genuinely celebrating the blessings and opportunities others receive, or are we allowing comparison to produce resentment? Are we approaching difficult conversations with humility, or have we become more concerned with defending our opinions than preserving healthy relationships? These questions may be uncomfortable, but they are essential because spiritual maturity requires us to confront what is happening beneath the surface of our conduct.

The Apostle Paul describes a related process in Romans 12:2, where he calls believers to be transformed through the renewing of their minds. This transformation involves allowing God's truth to reshape our understanding, values, and priorities. We do not develop a renewed mind simply by avoiding negative influences. We must also actively cultivate a deeper understanding of Scripture and a consistent relationship with God. Prayer, biblical study, worship, fellowship, and obedience become important because they help establish the truth through which our attitudes and decisions are evaluated.

Within our families, guarding the heart becomes a responsibility that influences the entire household. Parents who continually nurture anxiety, resentment, or bitterness may unintentionally communicate those attitudes to their children. Spouses who refuse to address unresolved conflict may gradually create an environment where trust becomes difficult to maintain. Family members who repeatedly speak negatively about one another can weaken relationships that should be characterized by love and mutual encouragement. Yet when we allow God's Word to confront our attitudes, we begin creating opportunities for healthier communication, forgiveness, and spiritual growth.

A birthing church must understand that the condition of our hearts matters because our inward attitudes eventually influence our collective culture. The spiritual environment of a congregation is not determined exclusively by the quality of its preaching or worship. It is also shaped by the attitudes its members carry into conversations, relationships, and responsibilities. If we desire a healthy church, we must become intentional about cultivating healthy hearts.

5.3 The Spiritual Diet: What We Continually Consume Shapes What We Become

Pastor Azzolini's illustration of pregnancy emphasized the importance of being attentive to what enters the body during a season of development. He applied this principle spiritually by challenging the congregation to consider what we are consuming through our conversations, relationships, and daily influences. The illustration is particularly meaningful because spiritual formation is not disconnected from the information and attitudes we continually receive. Our minds are influenced by repeated exposure, and our hearts can gradually become shaped by the values we allow to dominate our attention.

The Apostle Paul provides an important foundation for this principle in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 4:8 (KJV)

> *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Paul was writing to believers who needed encouragement to remain steadfast, pursue unity, and continue rejoicing in the Lord despite challenging circumstances. His instruction concerning the mind was not an invitation to ignore reality or pretend that difficult situations did not exist. Rather, he was directing believers toward a disciplined pattern of thought shaped by truth, righteousness, purity, and what is worthy of praise. The emphasis is upon developing a mind that is increasingly influenced by the values of God's kingdom rather than by the destructive attitudes that characterize a fallen world.

This passage challenges us to examine the information we continually consume. We live in an environment where news, social media, entertainment, and personal opinions are available almost constantly. These resources can provide useful information, meaningful communication, and opportunities for learning. Yet they can also expose us to repeated patterns of fear, hostility, comparison, immorality, and cynicism. If we are not intentional, the voices we hear most frequently may begin influencing our attitudes more deeply than the Word of God.

This does not mean that believers should withdraw from society or refuse to engage with difficult subjects. Scripture calls us to live as witnesses in the world, and faithful Christian living requires us to understand the needs and challenges of the people around us. The issue is not whether we encounter negative information, but whether we allow that information to dominate our thinking and determine our spiritual perspective. We can remain informed without becoming consumed by fear. We can recognize injustice without surrendering to hatred. We can acknowledge the failures of others without allowing criticism to become the defining characteristic of our conversations.

Our spiritual diet also includes the voices we permit to influence our understanding of the church. If we continually surround ourselves with people who criticize every decision, question every motive, and interpret every challenge through suspicion, those attitudes may gradually influence our own perspective. We may begin viewing ministry through the lens of frustration rather than gratitude. We may become less willing to serve because we have allowed the imperfections of others to overshadow the mission of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that all criticism is unhealthy or that leaders should be protected from legitimate accountability. It means that we must distinguish between conversations intended to produce understanding and restoration and those that merely cultivate resentment.

The same principle applies to our personal relationships. We should seek friendships that encourage spiritual growth, honesty, humility, and faithfulness. Healthy relationships do not require constant agreement, and genuine friends may sometimes challenge us when our decisions are unwise. In fact, Proverbs 27:6 reminds us that faithful correction can be an expression of love. But there is a significant difference between relationships that help us become more like Christ and those that continually encourage compromise, bitterness, or disobedience. Spiritual discernment requires us to recognize that not every influence deserves equal authority in our lives.

For our children and young people, this subject is especially important because they are developing their understanding of identity, relationships, morality, and purpose within a culture filled with competing messages. We cannot simply tell the next generation to avoid harmful influences without also helping them understand why biblical truth matters. They need opportunities to ask questions, examine Scripture, and develop convictions that are rooted in a genuine relationship with God. If we respond to every difficult question with fear or condemnation, we may discourage the honest conversations necessary for spiritual growth. But when we provide biblical instruction with patience and love, we help them develop the discernment necessary to navigate a complicated world.

A birthing church must therefore become intentional about its spiritual diet. We should continually expose ourselves to Scripture, prayer, worship, and relationships that strengthen our commitment to Christ. We must learn to recognize when certain influences are producing fear, jealousy, bitterness, or spiritual complacency. And we must be willing to make adjustments when our daily habits begin weakening the convictions we profess.

5.4 Gossip and Division: When Our Words Damage What God Is Building

Among the influences Pastor Azzolini warned against were gossip, jealousy, division, and conversations that weaken spiritual expectation. These concerns are particularly important because the health of a church depends heavily upon the quality of its relationships. A congregation may possess strong preaching, excellent music, and effective organizational structures, yet still experience serious spiritual damage when trust begins to deteriorate among its members. Gossip and division can undermine relationships quietly, creating suspicion and discouragement long before their effects become publicly visible.

The Apostle Paul addresses the responsibility of Christian speech in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:29 (KJV)

> *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

Paul's instruction appears within a broader discussion concerning the transformation that should characterize those who belong to Jesus Christ. He calls believers to abandon falsehood, deal appropriately with anger, practice honest labor, and speak in ways that build others up. The emphasis is not merely upon avoiding offensive language. It concerns the purpose and effect of our communication. Our words should contribute to the spiritual well-being of others rather than producing unnecessary harm.

Gossip becomes dangerous because it often presents itself as harmless conversation or even as concern for another person's situation. We may begin discussing someone's difficulties under the appearance of seeking understanding, but the conversation gradually moves toward speculation, criticism, or the sharing of information that was never ours to distribute. We may convince ourselves that our motives are innocent because the information is true, yet truthfulness alone does not justify every disclosure. Biblical wisdom also requires us to consider whether sharing particular information is necessary, loving, and appropriate.

Within a church, the consequences can be significant. A new believer who discovers that personal struggles have become the subject of public conversation may lose confidence in the people who were

supposed to provide spiritual support. A ministry leader who repeatedly encounters criticism through indirect conversations may become discouraged or defensive. Families experiencing difficulty may withdraw from fellowship because they fear judgment rather than expecting compassion. These situations demonstrate why protecting unity is not merely an organizational concern. It is a spiritual responsibility connected to the commandment to love one another.

Jealousy can produce similar damage. When we begin comparing our responsibilities, recognition, or opportunities with those of others, we may lose sight of the collective mission of the church. Instead of celebrating the development of another believer, we may begin questioning why they received an opportunity that we desired. Instead of supporting a ministry experiencing growth, we may interpret its success as evidence that our own contribution is less important. These attitudes are destructive because they transform service into competition and weaken the mutual encouragement that should characterize the body of Christ.

Paul confronted this kind of division in 1 Corinthians 3, where believers were identifying themselves with different ministers and allowing personal allegiance to create conflict. He reminded them that one servant planted, another watered, but God gave the increase. The purpose of ministry was not to establish the superiority of individual workers, but to participate faithfully in the work of God. This principle is especially important for a growing church because multiplication requires us to celebrate the development of new people and new ministries without interpreting their progress as a threat to our own significance.

We must also recognize that protecting unity does not mean ignoring wrongdoing. Scripture provides clear principles for correction, accountability, and the appropriate handling of serious concerns. Jesus instructed believers in Matthew 18:15-17 concerning the process of addressing sin within the community. The Apostle Paul also gave instructions regarding church discipline and the responsibility of leaders to act faithfully. Therefore, a healthy church must never use the language of unity to silence those who raise legitimate concerns or seek protection from harmful behavior. Biblical unity is grounded in truth and love, not secrecy or the avoidance of accountability.

The challenge is to cultivate communication that seeks restoration rather than destruction. When we have a concern, we should address it through appropriate relationships and processes rather than spreading suspicion. When someone disappoints us, we should seek understanding before assuming the worst about their motives. When correction is necessary, we should pursue it with humility and a genuine desire for spiritual growth. When another ministry succeeds, we should celebrate the contribution it makes to the body of Christ. These practices help protect the relationships through which discipleship and spiritual multiplication take place.

A birthing church must understand that gossip and division do not simply create unpleasant conversations. They can weaken the trust necessary for people to grow spiritually. If we desire to nurture new life, we must become intentional about cultivating relationships characterized by honesty, humility, forgiveness, and love.

5.5 Bitterness: The Hidden Influence That Can Spread Through a Community

One of the most dangerous spiritual conditions is bitterness because it often develops gradually and can remain concealed beneath outward religious activity. We may continue attending church, participating in ministry, and fulfilling our responsibilities while privately nurturing resentment toward someone who has disappointed or hurt us. Over time, that resentment can begin influencing how we interpret their words, evaluate their decisions, and respond to their presence. What began as a particular offense can eventually become a broader attitude that affects multiple relationships.

The writer of Hebrews warns believers about this danger.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (KJV)

> *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*

The imagery of a root is particularly meaningful because roots often develop beneath the surface before their effects become visible. Bitterness may begin as an unresolved disappointment, but when it is continually nurtured, it can influence our thoughts, speech, and relationships. The passage also emphasizes that the consequences may extend beyond the individual carrying the bitterness. Others can become affected when resentment begins shaping conversations and attitudes within a community.

This does not mean that every experience of anger or hurt is sinful. Scripture recognizes that people can experience genuine injustice, betrayal, and suffering. Some situations require boundaries, accountability, or professional assistance. Forgiveness should never be confused with denying harm or automatically restoring trust where repentance and changed behavior are absent. Nevertheless, the biblical warning concerns the danger of allowing resentment to become an enduring condition that shapes our identity and relationships.

Within a church, bitterness can be particularly destructive because believers often continue interacting with people who have disappointed them. A disagreement concerning ministry may remain unresolved for years. A careless comment may be remembered long after the person who spoke it has forgotten. A leadership decision may become the foundation for ongoing suspicion. When these experiences are not addressed with humility and wisdom, they can gradually influence the way we participate in the life of the congregation.

The Apostle Paul addresses the need for forgiveness and compassion in Ephesians 4:31-32. He calls believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, and evil speaking, and to become kind and tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God has forgiven them through Christ. This instruction reveals that Christian forgiveness is rooted in the grace we have received. We do not forgive because every offense is insignificant or because every relationship can immediately return to its previous condition. We forgive because we recognize the mercy of God and refuse to allow resentment to become the governing influence of our hearts.

For our families, this principle is deeply important. Unresolved bitterness can become part of the emotional atmosphere of a household. Children may grow up hearing repeated accounts of past offenses, learning to distrust particular relatives or developing assumptions about relationships based upon conflicts they did not personally experience. Spouses may allow old disappointments to influence every new disagreement, making genuine reconciliation increasingly difficult. When we continually rehearse the pain of the past without pursuing healing, we risk allowing previous experiences to determine the quality of our present relationships.

A spiritually healthy home must become a place where forgiveness is taught and practiced. This does not mean avoiding difficult conversations. In fact, genuine reconciliation often requires honesty concerning what happened, acknowledgment of responsibility, and practical changes that rebuild trust. But it does mean that we should resist the temptation to preserve offenses as permanent weapons against one another. We must learn to address conflict in ways that reflect both truth and grace.

A birthing church must cultivate this same commitment. If we are expecting God to bring new people into our fellowship, we should consider whether unresolved bitterness is influencing the environment they will encounter. A congregation characterized by longstanding conflict may struggle to provide the kind of spiritual support new believers need. But when members practice forgiveness, accountability, and healthy communication, they help establish a community where relationships can be strengthened and discipleship can flourish.

5.6 Fear and Unbelief: When Our Circumstances Become Louder Than God's Word

Another important influence that can weaken spiritual expectation is fear. Fear is a natural human response to uncertainty, danger, or circumstances beyond our control. Scripture does not suggest that faithful believers never experience fear. Many biblical figures encountered moments of anxiety, uncertainty, and emotional struggle. Yet the Word of God repeatedly calls us to respond to fear through trust, prayer, and obedience rather than allowing it to determine the direction of our lives.

One of the clearest examples appears in Numbers 13 and 14, when the Israelites approached the land God had promised to their ancestors. Moses sent twelve men to examine the land, and they returned with a report concerning its inhabitants, resources, and fortified cities. All twelve had observed the same territory, but they interpreted what they saw differently. Ten emphasized the strength of the inhabitants and the apparent impossibility of overcoming them, while Joshua and Caleb urged the people to trust the Lord and proceed in obedience.

The difference was not that Joshua and Caleb denied the existence of obstacles. They recognized the challenges, but they evaluated those challenges in light of God's covenant promise and the history of His faithfulness. The other spies allowed their perception of the obstacles to dominate their response, and their report contributed to fear and rebellion among the people. The account demonstrates how a community's response to difficult circumstances can be influenced by the interpretation communicated through its leaders and members.

We must be careful not to use this passage to dismiss legitimate concerns or discourage responsible evaluation. The Israelites had received a specific promise concerning the land, and their situation cannot be applied automatically to every modern ambition or ministry plan. Nevertheless, the narrative reveals a principle concerning the relationship between fear and obedience. When God has clearly instructed us to act, we must not allow fear alone to become the final authority over our response.

This principle is relevant to our personal lives because fear can influence decisions in subtle ways. We may avoid meaningful conversations because we are afraid of rejection. We may hesitate to serve because we fear making mistakes. We may resist opportunities for spiritual growth because they require us to move beyond familiar responsibilities. We may become so concerned about possible failure that we never take the steps necessary to develop our abilities. In these situations, fear can become an obstacle to obedience even when the responsibility before us is consistent with Scripture.

For our families, fear can also influence the way we respond to the future. Parents may become overwhelmed by concerns about their children's decisions, education, relationships, or spiritual direction. Financial uncertainty may create anxiety that affects the atmosphere of the home. Health challenges or unresolved family conflicts may produce feelings of helplessness. During these seasons, we must recognize that faith does not require us to suppress every emotion. Instead, we are invited to bring our concerns before God and seek His wisdom concerning the responsibilities we can faithfully fulfill.

Paul's instruction in Philippians 4:6-7 encourages believers to bring their requests to God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. The promise of God's peace is not presented as a guarantee that every circumstance will immediately change, but as a reminder that His presence can sustain us amid uncertainty. This becomes especially important when we are navigating situations whose outcomes remain beyond our control. We can pray, seek counsel, make responsible decisions, and remain faithful without allowing fear to dominate our understanding of the future.

A birthing church must therefore cultivate an atmosphere where faith and wisdom operate together. We should not be afraid to pursue opportunities for evangelism, discipleship, and ministry development simply because they involve challenges. Neither should we interpret every ambitious idea as a divine mandate that must be pursued without careful evaluation. Biblical faith encourages courageous obedience, while biblical wisdom calls us to examine our responsibilities honestly. When these principles remain connected, we can move forward with confidence in God without becoming reckless or dismissive of legitimate concerns.

5.7 The Influence of Relationships: Who Is Helping Us Grow?

The people with whom we develop close relationships can significantly influence our spiritual direction. Throughout Scripture, we encounter examples of individuals whose decisions were strengthened or weakened by the counsel and companionship they received. Relationships can provide encouragement, accountability, wisdom, and support, but they can also reinforce destructive attitudes when people continually affirm one another's resentment, compromise, or pride. This is why spiritual discernment must include careful attention to the relationships that influence our thinking and behavior.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (KJV)

> *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

In its original context, Paul was addressing false teaching concerning the resurrection. His warning emphasized the danger of allowing destructive beliefs and associations to influence the convictions and conduct of believers. The principle extends beyond casual companionship because it concerns the influence of ideas, relationships, and repeated exposure upon our spiritual understanding.

We must recognize that not every relationship serves the same purpose. Some people encourage us to become more faithful to God, even when that encouragement involves difficult conversations. Others may continually reinforce attitudes that weaken our spiritual growth. A friend who lovingly challenges our bitterness may be helping us more than someone who always agrees with our criticism. A mentor who provides honest correction may contribute more to our development than someone who simply praises our abilities. Healthy spiritual relationships do not require constant affirmation. They require a shared commitment to truth, love, and growth.

This is particularly important for those serving in ministry. Leadership can create emotional pressure, and people in positions of responsibility need relationships where they can receive encouragement, accountability, and wise counsel. When leaders surround themselves exclusively with individuals who affirm every decision, they risk losing the perspective necessary for healthy leadership. Conversely, when they continually entertain conversations characterized by cynicism and hostility, they may become discouraged or defensive. Spiritual maturity requires us to seek relationships that combine honesty with compassion and biblical conviction with humility.

Within our families, relationships outside the home can also influence the values we cultivate. Our children and young people develop friendships that shape their understanding of identity, morality, and belonging. We cannot protect them from every harmful influence through isolation, nor should we assume that every person who thinks differently represents a threat. Instead, we must help them develop discernment, confidence in biblical truth, and the ability to establish healthy boundaries. We should create opportunities for meaningful conversation so that they can discuss difficult questions without fear of immediate condemnation.

For the church, the responsibility is to become a community where healthy spiritual relationships are intentionally developed. New believers need more than occasional contact with mature Christians during services. They benefit from meaningful friendships, mentoring, small-group relationships, and opportunities to ask questions as they grow. Young people need spiritual examples who demonstrate consistency between public worship and private conduct. Emerging leaders need guidance from those who possess experience and maturity. These relationships become part of the environment through which discipleship takes place.

A birthing church must therefore recognize that protecting spiritual growth involves cultivating relationships that strengthen faith rather than merely avoiding those that weaken it. The goal is not to create a community isolated from the world, but to establish a spiritually healthy body capable of reaching the world without losing its biblical identity.

5.8 Protecting Our Homes: The First Environment of Spiritual Formation

The responsibility of guarding our spiritual environment becomes especially important within our families because the home is often the place where our most influential habits are developed. Church services provide opportunities for worship, teaching, fellowship, and spiritual encouragement, but the majority of our daily decisions occur outside the church building. Our children observe how we respond to stress, how we communicate during disagreements, how we treat people who disappoint us, and whether our relationship with God remains consistent when no one else is watching. These ordinary experiences contribute to their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 emphasizes the importance of teaching God's commandments throughout daily life. The instruction was not limited to formal religious gatherings, but included conversations at home, during travel, and at the beginning and end of the day. This reveals that spiritual formation was intended to become part of the ordinary rhythm of family life. The Word of God was not simply information to be remembered during religious ceremonies. It was truth intended to shape the identity, values, and conduct of the people.

For our families, this means that protecting the spiritual environment of the home requires intentional consistency. We should create opportunities for prayer and biblical conversation, but we must also recognize that our conduct communicates spiritual values. When we apologize after speaking harshly, we demonstrate humility. When we choose forgiveness rather than continually rehearsing an offense, we demonstrate grace. When we make responsible decisions concerning our finances, relationships, and priorities, we model stewardship. When we respond to uncertainty through prayer rather than allowing fear to dominate our conversations, we demonstrate dependence upon God.

We must also be careful not to create an atmosphere where spiritual expectations become a source of constant pressure. Children should not feel that their value depends upon demonstrating a particular religious performance. Spouses should not experience biblical teaching as a tool for manipulation or control. The home should become an environment where truth is communicated with love, where questions can be discussed honestly, and where spiritual growth is encouraged through example and instruction. Healthy spiritual formation requires both conviction and compassion.

This becomes especially important when our children begin developing greater independence. As they mature, they will encounter ideas, relationships, and decisions that challenge the values they have learned. We cannot guarantee that they will always choose what we believe is right, but we can help establish a foundation of biblical understanding and relational trust. If they know that difficult questions can be discussed honestly within the family, they may be more willing to seek guidance when challenges arise. If they have witnessed genuine repentance and forgiveness, they may better understand how to respond when they make mistakes.

The spiritual health of our homes also influences the health of our church. Families who practice prayer, hospitality, forgiveness, and biblical instruction contribute to a congregation where those values are more likely to flourish. Conversely, when bitterness, dishonesty, or destructive communication dominate our private lives, those attitudes may eventually influence our participation in the church. We cannot separate

the condition of our homes from the spiritual culture of the congregation because the church is composed of people whose daily relationships shape the way they serve and worship together.

A birthing church must therefore become committed to strengthening families, not merely increasing attendance. We should recognize that discipleship involves helping people apply biblical truth to marriage, parenting, relationships, work, and personal conduct. The goal is not to produce families that appear perfect, but to encourage households where the grace and truth of Jesus Christ are continually shaping the way people live.

5.9 Protecting the Promise Requires More Than Avoiding Negative Influences

Although Pastor Azzolini emphasized the importance of avoiding destructive spiritual influences, we must recognize that spiritual health cannot be sustained through avoidance alone. We may remove certain harmful habits or distance ourselves from unhealthy conversations, but if we fail to cultivate a deeper relationship with God, our spiritual lives can remain weak and vulnerable. The Christian life is not defined merely by what we refuse to participate in. It is defined by our relationship with Jesus Christ and the transformation that His grace produces within us.

Jesus addressed this principle through the imagery of the vine and branches in John 15.

John 15:4-5 (KJV)

> *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*
>
> *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

This passage establishes the foundation of genuine spiritual fruitfulness. A branch does not produce fruit through independent effort. Its ability to bear fruit depends upon its continuing connection to the vine. Jesus used this illustration to teach His disciples that their spiritual lives must remain dependent upon Him. Fruitfulness is not simply the result of avoiding harmful influences or developing impressive religious activity. It flows from an abiding relationship with Christ.

This understanding is essential because we can become so focused on protecting ourselves from negative influences that we neglect the positive disciplines necessary for spiritual growth. We may spend considerable energy identifying what is wrong with the surrounding culture while investing very little time in prayer, Scripture, and meaningful fellowship. We may become skilled at criticizing unhealthy attitudes without developing the humility and compassion necessary to demonstrate a better example. We may emphasize the importance of holiness while failing to cultivate the love that Scripture identifies as central to Christian maturity.

A spiritually healthy life requires both discernment and devotion. We must reject influences that contradict God's Word, but we must also intentionally pursue the practices that strengthen our relationship with Him.

Prayer allows us to bring our concerns before God and submit our hearts to His will. Scripture provides the truth through which our thinking is renewed. Worship directs our attention toward the greatness and faithfulness of the Lord. Fellowship provides opportunities for encouragement, accountability, and mutual service. Obedience allows the truth we have received to become visible in our conduct.

The Apostle Paul describes this process in Galatians 5, where he contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit he identifies includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These qualities reveal the kind of character that should develop as believers walk in the Spirit. They also provide a meaningful standard through which we can examine the spiritual environment of our church. Are our relationships becoming more loving? Are we demonstrating patience with those who are still growing? Are we responding to conflict with gentleness and self-control? Are we developing faithfulness that remains steady through difficult seasons?

A birthing church must be committed to cultivating this fruit because spiritual multiplication without spiritual maturity can create serious challenges. New believers need examples of Christlike character, not merely impressive religious activity. Families need relationships where compassion and truth operate together. Leaders need the humility and self-control necessary to serve responsibly. The church needs an atmosphere where people are encouraged to grow through the transforming work of the Holy Ghost.

When we remain connected to Jesus Christ, spiritual protection becomes more than an attempt to avoid danger. It becomes part of a life increasingly shaped by His presence and Word. We begin recognizing unhealthy influences not merely because they make us uncomfortable, but because they contradict the character of the One we are following. We learn to reject gossip because we value love, to resist bitterness because we have received forgiveness, and to pursue unity because we belong to one body. Our spiritual disciplines are no longer isolated religious obligations. They become expressions of our desire to abide in Christ.

5.10 A Healthy Church Must Be Prepared to Nurture New Life

The imagery of a birthing church reaches its greatest practical significance when we consider the responsibility of caring for those who respond to the gospel. A family preparing for a child understands that the arrival of new life introduces responsibilities that extend far beyond the moment of birth. The child will require nourishment, protection, guidance, and consistent care. In a similar way, spiritual multiplication within the church creates a responsibility to nurture the development of new believers. The excitement of seeing someone repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, or receive the gift of the Holy Ghost must be accompanied by a commitment to continued discipleship.

The New Testament church provides a clear example of this responsibility. Following the events of Pentecost, Acts 2:42 records that believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Their spiritual experience became the beginning of a life of continued learning and shared commitment. The early church did not treat conversion as the completion of spiritual development. It recognized the importance of teaching, relationships, and ongoing devotion.

This principle challenges us to evaluate whether our congregation is prepared to nurture the people we are praying to reach. A new believer may arrive with limited biblical understanding, complicated family

circumstances, or habits developed over many years. Spiritual growth will not necessarily occur immediately or without difficulty. People may struggle with questions, experience setbacks, or require repeated encouragement. A healthy church must be prepared to respond with patience and truth rather than expecting instant maturity.

This is why the spiritual diet of the church matters so deeply. New believers are influenced by the attitudes and conversations they encounter. If they become surrounded by criticism, gossip, or division, their understanding of Christian community may become distorted. If they encounter believers who demonstrate humility, compassion, and biblical conviction, they receive examples that can strengthen their development. The culture we cultivate becomes part of the environment in which spiritual growth takes place.

For ministry leaders, this responsibility requires intentional preparation. Teachers must understand that biblical instruction involves more than communicating information. It requires patience, clarity, and a willingness to walk alongside people as they learn. Those serving in hospitality must recognize that a welcoming attitude can influence whether someone feels comfortable returning. Prayer teams must approach personal needs with compassion and confidentiality. Pastoral leadership must cultivate an environment where truth, accountability, and care remain connected. Every ministry contributes to the spiritual health of the congregation.

The responsibility also extends to mature believers who may not hold formal leadership positions. Discipleship is not limited to classrooms or organized programs. A conversation after service, an invitation to share a meal, a thoughtful message of encouragement, or a willingness to answer a question can become meaningful expressions of spiritual care. The church grows stronger when every member understands that nurturing new life is a collective responsibility.

We must therefore resist the temptation to celebrate multiplication while neglecting the people who make that multiplication meaningful. A church can become focused on attendance, baptisms, and visible growth without giving adequate attention to the spiritual development of those who respond. These milestones are important, but they should lead us toward deeper commitment rather than becoming the final measure of success. The mission of Jesus Christ is not simply to gather crowds. It is to make disciples.

A birthing church must become a nurturing church because the responsibility of spiritual multiplication does not end when new life begins. In many ways, that is when the work of discipleship becomes most important.

Section 5 Conclusion: We Must Protect the Environment Where Spiritual Life Is Growing

The message of The Birthing Church reminds us that spiritual expectation carries a responsibility to protect what God has entrusted to our care. Pastor Vinny Azzolini's illustration of the spiritual diet challenges us to examine the influences that shape our thoughts, attitudes, relationships, and decisions. Just as responsible preparation accompanies the expectation of a child's arrival, spiritual maturity requires us to become intentional about the environment in which faith is being developed. We cannot continually expose ourselves to bitterness, gossip, jealousy, fear, and division while expecting those influences to have no effect upon our spiritual lives.

Scripture calls us to guard our hearts because the condition of our inner lives influences our outward conduct. It challenges us to discipline our thoughts according to what is true and righteous, to use our words for edification, and to pursue peace and holiness in our relationships. These instructions are not isolated rules intended to restrict our lives unnecessarily. They are expressions of God's wisdom concerning the kind of character that allows believers to grow in maturity and serve one another faithfully.

For our families, protecting the spiritual environment means becoming intentional about the attitudes and habits we cultivate at home. We must recognize that our children are influenced by more than the biblical lessons we teach. They observe our conversations, our responses to conflict, and the consistency of our relationship with God. When we practice forgiveness, humility, prayer, and honest communication, we help establish an environment where biblical truth becomes visible in daily life. We cannot guarantee every future decision our children will make, but we can faithfully demonstrate the character of Christ.

For Tampa Life Church, the responsibility is collective. If we desire to become a spiritually fruitful congregation, we must protect the unity and relationships necessary for healthy discipleship. We should refuse gossip, address conflict appropriately, celebrate the development of others, and remain committed to the mission of Jesus Christ. We must also cultivate an environment where new believers can grow without being discouraged by unnecessary criticism or unrealistic expectations. The people we are praying to reach will need more than an inspiring service. They will need a spiritual family characterized by truth, love, patience, and faithful instruction.

Above all, we must remember that spiritual protection is not sustained through avoidance alone. Jesus taught that genuine fruitfulness comes through abiding in Him. Our relationship with Christ must remain the foundation of everything we do. We can develop excellent programs, establish healthy boundaries, and encourage responsible communication, but these practices cannot replace the transforming work of the Holy Ghost. We need His presence to renew our minds, correct our attitudes, and produce the fruit that reflects His character.

A birthing church is therefore not merely a congregation that expects God to accomplish something extraordinary. It is a church willing to cultivate the spiritual environment necessary to care for what He entrusts to it. It understands that unity must be protected, relationships must be nurtured, and spiritual maturity must be developed through consistent obedience to God's Word.

We cannot faithfully nurture what God is developing among us while continually allowing destructive influences to shape the environment in which that spiritual life must grow.

And as we continue exploring the message, we encounter another essential responsibility. Protecting the spiritual environment is only one part of preparation. We must also consider whether we are making room for the growth we desire to see. The promise of multiplication introduces practical responsibilities that challenge our willingness to expand beyond what is familiar. If we are asking God to bring new people, new opportunities, and new responsibilities, we must examine whether our hearts, our homes, and our church are prepared to receive them.

The next section will take us into one of Pastor Azzolini's most significant statements concerning spiritual multiplication: possession requires population. We will examine how this principle connects to the biblical mandate of fruitfulness, the responsibility of discipleship, and the mission of the church to reach beyond its existing boundaries.

PART 06

Possession Requires Population: Preparing for Spiritual Multiplication



Understanding God's Design for Fruitfulness, the Responsibility of Making Disciples, and Why a Growing Church Must Prepare to Carry More Than It Currently Holds

Foundational Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 23:29-30; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2

6.1 The Purpose of Spiritual Birth Is Greater Than the Moment of Delivery

Throughout this study, we have examined the progression presented in Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message The Birthing Church. We have considered the importance of receiving God's Word, coming into agreement with His instructions, developing expectation, remaining faithful during seasons of waiting, and protecting the spiritual environment in which growth takes place. Each of these principles has prepared us to understand an even greater responsibility. If God is calling His church to become spiritually fruitful, we must recognize that the purpose of new life extends beyond the moment in which it begins. Birth is not the completion of a child's development. It is the beginning of a new stage of responsibility, one that requires care, nourishment, instruction, and a willingness to make room for someone whose presence will permanently change the family.

This is where one of the most significant statements from Pastor Azzolini's sermon becomes especially meaningful: "Possession requires population." Within the context of his message, this declaration challenged Tampa Life Church to understand that spiritual expansion requires more than an enthusiastic desire for growth. If we are praying for God to increase the influence of our congregation, reach additional communities, and bring more people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we must also become willing to accept the responsibilities associated with that increase. A church cannot faithfully serve a growing spiritual family while remaining unwilling to develop the discipleship, leadership, relationships, and structures necessary to care for people. The desire for greater influence must be accompanied by a willingness to carry greater responsibility.

The phrase also challenges the way we sometimes understand spiritual blessing. We may naturally associate God's favor with receiving something that improves our circumstances, expands our opportunities, or brings personal satisfaction. Yet throughout Scripture, divine blessing is frequently connected to responsibility. Abraham was blessed so that all the families of the earth would ultimately be blessed through God's redemptive purpose. Israel was called to become a people who reflected the holiness and character of the Lord among the nations. The New Testament church received the Holy Ghost and was commissioned to carry the gospel beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem. In each of these examples, God's work extended beyond the immediate experience of those who received His promises.

For this reason, spiritual multiplication must never become merely a pursuit of numerical achievement. The church does not exist to accumulate attendance figures, develop impressive facilities, or establish a reputation for organizational success. These things may become useful tools when they serve the mission, but they cannot become the mission itself. Jesus Christ has called His church to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, baptize believers, teach obedience to His commandments, and demonstrate His love. When new people come into the church, we are not simply increasing the size of a congregation. We are accepting the responsibility of helping individuals and families grow in their relationship with God.

This distinction becomes particularly important when we consider the imagery of a birthing church. A healthy family does not measure the value of a child according to the recognition that child's birth brings to the parents. The child is valuable because human life possesses dignity and worth. In a similar way, every person who enters our church must be recognized as someone created in the image of God, not as another number contributing to institutional growth. People arrive with different experiences, struggles, questions, and levels of spiritual understanding. Some have grown up in church, while others may be

encountering Apostolic teaching for the first time. Some come from stable families, while others carry the pain of broken relationships or difficult circumstances. Our responsibility is to welcome them with compassion, teach them biblical truth, and provide opportunities for genuine spiritual development.

A birthing church must therefore understand that multiplication is not simply about how many people we can reach. It is also about how faithfully we can nurture those who respond. The excitement of spiritual birth must become a commitment to spiritual maturity, because the mission of Jesus Christ involves making disciples who will eventually become capable of helping others grow.

6.2 "Be Fruitful, and Multiply": Understanding God's Original Design

Pastor Azzolini connected the principle of multiplication to the opening chapters of Genesis, where God blessed humanity and established the responsibility of fruitfulness. This passage provides an important foundation for understanding that multiplication was part of God's original design for human life, although we must carefully distinguish its immediate meaning from its broader theological application to the church.

Genesis 1:27-28 (KJV)

> *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*
>
> *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

In its original context, this command concerns humanity's creation, fruitfulness, and responsibility within the world God had made. Human beings were created in the image of God and entrusted with the responsibility of filling the earth and exercising stewardship over creation. The command was not originally given as a numerical growth strategy for a local congregation. Nevertheless, the passage establishes a broader biblical theme: God created human life with the capacity for fruitfulness, relationship, and the continuation of life across generations.

This theme becomes particularly meaningful when we consider the relationship between blessing and responsibility. God blessed humanity, but that blessing was accompanied by a calling to participate faithfully in the world He had created. Human beings were not instructed merely to enjoy creation without accepting responsibility for it. They were entrusted with stewardship. In a similar way, when God grants opportunities for ministry, influence, and spiritual growth, those opportunities carry responsibilities that must be exercised with wisdom and obedience.

The New Testament develops the theme of spiritual fruitfulness in a different but related direction. Jesus taught His disciples that genuine fruitfulness depends upon abiding in Him. In John 15, He described Himself as the true vine and His followers as branches whose ability to bear fruit depends upon their continuing relationship with Him. This teaching reminds us that spiritual multiplication cannot be reduced to human productivity. A church may increase its attendance through effective communication, organizational planning, or community engagement, but genuine spiritual life is produced through the work of God. Our

methods may create opportunities for people to hear the gospel, yet repentance, faith, and transformation cannot be manufactured through human effort alone.

We must therefore understand spiritual multiplication as the extension of Christ's mission through people who have been transformed by His grace. When someone receives the gospel and begins following Jesus, a new journey of discipleship begins. As that person grows in biblical understanding, spiritual maturity, and obedience, they may eventually become capable of teaching and encouraging others. In this way, the influence of the gospel extends beyond one individual to families, friendships, communities, and future generations.

This process is especially significant for our homes. Parents possess a responsibility to communicate biblical truth to their children, not merely through formal instruction but through the example of their daily lives. When our children observe genuine prayer, repentance, forgiveness, and obedience, they encounter a living demonstration of the faith we profess. Although every person must respond to God individually, the spiritual environment we cultivate can provide an important foundation for future generations. The goal is not simply to produce children who attend church because their parents expect it. We desire to help them develop personal convictions, understand Scripture, and establish a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.

For Tampa Life Church, the principle of multiplication should inspire us to think beyond the immediate congregation. We must consider how our ministries can strengthen families, equip believers, and reach people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A multicultural church possesses opportunities to communicate the gospel across communities that might otherwise remain disconnected. Yet these opportunities require intentional discipleship, leadership development, and a willingness to recognize the contributions of people whose experiences differ from our own. Spiritual fruitfulness becomes healthier when the entire body understands that it has been called to participate in the mission of Christ.

6.3 Possession Without Preparation Can Become a Burden

One of the most challenging implications of Pastor Azzolini's statement is that receiving greater responsibility without adequate preparation can create difficulties that undermine the very growth we desire. We often pray for expansion because we imagine the joy associated with reaching more people, developing new ministries, and seeing greater spiritual activity. Yet every form of growth introduces practical responsibilities. More people require more opportunities for meaningful relationships. New believers need biblical instruction and pastoral care. Additional ministries require trained leaders, reliable volunteers, and responsible stewardship of resources. If a church desires multiplication without considering these responsibilities, it may discover that growth exposes weaknesses that were less visible when the congregation was smaller.

An interesting parallel appears in God's instructions to Israel concerning the possession of the promised land.

Exodus 23:29-30 (KJV)

> *I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.*
>
> *By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.*

In its historical context, this passage concerns God's promise to establish Israel in the land of Canaan. The Lord explained that the process would not occur all at once because the land required a population capable of occupying and maintaining it. The gradual nature of the promised conquest was connected to the practical realities of habitation and stewardship.

This passage should not be interpreted as a direct promise that every church will receive territory or experience numerical expansion according to a particular timetable. Its historical setting concerns ancient Israel, and its language of conquest must not be transferred uncritically into modern ministry. Nevertheless, it provides an instructive illustration of the relationship between increased responsibility and the capacity to steward what has been entrusted.

The principle is particularly relevant to the development of church ministries. If a congregation grows rapidly without preparing people to serve, the responsibilities may become concentrated among a small number of leaders and volunteers. Those individuals may initially respond with enthusiasm, but prolonged pressure can produce exhaustion, frustration, and diminished effectiveness. If discipleship opportunities are insufficient, new believers may struggle to establish strong spiritual foundations. If communication systems are weak, families may feel overlooked. If leadership development is neglected, ministry expansion may become dependent upon individuals who are already carrying more than they can reasonably sustain.

For this reason, preparation should not be viewed as a lack of faith. It is an expression of responsible stewardship. When we organize discipleship classes, train teachers, develop ministry teams, and establish healthy systems of communication, we are not attempting to replace the work of the Holy Ghost with human organization. We are seeking to fulfill our responsibilities faithfully so that the people God brings into our fellowship can receive appropriate care.

The same principle applies to our personal lives. We may desire greater influence, increased financial resources, or new opportunities for service, but these responsibilities require maturity. Greater financial capacity without wise stewardship can produce new problems rather than lasting stability. Greater influence without humility can create opportunities for pride and misuse of authority. Greater ministry responsibility without spiritual discipline can expose weaknesses in character and relationships. The issue is not simply whether we desire more. We must consider whether we are developing the maturity necessary to manage more faithfully.

A birthing church must therefore become a preparing church. We should not wait until every classroom is full before considering the need for additional teachers. We should not wait until ministry leaders are exhausted before developing new volunteers. We should not wait until families feel disconnected before strengthening fellowship and pastoral care. We must learn to anticipate the responsibilities associated with growth and respond with wisdom, prayer, and intentional preparation.

6.4 The Great Commission: Multiplication Through Discipleship

The clearest New Testament foundation for the mission of spiritual multiplication is found in the Great Commission. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and entrusted them with the responsibility of carrying His message to the nations. His instructions reveal that the mission of the church involves more than gathering people into religious meetings. It requires making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe His commandments.

Matthew 28:18-20 (KJV)

> *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
>
> *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*
>
> *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

The authority behind this commission belongs to Jesus Christ. He begins by declaring that all power has been given to Him in heaven and earth. The church does not possess an independent mission that it may redefine according to its preferences. We are participating in the work of the risen Lord, and our responsibility is to remain faithful to His instructions.

The command to make disciples is especially significant because discipleship involves more than a single decision or spiritual experience. A disciple is someone who follows, learns from, and submits to the teaching of Jesus Christ. The process includes instruction, obedience, spiritual growth, and participation in the community of faith. Baptism is an essential part of the commission, and from an Apostolic Pentecostal understanding, the church follows the apostolic proclamation of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Acts 2:38 and demonstrated throughout the book of Acts.

But the Great Commission does not end with baptism. Jesus specifically instructed His followers to teach believers to observe everything He had commanded. This means that spiritual multiplication must always remain connected to ongoing instruction and obedience. We cannot assume that someone possesses mature biblical understanding simply because they have attended a powerful service or responded to an altar call. The beginning of faith must be followed by a process of growth in which believers learn to apply Scripture to their relationships, decisions, responsibilities, and daily conduct.

This becomes especially important for a church with a strong emphasis on evangelism and the moving of the Holy Ghost. We should continue praying for people to repent, be baptized in Jesus' name, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. These experiences are central to our Apostolic understanding of the gospel response. Yet we must also recognize that new believers need continued instruction concerning prayer, holiness, stewardship, spiritual gifts, relationships, and the mission of the church. Spiritual birth introduces a new life that must be nurtured through discipleship.

A church that focuses exclusively on bringing people into the congregation without helping them develop spiritually may experience activity without lasting maturity. People may become excited about their initial

experiences but struggle when they encounter temptation, disappointment, or difficult questions. They may lack the biblical foundation necessary to understand why certain convictions matter or how to practice spiritual disciplines consistently. Without meaningful relationships, they may feel isolated when challenges arise. These realities demonstrate why the Great Commission must shape the entire ministry of the church rather than being treated as a responsibility limited to evangelistic outreach.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that every ministry should understand how it contributes to the process of making disciples. Worship creates opportunities for people to encounter biblical truth and respond to God. Teaching provides the foundation necessary for spiritual understanding. Small groups and fellowship help believers develop meaningful relationships. Prayer ministries encourage dependence upon the Lord. Pastoral care provides guidance during difficult seasons. Leadership development prepares mature believers to serve others. These responsibilities are interconnected because discipleship is not accomplished through a single event or program.

A birthing church does not merely celebrate the arrival of new believers. It accepts the responsibility of helping them become mature followers of Jesus Christ.

6.5 The Early Church: When Spiritual Birth Produced a Spiritual Family

The events recorded in Acts 2 provide one of the clearest biblical examples of spiritual multiplication accompanied by the development of a community. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the believers gathered in Jerusalem. Peter then proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, declaring His death, resurrection, and exaltation. When those who heard the message asked what they should do, Peter instructed them to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The response was remarkable. Acts 2:41 records that approximately three thousand people received the Word and were baptized. This was a significant moment of numerical increase, but the biblical narrative does not end with the size of the response. Luke continues by describing the spiritual practices and relationships that developed among the believers.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

This verse reveals that spiritual multiplication immediately introduced the responsibility of spiritual formation. The believers continued in apostolic teaching, shared fellowship, participated in meals, and devoted themselves to prayer. Their response to the gospel was not treated as an isolated event disconnected from the rest of their lives. It became the beginning of a shared commitment to Jesus Christ and to one another.

The early church also developed a remarkable sense of mutual responsibility. Acts 2 describes believers sharing resources and responding to the needs within their community. This generosity reflected the transformation taking place in their understanding of relationships and possessions. Their faith influenced how they treated others, and their commitment to Christ produced a willingness to care for those who were

experiencing need. The church was becoming more than a gathering of individuals who shared similar religious beliefs. It was developing into a spiritual family whose members understood that they belonged to one another.

This is particularly important when we consider the challenges associated with modern church growth. It is possible for a congregation to increase in attendance while people remain relationally disconnected. We may gather in the same building, participate in the same worship services, and listen to the same preaching without developing meaningful relationships. But the New Testament pattern challenges us to recognize that fellowship is an essential part of spiritual formation. Believers need opportunities to encourage one another, share burdens, ask questions, and practice the love of Christ in ordinary life.

For new believers, these relationships can be especially significant. Someone who has recently responded to the gospel may be navigating changes in personal habits, friendships, or family relationships. They may encounter questions concerning Scripture that they have never previously considered. They may struggle with discouragement or uncertainty as they learn to establish a consistent relationship with God. A healthy spiritual community provides opportunities for encouragement and guidance during these seasons. Mature believers can help demonstrate what faithful Christian living looks like beyond the environment of a worship service.

The early church also reminds us that multiplication is ultimately dependent upon the Lord. Acts 2:47 describes God adding to the church those who were being saved. The believers were responsible for proclaiming the gospel, continuing in doctrine, praying, and caring for one another, but the work of salvation belonged to God. This balance protects us from treating spiritual growth as something we can manufacture through human effort. We should develop effective ministry practices, but we must never forget that genuine transformation requires the work of the Holy Ghost.

A birthing church must therefore become a spiritual family capable of nurturing new life. We should celebrate every person who responds to the gospel, but we must also consider whether that person will find relationships, instruction, and opportunities for continued growth. The health of our church cannot be measured exclusively by how many people enter its doors. We must also consider whether those people are being helped to develop a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ.

6.6 Making Room for People Who Are Not Yet Like Us

One of the most challenging aspects of spiritual multiplication is that growth often introduces people whose backgrounds, experiences, and levels of spiritual maturity differ significantly from our own. We may naturally feel comfortable around individuals who share our language, culture, traditions, and understanding of church life. Familiarity creates a sense of belonging, and there is nothing inherently wrong with appreciating the relationships we have developed over time. Yet the mission of Jesus Christ calls us beyond the boundaries of our existing comfort.

The Great Commission directs the church toward all nations. The gospel was never intended to remain confined to one cultural group, geographic region, or social background. The book of Acts demonstrates how the early church gradually came to understand the full implications of this calling. In Acts 10, Peter encountered the household of Cornelius, a Gentile centurion. Through this experience, God challenged

assumptions concerning the people who could receive the gospel and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter witnessed the Spirit being poured out upon Gentiles, and he recognized that God was extending His saving work beyond the boundaries many Jewish believers had previously assumed.

This development was not without difficulty. The early church had to navigate questions concerning cultural practices, religious traditions, and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers. Acts 15 records a significant discussion among church leaders concerning the responsibilities of Gentile converts. These accounts remind us that spiritual multiplication often requires believers to distinguish between the unchanging truth of the gospel and cultural expectations that should not become unnecessary barriers to fellowship.

For a multicultural congregation, this principle carries particular importance. Tampa Life Church has opportunities to reach people from different nations, languages, and cultural backgrounds. These opportunities are a blessing, but they also require intentional sensitivity and cooperation. People may express themselves differently during worship, approach relationships through different cultural expectations, or possess varying levels of familiarity with Apostolic teaching. If we expect everyone to become culturally identical before they can feel welcomed, we risk creating barriers that Scripture does not require.

This does not mean that biblical doctrine should be compromised for the sake of cultural inclusion. The church must remain faithful to the gospel and the teachings of Scripture. But we should carefully distinguish between biblical convictions and personal preferences. The language in which someone prays, the cultural background of their family, or the traditions they bring from their country of origin do not determine their value within the body of Christ. Our shared identity in Jesus Christ must remain stronger than the differences that distinguish us.

Making room also requires patience with spiritual immaturity. New believers may not immediately understand every aspect of Christian conduct or possess the same convictions as those who have walked with God for many years. They may ask difficult questions or struggle with habits that require time, instruction, and accountability. If we respond with harshness or unrealistic expectations, we may discourage the very people we have prayed to reach. Yet if we communicate biblical truth with love and patience, we create opportunities for genuine growth.

The Apostle Paul describes the importance of receiving one another in Romans 15:7, connecting Christian fellowship to the way Christ has received us. This principle should shape the culture of a birthing church. We must become willing to welcome people who are still learning, to walk alongside families navigating difficult circumstances, and to recognize that spiritual maturity develops through a process. The goal is not to lower biblical standards, but to help people grow toward those standards through truth, grace, and faithful discipleship.

A church that desires spiritual multiplication must therefore examine whether its existing culture makes room for new people. Are we willing to build relationships beyond our familiar circles? Do we notice visitors who appear uncertain or disconnected? Are we prepared to explain biblical practices to those who have never encountered them? Are we willing to adjust nonessential methods when doing so helps

communicate the gospel more effectively? These questions matter because a church can pray for growth while unintentionally maintaining habits that make newcomers feel unwelcome.

6.7 Multiplication Requires the Development of New Leaders

As a church grows, the responsibilities associated with ministry inevitably increase. More people require additional opportunities for discipleship, fellowship, pastoral care, and service. If these responsibilities remain concentrated among a small number of individuals, the congregation may become increasingly dependent upon leaders who are already carrying significant burdens. This can produce exhaustion and limit the church's ability to respond effectively to new opportunities. For this reason, spiritual multiplication must include the intentional development of new leaders.

The Apostle Paul provides an important foundation for this principle in his instruction to Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

> *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

This verse reveals a pattern of spiritual multiplication through faithful transmission of biblical teaching. Paul had instructed Timothy, and Timothy was responsible for entrusting that teaching to reliable individuals who would become capable of instructing others. The process extended beyond one generation of leadership. It involved preparing people who could continue the work after the original teacher was no longer present.

This is one of the clearest biblical examples of discipleship producing multiplication. Paul did not instruct Timothy merely to gather a larger audience for his own teaching. He challenged him to develop others who would become capable of teaching. The goal was not personal influence concentrated in one individual, but the faithful continuation of apostolic doctrine through successive generations of believers.

For our church, this principle should shape how we approach ministry development. We must learn to recognize potential in people who may not yet possess extensive experience. Someone who demonstrates faithfulness in small responsibilities may eventually become capable of teaching or leading. A believer who consistently encourages others may possess gifts that can be developed through mentoring and training. A young person who shows interest in Scripture may benefit from opportunities to study, serve, and receive guidance from mature Christians. Leadership development begins when we recognize that our responsibility includes preparing others to participate in the mission.

This process requires patience because people do not become mature leaders simply by receiving a title. They need biblical instruction, opportunities for practical experience, honest feedback, and accountability. They must learn how to communicate effectively, respond to criticism, manage responsibilities, and serve people with humility. Mistakes may occur during this development, and wise leaders must distinguish between errors that require correction and patterns of behavior that indicate someone is not yet prepared for greater responsibility.

We must also guard against the temptation to view emerging leaders as competition. When someone develops abilities that exceed our own in a particular area, we should celebrate their growth rather than feel

threatened by it. The body of Christ becomes stronger when its members are equipped to serve according to the gifts God has given them. Leadership should not become a means of protecting personal recognition. It should become an opportunity to invest in the spiritual development of others.

Ephesians 4:11-12 describes the responsibility of ministry leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ. This teaching reveals that leadership is not intended to perform every ministry responsibility independently. It exists in part to prepare the wider body for faithful service. When this principle is embraced, the church becomes less dependent upon a few individuals and more capable of responding collectively to the opportunities God provides.

A birthing church must therefore become a developing church. We should not simply ask who is available to fill a position today. We should consider whom we are preparing to serve tomorrow. If we desire spiritual multiplication across generations, we must intentionally invest in the people who will carry the gospel beyond our current season of ministry.

6.8 The Difference Between Numerical Growth and Spiritual Maturity

One of the greatest challenges facing any growing congregation is learning to distinguish between numerical increase and genuine spiritual health. Attendance figures can provide useful information concerning the reach of a ministry, but they do not tell the entire story. A church may experience significant numerical growth while struggling with discipleship, unity, or leadership development. Conversely, a smaller congregation may demonstrate remarkable faithfulness, spiritual maturity, and meaningful influence within its community. Numbers matter because people matter, but numbers alone cannot define the health of the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul describes the purpose of ministry development in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:13-15 (KJV)

> *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*
>
> *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*
>
> *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

Paul's emphasis is upon maturity in Christ. He describes believers growing in unity, biblical understanding, stability, and love. The goal is not merely to increase the number of people associated with the church, but to develop a body whose members are becoming more firmly established in the truth of Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity protects believers from deception, strengthens relationships, and equips the church to fulfill its mission.

This passage challenges us to evaluate our understanding of success. We may celebrate a large gathering, but we should also consider whether people are developing consistent prayer lives. We may

rejoice when many individuals respond to an altar call, but we should also ask whether they are receiving the biblical instruction necessary for continued growth. We may be encouraged by the expansion of ministry programs, but we should examine whether those programs are helping people become more mature followers of Jesus.

A spiritually healthy church should desire both evangelistic reach and deep discipleship. These responsibilities are not competitors. The gospel calls us to reach those who have not yet believed, and the Great Commission calls us to teach those who respond. When evangelism is separated from discipleship, the church may become focused upon beginnings without developing lasting maturity. When discipleship is separated from evangelism, the congregation may become inwardly focused and neglect the mission of reaching others. Biblical multiplication requires both.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that spiritual growth should be evaluated through more than one measure. We should celebrate baptisms, people receiving the Holy Ghost, and new families becoming part of the congregation. But we should also value the development of teachers, the strengthening of marriages, the spiritual growth of young people, the participation of believers in service, and the formation of healthy relationships across cultural and generational boundaries. These expressions of maturity may be less visible than attendance figures, but they are essential to the long-term health of the church.

The goal is not to choose between growth and maturity. It is to pursue growth that produces maturity and maturity that contributes to further growth. When believers become established in Scripture, develop Christlike character, and learn to serve others, they become better prepared to participate in the mission of making disciples. In this way, spiritual multiplication becomes a continuing process rather than a series of disconnected events.

6.9 Our Families Must Become Part of the Mission

The responsibility of spiritual multiplication does not belong exclusively to pastors, teachers, or formal ministry leaders. The mission of the church is carried forward through ordinary believers whose daily relationships provide opportunities to demonstrate the love and truth of Jesus Christ. Our homes, workplaces, friendships, and communities become important places where the gospel can be communicated through both words and conduct. This means that the vision of a birthing church must extend beyond the sanctuary and become part of the way we understand our everyday responsibilities.

For parents, this begins with recognizing that our children are not simply future members of the congregation. They are individuals who need a personal relationship with God and a growing understanding of His Word. We should not assume that attending church automatically produces spiritual maturity. Our children need opportunities to ask questions, develop convictions, and observe biblical principles practiced consistently. They need to understand why we pray, why Scripture matters, why holiness is important, and how the gospel influences our relationships and decisions.

This responsibility becomes particularly important as children grow older and begin making independent choices. We may desire them to remain faithful to the values we have taught, but genuine faith cannot be sustained through parental pressure alone. We must help them develop a relationship with Jesus Christ that becomes meaningful beyond the expectations of the family. This requires patience, honest

communication, and a willingness to address difficult questions without immediately interpreting every struggle as rebellion.

Our families can also participate in the mission of the church through hospitality and relationships. Inviting someone into our home, sharing a meal with a new believer, or encouraging a family experiencing difficulty can become meaningful expressions of discipleship. These actions may appear ordinary, but they help create the relational connections that strengthen spiritual communities. A person who feels welcomed and supported is more likely to recognize that the church is not merely a place to attend but a family in which they can belong and grow.

We must also remember that spiritual multiplication includes the influence we have upon future generations. The Apostle Paul recognized the sincere faith that had been present in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their influence contributed to Timothy's spiritual foundation and preparation for ministry. This account reminds us that the faithfulness of one generation can become an important influence upon the next, even though every individual must personally respond to God.

A birthing church should therefore invest intentionally in children, young people, and families. We must recognize that the next generation is not simply waiting to become useful in the future. Young believers can develop meaningful spiritual convictions and participate in service today. They need guidance, opportunities, and examples of mature Christian living. When generations learn to serve together, the church becomes stronger and better prepared to carry its mission into the future.

6.10 A Church That Multiplies Must Be Willing to Change Its Capacity

One of the most practical implications of spiritual multiplication is that increased responsibility often requires adjustments in the way a church operates. A congregation that has served a particular number of people for many years may develop structures, routines, and expectations suited to that season. Those practices may have been effective and appropriate, but as new opportunities emerge, the church may need to reconsider whether its existing methods are sufficient to support continued growth.

This does not mean that biblical principles should change. The gospel of Jesus Christ remains the foundation of the church, and apostolic doctrine must never be compromised for the sake of convenience or numerical success. Yet methods of communication, organization, teaching, and hospitality may need to develop as circumstances change. A church that welcomes more families may require additional discipleship opportunities. A congregation reaching people from different language backgrounds may need translation, culturally sensitive communication, and leaders who understand the needs of those communities. A growing ministry may require clearer systems of accountability and coordination so that responsibilities are shared effectively.

The principle of increasing capacity also applies to the spiritual maturity of the congregation. We must become more patient, more welcoming, and more willing to invest in people who are different from us. We may need to surrender familiar habits that unintentionally exclude newcomers. We may need to learn how to communicate biblical truth more clearly to those who possess little church background. We may need to become more intentional about developing relationships beyond the people we already know.

This kind of change can create discomfort because it challenges our attachment to what is familiar. We may prefer the simplicity of a smaller congregation where everyone knows one another and responsibilities are easily understood. Growth introduces complexity, and complexity requires wisdom. Yet if we genuinely desire to reach more people with the gospel, we must be willing to accept that ministry responsibilities may develop beyond the patterns we have previously experienced.

A birthing church must therefore become flexible in its methods while remaining firmly established in its doctrine. We should evaluate changes according to whether they strengthen discipleship, preserve biblical truth, support healthy relationships, and contribute to the mission of Jesus Christ. We should resist change motivated merely by the desire to appear modern or impressive, but we should also resist the assumption that every familiar method must remain unchanged indefinitely.

The central question is whether our practices are helping us fulfill the mission entrusted to the church. If a particular method strengthens discipleship and allows us to serve people more effectively, we should be willing to consider it. If an established practice is creating unnecessary barriers, we should examine whether adjustments are appropriate. If growth reveals weaknesses in our organization or communication, we should respond with humility rather than defensiveness.

A church that prays for greater spiritual responsibility must also be willing to develop the capacity necessary to carry that responsibility faithfully.

Section 6 Conclusion: We Must Prepare for the People We Are Praying to Reach

Pastor Vinny Azzolini's declaration that "possession requires population" challenges us to understand spiritual multiplication as a responsibility rather than merely an achievement. The biblical theme of fruitfulness reminds us that God's purposes often extend beyond the individual and influence future generations. The Great Commission establishes the church's responsibility to make disciples, baptize believers, and teach obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ. The early church demonstrates that spiritual multiplication should produce a community devoted to doctrine, prayer, fellowship, and mutual care. Together, these passages reveal that the purpose of spiritual growth is not simply to increase the size of a congregation, but to develop a body of believers who are becoming more mature in Christ and more capable of participating in His mission.

For our families, this means recognizing that the spiritual future of the next generation requires intentional investment today. We must cultivate homes where Scripture is respected, prayer is practiced, and the character of Jesus Christ is demonstrated through everyday relationships. We cannot control every decision our children will make, but we can faithfully provide instruction, encouragement, and a living example of the faith we profess. The responsibility of spiritual multiplication begins with the willingness to nurture those already entrusted to our care.

For Tampa Life Church, the challenge is both spiritual and practical. If we are praying for God to bring new people into our congregation, we must become intentional about preparing to receive them. We should strengthen discipleship, develop leaders, support families, cultivate unity, and create opportunities for

believers to grow through meaningful relationships. We must recognize that new life requires continued care, and that the responsibility of making disciples cannot be fulfilled through powerful services alone.

We should also remain humble concerning the outcomes of our efforts. Spiritual multiplication is not something we can guarantee through human planning or enthusiastic declarations. We can prepare faithfully, communicate the gospel clearly, and serve with excellence, but genuine spiritual life comes through the work of God. Our confidence must remain in Jesus Christ, who promised to build His church and who commissioned His followers to carry the gospel to the nations.

A birthing church is therefore not simply a congregation that expects growth. It is a church willing to make room for people, develop the maturity necessary to serve them, and invest in the generations that will continue the mission. It understands that the arrival of new believers introduces responsibilities that must be embraced with patience, humility, and love. It recognizes that every person matters, that discipleship requires time, and that the health of the body depends upon the faithful participation of its members.

We must never become so focused on the territory we hope to reach that we neglect the people we are called to disciple.

And as we continue examining the message, we approach another important stage in the process of spiritual birth. After the season of formation, preparation, and increasing responsibility, the natural process of pregnancy eventually reaches a moment when discomfort intensifies and delivery approaches. Pastor Azzolini used the imagery of contractions to explain how certain seasons of pressure and discomfort may accompany significant transitions in our spiritual lives and in the mission of the church.

This illustration requires careful biblical understanding because not every difficulty indicates that a particular promise is about to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, Scripture provides important teaching concerning perseverance, spiritual testing, and the relationship between suffering and maturity. We must learn how to respond when circumstances become uncomfortable without immediately assuming that God has abandoned us or that every challenge must be removed.

PART 07

The Contractions Before the Birth: Understanding Pressure, Discomfort, and Spiritual Transition



Recognizing the Difference Between Destructive Pressure and Spiritual Formation, and Learning to Remain Faithful When the Process Becomes Uncomfortable

Foundational Scriptures: John 16:20-22; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Isaiah 66:7-9

7.1 When the Process Becomes Uncomfortable

There are seasons in our spiritual lives when the responsibilities we have embraced begin to feel heavier than we originally anticipated. We may begin a journey with tremendous enthusiasm, encouraged by the Word of God and confident that He is leading us toward something meaningful. We dedicate ourselves to prayer, establish new commitments, invest in ministry, and begin preparing for the opportunities we believe lie ahead. Yet as time passes, circumstances may become increasingly demanding. Responsibilities multiply, relationships require greater patience, and challenges emerge that were not visible when the journey began. What initially felt exciting may gradually become exhausting, and we may find ourselves questioning whether the difficulties we are experiencing indicate that something has gone wrong.

In his message The Birthing Church, Pastor Vinny Azzolini used the natural process of labor and delivery to illustrate this stage of spiritual responsibility. He described how contractions introduce a different level of discomfort as the moment of birth approaches. During pregnancy, a mother experiences months of development and preparation, but labor represents a significant transition. The body begins responding to the approaching delivery, and the intensity of the experience changes. What was previously a season of waiting becomes a moment that demands attention, endurance, and preparation for the arrival of new life.

This illustration provides a meaningful way to examine our response to spiritual pressure. We often interpret discomfort as evidence that we should abandon a responsibility or seek immediate relief. When ministry becomes demanding, we may begin questioning whether we should continue serving. When relationships become difficult, we may feel tempted to withdraw rather than pursue understanding and reconciliation. When spiritual growth exposes weaknesses in our character, we may resist the correction necessary for maturity. Yet Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that faithfulness does not always produce comfortable circumstances. There are moments when obedience requires perseverance, sacrifice, and a willingness to continue trusting God through difficulty.

At the same time, we must approach the imagery of contractions with theological care. Not every painful experience is a sign that a particular promise is about to be fulfilled. Some difficulties result from poor decisions, unhealthy relationships, injustice, physical limitations, or circumstances unrelated to a specific spiritual assignment. Scripture does not teach that every season of suffering guarantees an imminent breakthrough. We must therefore resist the temptation to interpret all pain as evidence of divine timing. The value of the illustration is that it challenges us to examine our response to pressure while remaining grounded in the broader biblical teaching concerning suffering, perseverance, and the faithfulness of God.

For our families, this distinction is particularly important. We may experience pressure through financial responsibilities, parenting challenges, marital disagreements, or concerns about loved ones. These difficulties should not automatically be interpreted as spiritual contractions announcing an extraordinary future event. Sometimes they require practical decisions, honest conversations, counseling, or changes in our habits. Yet even in these situations, we can respond in ways that reflect our faith. We can seek God's wisdom, practice patience, and refuse to allow discouragement to destroy our commitment to biblical principles.

For Tampa Life Church, the imagery becomes especially meaningful when we consider the responsibilities associated with spiritual multiplication. A growing congregation may encounter pressure as ministries

expand, leadership responsibilities increase, and new families require care. These challenges do not necessarily indicate that something is wrong. They may reveal areas where additional preparation, cooperation, and spiritual maturity are needed. We must learn to respond to such pressure with wisdom rather than allowing discomfort alone to determine our direction.

The central question is not simply whether we are experiencing difficulty. It is whether our response to that difficulty is drawing us closer to Jesus Christ and helping us become more faithful to the responsibilities He has entrusted to us.

7.2 Jesus Used the Language of Childbirth to Explain Sorrow and Joy

One of the most significant biblical passages connected to the imagery of childbirth appears in John 16. During His final conversation with the disciples before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus prepared them for the sorrow they would soon experience. They had followed Him, listened to His teaching, witnessed His miracles, and developed expectations concerning His kingdom. Yet the events surrounding His death would challenge their understanding and produce deep emotional distress. Jesus knew that they were approaching a moment when their circumstances would appear to contradict the hope they had placed in Him.

John 16:20-22 (KJV)

> *Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*
>
> *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*
>
> *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

Jesus used the experience of childbirth to help His disciples understand the relationship between the sorrow they were about to encounter and the joy that would follow His resurrection. The illustration was not primarily a general promise that every painful circumstance would eventually produce the outcome we desire. It was spoken within the specific context of Christ's approaching death and resurrection. The disciples would experience grief as they witnessed His suffering and crucifixion, but their sorrow would be transformed when they encountered the risen Lord.

This historical context is essential because it establishes the foundation of Christian hope. Our confidence does not rest upon the assumption that every difficult season will end exactly as we expect. It rests upon the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death. The resurrection demonstrates that God's redemptive purposes cannot be defeated by the apparent finality of the cross. What the disciples experienced as devastating loss became the setting in which God's saving purpose was revealed through the resurrection.

There is something deeply meaningful about the way Jesus acknowledged their coming sorrow. He did not dismiss their emotions or suggest that genuine faith would prevent them from grieving. He told them plainly that they would weep and lament. Their pain would be real, and the circumstances surrounding His death would be difficult to understand. Yet He also assured them that their sorrow would not possess the final word. The resurrection would establish a joy rooted in His victory rather than in the temporary appearance of their circumstances.

This teaches us that biblical faith does not require emotional denial. We can experience grief while remaining faithful to God. We can acknowledge disappointment without abandoning hope. We can admit that certain responsibilities are difficult without concluding that obedience has become meaningless. Jesus did not ask His disciples to pretend that the crucifixion would be easy. He prepared them to understand that their sorrow existed within a greater redemptive story.

For our families, this perspective becomes especially valuable during seasons of loss or uncertainty. We may encounter circumstances that cannot be resolved through immediate action. A loved one may experience serious illness, a relationship may change unexpectedly, or a family may face a season of grief. In such moments, we should not feel pressured to explain every painful experience as preparation for an immediate blessing. Sometimes the most faithful response is to mourn with those who mourn, provide practical support, and remain confident in the resurrection hope we possess through Jesus Christ.

For the church, John 16 reminds us that our greatest source of hope is not the promise of institutional expansion or numerical success. It is the risen Savior who has overcome death and who continues to sustain His people. We can pursue spiritual multiplication with expectation, but our confidence must remain anchored in Christ rather than in a particular prediction concerning the future.

The joy of the resurrection provides the foundation upon which we can endure difficulty without surrendering our faith.

7.3 Pressure Reveals the Foundation of Our Faith

Difficult circumstances often expose the beliefs upon which we have built our lives. When everything appears stable, we may not recognize how deeply our confidence depends upon comfort, predictability, or personal control. We may speak about trusting God while quietly assuming that faithfulness will protect us from significant disappointment. We may believe that serving in ministry should produce consistent encouragement or that obedience should lead toward circumstances that become progressively easier. Yet when pressure increases, these assumptions are challenged, and we begin discovering whether our faith is grounded in the character of God or in the outcomes we expected Him to provide.

The Apostle Paul addressed the relationship between suffering and spiritual development in Romans 5.

Romans 5:3-5 (KJV)

> *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*
>
> *And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*
>
> *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Paul's teaching appears within a discussion of justification by faith and the peace believers possess with God through Jesus Christ. He explains that the hope of God's glory provides a foundation that remains meaningful even when believers experience tribulation. His statement does not suggest that suffering is inherently desirable or that every painful experience automatically produces maturity. Rather, he describes how tribulation can become an environment in which endurance, tested character, and hope are developed through the sustaining grace of God.

The progression is significant because spiritual maturity often develops through repeated opportunities to trust God when circumstances are difficult. Endurance is not simply the ability to tolerate discomfort. It involves remaining faithful to biblical convictions when abandoning them might appear easier. Tested character develops as we continue practicing obedience through circumstances that reveal our weaknesses. Hope becomes stronger as we learn that our relationship with God is not dependent upon the absence of difficulty.

This principle becomes especially important for those involved in ministry. It is possible to begin serving because we enjoy the encouragement, relationships, and sense of purpose that ministry provides. These experiences are meaningful, but they cannot become the only foundation of our commitment. Eventually, responsibilities may become demanding. People may disappoint us, plans may fail, and our efforts may not receive the recognition we anticipated. During these seasons, we must decide whether we are serving primarily because the experience is personally rewarding or because we recognize the value of the mission entrusted to us.

Pressure can also expose weaknesses in our relationships. When life becomes demanding, we may discover that our patience is less developed than we believed. We may become defensive when corrected or critical when others fail to meet our expectations. We may struggle to communicate with compassion because we feel overwhelmed by responsibilities. These reactions reveal areas where the transforming work of the Holy Ghost is still needed. Instead of allowing pressure to justify unhealthy conduct, we should recognize it as an opportunity to examine our attitudes and seek spiritual growth.

Within our homes, this principle becomes deeply practical. Financial stress may reveal whether we have developed healthy communication and responsible stewardship. Parenting challenges may expose our tendency toward impatience or control. Marital disagreements may reveal whether we are willing to listen, apologize, and pursue reconciliation. These situations do not automatically produce maturity, but they can become opportunities for growth when we respond with humility and obedience to God's Word.

A birthing church must learn to approach pressure with this perspective. When responsibilities increase, we should not immediately assume that the solution is to abandon the mission. We should examine whether the pressure is revealing a need for stronger leadership development, healthier communication, clearer organization, or greater spiritual maturity. Sometimes the challenge is not evidence that the vision is wrong. It is evidence that our current capacity must be strengthened.

7.4 The Difference Between Spiritual Formation and Unnecessary Suffering

One of the most important responsibilities of spiritual leadership is helping people distinguish between difficulties that require perseverance and situations that require intervention or change. The imagery of contractions can become harmful if it is used to suggest that every painful experience must be endured without question because it represents preparation for a future blessing. Scripture does not teach that believers should remain passive in the face of abuse, exploitation, injustice, or preventable harm. Neither does it suggest that every form of exhaustion is evidence of spiritual maturity.

Jesus demonstrated compassion toward people experiencing suffering. He healed the sick, responded to those who were oppressed, and confronted religious practices that placed unnecessary burdens upon others. His ministry reveals that suffering should never be romanticized as though pain itself possesses spiritual value independent of our response to God. There are circumstances in which faithful obedience requires endurance, but there are also circumstances in which wisdom requires us to seek help, establish boundaries, or remove ourselves from harmful situations.

This distinction is especially important within families. If a relationship is characterized by manipulation, intimidation, or abuse, we should not interpret the suffering as a spiritual contraction that must be endured until a promised breakthrough occurs. Biblical principles concerning love, truth, justice, and the protection of vulnerable people require responsible action. Forgiveness does not eliminate accountability, and patience does not require the acceptance of continued harm. A spiritually mature response may involve seeking pastoral guidance, professional counseling, legal protection, or other appropriate support.

The same principle applies to ministry responsibilities. If a volunteer is consistently overwhelmed because too many responsibilities have been assigned to one person, the solution may not be to encourage greater endurance without making practical changes. The church may need to develop additional leaders, redistribute responsibilities, or establish healthier expectations. If conflict arises because communication is unclear, the solution may involve improving organizational practices rather than interpreting every disagreement as spiritual opposition.

The Apostle Paul provides an example of practical discernment in Acts 22 and 23. When he faced unlawful treatment and threats against his life, he did not assume that faithfulness required him to remain silent or refuse protection. He exercised his rights as a Roman citizen and accepted appropriate measures for his safety. His actions demonstrate that trusting God and making responsible decisions are not contradictory principles.

We must therefore develop a balanced understanding of spiritual pressure. There are difficulties that accompany faithful service, and Scripture calls us to endure them with perseverance. But there are also

difficulties that result from unhealthy systems, poor decisions, or harmful behavior, and these require correction. Spiritual maturity involves learning to discern the difference rather than treating every uncomfortable circumstance as evidence of divine preparation.

For Tampa Life Church, this balance is essential because a growing congregation must protect both its mission and the well-being of the people serving within it. We should encourage commitment and perseverance, but we must also develop healthy ministry practices that prevent unnecessary exhaustion. We should celebrate sacrifice, but not create an environment where people feel guilty for acknowledging their limitations. We should teach faithfulness, but also recognize that wise stewardship includes rest, accountability, and shared responsibility.

A birthing church must become a place where spiritual growth is encouraged without allowing the language of sacrifice to justify preventable harm.

7.5 The Treasure Within the Earthen Vessel

The Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians provides one of the most profound biblical explanations of how God's power operates through human weakness. Paul was defending the nature of his apostolic ministry while describing the suffering and opposition he had experienced in proclaiming the gospel. Rather than presenting ministry as a life free from difficulty, he acknowledged the reality of pressure, persecution, and physical vulnerability. Yet he also emphasized that the power sustaining his ministry came from God rather than from his own strength.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 (KJV)

> *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*
>
> *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*
>
> *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

The imagery of treasure contained within an earthen vessel reveals the contrast between the greatness of the gospel and the weakness of those entrusted to proclaim it. Clay vessels were ordinary and fragile, yet they could contain something valuable. Paul used this illustration to demonstrate that the power of the gospel does not originate in the human abilities of its messengers. The treasure is greater than the vessel, and the effectiveness of God's work cannot be explained exclusively through human strength.

This passage provides an important perspective for a birthing church because spiritual multiplication can introduce responsibilities that expose our limitations. We may recognize the significance of reaching more people while also acknowledging that our resources are limited. We may desire to develop stronger ministries while realizing that our leaders and volunteers possess finite time and energy. We may feel called to serve families facing complicated circumstances while recognizing that we do not possess immediate solutions to every problem. These limitations should encourage humility and dependence upon God rather than producing either despair or unrealistic confidence in our own abilities.

Paul's description is especially meaningful because he did not deny the reality of his difficulties. He acknowledged being troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down. Yet he also testified that these circumstances had not destroyed his confidence in God. His perseverance was rooted in the power of the Lord and the hope of the resurrection. This is an important distinction because biblical strength does not require us to pretend that pressure is insignificant. It involves recognizing our limitations while remaining dependent upon the grace of God.

For those of us serving in ministry, this passage challenges the assumption that spiritual effectiveness requires us to appear constantly strong. We may feel pressure to demonstrate confidence even when we are struggling. We may hesitate to acknowledge fatigue because we fear that others will interpret it as weakness. We may attempt to carry responsibilities alone because we believe that asking for help would undermine our leadership. Yet Paul's testimony reminds us that human weakness does not automatically disqualify us from meaningful service. The gospel's power belongs to God, and mature leadership includes recognizing our dependence upon Him and upon the support of the body of Christ.

This understanding also shapes the way we care for one another. A spiritually healthy church should not become a place where people feel pressured to hide their struggles. We should cultivate relationships where believers can acknowledge difficulty, seek prayer, receive counsel, and find encouragement without being immediately judged. When someone experiences emotional exhaustion, family conflict, or spiritual discouragement, our response should reflect compassion and biblical wisdom. We are not called to create an appearance of perfection. We are called to demonstrate the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

The treasure remains valuable even when the vessel is fragile. And the power of God remains sufficient even when our human limitations become painfully visible.

7.6 When the Pressure Comes From Carrying Responsibility for Others

One of the most significant applications of Pastor Azzolini's message concerns the relationship between spiritual pressure and the responsibility of caring for people. Ministry is not simply the performance of religious activities. It involves relationships with individuals who possess different needs, experiences, and levels of maturity. As a church grows, the emotional and practical responsibilities associated with these relationships can increase. Leaders may find themselves supporting families through difficult circumstances, helping new believers overcome destructive habits, and guiding people through conflicts that require patience and wisdom.

The Apostle Paul understood this burden. In 2 Corinthians 11, after describing the physical hardships and opposition he had endured, he identified another significant concern.

2 Corinthians 11:28 (KJV)

> *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

Paul's statement reveals that his ministry responsibilities extended beyond preaching and traveling. He carried a genuine concern for the spiritual condition of the congregations he served. Their challenges,

conflicts, and development mattered to him. His commitment to the gospel included the responsibility of caring for people whose spiritual lives were still being formed.

This provides an important perspective on the discomfort associated with spiritual multiplication. A growing church may experience pressure not because something is fundamentally wrong, but because more people are receiving care. New believers may require repeated instruction. Families may need support through complicated situations. Ministry teams may encounter communication challenges as responsibilities increase. These experiences can become demanding because genuine discipleship involves more than organizing events. It requires relationships characterized by patience, love, and consistent investment.

We must also recognize that caring for people does not mean assuming responsibility for every decision they make. Paul instructed, corrected, encouraged, and prayed for the churches, but he did not possess the ability to control every believer's response. In a similar way, pastors and ministry leaders must learn to distinguish between faithful care and unhealthy attempts to control outcomes. We can teach biblical truth, provide guidance, and establish appropriate accountability, but each person remains responsible for their response to God.

This distinction protects leaders from carrying burdens that do not belong exclusively to them. We may feel discouraged when someone we have discipled makes a destructive decision or withdraws from fellowship. We may question our effectiveness when a family continues struggling despite repeated efforts to help. Yet the faithfulness of our ministry cannot be measured solely by the decisions of those we serve. Our responsibility is to communicate truth with love, provide appropriate support, and remain obedient to Christ.

The responsibility of caring for others must also be shared across the body. Galatians 6:2 instructs believers to bear one another's burdens, while Galatians 6:5 reminds us that each person also possesses responsibilities of their own. Together, these principles establish a healthy balance between mutual support and personal accountability. A church should become a community where people help one another without creating unhealthy dependence upon a small number of individuals.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that spiritual multiplication must include the multiplication of care. As new families arrive, more mature believers should be equipped to develop meaningful relationships with them. Teachers should receive support and training. Ministry leaders should work together rather than carrying responsibilities in isolation. The congregation should understand that discipleship is a shared calling rather than a task assigned exclusively to pastoral leadership.

When we embrace this responsibility collectively, the pressure associated with growth can become more manageable. We begin recognizing that the church is a body whose members are called to support one another, and that the mission of Christ is strengthened when responsibilities are shared faithfully.

7.7 Contractions Do Not Mean We Should Abandon the Process

The imagery of contractions is particularly powerful because it illustrates a moment when discomfort intensifies during a process that has already required significant preparation. In the natural experience of childbirth, labor is not the time when a mother decides that the child no longer matters because the process has become painful. The family understands that the moment requires appropriate care, support, and attention. Pastor Azzolini used this illustration to challenge the congregation not to abandon its spiritual responsibilities simply because the process becomes uncomfortable.

This principle is consistent with the biblical emphasis upon perseverance. Throughout Scripture, believers are encouraged to remain faithful when obedience becomes demanding. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that endurance is necessary, while James explains that the testing of faith can develop patience and maturity. These passages challenge the assumption that difficulty automatically indicates we should surrender our commitments.

Yet perseverance must remain connected to wisdom. We should not continue pursuing a particular plan merely because we have invested significant time or resources into it. If circumstances reveal that our approach is ineffective or harmful, responsible leadership may require adjustment. The goal is not to preserve every method at any cost. It is to remain faithful to God's Word and the mission He has entrusted to us.

This distinction becomes especially important when we consider the development of church ministries. A discipleship program may encounter challenges with participation, scheduling, or volunteer availability. These difficulties should not automatically lead us to abandon the importance of discipleship. Instead, they should motivate us to evaluate how the program can become more effective. A multicultural ministry may experience communication challenges, but those challenges should encourage us to develop greater understanding and cooperation rather than withdrawing from the responsibility of reaching different communities.

The same principle applies within our families. When parenting becomes difficult, we should not abandon our responsibility to provide love, guidance, and biblical instruction. When marriage requires greater effort, we should seek healthy communication and appropriate support rather than assuming that discomfort alone means the relationship has no value. When spiritual disciplines become difficult to maintain, we should examine our priorities and develop sustainable habits rather than surrendering our commitment to prayer and Scripture.

The Apostle Paul encouraged believers in Galatians 6:9 not to become weary in doing good. His instruction reminds us that faithful conduct matters even when immediate results are not visible. We should continue practicing what is right because obedience to God possesses value beyond the circumstances we can presently observe.

A birthing church must therefore develop the maturity to distinguish between the discomfort that accompanies responsibility and the warning signs that require correction. We should not become so sensitive to difficulty that we abandon every demanding assignment. Neither should we become so committed to endurance that we ignore the need for wisdom, rest, and accountability.

The goal is faithful perseverance guided by the Word of God.

7.8 The Refining of Faith Through Difficult Seasons

The Apostle Peter addressed believers who were experiencing various trials and encouraged them to understand their difficulties within the larger hope of salvation. His first epistle was written to Christians who faced pressure because of their identity and commitment to Jesus Christ. Rather than promising that their circumstances would immediately improve, Peter directed their attention toward the inheritance reserved for them in heaven and the ultimate revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV)

> *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*
>
> *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

Peter compares the testing of faith to the refining of gold. The illustration emphasizes the value of genuine faith and the way trials can reveal its authenticity. Gold is precious, yet Peter declares that tested faith possesses even greater value because its significance extends beyond temporary earthly circumstances. The ultimate focus of the passage is not immediate relief, but the praise, honor, and glory associated with the appearing of Jesus Christ.

This teaching challenges our tendency to evaluate every difficult season exclusively according to what we hope will happen next. We may become so focused on escaping the pressure that we overlook the spiritual lessons available within it. We may pray for circumstances to change without considering whether our attitudes also need transformation. We may desire greater opportunities while resisting the humility, patience, and accountability necessary to carry them faithfully.

The refining of faith does not occur automatically through suffering. Difficult experiences can also produce resentment, fear, or spiritual withdrawal when they are not approached with wisdom and dependence upon God. The biblical invitation is to respond to trials through continued trust, obedience, and the sustaining grace of the Lord. We should seek His wisdom concerning our circumstances while allowing Scripture to examine our hearts.

For ministry leaders, this may involve learning to receive correction without becoming defensive. For families, it may require developing healthier communication during seasons of stress. For young believers, it may involve learning to remain faithful when their convictions are challenged by peers or cultural expectations. For the church as a whole, it may mean strengthening unity when differences of opinion arise concerning practical decisions.

These experiences can reveal whether our commitment to Christ is rooted in genuine conviction or in the comfort of familiar circumstances. When we remain faithful through difficulty, our understanding of God's character can deepen, and our ability to serve others with compassion may increase.

A birthing church should therefore become a community where spiritual maturity is valued more highly than the appearance of effortless success. We should recognize that people grow through different seasons and that genuine discipleship requires patience. We must encourage one another to remain faithful while also providing the support necessary to navigate difficult circumstances responsibly.

7.9 The Danger of Seeking Deliverance From Every Responsibility

One of the most memorable declarations in Pastor Azzolini's sermon was:

"I'm looking for a delivery, not a deliverance."

This statement captures the central challenge of the childbirth illustration. The preacher was encouraging the congregation to recognize that certain forms of discomfort may be connected to responsibilities that should not be abandoned. Instead of interpreting every challenge as something from which we must immediately escape, we should consider whether we are being called to remain faithful through a demanding process.

The distinction is particularly meaningful because we often pray for relief when our responsibilities become difficult. We may ask God to remove a challenge without considering whether the situation requires us to develop greater patience, wisdom, or perseverance. We may desire freedom from a ministry responsibility because it no longer produces the excitement we initially experienced. We may hope that a difficult relationship will simply disappear rather than accepting the responsibility of pursuing healthy communication and reconciliation.

Yet the biblical record reminds us that not every burden is intended to be removed immediately. Paul prayed concerning his affliction in 2 Corinthians 12, but the answer he received emphasized the sufficiency of God's grace. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane concerning the cup before Him, yet He surrendered Himself to the Father's will. The early apostles encountered persecution and hardship while continuing to proclaim the gospel. These examples demonstrate that faithfulness may sometimes require endurance rather than immediate escape.

However, we must not interpret the preacher's statement as a rejection of deliverance itself. Scripture clearly reveals God as the One who delivers His people. The Lord delivered Israel from Egypt, rescued individuals from danger, and demonstrated His power through the ministry of Jesus Christ. The gospel itself proclaims liberation from the bondage of sin through the saving work of Jesus. We should continue praying for healing, protection, freedom, and relief when circumstances require divine intervention.

The distinction concerns discernment. There are burdens from which we need deliverance, and there are responsibilities through which we need perseverance. We must not confuse the two.

If we are experiencing destructive spiritual bondage, we should seek freedom through the power of Jesus Christ. If we are facing abuse or serious harm, we should pursue appropriate protection and support. If we are overwhelmed because responsibilities have become unhealthy, we should seek wise adjustments. But if we are simply uncomfortable because obedience requires sacrifice, humility, or patience, we should not automatically interpret that discomfort as a reason to abandon our calling.

For Tampa Life Church, the declaration challenges us to consider whether we are prepared to carry the responsibilities associated with the spiritual growth we desire. We may pray for revival, but revival will require discipleship. We may ask God to bring new families, but those families will need relationships and pastoral care. We may desire new ministries, but those ministries will require training, accountability, and faithful service. We cannot celebrate the possibility of spiritual multiplication while continually seeking to escape the responsibilities that make healthy multiplication possible.

The deeper message is that spiritual maturity requires us to recognize the difference between a burden that is destroying us and a responsibility that is developing us. Both situations may involve discomfort, but they require different responses. Biblical wisdom helps us discern when to endure, when to seek help, and when to make necessary changes.

7.10 A Church Must Learn to Support Those Who Are Carrying Heavy Responsibilities

The natural imagery of childbirth also reminds us that significant moments of transition should not be experienced in isolation. A mother in labor needs appropriate care, support, and attention. The responsibility of the family is not simply to celebrate the arrival of the child after the difficult process has ended. It is also to provide support throughout the journey. This principle offers a meaningful application to the life of the church because spiritual responsibilities can become overwhelming when individuals attempt to carry them alone.

The New Testament consistently emphasizes the importance of mutual support within the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the church as one body composed of many members. Each member possesses a role, and the well-being of the whole is connected to the condition of its parts. When one member suffers, the others are called to share in that concern. When one member receives honor, the entire body has reason to rejoice. This teaching challenges the individualistic approach to ministry in which people are expected to carry significant responsibilities without meaningful support.

For ministry leaders, this means that developing healthy teams is an expression of biblical wisdom. A pastor should not be expected to personally fulfill every responsibility within the congregation. Teachers need opportunities for training and encouragement. Volunteers need clear expectations and appropriate support. Those caring for families experiencing difficult circumstances should have access to guidance and accountability. The church becomes stronger when responsibilities are shared according to the gifts and capacities of its members.

This principle also challenges how we respond to people who are struggling. We may be quick to encourage someone to remain faithful, but genuine support requires more than offering a brief statement of encouragement. Sometimes we need to listen carefully, provide practical assistance, or help someone identify resources that can strengthen their situation. A family experiencing financial difficulty may need both prayer and responsible practical support. A parent struggling with a child's behavior may benefit from encouragement, biblical counsel, and appropriate professional guidance. A ministry volunteer experiencing exhaustion may need help redistributing responsibilities rather than simply being told to persevere.

The early church demonstrated this kind of practical concern through its willingness to share resources and respond to the needs of believers. Acts 6 also reveals how the apostles addressed an organizational challenge involving the distribution of assistance to widows. Rather than ignoring the problem or expecting the existing leadership to carry every responsibility, they established a structure through which qualified individuals could provide appropriate care. This account demonstrates that spiritual leadership and practical organization can work together to strengthen the church.

For Tampa Life Church, the responsibility of supporting one another becomes increasingly important as the congregation develops. A multicultural and multigenerational church includes people navigating different challenges, and no single ministry can meet every need independently. We must learn to cooperate across departments, languages, and generations so that the entire body can participate in caring for one another.

A birthing church should never become a place where people are praised for carrying burdens that could have been shared more wisely. We should celebrate faithfulness while also recognizing the importance of healthy support systems. When people are strengthened through meaningful relationships, they become better equipped to continue serving with joy and maturity.

7.11 The Eternal Perspective That Sustains Us Through Temporary Pressure

One of the most powerful aspects of Paul's teaching concerning suffering is his ability to evaluate present difficulties through the hope of eternity. In 2 Corinthians 4, he acknowledged the hardships associated with his ministry, but he refused to allow those hardships to define the ultimate meaning of his life. His confidence was rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal glory promised to those who belong to Him.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (KJV)

> *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*
>
> *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*
>
> *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Paul's description of affliction as light and momentary must be understood in relation to the eternal glory he anticipated. His suffering was not insignificant in human terms. He had experienced persecution, imprisonment, physical hardship, and serious opposition. Yet when he compared those experiences with the eternal future secured through Jesus Christ, he recognized that suffering would not possess the final word.

This perspective is essential because the Christian life cannot be understood exclusively through the outcomes we experience in the present world. We may serve faithfully without witnessing every result we

hoped to see. We may invest in people whose spiritual development continues beyond our lifetime. We may experience difficulties that remain unresolved despite sincere prayer. Yet our labor in the Lord is not meaningless simply because its results are not immediately visible.

The Apostle Paul expressed a similar conviction in 1 Corinthians 15:58, where he encouraged believers to remain steadfast and always abound in the work of the Lord because their labor is not in vain. This instruction follows his extensive teaching concerning the resurrection. The foundation of perseverance is therefore not the guarantee of immediate earthly success, but the certainty that Christ has overcome death and that our future rests in Him.

For our families, this eternal perspective changes the way we understand spiritual responsibility. We may spend years teaching, praying, and demonstrating biblical truth without knowing the full influence our faithfulness will have upon future generations. We may not witness every outcome we desire, but we can remain confident that obedience to Christ possesses value beyond what we can presently measure.

For the church, this means that our mission must remain greater than our institutional ambitions. We should desire to reach our community, develop ministries, and see people respond to the gospel. But our ultimate purpose is not to establish a reputation for success. It is to glorify Jesus Christ and participate faithfully in His redemptive mission. When this eternal perspective shapes our understanding, we become less vulnerable to discouragement when circumstances do not unfold according to our expectations.

A birthing church must therefore learn to carry present responsibilities with eternity in view. We should serve with excellence, prepare wisely, and pursue spiritual multiplication, but we must never forget that the greatest fulfillment of our hope is found in Jesus Christ Himself.

Section 7 Conclusion: We Must Learn to Discern the Purpose of the Pressure

The imagery of contractions in Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message challenges us to reconsider how we respond when the responsibilities of spiritual life become uncomfortable. We often desire the joy of fulfillment without anticipating the patience, sacrifice, and perseverance that may accompany the journey. We celebrate the possibility of spiritual multiplication, but the development of new believers, stronger families, and additional ministries introduces responsibilities that can test our maturity. The question is not whether every difficulty possesses a hidden prophetic meaning. The question is whether we are willing to remain faithful to God's Word when obedience becomes demanding.

Jesus used the imagery of childbirth to prepare His disciples for the sorrow they would experience before the joy of His resurrection. Paul explained that tribulation can develop endurance, tested character, and hope. Peter encouraged believers to recognize the value of genuine faith even when it is tested through difficulty. These passages remind us that suffering does not automatically indicate divine abandonment and that the grace of God can sustain us through circumstances we would not have chosen.

Yet Scripture also requires us to exercise discernment. Not every painful experience should be endured without question, and not every burden represents a responsibility God intends us to carry indefinitely. Some situations require correction, practical assistance, accountability, or protection. Spiritual maturity

involves learning to distinguish between difficulties that call for perseverance and circumstances that require responsible change. We must never use the language of spiritual formation to justify preventable harm or unhealthy expectations.

For our families, this means responding to pressure with prayer, wisdom, and compassion. We may encounter seasons when relationships require greater patience, when financial responsibilities become demanding, or when our children face challenges we cannot immediately resolve. During these moments, we must resist both despair and the temptation to control every outcome. We can remain faithful to biblical principles while seeking appropriate support and making responsible decisions.

For Tampa Life Church, the responsibility is to prepare for the demands associated with spiritual multiplication. If we desire to reach more people, we must develop the capacity to care for them. If we expect new leaders to emerge, we must invest in their training and maturity. If we pray for families to experience restoration, we must cultivate relationships and ministries capable of providing meaningful support. The pressure associated with growth should motivate us to strengthen our spiritual and practical foundations rather than simply seeking relief from every demanding responsibility.

Pastor Azzolini's declaration, "I'm looking for a delivery, not a deliverance," becomes especially meaningful when understood through this biblical balance. There are responsibilities we should not abandon merely because they require sacrifice, and there are burdens from which we should seek God's help and appropriate intervention. The wisdom of spiritual maturity lies in discerning the difference.

A birthing church must become a congregation that does not allow discomfort alone to determine its obedience, but continually seeks God's wisdom concerning what must be endured, what must be corrected, and what must be entrusted to His care.

As we continue toward the conclusion of this study, we arrive at the final stage of the childbirth illustration. The season of waiting, formation, preparation, and labor eventually gives way to the arrival of new life. Yet the moment of delivery is not the end of responsibility. It introduces a new beginning in which the family must learn to nurture what has been born.

In the same way, spiritual multiplication must lead toward continued discipleship, faithful stewardship, and the development of future generations. We must consider what happens after the moment of breakthrough, how we respond when God brings new people into our congregation, and why the greatest evidence of spiritual fruitfulness is not merely that something begins, but that it continues growing toward maturity in Jesus Christ.

PART 08

The Delivery Is Only the Beginning: Nurturing What God Has Brought to Life



Understanding the Responsibility of Spiritual Parenthood, the Importance of Discipleship, and Why the Greatest Evidence of Revival Is a Life That Continues Growing in Christ

Foundational Scriptures: Acts 2:38-47; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 3:6-9; Colossians 1:28-29; Galatians 4:19; 2 Timothy 2:2

8.1 The Moment of Birth Changes Everything

There is something extraordinary about the moment a child is born. After months of expectation, preparation, physical changes, and uncertainty, the family finally experiences the arrival of the life they have been anticipating. The nursery that was prepared now has someone to occupy it. The clothes that were purchased now have someone to wear them. The conversations about the future suddenly become connected to a real person whose presence changes the responsibilities of everyone involved. What was previously an expectation has become a reality, and the family begins experiencing the joy of welcoming a new life.

Yet every parent quickly discovers that the moment of birth, as wonderful as it may be, is not the conclusion of the journey. In many ways, it is the beginning of a much greater responsibility. The child who has arrived cannot care for himself or herself independently. There is a need for nourishment, protection, affection, guidance, and consistent attention. The parents must adjust their routines, reconsider their priorities, and learn to respond to needs that did not previously exist. The excitement of delivery is followed by the responsibility of nurturing the life that has been entrusted to their care.

This is one of the most important applications of Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message The Birthing Church. Throughout the sermon, the imagery of pregnancy and delivery challenged Tampa Life Church to understand that spiritual expectation must be accompanied by preparation and perseverance. The preacher emphasized that the church should not simply seek relief from the discomfort associated with growth, but should recognize the responsibility of carrying what God desires to accomplish. Yet the imagery also invites us to consider what happens after the moment of delivery. If we are praying for spiritual multiplication, we must recognize that the arrival of new believers introduces responsibilities that extend far beyond the initial moment of conversion.

In the life of the church, we often celebrate the moments when people respond to the gospel. We rejoice when someone comes forward in repentance, when a person is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and when someone receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are significant moments that deserve celebration because they reflect the transforming work of God in human lives. Yet the New Testament does not present these experiences as permission to neglect the continued development of those who have responded. Instead, the apostolic pattern reveals that the beginning of spiritual life should lead toward a continuing journey of discipleship, fellowship, obedience, and maturity.

We must therefore examine how we understand spiritual success. If our greatest excitement is reserved exclusively for the moment someone responds to an altar call, we may unintentionally overlook the importance of what happens afterward. A new believer may leave the service filled with joy but return to a home where no one shares their convictions. They may encounter questions concerning Scripture that they do not know how to answer. They may struggle with habits that developed over many years or experience discouragement when the emotional excitement of their initial encounter begins to fade. Without meaningful relationships and continued biblical instruction, they may find it difficult to develop the spiritual foundations necessary for lasting maturity.

This is why a birthing church must also become a nurturing church. We cannot be satisfied merely with the arrival of new life. We must become committed to its development. We should celebrate spiritual

beginnings while also investing in the relationships, teaching, and encouragement that help people continue following Jesus Christ. The responsibility of discipleship belongs not only to pastors and teachers, but to the entire body of believers who have been called to love one another and participate in the mission of the gospel.

The joy of spiritual birth must become the responsibility of spiritual nurture, because the purpose of the church is not merely to witness new beginnings but to help people grow into mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

8.2 Pentecost: When Three Thousand New Believers Became a Spiritual Family

The second chapter of Acts provides one of the clearest biblical examples of spiritual multiplication followed by intentional community development. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the believers gathered in Jerusalem, fulfilling the promise Jesus had given concerning the coming of the Spirit. The extraordinary events drew the attention of the surrounding crowd, and Peter stood to proclaim the gospel. His message centered upon Jesus Christ, whom God had raised from the dead and exalted as both Lord and Christ.

When the people heard Peter's preaching, they were convicted and asked what they should do. Peter responded with the apostolic proclamation recorded in Acts 2:38.

Acts 2:38-39 (KJV)

> *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
>
> *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

For the Apostolic Pentecostal church, this passage remains central to our understanding of the biblical response to the gospel. Repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are not merely historical details. They are part of the apostolic proclamation of salvation and the continuing mission of the church. We should never lose our passion for communicating this message clearly and inviting people to respond to the grace of God.

Acts 2:41 records that approximately three thousand people received Peter's word and were baptized. This was an extraordinary moment of spiritual multiplication. The church experienced tremendous growth in a remarkably short period, and the number of new believers introduced responsibilities that had not previously existed on the same scale. These individuals came from different backgrounds and possessed different levels of understanding concerning the message they had received. They needed instruction, fellowship, and opportunities to establish their new identity within the community of faith.

Luke's account becomes especially significant because he does not conclude the narrative with the number of people baptized. Instead, he describes what the believers did afterward.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

The word continued reveals something essential about the spiritual life of the early church. Their response to the gospel was not treated as a temporary emotional experience. It became the beginning of a sustained commitment to apostolic teaching, meaningful relationships, shared meals, and prayer. The believers were learning how to live as a spiritual family, and their new identity in Jesus Christ began influencing their daily conduct.

This pattern challenges us to consider whether our understanding of revival includes the responsibility of continued discipleship. We may experience powerful services in which many people respond to the preaching of the Word, but what happens during the following days and weeks? Do those individuals have opportunities to ask questions? Are they being connected with mature believers who can encourage them? Do they understand the importance of prayer, Scripture, fellowship, and holiness? Are we helping them develop the spiritual disciplines necessary to remain faithful when difficulties arise?

The early church demonstrates that genuine spiritual multiplication should produce a community where new believers are welcomed into a continuing process of formation. The apostles did not merely proclaim the gospel and leave people to develop independently. The believers remained connected to teaching and fellowship, and their shared commitment became part of the environment in which spiritual growth occurred.

For Tampa Life Church, this principle should influence every stage of our discipleship process. When someone responds to the gospel, we should celebrate with joy, but we should also recognize that a new responsibility has begun. We must help that person become connected to the church family, understand the foundations of Apostolic doctrine, and develop a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. The moment of spiritual birth is precious, but the continued development of that life is equally important.

8.3 New Believers Need Spiritual Nourishment

One of the clearest biblical illustrations of spiritual development appears in Peter's first epistle, where he compares the desire for God's Word to the natural hunger of a newborn child. The illustration is especially meaningful within the context of The Birthing Church because it connects the beginning of life with the necessity of continued nourishment.

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

> *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

Peter was writing to believers who needed encouragement to remain faithful amid difficult circumstances. In the opening chapter, he reminded them of the living hope they possessed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and called them to holiness and sincere love. As he continued into the second chapter, he instructed them to lay aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, and to develop a genuine desire for the nourishment provided through God's Word.

The connection between spiritual nourishment and spiritual growth is important because new believers cannot develop maturity through enthusiasm alone. A child may be born healthy, but continued development requires appropriate nourishment. In a similar way, someone may respond sincerely to the gospel and experience a powerful encounter with God, yet still require ongoing biblical instruction to understand how to live faithfully. Spiritual excitement can motivate us, but it cannot replace the consistent nourishment of Scripture.

This principle challenges the assumption that a new believer should immediately understand every aspect of Christian doctrine and conduct. People arrive at the church with different experiences, educational backgrounds, and levels of biblical knowledge. Some may be familiar with the stories of Scripture but lack an understanding of their theological significance. Others may have never read the Bible consistently. Some may possess strong moral convictions while struggling to understand the nature of God, salvation, or the purpose of the church. These differences require patience and thoughtful instruction.

A spiritually healthy congregation should therefore provide clear opportunities for foundational biblical teaching. New believers need to understand who Jesus Christ is, why His death and resurrection matter, and how the gospel calls us to respond. They need instruction concerning repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the importance of continuing in faith. They also need guidance concerning prayer, holiness, stewardship, spiritual disciplines, and relationships within the body of Christ.

Yet spiritual nourishment involves more than completing a series of lessons. The goal of biblical instruction is not merely to communicate information. It is to help believers develop a relationship with Jesus Christ that influences their decisions and conduct. We should desire people to understand Scripture deeply enough that they can recognize truth, respond to temptation, practice forgiveness, and remain faithful when circumstances become difficult.

This is why discipleship must be approached as a continuing relationship rather than a temporary program. A class can provide structure, but spiritual development also occurs through conversations, shared experiences, prayer, and the example of mature believers. Someone may understand the importance of forgiveness intellectually but need encouragement when facing a painful conflict. Another person may know that prayer matters but struggle to develop a consistent habit. A new believer may understand the biblical teaching concerning generosity but need guidance concerning responsible stewardship.

A birthing church must therefore become intentional about providing nourishment appropriate to different stages of spiritual development. We should not expect spiritual infants to demonstrate the same maturity as believers who have walked with God for decades. Neither should we become content with allowing people to remain spiritually immature indefinitely. The goal is growth, and growth requires continued instruction, patience, and faithful application of God's Word.

8.4 Spiritual Parenthood Requires Patience, Not Perfection

One of the most meaningful responsibilities within the church is the opportunity to help another person develop spiritually. This responsibility can be compared to parenting because it involves teaching, encouragement, correction, and consistent care. Yet spiritual parenthood must never become an excuse for controlling another person's decisions or creating unhealthy dependence upon a particular leader. The goal of discipleship is to help people develop a mature relationship with Jesus Christ, not to make them permanently dependent upon our personal approval.

The Apostle Paul expressed a remarkable sense of spiritual responsibility toward the believers he served. In Galatians 4:19, he described his concern using the language of childbirth.

Galatians 4:19 (KJV)

> *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*

Paul's words reveal the depth of his concern for the spiritual condition of the Galatian believers. They had been influenced by teaching that threatened their understanding of the gospel, and Paul was deeply troubled by the direction they were taking. His use of childbirth imagery communicates the intensity of his desire to see Christ formed within them. He was not satisfied merely with the fact that they had previously responded to his ministry. He wanted them to continue developing in the truth.

This passage provides a powerful connection to the theme of The Birthing Church. Spiritual labor does not end when someone first responds to the gospel. There is an ongoing responsibility to help believers become established in Christ. Paul understood that the development of spiritual maturity could involve repeated instruction, correction, encouragement, and prayer. His concern was not simply that the Galatians remain associated with his ministry, but that their lives reflect the truth of Jesus Christ.

For those of us who teach or mentor others, this principle requires patience. We may invest considerable time in someone who continues struggling with the same questions or habits. We may explain a biblical principle repeatedly before it becomes meaningful in their daily life. We may encourage someone through a difficult season only to discover that they have become discouraged again. These experiences can be frustrating if we expect spiritual development to occur quickly and without setbacks. Yet discipleship requires us to recognize that maturity develops through a process.

At the same time, patience does not mean avoiding correction. Healthy spiritual development requires truth, accountability, and a willingness to confront destructive behavior when necessary. The Apostle Paul did not hesitate to address false teaching or sinful conduct within the churches. But his correction was intended to restore people to faithfulness rather than establish his personal superiority. This distinction is essential because spiritual leadership can become harmful when correction is motivated by pride, anger, or the desire to control.

A mature spiritual parent must learn to combine conviction with compassion. We should communicate biblical truth clearly while remembering that people are developing at different stages. We should establish appropriate expectations without demanding instant perfection. We should celebrate genuine progress

even when that progress appears small. And we should remain humble enough to recognize that our own spiritual development is also continuing.

This principle is particularly important within our families. Parents may desire their children to demonstrate strong spiritual convictions, but those convictions must eventually become personal. We can provide instruction, establish appropriate boundaries, and model faithful Christian living, yet we cannot substitute our relationship with God for theirs. As children mature, our responsibility increasingly includes helping them understand why biblical principles matter and how to apply those principles independently.

A birthing church must cultivate this same approach to discipleship. We should help new believers develop spiritual independence rooted in dependence upon Christ. The goal is not to produce people who require constant direction from a particular leader, but believers who understand Scripture, recognize the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and become capable of serving others faithfully.

8.5 The Church Must Become a Place Where Growth Is Possible

A child needs more than nourishment to develop properly. Healthy growth also requires an environment where care, protection, relationships, and appropriate guidance are available. In a similar way, spiritual development is influenced by the culture of the congregation in which believers participate. A church may possess excellent teaching, but if its relationships are characterized by harshness, gossip, competition, or unrealistic expectations, new believers may struggle to develop a healthy understanding of Christian community.

This is why the previous section concerning the spiritual diet of a birthing church remains deeply connected to the responsibility of discipleship. We cannot separate the nourishment of new believers from the environment in which that nourishment is provided. People learn not only through formal instruction but also through observation. They notice how mature believers respond to conflict, how ministry leaders communicate with volunteers, and whether the church demonstrates the love it proclaims.

Jesus emphasized the importance of love among His disciples in John 13:34-35. He instructed them to love one another as He had loved them and explained that this love would become a distinguishing characteristic of their identity as His followers. The command was not limited to emotional affection. It involved the kind of sacrificial concern that Jesus demonstrated through His life and ministry.

For a growing church, this means that hospitality must become more than a friendly greeting at the entrance. New believers need opportunities to develop meaningful relationships. They should feel comfortable asking questions, acknowledging struggles, and seeking guidance without fear that their difficulties will become subjects of gossip. They should encounter mature Christians who are willing to listen patiently and provide encouragement grounded in Scripture.

This environment must also include appropriate accountability. A loving church does not ignore destructive behavior or abandon biblical standards. Rather, it communicates truth in a way that seeks restoration and spiritual maturity. Ephesians 4:15 describes the importance of speaking the truth in love so that believers may grow into Christ. Truth and love are not competing responsibilities. They are essential elements of healthy discipleship.

We must also recognize that people develop at different rates. Some new believers may quickly establish consistent habits of prayer and Bible study, while others require more time and guidance. Some may possess supportive families who encourage their spiritual development, while others may face opposition or misunderstanding at home. Some may have extensive experience with Christian teaching, while others are encountering biblical concepts for the first time. A spiritually healthy church must recognize these differences without creating a culture of comparison.

For Tampa Life Church, this responsibility becomes especially significant because a multicultural congregation includes people from different backgrounds and traditions. We must be willing to explain biblical practices patiently rather than assuming everyone understands the same terminology or expectations. We should recognize that cultural differences may influence communication styles and relationships without necessarily reflecting differences in spiritual sincerity. Our shared commitment to Jesus Christ should create an environment where people can grow in unity while maintaining appropriate respect for one another.

A birthing church must therefore become a place where people are challenged to grow without being condemned for every weakness. We should maintain biblical conviction while demonstrating the patience and compassion necessary for genuine discipleship. The goal is not to create an environment where spiritual immaturity is celebrated, but one where maturity is pursued through truth, grace, and consistent encouragement.

8.6 The Responsibility of Nurturing Must Be Shared

One of the greatest dangers facing a growing congregation is the assumption that discipleship belongs exclusively to pastors, teachers, or formal ministry leaders. While these individuals possess important responsibilities, the New Testament consistently describes the church as a body whose members contribute to the spiritual development of one another. A healthy congregation cannot depend upon a small number of people to provide every form of teaching, encouragement, fellowship, and practical care.

The Apostle Paul explains this principle in Ephesians 4, where he describes the purpose of ministry leadership.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV)

> *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*
>
> *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

Paul's instruction reveals that ministry leadership has a responsibility to equip believers for service. The church is not intended to function as a community where a few individuals perform every responsibility while the majority remain passive observers. Instead, believers are to be prepared to participate in the work of ministry according to the gifts and opportunities God has entrusted to them.

This principle becomes particularly important when spiritual multiplication increases the needs within a congregation. More people require additional opportunities for connection, teaching, and care. If every

responsibility remains concentrated among the same small group, those individuals may become exhausted while others remain unaware of the opportunities available to serve. A birthing church must therefore become intentional about developing a culture in which mature believers recognize their responsibility to encourage and disciple others.

This does not mean that everyone must become a formal teacher or ministry leader. Spiritual nurture occurs through many different expressions of service. A family may invite a new believer to share a meal and develop a meaningful friendship. Someone with years of experience in prayer may encourage a younger believer who is learning to establish a consistent devotional life. A mature Christian may offer biblical counsel and practical support to a family navigating difficult circumstances. A volunteer may help create an environment where children feel welcomed and valued. These contributions may not always be visible from the platform, but they are essential to the health of the body.

The Apostle Paul describes the church as a body in 1 Corinthians 12, emphasizing that every member possesses value and that the different parts must function together. This imagery challenges the assumption that only visible ministries matter. A healthy body depends upon the coordinated activity of many members, including those whose contributions receive little public attention. In the same way, spiritual multiplication requires the faithful participation of believers whose service may occur quietly through relationships, hospitality, prayer, and practical assistance.

For our families, this principle also provides an opportunity to demonstrate that Christian service is not limited to formal church activities. Parents can involve their children in appropriate acts of hospitality, generosity, and encouragement. Young people can learn to recognize the needs of others and participate in meaningful service. Families can pray together for new believers and develop friendships that strengthen the wider congregation. These practices help establish a culture in which discipleship becomes part of everyday life.

A birthing church must therefore become a community where spiritual responsibility is shared rather than concentrated. The goal is not simply to develop more programs, but to equip more believers to participate faithfully in the mission of Jesus Christ.

8.7 The Difference Between Growing a Crowd and Raising Disciples

As churches develop, it becomes increasingly important to distinguish between attracting people and forming disciples. Both outreach and hospitality are valuable, and a congregation should desire to communicate the gospel to as many people as possible. Yet numerical attendance does not automatically indicate spiritual maturity. People may participate regularly in church activities while remaining unfamiliar with Scripture, disconnected from meaningful relationships, or inconsistent in their spiritual disciplines. A growing crowd can create the appearance of success without necessarily producing the kind of transformation described in the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul addressed the importance of spiritual maturity in Colossians 1.

Colossians 1:28-29 (KJV)

> *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*
>
> *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

Paul's goal was not merely to proclaim Christ to large audiences. He desired to present believers mature in Christ. The word translated perfect communicates the idea of completeness or maturity rather than the absence of every human weakness. Paul understood that proclaiming the gospel involved continued teaching and instruction so that believers could develop a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ.

This passage provides an important standard for evaluating the mission of a birthing church. We should celebrate when new people attend services, but we should also consider whether they are being helped to develop spiritually. We should rejoice when someone responds to the gospel, but we should also ask whether that person is receiving the support necessary to continue growing. We should value ministry programs, but we must evaluate whether those programs are helping people become more mature followers of Christ.

The difference between a crowd and a community of disciples becomes visible through relationships and conduct. A crowd may gather because an event is exciting, but disciples remain committed to Christ when circumstances become difficult. A crowd may appreciate inspiring preaching, but disciples learn to apply biblical truth to their daily decisions. A crowd may enjoy fellowship, but disciples accept responsibility for loving, serving, and encouraging one another.

This does not mean that everyone who attends church must demonstrate the same level of maturity. The church should remain a place where seekers, new believers, and mature Christians can encounter the gospel and receive appropriate care. The distinction concerns the direction of our ministry. Are we simply attempting to increase attendance, or are we intentionally helping people move toward deeper faithfulness?

For Tampa Life Church, this question should influence how we develop discipleship opportunities. Foundational classes can help new believers understand Apostolic doctrine. Continued Bible studies can strengthen their knowledge of Scripture. Small groups and meaningful relationships can encourage accountability and fellowship. Opportunities for service can help believers discover how their gifts contribute to the body of Christ. Leadership development can prepare mature disciples to invest in others.

These responsibilities should not be treated as isolated programs competing for attention. They are different expressions of the same mission: helping people grow toward maturity in Jesus Christ.

A birthing church must therefore measure fruitfulness through more than the number of people who gather. We should also consider whether those people are becoming established in biblical truth, developing Christlike character, and participating in the mission of making disciples.

8.8 From Spiritual Children to Spiritual Parents

One of the most beautiful expressions of spiritual multiplication occurs when someone who was once a new believer becomes capable of helping another person grow. This process demonstrates that discipleship is not intended to end with personal maturity. As we become more established in our relationship with Jesus Christ, we should increasingly recognize opportunities to encourage, teach, and serve others.

The Apostle Paul's instruction to Timothy provides a clear example of this principle.

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

> *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

Paul describes a pattern of spiritual transmission that extends across multiple generations of believers. He had instructed Timothy, Timothy was to entrust that teaching to faithful individuals, and those individuals were to become capable of teaching others. The process was not designed to remain dependent upon one teacher. It was intended to continue through the faithful development of future disciples.

This is a powerful expression of the mission of a birthing church. We should not be satisfied merely with helping people become stable members of the congregation. We should desire to see them develop the maturity necessary to contribute to the spiritual growth of others. A person who once needed encouragement may eventually become someone who provides encouragement. Someone who began with limited biblical understanding may become capable of teaching foundational truths. A young believer who once struggled to establish a prayer life may eventually help others discover the importance of consistent prayer.

This process requires intentional investment. Mature believers must be willing to share their knowledge and experience rather than treating spiritual understanding as something that establishes personal superiority. Teachers must recognize the importance of preparing others who can eventually teach. Ministry leaders should provide opportunities for developing believers to participate in service under appropriate guidance. Pastors should encourage the formation of healthy leadership structures that allow responsibility to be shared across the congregation.

We must also recognize that spiritual parenthood does not require a formal title. A mature believer may influence others through consistent friendship, hospitality, prayer, and personal example. Someone who has walked faithfully with God through difficult seasons may possess wisdom that can encourage those facing similar challenges. A family that has developed healthy spiritual habits may provide an example to others who are learning how to establish prayer and biblical instruction at home.

For our children and young people, this principle establishes a vision that extends beyond their immediate participation in church activities. We should desire them to become mature believers who understand Scripture, demonstrate Christlike character, and recognize their responsibility to serve others. The goal is not simply that they remain connected to church because of family tradition. We want them to develop personal convictions that can influence future generations.

A birthing church must therefore become committed to generational discipleship. We should recognize that the people we are nurturing today may eventually become the teachers, missionaries, pastors, ministry leaders, and faithful servants who carry the gospel into places we may never personally reach.

8.9 We Plant and Water, but God Gives the Increase

One of the greatest challenges in discipleship is learning to accept the limits of our responsibility. When we invest deeply in another person's spiritual development, we naturally desire to see meaningful results. We want them to understand Scripture, establish consistent spiritual habits, and remain faithful to Jesus Christ. Yet people do not always respond according to our expectations. Some develop quickly, while others struggle for extended periods. Some receive instruction with enthusiasm, while others resist correction or become distracted by competing priorities. These experiences can create discouragement if we begin assuming that the spiritual outcome of another person's life depends entirely upon our efforts.

The Apostle Paul provides an important correction to this assumption in 1 Corinthians 3.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (KJV)

> *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*
>
> *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

Paul was addressing division within the Corinthian church, where believers had begun identifying themselves with particular ministers. He reminded them that different servants had contributed to their spiritual development, but the ultimate source of growth was God. Paul had planted, Apollos had watered, and both had participated in the work of ministry. Yet neither possessed independent power to produce spiritual life.

This principle is essential for healthy discipleship because it protects us from both pride and despair. When someone grows spiritually through our ministry, we should rejoice and give glory to God rather than assuming that the result proves our personal superiority. When someone struggles or makes disappointing decisions, we should examine whether we have fulfilled our responsibilities faithfully without automatically assuming that every outcome reflects our failure.

Our calling is to plant and water faithfully. We can proclaim the gospel, teach Scripture, encourage prayer, provide guidance, and demonstrate the love of Christ. We can establish healthy relationships and create opportunities for spiritual growth. But we cannot force another person to repent, believe, obey, or remain faithful. Each individual must respond personally to the grace and truth of God.

This understanding becomes especially important for parents. We may invest years in teaching our children biblical principles and helping them develop spiritual habits, yet they will eventually make decisions that belong to their own responsibility. We should remain faithful in prayer, instruction, and love, but we must resist the temptation to measure our entire spiritual identity according to their choices. Our confidence must remain in God, and our relationships should continue reflecting His character.

For church leaders, this principle provides freedom from the unhealthy pressure to manufacture spiritual outcomes. We should evaluate our ministries honestly and continually seek improvement, but we must remember that genuine transformation is the work of the Holy Ghost. We cannot replace the presence of God with organizational excellence, nor can we substitute human persuasion for sincere repentance.

A birthing church must therefore become both diligent and dependent. We should work faithfully because discipleship matters, and we should pray continually because spiritual life comes from God. We must recognize the value of our responsibility without assuming authority over outcomes that belong to Him.

8.10 The Greatest Evidence of Spiritual Birth Is Continued Growth

As we approach the conclusion of this section, we must return to the central question raised by Pastor Azzolini's message: What does it mean for Tampa Life Church to become a birthing church? The answer cannot be limited to the expectation of powerful services or increased attendance. A spiritually fruitful church must be committed to the entire process through which people encounter the gospel, respond to Jesus Christ, and develop into mature disciples.

The natural illustration of childbirth helps us recognize that the arrival of new life introduces a responsibility that continues long after the moment of delivery. A family does not stop caring for a child because the birth has been completed. In fact, the responsibilities become more visible as the child grows. There are new stages of development, new challenges, and new opportunities for instruction. Each season requires patience, wisdom, and a willingness to adapt to the needs of the developing person.

In the same way, the church must remain committed to believers through different stages of spiritual growth. Someone who has recently been baptized may need foundational instruction concerning prayer and Scripture. A believer who has walked with God for several years may need encouragement to develop greater consistency in service. A mature Christian may need opportunities to mentor others or assume additional responsibility. Families may require guidance as their children grow and encounter new challenges. The needs change, but the mission remains the same: helping people become more like Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul describes the continuing development of the body in Ephesians 4:16, where he explains that the whole body grows as its members contribute according to their responsibilities. This passage reminds us that spiritual maturity is not simply an individual achievement. The health of the church is strengthened when its members function together in love.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that the vision of spiritual multiplication should influence every ministry and every generation. We should desire to see people respond to the gospel, but we must also prepare to nurture them through biblical instruction and meaningful relationships. We should celebrate the development of new leaders, but we must also provide the training and accountability necessary for their continued maturity. We should invest in children and young people, recognizing that their spiritual development will influence the future of the congregation.

Above all, we must remember that the church belongs to Jesus Christ. We are not building a personal institution or attempting to establish our own legacy. We are participating in the mission of the risen Lord,

who has called us to proclaim His gospel and make disciples. Every act of faithful service should ultimately direct people toward Him.

A truly fruitful church is not merely one where new spiritual life begins, but one where that life is consistently nurtured toward maturity in Jesus Christ.

Section 8 Conclusion: The Responsibility Begins When the New Life Arrives

The message of The Birthing Church challenges us to understand that spiritual multiplication involves more than the excitement of expectation or the joy of delivery. The moment someone responds to the gospel is precious, but it also introduces a responsibility to provide continued care, biblical instruction, and meaningful relationships. The New Testament pattern demonstrates that believers were called not only to receive the Word, but also to continue steadfastly in apostolic doctrine, fellowship, prayer, and shared spiritual life.

For our families, this principle reminds us that spiritual formation requires consistent investment across generations. We must cultivate homes where biblical truth is taught, prayer is practiced, and the character of Jesus Christ is demonstrated through everyday relationships. We should help our children develop personal convictions rather than depending exclusively upon family tradition. We must recognize that spiritual maturity develops through a process and that our responsibility is to provide faithful instruction and example while trusting God with the outcomes we cannot control.

For Tampa Life Church, the challenge is to become a congregation that nurtures the people it reaches. We should celebrate repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, and the infilling of the Holy Ghost, but we must also establish meaningful opportunities for continued discipleship. New believers need encouragement, mature Christians need opportunities to serve, and emerging leaders need guidance and accountability. The spiritual health of the congregation depends upon the willingness of its members to participate in this shared responsibility.

We must also remember that spiritual growth is ultimately the work of God. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Our responsibility is to remain faithful in teaching, prayer, encouragement, and service without assuming that we possess the power to control another person's spiritual development. This understanding protects us from pride when ministry is fruitful and from despair when progress appears slow.

A birthing church must therefore become a nurturing church, a teaching church, and a multiplying church. It must recognize that the mission of Jesus Christ extends beyond the moment of spiritual birth into the continuing formation of disciples who will eventually help others grow. The greatest testimony of a spiritually fruitful congregation is not simply that people respond to the gospel, but that they continue developing into mature followers of Jesus Christ.

The delivery may be the moment we celebrate, but discipleship is the responsibility we must embrace.

And this leads us toward another essential dimension of Pastor Azzolini's message. If the church is called to bring forth spiritual life and nurture it toward maturity, then we must consider the responsibility of carrying that mission beyond the boundaries of our existing congregation. The purpose of multiplication is not simply to fill a building. It is to extend the influence of the gospel into families, neighborhoods, cities, and future generations.

The church that has been spiritually strengthened must become a church that reaches outward. The believers who have been discipled must become willing to disciple others. The families who have experienced the transforming power of God must become witnesses of His grace. The responsibility of spiritual multiplication continues as the gospel moves beyond the places where it has already been received.

PART 09

09

Born to Reach Beyond Our Walls: The Mission of a Multiplying Church



Understanding the Responsibility of Evangelism, the Power of the Holy Ghost, and Why Spiritual Multiplication Must Extend Beyond the People We Already Know

Foundational Scriptures: Acts 1:8; Matthew 9:35-38; Acts 8:1-8; Romans 10:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Revelation 7:9-10

9.1 A Church Cannot Be Called to Multiply and Remain Focused Only on Itself

Throughout this study, we have examined the spiritual responsibilities connected to Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message, The Birthing Church. We have considered the importance of receiving God's Word, developing spiritual expectation, remaining faithful through seasons of preparation, guarding the condition of our hearts, and accepting the responsibility of nurturing new believers. Each of these principles has brought us toward a greater understanding of the church's mission. If spiritual multiplication is truly part of our calling, then we must recognize that the purpose of growth extends beyond the people who already belong to our congregation. The church was never intended to become a closed community concerned exclusively with preserving its own comfort, traditions, and relationships. Jesus Christ established His church to proclaim the gospel and make disciples among all nations.

This truth challenges one of the most subtle dangers that can develop within an established congregation. Over time, we naturally form meaningful friendships, develop familiar routines, and become comfortable with the way ministry operates. We learn where we belong, recognize the people around us, and establish relationships that bring encouragement and stability. These are valuable expressions of Christian fellowship, but they can also become limitations if we begin treating the church primarily as a place designed to meet our existing preferences. Without realizing it, we may become more concerned about preserving what feels familiar than about reaching those who have not yet experienced the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Azzolini's emphasis upon spiritual birth and multiplication challenges us to reconsider this inward focus. The imagery of childbirth reminds us that new life changes the existing family. When a child arrives, the household must make room for someone whose needs, personality, and development will influence the lives of everyone already present. The family cannot remain exactly as it was before the child's arrival. In a similar way, a congregation that desires to reach new believers must become willing to welcome people whose backgrounds, experiences, and spiritual needs may differ from those of its established members.

This does not mean that the church should abandon its biblical convictions or compromise Apostolic doctrine in order to become more appealing. The gospel remains the foundation of our identity, and faithfulness to Scripture must guide every aspect of our mission. But we must distinguish between the unchanging truth of God's Word and the personal preferences that develop through familiarity. The style of communication we prefer, the friendships we have established, and the routines we find comfortable should never become unnecessary barriers preventing others from encountering the gospel.

The mission of a birthing church is therefore greater than maintaining a successful weekly gathering. We are called to become a community of believers whose relationship with Jesus Christ produces a continuing desire to reach others. We should value the spiritual growth of those already among us, but that growth should increasingly equip us to participate in evangelism, discipleship, and service beyond the walls of the sanctuary.

A spiritually mature congregation should never lose its concern for people who are still outside its fellowship. We must remember that every person who now belongs to the church was once someone who needed to hear the gospel, receive encouragement, and encounter the grace of God. Our spiritual family

exists because someone before us was willing to proclaim the Word, pray, teach, serve, and make room for others. The responsibility that once brought us into the community of faith must now become part of our own commitment to those who have not yet been reached.

9.2 The Holy Ghost Was Given to Empower Our Witness

One of the clearest biblical foundations for the outward mission of the church appears in the final instructions Jesus gave His disciples before His ascension. The disciples had witnessed His resurrection and were anticipating the fulfillment of His promises. Yet their understanding of the kingdom still required clarification. They asked whether He would restore the kingdom to Israel at that time, revealing their continued interest in the timing and nature of God's future purposes. Jesus redirected their attention away from speculation concerning the timetable and toward the responsibility they were about to receive.

Acts 1:8 (KJV)

> *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

This passage establishes an essential connection between the power of the Holy Ghost and the mission of the church. Jesus promised that His followers would receive power through the coming of the Spirit, but He also identified the purpose toward which that empowerment would be directed. They were to become His witnesses, carrying the testimony of His life, death, resurrection, and saving work beyond their immediate surroundings.

For Apostolic Pentecostal believers, the experience of receiving the Holy Ghost is central to our understanding of the New Testament church. Acts 2 records the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, accompanied by speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. This event marked the fulfillment of Jesus' promise and became the beginning of the church's public witness through the power of the Holy Ghost. Peter immediately proclaimed the gospel, and thousands responded to the message.

The sequence is significant because the experience of the Spirit was connected to the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The believers did not receive the Holy Ghost merely so they could enjoy an extraordinary spiritual encounter and then return to an unchanged understanding of their responsibilities. The power of God equipped them to participate in the mission Jesus had entrusted to them. Their encounter with the Spirit became the foundation for bold witness, apostolic preaching, and the expansion of the gospel.

This challenges us to examine how we understand the purpose of spiritual experiences within our own congregation. We should continue seeking the presence of God, praying for the infilling of the Holy Ghost, and expecting Him to work powerfully in our services. Yet we must recognize that the same Spirit who moves among us during worship also calls us to demonstrate the character of Christ and proclaim His truth beyond the church building. A powerful encounter with God should strengthen our willingness to serve, encourage, and reach others.

We cannot separate the experience of Pentecost from the mission of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost was not given to produce a spiritual community that exists only for itself. The Spirit empowers the church to testify of Jesus Christ, overcome fear, and carry the gospel into places where it has not yet been received.

For Tampa Life Church, this principle should influence our understanding of every ministry. Our prayer gatherings should strengthen our dependence upon God and deepen our concern for the lost. Our worship should direct people toward Jesus Christ and cultivate a heart of surrender. Our discipleship classes should prepare believers to understand and communicate biblical truth. Our multicultural ministries should create opportunities for the gospel to reach people across language and cultural boundaries.

A birthing church must become a witnessing church because spiritual life is intended to produce spiritual fruitfulness. The presence of the Holy Ghost among us should not lead toward spiritual isolation, but toward greater participation in the mission of Jesus Christ.

9.3 Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the Uttermost Part of the Earth

The geographical progression in Acts 1:8 reveals the expanding scope of the mission entrusted to the disciples. Jesus identified Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth as places where His followers would bear witness. These locations represented an expanding movement beyond the immediate community of the disciples, eventually reaching people from different regions, cultures, and nations.

Jerusalem was the city where the disciples were gathered and where the events of Pentecost would soon take place. It was a familiar environment, although it also contained opposition and challenges. Judaea represented the surrounding region, while Samaria introduced significant cultural and religious differences. The command to reach the uttermost part of the earth extended the mission beyond the boundaries of the disciples' existing understanding and relationships.

This progression reminds us that the mission of the church cannot remain confined to the places where we feel most comfortable. We must begin by recognizing the people and communities immediately around us, but we should also develop a vision that extends beyond our familiar environment. The gospel belongs to every nation, and the church is called to participate in making it known.

For Tampa Life Church, our Jerusalem includes the communities in which we live, work, study, and develop relationships. It includes families who may live near our homes but have never attended an Apostolic church. It includes coworkers who are navigating personal struggles, young people searching for direction, and individuals who may feel disconnected from meaningful community. We do not need to travel across the world to encounter people who need the gospel. Many opportunities for witness exist within the ordinary relationships of our daily lives.

Yet our responsibility cannot end with the people who resemble us or share our background. The reference to Samaria is especially meaningful because it reminds us that the gospel crosses boundaries that human history and cultural assumptions may have established. In the first century, relationships between Jews and Samaritans were shaped by longstanding religious and social tensions. The mission of Jesus Christ

challenged His followers to recognize that God's saving purpose extended beyond the divisions they had inherited.

A multicultural congregation possesses a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate this truth. When believers from different nations and language backgrounds worship together, they provide a visible testimony that our identity in Jesus Christ is greater than the differences that distinguish us. Yet multicultural ministry requires more than the presence of different languages in the same building. It requires intentional relationships, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and a willingness to recognize the contributions of people whose experiences differ from our own.

We must also recognize that the mission of the church extends globally. Some believers may be called to serve in other nations, while others participate through prayer, financial support, teaching, or practical assistance. The New Testament reveals that the spread of the gospel involved different forms of service and cooperation. Not everyone traveled to the same places or fulfilled identical responsibilities, but the church shared a commitment to making Jesus Christ known.

The geographical movement of Acts 1:8 should therefore challenge our understanding of spiritual multiplication. We must be faithful in the communities immediately around us while remaining open to the broader opportunities God provides. A birthing church should develop a vision that is local in its daily relationships and global in its understanding of the gospel.

9.4 Jesus Saw People Before He Saw the Harvest

One of the most important passages concerning evangelism appears in Matthew 9, where Jesus traveled through cities and villages, teaching in synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing those who were suffering. The passage reveals not only the activity of His ministry, but also the compassion that motivated His response to the people around Him.

Matthew 9:36-38 (KJV)

> *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*
>
> *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;*
>
> *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The order of this passage is deeply significant. Before Jesus spoke about the harvest, He saw the people and was moved with compassion. He recognized their spiritual condition and their need for care. The multitudes were not simply a potential audience or a measure of ministerial success. They were individuals whose circumstances mattered to Him.

This perspective should transform the way we approach evangelism. We may speak about reaching our community, expanding our influence, or increasing attendance, but we must never allow these objectives to become disconnected from genuine compassion for people. Evangelism is not a strategy for making our

congregation appear more successful. It is an expression of love rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ is the Savior and that every person needs the hope of the gospel.

When we encounter people outside the church, we must learn to see more than their outward behavior or circumstances. Someone who appears resistant to spiritual conversation may be carrying painful experiences associated with religion. A person whose lifestyle differs from our biblical convictions may still be searching for meaning, stability, and hope. A family that rarely attends church may be navigating responsibilities or difficulties we do not understand. Compassion requires us to approach people as individuals rather than reducing them to categories.

Jesus demonstrated this compassion throughout His ministry. He spoke with people who were socially marginalized, responded to those who were suffering, and challenged religious attitudes that treated certain individuals as unworthy of attention. His compassion did not require Him to compromise truth. He called people to repentance and obedience, but He communicated the kingdom of God through a ministry characterized by mercy and concern for human need.

This provides an important model for a birthing church. We should proclaim the gospel clearly, including the biblical call to repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. But our proclamation must be accompanied by genuine love. People should encounter believers who are willing to listen, provide encouragement, and demonstrate the character of Christ through practical actions.

The harvest imagery also reminds us that evangelism requires laborers. Jesus did not instruct His disciples merely to admire the size of the harvest or become overwhelmed by the needs around them. He directed them to pray for workers. The mission required people who were willing to participate.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that every believer should consider how they can contribute to the work of reaching others. Some may possess opportunities to teach Bible studies. Others may develop meaningful relationships through hospitality or community service. Some may be particularly effective at encouraging young people or supporting families. Others may contribute through prayer, translation, transportation, or practical assistance.

A birthing church must become a compassionate church because spiritual multiplication begins with recognizing the value of the people Jesus has called us to reach.

9.5 When the Gospel Moves Beyond Familiar Boundaries

The eighth chapter of Acts records an important transition in the expansion of the early church. Following the persecution that developed after Stephen's death, believers were scattered beyond Jerusalem. What had been a concentrated community of disciples began spreading into surrounding regions, and the gospel reached new populations.

Acts 8:4-5 (KJV)

> *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*
>
> *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

This passage demonstrates that the proclamation of the gospel was not limited to the apostles. Believers who were scattered through persecution continued communicating the Word wherever they went. Philip's ministry in Samaria became an important expression of the mission Jesus had described in Acts 1:8.

We must be careful not to interpret persecution as something God requires in order for the church to grow. The suffering experienced by the early believers was real, and the biblical narrative does not invite us to celebrate injustice or seek hardship. Nevertheless, the account reveals that opposition did not prevent the gospel from spreading. The believers continued bearing witness despite circumstances that had disrupted their established community.

The movement into Samaria was especially significant because it crossed historical boundaries between communities that had experienced longstanding religious and cultural tensions. Philip proclaimed Christ, and the people responded to the message. Acts 8 records that many believed and were baptized, and the apostles in Jerusalem later came to pray for them to receive the Holy Ghost. The narrative demonstrates that the same gospel proclaimed in Jerusalem was reaching people beyond the original center of the church.

This becomes a powerful challenge for congregations that have developed strong internal relationships. We may become so comfortable with the people we already know that we unintentionally limit our willingness to reach beyond those relationships. We may prefer familiar worship environments, familiar cultural expressions, and familiar methods of communication. Yet the mission of Jesus Christ calls us to recognize that the gospel is not restricted to the people who already understand our traditions.

For a multicultural church, this responsibility is especially important. We should recognize the value of communicating biblical truth in languages people understand and creating opportunities for meaningful relationships across cultural differences. Translation, discipleship, and culturally sensitive communication can become practical expressions of our commitment to the Great Commission.

We must also be willing to reach people whose spiritual backgrounds differ from our own. Some may have grown up in other Christian traditions, while others may possess little understanding of Scripture. Some may have experienced disappointment or mistreatment within religious communities. Others may be skeptical because they have never encountered a convincing example of Christian love. These differences should motivate us toward patient communication rather than unnecessary confrontation.

A birthing church must learn to proclaim the unchanging gospel through relationships and methods that allow people to understand its meaning. The goal is not to make every person culturally identical. It is to help people encounter Jesus Christ and become established in biblical truth.

9.6 The Gospel Must Be Heard Before It Can Be Believed

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of gospel proclamation in his letter to the Romans. In Romans 10, he explained the necessity of faith and the relationship between hearing the message of Christ and responding to it. His argument demonstrates that the church possesses a responsibility to communicate the gospel because people cannot respond to a message they have never heard.

Romans 10:13-15 (KJV)

> *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*
>
> *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*
>
> *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

Paul's reasoning establishes a progression connecting the proclamation of the gospel with the opportunity for faith. People must hear the message concerning Jesus Christ in order to respond to Him. The responsibility of communicating that message belongs to the church, which has been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation.

This passage challenges us to examine whether we have become more comfortable discussing church activities than communicating the gospel itself. We may invite people to special events, encourage them to attend services, or describe the positive relationships within our congregation. These invitations can be valuable, but they should ultimately create opportunities for people to hear the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

The gospel is not merely an invitation to experience a supportive community. It is the proclamation that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. It declares that salvation is found in Him and calls people to respond through repentance and faith. In the apostolic preaching of Acts, this response includes baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the promise of the Holy Ghost.

We must therefore develop confidence in communicating biblical truth. Some believers hesitate to share their faith because they fear being asked questions they cannot answer. Others may feel that evangelism requires a particular personality or level of theological training. Yet the responsibility of witness begins with a willingness to speak truthfully about Jesus Christ and the difference His grace has made in our lives.

This does not eliminate the importance of biblical preparation. We should study Scripture, learn how to explain foundational doctrines, and seek wisdom concerning difficult questions. But we must resist the assumption that we need perfect knowledge before we can participate in evangelism. The church grows stronger when believers develop both humility concerning what they do not yet understand and confidence in the truth they have received.

For our families, this principle provides an opportunity to cultivate a culture of witness. We can teach our children to speak respectfully about their faith, answer questions with patience, and demonstrate Christian character through their relationships. We can help them understand that sharing the gospel is not about winning arguments or proving personal superiority. It is about communicating the hope found in Jesus Christ.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that discipleship should equip believers not only to understand the gospel personally, but also to communicate it to others. Bible studies, ministry training, and opportunities

for service should strengthen our ability to explain Scripture clearly and lovingly. A spiritually mature congregation should become increasingly capable of participating in evangelism rather than depending exclusively upon the preaching that occurs during scheduled services.

9.7 Our Testimony Must Be Supported by Our Conduct

One of the greatest challenges in evangelism is maintaining consistency between the message we proclaim and the lives we live. We may communicate biblical truth accurately, but if our conduct continually contradicts that truth, our witness can become weakened. People observe how we treat others, respond to conflict, handle responsibilities, and demonstrate integrity in ordinary circumstances. Our testimony is therefore influenced not only by what we say about Jesus Christ, but also by whether our lives reflect His character.

Jesus addressed this responsibility in Matthew 5 when He described His followers as the light of the world. He instructed them to let their light shine before others so that their good works would direct attention toward the glory of the Father. The emphasis was not upon seeking recognition for personal righteousness, but upon living in a way that reveals the character and goodness of God.

This principle becomes especially important because many people encounter Christianity first through their relationships with believers. A coworker may not attend our church, but they observe how we respond when responsibilities become stressful. A neighbor may never listen to a sermon, but they notice whether we demonstrate kindness and integrity. Our children may hear biblical teaching during services, but they also observe whether those principles influence our conduct at home.

A consistent Christian witness requires humility because none of us lives without mistakes. We may speak impatiently, make poor decisions, or fail to demonstrate the compassion we profess. When this happens, our responsibility is not to defend every action or pretend that we have done nothing wrong. We should acknowledge our failures, seek forgiveness where appropriate, and demonstrate genuine repentance. In many situations, humility and accountability can communicate the transforming work of God's grace more clearly than an attempt to maintain an appearance of perfection.

The Apostle Peter encouraged believers to maintain honorable conduct among those who did not share their faith. His instruction in 1 Peter 2:12 emphasized that their good works could become a testimony to others. The passage reminds us that Christian witness includes the visible expression of biblical values through ordinary behavior.

For our families, this means that evangelism begins with the consistency of our daily relationships. We cannot expect our children to understand the importance of forgiveness if they continually observe bitterness and hostility at home. We cannot teach generosity effectively while demonstrating indifference toward the needs of others. We cannot encourage prayer while treating dependence upon God as unnecessary in our own decisions. The spiritual values we desire to communicate must become visible through our conduct.

For the church, the same principle applies collectively. Visitors and new believers observe how we treat one another. They notice whether ministry leaders demonstrate humility, whether disagreements are

handled respectfully, and whether people who are struggling receive compassion. The culture of the congregation becomes part of its witness.

A birthing church must therefore recognize that evangelism is not limited to organized outreach. Our conduct, relationships, and everyday decisions can either strengthen or weaken the credibility of the message we proclaim.

9.8 Spiritual Multiplication Must Reach Our Children and Future Generations

The mission of a multiplying church cannot be understood exclusively through the people we hope to reach outside the congregation. It must also include the responsibility of nurturing the generations already growing among us. Children and young people are not simply future participants in the church. They are individuals who need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and opportunities to develop biblical convictions that will guide their lives.

The instruction given to Israel in Deuteronomy 6 emphasized the responsibility of teaching God's commandments diligently to the next generation. The Word was to become part of daily conversation, family life, and the ordinary activities of the household. This principle reminds us that spiritual formation requires more than occasional exposure to religious instruction.

For our children, the church should become an environment where biblical truth is taught clearly and where meaningful relationships with mature believers can develop. They need opportunities to ask questions, express concerns, and examine the relationship between Scripture and the challenges they encounter. They should be encouraged to develop personal habits of prayer and Bible study rather than depending exclusively upon the spiritual routines of their parents.

As young people mature, they will encounter ideas and values that challenge the convictions they have learned. Some may struggle with questions concerning identity, relationships, suffering, or the reliability of Scripture. Others may experience pressure to conform to cultural expectations that conflict with biblical teaching. We must respond to these challenges with truth and patience, recognizing that spiritual maturity develops through understanding and personal conviction rather than fear alone.

This responsibility also extends to the development of young leaders. We should create opportunities for young believers to serve according to their maturity and abilities. They can participate in hospitality, worship, prayer, outreach, and other areas of ministry under appropriate guidance. As they gain experience, they can begin recognizing the value of serving others and the importance of accountability.

The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy not to allow his youth to become a reason for others to disregard him, but to become an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. This instruction reminds us that spiritual influence is connected to character rather than age alone. Young believers can become meaningful examples when they are grounded in biblical truth and supported through healthy relationships.

For Tampa Life Church, investing in future generations must remain central to the vision of spiritual multiplication. A congregation may experience significant growth during one season, but if it neglects the

spiritual development of children and young people, its long-term health may become vulnerable. The responsibility of discipleship requires us to think beyond our immediate achievements and consider the people who will carry the gospel into the future.

A birthing church must become a generational church, committed to nurturing spiritual life in those who will continue the mission long after our present responsibilities have changed.

9.9 A Multicultural Church Reflects the Global Scope of the Gospel

One of the most beautiful expressions of the church's mission is the gathering of believers from different nations, languages, and cultural backgrounds around the person of Jesus Christ. The New Testament reveals that the gospel was never intended to remain confined to one ethnic or national community. Through the ministry of the apostles and the expansion of the early church, people from different backgrounds began responding to the same message of salvation.

The book of Revelation provides a remarkable picture of the ultimate scope of God's redemptive work.

Revelation 7:9-10 (KJV)

> *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*
>
> *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

This vision reveals a multitude gathered in worship before God and the Lamb, representing the nations and peoples of the earth. The emphasis is upon the universal scope of salvation and the glory of God revealed through the redeemed. The passage does not suggest that cultural identity becomes the foundation of salvation. Rather, it demonstrates that the saving work of Jesus Christ reaches across the divisions that distinguish human communities.

For a multicultural congregation, this vision should inspire both gratitude and responsibility. We have opportunities to worship alongside believers whose languages, traditions, and life experiences differ from our own. These relationships can broaden our understanding of the body of Christ and challenge assumptions we may have developed through limited cultural experience.

Yet multicultural ministry requires intentional effort. Language barriers can create difficulties in communication. Cultural differences may influence expectations concerning leadership, hospitality, family relationships, and worship. People who are unfamiliar with the dominant language of a congregation may struggle to develop meaningful relationships if appropriate support is unavailable. These challenges require patience, wisdom, and a willingness to cooperate.

We must therefore recognize that multicultural ministry involves more than translating announcements or providing separate services. It requires developing leaders, strengthening relationships, and creating opportunities for believers from different backgrounds to participate meaningfully in the life of the church.

The goal is not to erase cultural differences, but to cultivate unity grounded in Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word.

This principle also challenges us to examine our attitudes toward people who are different from us. We may unintentionally assume that our cultural expressions represent the only appropriate way to communicate Christian faith. Yet Scripture demonstrates that the gospel can be proclaimed among diverse communities without requiring every believer to adopt identical cultural customs. We must remain faithful to biblical doctrine while exercising wisdom concerning methods and traditions that are not essential to the gospel.

For Tampa Life Church, the opportunity to serve Spanish-, Portuguese-, Chinese-, French-, and English-speaking communities can become a meaningful expression of the Great Commission. These ministries should not be viewed merely as separate departments competing for attention. They are opportunities for the same gospel to reach people through languages and relationships they can understand.

A birthing church must therefore become a church whose vision reflects the global scope of the gospel. We should celebrate the diversity of those who worship with us while remaining united in our commitment to Jesus Christ, apostolic doctrine, and the mission of making disciples.

9.10 Every Believer Has a Part in the Mission of Reconciliation

The Apostle Paul describes the responsibility of Christian witness through the language of reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5, he explains that those who belong to Jesus Christ have experienced the transforming work of God and have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation through Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (KJV)

> *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
>
> *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*
>
> *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*
>
> *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Paul's teaching reveals that the gospel is fundamentally concerned with restoring the relationship between humanity and God through Jesus Christ. The church has been entrusted with communicating this message. Our responsibility is not to create salvation through our own efforts, but to proclaim the saving work of Christ and invite people to respond.

The language of ambassadors is particularly meaningful because an ambassador represents the interests and message of another. We do not possess authority to redefine the gospel according to our preferences. We are called to represent Jesus Christ faithfully through our words and conduct.

This responsibility extends beyond formal ministry positions. A believer who has experienced the grace of God can become a witness through personal testimony, relationships, and service. We may not all possess the same abilities or opportunities, but we can participate in the mission according to the responsibilities entrusted to us.

Some may communicate the gospel through preaching or teaching. Others may develop relationships with coworkers or neighbors who are searching for spiritual direction. Some may provide hospitality to families who are unfamiliar with church life. Others may support missionary work through prayer, generosity, or practical assistance. These contributions are different, but they participate in the same mission.

We must also recognize that reconciliation with God should influence our relationships with one another. A church that proclaims the message of reconciliation while continually cultivating division undermines the credibility of its witness. We should pursue peace, practice forgiveness, and demonstrate the humility necessary for healthy relationships. Our conduct should reflect the grace we have received.

For our families, this principle challenges us to become examples of reconciliation within our homes. We should learn to acknowledge wrongdoing, seek forgiveness, and restore relationships where appropriate. Our children should observe that the gospel influences how we respond to conflict and disappointment. These practices help demonstrate that Christianity is not merely a collection of beliefs, but a transformed way of life.

A birthing church must therefore understand that every believer possesses opportunities to participate in the mission of reconciliation. We should not wait for a formal title before recognizing our responsibility to communicate the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

9.11 The Mission Must Remain Greater Than Our Comfort

As we consider the outward responsibility of a birthing church, we must recognize that evangelism and spiritual multiplication will sometimes require us to move beyond familiar routines. We may need to develop relationships with people whose experiences differ from our own. We may need to learn new methods of communication or participate in ministries that challenge our existing preferences. We may encounter questions that require further biblical study or circumstances that demand greater patience and compassion.

These challenges should not surprise us because the mission of Jesus Christ has always required His followers to look beyond themselves. The early disciples were called to leave familiar environments, proclaim the gospel amid opposition, and develop communities of faith among people from different backgrounds. Their experiences demonstrate that spiritual multiplication is not simply the result of comfortable circumstances. It often requires sacrifice, perseverance, and a willingness to remain faithful when the mission becomes demanding.

Yet we must remember that our willingness to serve is not the foundation of salvation. We do not earn God's favor through the number of people we reach or the amount of ministry activity we perform. Our service is a response to the grace we have received through Jesus Christ. We participate in His mission because we love Him and recognize the value of the people He has called us to reach.

This distinction protects us from turning evangelism into a competition or a measure of personal spiritual superiority. Some believers possess opportunities to reach large numbers of people, while others influence a smaller circle through consistent relationships. Some may serve publicly, while others contribute quietly through prayer, hospitality, or practical assistance. The value of faithful service cannot be measured exclusively through visibility.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that our vision of spiritual multiplication should encourage participation rather than create unhealthy pressure. We should equip believers to share their faith, develop opportunities for outreach, and cultivate relationships beyond the congregation. But we should also recognize that different members possess different capacities and responsibilities. A healthy church encourages everyone to participate meaningfully without treating every expression of service as identical.

We must also remain willing to evaluate whether our existing practices are helping us fulfill the mission. If our communication is difficult for newcomers to understand, we should consider how to make it clearer. If people from different language backgrounds struggle to participate, we should explore appropriate support. If new believers have difficulty developing relationships, we should strengthen opportunities for fellowship. If our outreach efforts are disconnected from continued discipleship, we should reconsider how we help people move from initial contact toward spiritual maturity.

The mission must remain greater than our comfort because the people Jesus has called us to reach are more important than preserving every familiar routine.

Section 9 Conclusion: The Church Was Born to Carry the Gospel Forward

The message of The Birthing Church challenges us to understand spiritual multiplication as a mission that extends beyond the boundaries of our existing congregation. The church was not established merely to provide a place where believers could gather and enjoy spiritual experiences. Jesus Christ commissioned His followers to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and carry His message to the nations. The power of the Holy Ghost was given to equip the church for this responsibility, and the book of Acts demonstrates how that mission began extending beyond Jerusalem into surrounding regions and eventually across the wider world.

For our families, this calling reminds us that spiritual influence begins through ordinary relationships. We must cultivate homes where biblical truth is practiced consistently and where our children learn to understand and communicate their faith. We should demonstrate compassion toward neighbors, coworkers, and friends, recognizing that our conduct can become part of our witness. The gospel should influence not only what we believe during church services, but also how we live throughout the week.

For Tampa Life Church, the responsibility is to develop a vision that includes both those already among us and those who have not yet been reached. We should continue strengthening discipleship, equipping

leaders, and nurturing the spiritual growth of our congregation. But these responsibilities should prepare us to reach outward rather than becoming an excuse for remaining inwardly focused. A healthy church develops mature believers who are increasingly capable of helping others encounter Jesus Christ.

Our multicultural identity provides opportunities to communicate the gospel across languages and cultural backgrounds. We must steward those opportunities with humility, wisdom, and intentional cooperation. We should recognize that every person who enters our fellowship possesses value and that the mission of Jesus Christ extends beyond the preferences and traditions of any one community.

Above all, we must remain dependent upon the Holy Ghost. We can develop effective outreach methods, establish meaningful relationships, and communicate Scripture clearly, but genuine spiritual life comes through the work of God. Our responsibility is to proclaim the gospel faithfully, demonstrate the love of Christ, and provide opportunities for continued discipleship.

A birthing church must never become so satisfied with the spiritual life already within its walls that it forgets the people Jesus has called it to reach beyond them.

The purpose of spiritual multiplication is not simply to fill a sanctuary. It is to extend the influence of the gospel into homes, neighborhoods, communities, and future generations. Every new believer represents a life that matters to God. Every mature disciple possesses opportunities to encourage others. Every family strengthened through the Word becomes part of a larger testimony concerning the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

As we approach the final movement of this study, we must bring these principles together. We have examined the Word that precedes formation, the visitation that awakens expectation, the agreement that produces obedience, the waiting season that develops maturity, the spiritual influences that must be guarded, the responsibility of multiplication, the pressure associated with transition, and the continued nurture required after spiritual birth.

The remaining question is deeply personal and collective: What kind of church are we becoming as we respond to this message? Are we simply inspired by the possibility of spiritual multiplication, or are we willing to embrace the responsibilities necessary for faithful discipleship? Are we preparing our homes and ministries to receive new life? Are we cultivating the unity, holiness, compassion, and biblical understanding necessary to sustain a healthy spiritual community?

These questions lead us toward the concluding challenge of The Birthing Church: becoming a congregation that does not merely speak about spiritual fruitfulness, but demonstrates its commitment through continued obedience to Jesus Christ.

PART 10

10

Becoming the Birthing Church: From Spiritual Expectation to a Lasting Legacy



When God's Word Becomes Our Conviction, His Mission Becomes Our Responsibility, and Spiritual Multiplication Becomes a Legacy That Reaches Beyond Our Generation

Foundational Scriptures: Jeremiah 1:4-5; Luke 1:38; John 15:5-8; Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 3:20-21; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:2

10.1 The Greatest Question Is Not What God Will Do, but Who We Are Becoming

Throughout this study, we have explored the powerful spiritual imagery presented in Pastor Vinny Azzolini's message, The Birthing Church. We began by considering the Word of God that precedes formation, the divine visitation that awakens expectation, and the agreement of faith that produces obedience. We examined the seasons of waiting during which spiritual maturity develops, the importance of protecting our hearts and relationships, and the responsibility of preparing for spiritual multiplication. We considered the discomfort that can accompany seasons of transition, the need to nurture new believers after spiritual birth, and the calling to carry the gospel beyond the boundaries of our existing congregation. Each of these principles has brought us toward a question that must now become central to our response: What kind of people are we becoming as we seek to participate in the work of God?

It is possible to become deeply excited about what we believe God may accomplish while giving insufficient attention to the character and responsibilities required of those who will participate in that work. We may pray for revival, spiritual multiplication, and new opportunities for ministry while remaining reluctant to address attitudes that weaken our relationships. We may desire to see our children develop strong spiritual convictions while neglecting the consistency of our own example. We may celebrate the possibility of new believers entering the church while remaining unwilling to adjust familiar routines or invest time in discipleship. In these situations, our expectation may be sincere, but our preparation remains incomplete.

This is why the message of The Birthing Church must become more than an inspiring illustration concerning pregnancy and delivery. Its greatest value lies in challenging us to examine our willingness to accept the responsibilities associated with spiritual life. The church is not called merely to anticipate extraordinary moments. We are called to become a community shaped by the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Ghost, and committed to the mission of Jesus Christ. The evidence of spiritual maturity is not simply the intensity of our expectation, but the consistency of our obedience.

Throughout Scripture, God demonstrates concern not only for what His people accomplish, but also for the character they develop through their relationship with Him. The prophets repeatedly confronted religious activity that had become disconnected from justice, mercy, and genuine devotion. Jesus challenged those who possessed extensive religious knowledge but neglected the weightier matters of the law. The apostles instructed believers to pursue holiness, love, humility, and unity as essential expressions of their new life in Christ. These teachings remind us that spiritual activity cannot replace spiritual transformation.

For our families, this means that the vision of a birthing church must begin with the way we live outside the sanctuary. We may desire our children to become faithful believers, but they need to observe faithfulness in our daily conduct. We may pray for restoration within our homes, but we must also become willing to practice forgiveness, communicate honestly, and address unhealthy patterns. We may desire greater spiritual influence, but that influence must be supported by integrity, humility, and genuine compassion.

For Tampa Life Church, the challenge is collective. We must become more than a congregation that enjoys powerful preaching and meaningful worship. We should become a spiritual family where biblical truth shapes relationships, where mature believers invest in others, where leadership is exercised with humility, and where the mission of reaching people remains central to our identity.

The most important question is therefore not simply whether we are expecting God to bring forth something new. It is whether we are allowing His Word and Spirit to transform us into people who can faithfully serve the purposes He has entrusted to His church.

10.2 From a Word Received to a Life of Obedience

At the beginning of this study, we examined Jeremiah 1:4-5 and the significance of God's Word preceding the prophet's formation. We considered how the Lord knew Jeremiah before his birth and appointed him for a particular prophetic responsibility. This passage established an important foundation concerning divine initiative and purpose, while also reminding us that Jeremiah's specific calling should not be converted into a universal promise that every personal ambition represents a predetermined assignment from God.

The principle that remains essential is that our spiritual lives must begin with the authority of God's Word rather than with the intensity of our personal desires. We do not establish the mission of the church through imagination or enthusiasm alone. Jesus Christ has already revealed the responsibilities of His followers through Scripture. We are called to repent, believe the gospel, pursue holiness, love one another, make disciples, and remain faithful to His commandments. These instructions provide a foundation that does not depend upon the changing circumstances of our lives.

The example of Mary in Luke 1 provides another important dimension of this responsibility. When the angel Gabriel announced that she would conceive and give birth to Jesus, Mary responded with humility and submission to the Word she had received.

Luke 1:38 (KJV)

> *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

Mary's response was connected to a unique event in redemptive history: the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Her experience cannot be reproduced as a general pattern in which every believer receives a comparable announcement concerning a personal promise. Yet her willingness to submit to God's Word provides a meaningful example of faith expressed through obedience.

Throughout our spiritual lives, we will encounter moments when Scripture challenges our preferences. We may be instructed to forgive someone when resentment feels easier. We may be called to serve faithfully when recognition is limited. We may need to surrender habits that conflict with biblical holiness or adjust priorities that have gradually displaced our relationship with God. In these situations, agreement with the Word must become visible through conduct.

This is where spiritual expectation becomes spiritually meaningful. We may speak about believing God for our families, but faith must influence how we treat one another. We may declare our desire for a healthy church, but that desire must shape our communication and participation. We may pray for discipleship and spiritual multiplication, but those prayers should encourage us to become available for teaching, hospitality, mentoring, and service.

James 1:22 challenges believers to become doers of the Word rather than hearers only. The passage reminds us that receiving biblical instruction without applying it can produce a false sense of spiritual maturity. We may become familiar with sermons, doctrines, and religious language while remaining resistant to the practical demands of obedience.

A birthing church must therefore become a church where the Word of God is not simply admired but obeyed. We should approach Scripture with humility, allowing it to correct our attitudes, strengthen our convictions, and direct our responsibilities. The transformation we desire within the congregation must begin with our willingness to respond personally to the truth we have received.

10.3 Spiritual Fruitfulness Begins With Abiding in Jesus Christ

One of the greatest dangers associated with a vision of spiritual multiplication is the possibility of becoming so focused upon visible results that we neglect the relationship from which genuine spiritual life flows. We may become occupied with developing programs, expanding ministries, increasing attendance, and organizing responsibilities. These activities can serve important purposes, but they cannot become substitutes for a living relationship with Jesus Christ. The church is not sustained by human organization alone, and spiritual transformation cannot be manufactured through administrative excellence.

Jesus addressed the foundation of fruitfulness in John 15.

John 15:5 (KJV)

> *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

The imagery of the vine and branches establishes the relationship between dependence and fruitfulness. A branch cannot sustain life independently from the vine. Its ability to bear fruit depends upon remaining connected to the source of its nourishment. Jesus used this illustration to teach His disciples that genuine spiritual fruitfulness requires an abiding relationship with Him.

This principle should shape every aspect of our understanding of The Birthing Church. We may prepare for spiritual multiplication, develop leaders, strengthen discipleship, and create opportunities for outreach, but none of these responsibilities can replace the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Our efforts must remain expressions of obedience and dependence rather than attempts to produce spiritual life through human ability alone.

Abiding in Christ involves more than occasional religious activity. It requires a continuing relationship in which His Word shapes our thinking, His commandments direct our conduct, and His presence remains central to our priorities. Prayer becomes an expression of dependence upon Him. Scripture becomes the foundation through which our understanding is renewed. Worship directs our attention toward His greatness and faithfulness. Obedience demonstrates that our relationship with Him influences the way we live.

For our families, abiding in Christ means cultivating spiritual habits that extend beyond scheduled church services. We should develop opportunities for prayer, biblical conversation, and meaningful fellowship

within our homes. We must recognize that spiritual consistency is not established through occasional moments of enthusiasm alone. It develops through repeated decisions to seek God and submit our lives to His Word.

This does not mean that every family will follow an identical devotional schedule or that spiritual maturity can be measured by the length of a particular prayer routine. Different households possess different responsibilities and circumstances. The important principle is that our relationship with God should become an intentional part of daily life rather than something confined to the church building.

For Tampa Life Church, abiding in Christ must remain central to our understanding of ministry effectiveness. We should value excellent organization, thoughtful planning, and responsible stewardship, but we must never allow these priorities to displace prayer, biblical teaching, and dependence upon the Holy Ghost. A congregation may become impressive in its activities while gradually losing the spiritual sensitivity necessary for genuine discipleship.

The fruit Jesus described is not limited to numerical expansion. It includes the visible evidence of a life shaped by His presence and Word. Love, obedience, spiritual maturity, and faithful witness are essential expressions of genuine fruitfulness.

A birthing church must therefore remain connected to the source of spiritual life. We cannot faithfully nurture others if we neglect our own relationship with Christ, and we cannot produce lasting spiritual fruit through human effort independent of Him.

10.4 Revival Must Become a Culture, Not Merely an Event

One of the most significant challenges facing any congregation is learning how to carry the spiritual impact of a powerful service into the ordinary responsibilities of daily life. We may experience moments of extraordinary worship, conviction, repentance, and spiritual renewal. These experiences can strengthen our faith and remind us of the presence and power of God. Yet the long-term health of the church depends upon whether those moments produce continuing changes in our conduct, relationships, and commitments.

The book of Acts provides a meaningful example of this principle. The events of Pentecost were extraordinary, but the believers did not treat the outpouring of the Holy Ghost as the conclusion of their spiritual responsibility. They continued steadfastly in apostolic doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Their encounter with God became the beginning of a shared life shaped by the gospel.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

The significance of this passage lies in the relationship between spiritual experience and continued devotion. The believers had witnessed the power of God, but they also recognized the importance of ongoing instruction and community. Their faith influenced their relationships, generosity, worship, and daily

conduct. The extraordinary events of Pentecost became connected to the ordinary practices of Christian life.

This provides an important standard for understanding revival. We should welcome moments when God's presence moves powerfully among us, but we must also consider whether those experiences are producing lasting spiritual maturity. Are people developing greater love for Scripture? Are families becoming more intentional about prayer and biblical instruction? Are believers practicing forgiveness and humility? Are new disciples being nurtured through meaningful relationships? Are mature Christians becoming more willing to serve others?

These questions do not diminish the value of powerful spiritual experiences. Instead, they help us recognize their proper place within the larger mission of the church. An encounter with God should lead us toward deeper devotion and obedience rather than becoming an isolated memory that produces little lasting change.

For our families, this means that the spiritual atmosphere of Sunday worship should influence the way we live throughout the week. We may leave a service encouraged and inspired, but that inspiration must become visible in our communication, priorities, and relationships. If we have been convicted concerning forgiveness, we should seek appropriate reconciliation. If we have been challenged to strengthen our prayer lives, we should establish sustainable habits. If we have been reminded of the importance of discipleship, we should consider how we can encourage others.

For Tampa Life Church, revival must become a culture characterized by biblical truth, prayer, unity, and mission. We should not become dependent upon extraordinary events to maintain our spiritual commitment. The presence of God should remain central to our worship, but our faithfulness must continue when the service ends and ordinary responsibilities resume.

A birthing church must therefore become a continuing church. The joy of spiritual birth should produce a lasting commitment to nurture, teach, serve, and reach others. Revival becomes spiritually fruitful when its influence extends beyond the moment of encounter and begins transforming the daily life of the congregation.

10.5 Our Unity Must Be Strong Enough to Carry Our Diversity

As we consider the future of Tampa Life Church, we must recognize that spiritual multiplication will bring people with different backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and levels of maturity into the same spiritual family. This diversity can become a tremendous strength, but it also introduces responsibilities that require humility, patience, and intentional cooperation. A growing congregation cannot assume that unity will develop automatically simply because people attend the same services or share the same doctrinal convictions.

The Apostle Paul addressed the importance of unity in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:2-3 (KJV)

> *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*
>
> *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Paul's instruction reveals that unity requires intentional effort. Believers are called to practice humility, gentleness, patience, and love because relationships inevitably involve differences and challenges. The unity of the Spirit is not created through the elimination of every disagreement or the demand that all believers possess identical personalities. It is preserved through a shared commitment to Jesus Christ and conduct consistent with His Word.

This becomes especially important within a multicultural congregation. Different cultural backgrounds may influence communication styles, expectations concerning relationships, and approaches to ministry. People may possess different experiences with church leadership or express their worship in ways that are unfamiliar to others. These differences do not automatically represent spiritual problems. They can become opportunities for greater understanding when believers approach one another with humility and respect.

Yet diversity also requires clear biblical foundations. The church must remain united in its commitment to the gospel and the teachings of Scripture. Cultural sensitivity should not become an excuse for doctrinal compromise, and doctrinal conviction should not become an excuse for unnecessary cultural rigidity. We must learn to distinguish between biblical principles that must remain unchanged and personal preferences that can be approached with flexibility.

For our families, this principle becomes meaningful when we consider the relationships between generations. Parents and children may possess different experiences and expectations concerning communication, technology, and social relationships. Older believers may approach ministry through practices that have served them faithfully for many years, while younger believers may recognize opportunities for new methods of communication and outreach. These differences can create tension when people become more concerned with defending their preferences than understanding one another.

A spiritually healthy church should provide opportunities for generations to learn from each other. Older believers possess experiences that can offer wisdom, stability, and perspective. Younger believers may contribute energy, creativity, and familiarity with emerging forms of communication. The body becomes stronger when these contributions are recognized and guided by a shared commitment to biblical truth.

Unity also requires appropriate methods of addressing conflict. We should not assume that a healthy church will never experience disagreement. The New Testament itself records situations in which believers faced significant questions concerning doctrine, organization, and relationships. The issue is how those disagreements are addressed. We must cultivate an environment where concerns can be communicated honestly, where leaders remain accountable, and where correction is pursued with humility and love.

A birthing church must therefore become intentional about preserving the unity necessary for spiritual growth. We cannot expect to nurture new believers effectively if our relationships are continually weakened by competition, suspicion, or unresolved resentment. The mission of Jesus Christ requires us to become a spiritual family capable of loving one another through differences and challenges.

10.6 We Must Prepare Leaders Who Will Carry the Mission Beyond Us

One of the most important expressions of spiritual maturity is the willingness to invest in people who will eventually carry responsibilities we currently hold. This principle challenges the tendency to measure leadership primarily through personal influence or recognition. A leader may possess considerable ability and experience, but if those qualities are never invested in others, the ministry may become dependent upon one individual. Genuine spiritual multiplication requires the intentional development of future leaders who can continue serving faithfully across generations.

The Apostle Paul understood this responsibility when he instructed Timothy to entrust apostolic teaching to faithful individuals who would become capable of teaching others.

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

> *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

The progression described in this verse demonstrates that discipleship should extend beyond the immediate relationship between teacher and student. Paul had instructed Timothy, Timothy was to prepare others, and those individuals were expected to become capable of continuing the process. The goal was not merely to preserve knowledge within a small group, but to ensure that biblical truth would be faithfully communicated to future generations.

For Tampa Life Church, this principle should influence our understanding of every ministry. We should not simply ask who is capable of fulfilling a responsibility today. We should also consider whom we are preparing to serve tomorrow. A teacher should recognize the importance of developing other teachers. A ministry leader should create opportunities for faithful volunteers to gain experience and maturity. Mature believers should become willing to mentor those who are beginning their spiritual journey.

This process requires intentional patience because leadership development cannot be reduced to assigning titles or responsibilities. People need biblical instruction, practical experience, honest feedback, and opportunities to grow in character. They must learn how to communicate effectively, respond to criticism, make responsible decisions, and serve others with humility. Some may develop quickly, while others require additional time and guidance.

We must also recognize that not everyone will serve in the same capacity. The body of Christ includes different gifts and responsibilities, and leadership development should reflect those differences. Some believers may become teachers or ministry coordinators, while others serve faithfully through hospitality, prayer, technical support, administration, or practical care. The goal is not to create identical leaders, but to help each person develop the maturity necessary to contribute meaningfully to the mission.

This principle is especially important for our children and young people. We should provide opportunities for them to learn, participate, and develop spiritual convictions while receiving appropriate guidance. We should not assume that meaningful ministry begins only after a particular age or stage of life. Young believers can become examples of faithfulness and service when they are encouraged and supported responsibly.

A birthing church must become a church that develops spiritual parents. We should desire to see those who were once new believers become capable of encouraging others. We should celebrate when someone we have mentored develops greater understanding or receives new opportunities to serve. Their growth is not a threat to our significance. It is evidence that the mission is continuing.

10.7 The Legacy of Our Families Is Built Through Daily Faithfulness

When we speak about leaving a spiritual legacy, we may imagine extraordinary achievements, influential ministries, or significant moments that future generations will remember. Yet Scripture repeatedly demonstrates that faithfulness is often expressed through ordinary responsibilities carried out consistently over time. The spiritual influence of a family may develop through daily prayer, honest communication, biblical instruction, and the example of parents who seek to follow Jesus Christ through both joyful and difficult circumstances.

The Apostle Paul recognized the influence of Timothy's family when he referred to the sincere faith that had been present in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

2 Timothy 1:5 (KJV)

> *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

Paul's words reveal the significance of spiritual influence across generations. Timothy's faith was personal, but it had been nurtured within a family where biblical devotion was present. The example of his mother and grandmother contributed to the foundation upon which his own ministry developed.

This passage reminds us that spiritual legacy is not created merely through the public responsibilities we fulfill. It is also shaped by the private conduct our families observe. Our children may remember the way we prayed during difficult seasons, the way we responded to disappointment, and the way we treated people who could offer us nothing in return. They may remember whether we acknowledged our mistakes and sought forgiveness. They may remember whether our commitment to God remained consistent when life became demanding.

We must therefore recognize that our homes are important environments of discipleship. We cannot assume that the church alone possesses responsibility for the spiritual development of our children. Pastors, teachers, and youth leaders can provide meaningful instruction and encouragement, but the daily influence of family relationships remains significant.

This responsibility should not produce fear or unrealistic expectations. No family demonstrates perfect spiritual consistency, and no parent can guarantee the future decisions of a child. We must resist the temptation to measure our worth according to outcomes we cannot fully control. Our responsibility is to remain faithful in instruction, love, prayer, and example while recognizing that every individual must respond personally to God.

For families experiencing complicated circumstances, this principle should provide encouragement rather than condemnation. Some households may include only one parent who is actively pursuing a relationship

with God. Others may be navigating conflict, financial difficulty, or relationships that require healing. Spiritual legacy does not require the appearance of a perfect family. It requires a willingness to pursue Christ faithfully within the circumstances we face.

A birthing church should therefore become a community that strengthens families rather than simply placing additional expectations upon them. We should provide biblical teaching, meaningful relationships, and appropriate support for parents, children, and young people. We should recognize the challenges families encounter and encourage practical expressions of faith that can become part of daily life.

The spiritual future of our congregation is connected to the way we invest in the next generation. We may not know the full influence of our present faithfulness, but we can remain committed to demonstrating the character of Christ through the responsibilities entrusted to us today.

10.8 The Church Must Never Confuse Expansion With God's Approval

As we consider the possibility of spiritual multiplication, we must address an important theological distinction. Numerical growth, financial resources, organizational expansion, and public recognition can provide opportunities for ministry, but they are not automatic evidence of divine approval. A congregation may become larger without becoming spiritually healthier, just as a smaller congregation may demonstrate deep faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The New Testament calls us to evaluate spiritual life through obedience, truth, love, and maturity rather than relying exclusively upon visible measures of success.

Jesus warned His followers concerning the danger of religious activity disconnected from genuine obedience. In Matthew 7:21-23, He explained that impressive claims and outward religious works do not replace doing the will of the Father. The passage challenges the assumption that visible spiritual activity automatically proves the condition of a person's relationship with God.

This principle should shape the way we understand the mission of a birthing church. We should desire to reach more people because every person matters to God. We should develop effective ministries because discipleship requires thoughtful preparation. We should steward financial resources responsibly because they can support meaningful opportunities for service. Yet these responsibilities must remain connected to biblical faithfulness.

If numerical growth begins producing pride, competition, or unhealthy pressure, we must examine whether our priorities have become distorted. If organizational expansion requires us to neglect the spiritual well-being of our leaders and volunteers, we should reconsider how responsibilities are being managed. If the pursuit of recognition becomes more important than the development of mature disciples, we must return to the mission Jesus entrusted to His church.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that one servant plants and another waters, but God gives the increase. This teaching protects us from assuming that spiritual fruitfulness originates in human ability. We should work faithfully, but we must remain dependent upon the Lord.

For Tampa Life Church, this means that we should celebrate growth with gratitude while remaining committed to honest evaluation. Are we helping people develop biblical understanding? Are our families receiving meaningful support? Are our leaders demonstrating humility and accountability? Are new

believers becoming connected to healthy relationships? Are we communicating the gospel faithfully across the communities we serve?

These questions help us recognize that the purpose of ministry is not simply to become larger. It is to glorify Jesus Christ through faithful discipleship and spiritual transformation.

A birthing church must therefore pursue multiplication without allowing multiplication itself to become an idol. The mission belongs to Jesus Christ, and the church must remain accountable to His Word.

10.9 God Is Able to Work Beyond What We Can Imagine

As we approach the conclusion of this study, we should also recognize the importance of maintaining confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. The responsibilities associated with spiritual multiplication can appear overwhelming when we consider our human limitations. We may recognize needs that exceed our current resources, opportunities that require abilities we have not yet developed, or challenges that seem greater than our capacity to respond. These realities should encourage responsible preparation, but they should not lead us to assume that God's work is limited to what we can presently accomplish through our own strength.

The Apostle Paul offers a powerful declaration of God's ability in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (KJV)

> *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*
>
> *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Paul's declaration appears at the conclusion of a prayer concerning the spiritual strengthening of believers, their understanding of Christ's love, and their fullness in God. The passage is not simply a promise that every personal ambition will be fulfilled beyond our expectations. It is an expression of praise to the God whose power is sufficient to accomplish His redemptive purposes through His people.

This context is important because it directs our attention toward spiritual maturity rather than merely external success. Paul prayed that believers would be strengthened in the inner person and rooted and grounded in love. He desired them to understand the greatness of Christ's love and experience the fullness of God. His confidence in divine power was connected to the transforming work God was accomplishing within the church.

For our families, this passage should encourage us to remain faithful even when we cannot predict every outcome. We may not know how a difficult situation will develop or what opportunities our children will encounter in the future. We may recognize areas where our own maturity needs to increase. Yet we can trust that God is able to sustain us and work through our obedience in ways that extend beyond our present understanding.

For Tampa Life Church, this confidence should produce humility and courage. We should not become discouraged simply because the responsibilities associated with ministry exceed our current experience. We can seek wisdom, develop leaders, strengthen discipleship, and make responsible plans while remaining dependent upon the power of the Holy Ghost.

We must also remember that God's ability does not eliminate our responsibility. Divine power is not an excuse for careless planning or the neglect of biblical principles. Rather, our confidence in God should motivate us toward faithful obedience because we recognize that the mission belongs to Him.

A birthing church must become a congregation that expects God to work while remaining willing to serve faithfully. We should pray with confidence, prepare with wisdom, and respond with humility to the opportunities He provides.

10.10 The Work God Begins Must Continue Beyond Our Generation

One of the most meaningful aspects of spiritual legacy is the recognition that our present responsibilities belong to a mission extending beyond our individual lives. We may participate in a particular season of ministry, serve a congregation for a number of years, or invest in people whose future influence we will never fully observe. Yet the work of Jesus Christ is greater than the contribution of any single individual or generation.

The Apostle Paul expressed confidence in God's continuing work when he wrote to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV)

> *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

In its original context, Paul's statement concerns his confidence in God's work among the Philippian believers, a congregation that had participated faithfully in the gospel. His assurance was grounded in the faithfulness of God and the continuing work of grace within the Christian community.

This passage should not be used to guarantee that every personal project or ministry ambition will reach the outcome we imagine. Its deeper significance is that God's redemptive work continues toward the fulfillment of His purposes in Jesus Christ. Our confidence rests in His faithfulness rather than in our ability to control every circumstance.

This perspective is especially important when we consider the future of the church. We may invest in discipleship programs, develop ministry leaders, and establish relationships that strengthen the congregation, but the ultimate purpose is not simply to preserve our present influence. We should desire the next generation to become capable of carrying the gospel faithfully, even when the methods and responsibilities of ministry change.

A mature church must therefore learn to celebrate the development of people who will eventually serve beyond the limits of our own experience. We should prepare teachers who may become more effective than those who instructed them. We should encourage young believers whose gifts may lead them into

ministries we have never personally undertaken. We should invest in families whose spiritual influence may extend into communities and nations we may never visit.

This requires humility because spiritual legacy cannot be controlled as a personal possession. We may plant seeds whose fruit becomes visible only after our own season of ministry has changed. We may contribute to someone's development without receiving public recognition for the influence we provided. Yet our faithfulness remains meaningful because the mission belongs to Jesus Christ.

For Tampa Life Church, the challenge is to develop a culture that can continue faithfully across generations. We should strengthen biblical teaching, cultivate healthy leadership, encourage meaningful relationships, and invest in the spiritual development of children and young people. We must recognize that the long-term health of the congregation depends not merely upon the abilities of its current leaders, but upon the faithful transmission of apostolic truth and Christian character.

A birthing church must therefore become a legacy-building church. The goal is not simply to experience one extraordinary season of spiritual multiplication. It is to develop a community capable of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ through successive generations of believers.

Section 10 Conclusion: Becoming What We Have Been Praying For

The message of The Birthing Church has challenged us to examine the relationship between spiritual expectation and spiritual responsibility. We began by considering the Word of God that precedes formation and the importance of responding to divine instruction with faith and obedience. We explored the seasons of waiting during which maturity develops, the responsibility of protecting our spiritual environment, and the need to prepare for multiplication. We examined the discomfort that can accompany transition, the importance of nurturing new believers, and the calling to carry the gospel beyond the boundaries of our congregation.

Together, these principles reveal that the vision of a birthing church is not simply about expecting something extraordinary to happen. It is about becoming a community capable of participating faithfully in the mission of Jesus Christ.

For our families, this means cultivating homes where biblical truth becomes visible through daily conduct. We must recognize that our children are influenced by the example we provide, the conversations we encourage, and the consistency of our relationship with God. We should pursue prayer, forgiveness, humility, and biblical instruction while remembering that spiritual development requires patience. Our responsibility is to remain faithful in the present while entrusting the future to the Lord.

For Tampa Life Church, the challenge is to become intentional about the spiritual culture we are developing. We should remain committed to apostolic doctrine, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the mission of making disciples. We must protect unity, develop leaders, strengthen families, and create meaningful opportunities for new believers to grow. We should celebrate spiritual multiplication without allowing numerical growth to become the ultimate measure of our faithfulness.

We must also recognize that the mission requires the participation of the entire body. Pastors and ministry leaders possess important responsibilities, but every believer can contribute through prayer, hospitality,

teaching, encouragement, service, and personal witness. The church becomes stronger when its members understand that they belong to one another and that their gifts are intended to strengthen the body of Christ.

Above all, we must remain connected to Jesus Christ. He is the source of spiritual life, the foundation of our salvation, and the One who has entrusted His church with the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel. Our confidence cannot rest exclusively upon our plans, resources, or abilities. We must depend upon His Word and the power of the Holy Ghost while responding faithfully to the responsibilities before us.

The greatest legacy of a birthing church will not be the size of its buildings, the recognition of its ministries, or the achievements of a particular generation. Its greatest legacy will be the people who encounter Jesus Christ, become established in biblical truth, develop spiritual maturity, and continue carrying the gospel to others.

We are not simply praying for God to bring new life into our church. We are asking Him to shape us into the kind of spiritual family that will faithfully nurture that life for generations to come.

And this brings us to the central challenge of the entire study: we must become what we have been praying for.

If we are praying for a church characterized by unity, we must practice forgiveness, humility, and love. If we are praying for spiritual multiplication, we must become willing to reach beyond our familiar relationships. If we are praying for stronger families, we must cultivate biblical values within our homes. If we are praying for new leaders, we must invest in the development of others. If we are praying for revival, we must remain committed to prayer, holiness, and obedience when the excitement of a particular service has passed.

The responsibility of spiritual fruitfulness does not belong to some distant future. It begins with the decisions we make today.

A birthing church is a praying church. It is a teaching church. It is a discipling church. It is a church that protects unity, develops leaders, strengthens families, and reaches beyond its walls. It is a congregation willing to carry the responsibilities associated with the spiritual life it desires to see.

And when these commitments become part of our shared identity, the message of The Birthing Church moves beyond the language of expectation and becomes a continuing expression of our obedience to Jesus Christ.

The greatest evidence that we have embraced the vision is not merely that we are expecting something new, but that we are becoming more faithful with the people, responsibilities, and opportunities God has already entrusted to us.

Final Reflection: What Will We Carry Into the Next Generation?

There is a profound difference between attending a church that experiences spiritual growth and becoming part of a church that intentionally nurtures spiritual life. The first may allow us to witness extraordinary moments. The second requires us to accept personal responsibility for the mission of Jesus Christ.

Throughout this study, we have discovered that spiritual multiplication involves much more than the arrival of new believers. It requires a foundation in God's Word, a willingness to obey, patience during seasons of development, discernment concerning the influences we allow into our lives, and the maturity necessary to persevere through difficult responsibilities. It requires a commitment to discipleship that continues long after the excitement of spiritual birth. And it requires a vision that extends beyond our own generation.

The imagery of childbirth reminds us that new life changes everything. A family preparing for a child must recognize that the arrival of that child will influence its priorities, routines, and responsibilities. In the same way, a church that desires spiritual multiplication must become willing to make room for people whose presence will challenge it to grow in patience, compassion, organization, and maturity.

We cannot simply desire the joy of spiritual birth without accepting the responsibility of spiritual parenthood. We cannot pray for a harvest while remaining unwilling to participate in the labor of discipleship. We cannot expect future generations to carry the gospel faithfully if we neglect their spiritual development today.

But we also cannot accomplish these responsibilities through human strength alone. Jesus Christ remains the foundation of the church, and the Holy Ghost provides the power necessary for faithful witness. Our responsibility is to abide in Him, obey His Word, and participate faithfully in the mission He has entrusted to us.

As we consider the future of Tampa Life Church, we should not focus exclusively upon what we hope to receive. We must also consider what we are willing to give. Are we willing to invest time in new believers? Are we willing to strengthen relationships that require patience and humility? Are we willing to develop leaders who may eventually carry responsibilities beyond our own abilities? Are we willing to create space for families whose needs differ from ours? Are we willing to remain faithful when ministry becomes demanding and the results of our labor are not immediately visible?

These questions challenge us because the vision of a birthing church cannot remain an idea that inspires us only during a sermon. It must become a conviction that influences the way we live.

Our children are watching. New believers are learning. Families are searching for hope. Communities are waiting to hear the gospel. And the responsibility of carrying that message has been entrusted to the church.

We may not know everything the future holds, and we cannot guarantee the outcomes of every effort we make. But we can remain faithful to the responsibilities God has clearly revealed through His Word.

We can pray. We can teach. We can serve. We can forgive. We can disciple. We can encourage. We can reach beyond our walls. And we can continue trusting Jesus Christ to accomplish His purposes through a church that remains submitted to Him.

A birthing church is not defined merely by what it brings forth in one season. It is defined by its continuing commitment to nurture spiritual life, raise mature disciples, and carry the gospel faithfully into the generations that follow.

PART 11

11

Personal Examination, Spiritual Reflection, and Our Commitment to the Next Generation



Moving Beyond Inspiration Into Transformation, Examining Our Spiritual Responsibilities, and Responding to God's Word Through Faithful Obedience

Foundational Scriptures: James 1:22-25; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 139:23-24; Luke 1:38; John 15:5; Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 2:2

11.1 From Hearing the Message to Living the Message

Throughout The Birthing Church, we have examined the spiritual principles that emerge from Pastor Vinny Azzolini's preaching. We have considered the Word that precedes formation, the visitation that awakens expectation, the agreement that produces obedience, and the seasons of waiting during which spiritual maturity develops. We have explored the importance of protecting our spiritual environment, preparing for multiplication, persevering through difficulty, and nurturing new believers after spiritual birth. Finally, we have considered the responsibility of carrying the gospel beyond our congregation and developing a legacy that will influence future generations.

Yet the greatest challenge of any biblical teaching is not simply understanding its content. It is allowing that truth to examine and transform our lives. We can appreciate a powerful message, recognize its theological significance, and agree with its central principles without necessarily changing the way we live. Scripture repeatedly challenges us to move beyond intellectual agreement toward practical obedience.

James 1:22 (KJV)

> *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

James reminds us that hearing biblical truth without responding to it can produce spiritual self-deception. We may assume that familiarity with Scripture is equivalent to spiritual maturity, yet genuine discipleship requires us to apply the Word to our decisions, attitudes, relationships, and responsibilities. The value of this study will not ultimately be determined by the number of sections we have completed, but by whether its biblical principles encourage us to become more faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

This final part is designed to help us examine our spiritual condition individually, within our families, and as members of the church. The questions are not intended to create guilt or encourage comparisons between believers. They are opportunities for sincere reflection, honest conversation, and meaningful application of Scripture.

We should approach them with humility, recognizing that spiritual maturity is a continuing process. None of us has completed every aspect of our development. We all possess areas where we need greater wisdom, patience, consistency, and obedience. The purpose of examination is not to condemn ourselves, but to identify where our response to God's Word can become more faithful.

11.2 Twelve Deep Reflection Questions

These questions are intended for personal devotion, small-group discussion, discipleship classes, and leadership development. Each question invites us to examine not only what we believe, but how those convictions influence our daily conduct.

01

Are we more excited about what we believe God will do than we are committed to what He has already commanded us to do?

When we examine our prayer lives, priorities, and daily decisions, do we discover a greater emphasis upon future blessings or present obedience? How can we demonstrate our agreement with God's Word through practical changes rather than merely through declarations of faith?

Scripture: Luke 1:38; James 1:22-25

02

What is God developing in our character during seasons when visible progress seems limited?

When we experience waiting, uncertainty, or disappointment, how do we respond? Are we allowing those circumstances to develop patience, humility, and dependence upon God, or are we becoming increasingly frustrated because life is not unfolding according to our expectations?

Scripture: James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5

03

What influences are shaping the spiritual environment of our homes?

If we examined the conversations, entertainment, relationships, and habits that receive the greatest attention in our families, what would they reveal about our priorities? Are we creating an environment that encourages prayer, biblical understanding, forgiveness, and spiritual growth?

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:8; Deuteronomy 6:6-7

04

Are we protecting the unity of the church through our words and attitudes?

When we disagree with someone or become disappointed by a decision, do we respond through respectful communication and biblical accountability, or do we allow gossip, criticism, and resentment to influence others? How can we become people who address concerns honestly while preserving love and unity?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:29-32; Matthew 18:15-17

05

If God brings new believers into our congregation, are we personally prepared to help them grow?

Beyond welcoming people during a service, are we willing to develop friendships, answer questions, share meals, encourage prayer, and invest time in discipleship? What would need to change in our schedules or priorities for us to participate more intentionally?

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 2:2

06

How do we distinguish between responsibilities that require perseverance and situations that require change?

When ministry, family life, or personal commitments become difficult, do we immediately seek escape, or do we carefully examine the circumstances? Are we willing to persevere through healthy responsibilities while also recognizing when boundaries, rest, accountability, or practical support are necessary?

Scripture: Galatians 6:2-5; 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

07

Are we raising our children to develop personal faith, or merely teaching them to follow religious routines?

Do our children understand why we pray, why Scripture matters, and why obedience to Jesus Christ is important? Are we creating opportunities for honest questions and meaningful conversations? How can we model a faith that remains genuine outside the church building?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6-7; 2 Timothy 1:5

08

Who is becoming spiritually stronger because we have invested in their life?

Can we identify someone whom we are encouraging, teaching, mentoring, or helping develop a deeper relationship with God? If we cannot, what opportunities might exist for us to begin participating in the discipleship of another person?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:28-29

09

Are we willing to make room for people who are different from us?

How do we respond to newcomers whose language, culture, personality, or spiritual background differs from our own? Are we willing to build relationships beyond familiar circles and distinguish between biblical convictions and personal preferences?

Scripture: Romans 15:7; Acts 10:34-35

10

Does our relationship with the Holy Ghost influence our witness outside the sanctuary?

We may experience powerful moments of worship and prayer, but how does that spiritual life influence our conversations, integrity, compassion, and willingness to communicate the gospel? Are we allowing the Spirit to shape both our private conduct and our public witness?

Scripture: Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23

11

If our current ministry responsibilities were entrusted to the next generation tomorrow, would we have prepared them adequately?

Are we intentionally developing teachers, leaders, and mature believers who can continue serving faithfully? Do we celebrate the growth of others, or do we unintentionally hold responsibilities so tightly that new leaders struggle to develop?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2

12

If someone examined the spiritual legacy we are building today, what would they discover?

Would they see a life characterized primarily by religious activity, or a growing relationship with Jesus Christ expressed through love, holiness, generosity, humility, and discipleship? What do we want our children, our families, and future believers to remember about the faith we practiced?

Scripture: John 15:5-8; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 78:4-7

11.3 Ten Fill-in-the-Blank Statements

These statements reinforce the central biblical principles developed throughout the study. They can be used individually or during group discussion.

Complete the statements

Fill in each blank, then check the answer key.

1. Spiritual formation must remain grounded in God's _____ rather than merely in our personal desires.

2. Genuine agreement with God's Word becomes visible through _____ , not merely through verbal declarations.

3. Seasons of waiting can become opportunities for developing patience, character, and spiritual _____ .

4. We must guard our _____ because the influences we continually receive affect our spiritual direction.

5. The Great Commission calls the church to make _____ , not simply attract attendees.

6. Difficult responsibilities may require faithful _____ , while harmful situations require wise intervention.

7. New believers require continued biblical _____ and meaningful relationships in order to grow.

8. The Holy Ghost empowers believers to become _____ of Jesus Christ beyond the church building.

9. Mature disciples should become capable of teaching and encouraging _____ .

10. The source of lasting spiritual fruitfulness is our continuing relationship with Jesus _____ .

Answer key: 1. Word; 2. obedience; 3. maturity; 4. hearts; 5. disciples; 6. perseverance; 7. instruction; 8. witnesses; 9. others; 10. Christ.

11.4 Our Personal and Congregational Commitment

The purpose of this final exercise is to translate the principles of the study into specific responsibilities we can begin practicing. Spiritual transformation does not require us to attempt every possible change simultaneously. In many situations, meaningful growth begins when we identify one area of our lives that requires attention and respond faithfully through practical action.

The following commitments provide a framework for personal examination. They should not become a measure of superiority or a source of condemnation. They are opportunities to consider how we can participate more intentionally in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Our commitment checklist

□ Our relationship with God

Establish or strengthen a consistent pattern of prayer, Bible reading, and personal obedience.

□ Our families

Create intentional opportunities for biblical conversation, prayer, forgiveness, and spiritual encouragement at home.

□ Our relationships

Address unresolved conflict appropriately, reject gossip, and communicate with truth and love.

□ Our discipleship

Identify one person we can encourage, mentor, or help become more established in Scripture.

□ Our service

Consider how our gifts, time, and abilities can contribute to the spiritual health of the congregation.

□ Our witness

Develop a meaningful relationship with someone outside the church and look for respectful opportunities to share the gospel.

□ Our next generation

Invest intentionally in the spiritual development of a child, young person, or emerging leader.

11.5 A Final Challenge to Our Families

If the vision of The Birthing Church is going to influence future generations, it must become meaningful within our homes. We cannot depend exclusively upon powerful sermons, effective youth ministries, or well-organized discipleship programs to establish the spiritual foundations of our children. These ministries can provide important support, but our daily relationships remain a significant part of their spiritual formation.

We must therefore examine whether the faith we practice publicly is consistent with the faith we demonstrate privately. Our children should encounter more than religious expectations. They should observe genuine prayer, humility, compassion, and a willingness to acknowledge mistakes. They should see that Scripture influences our decisions and that our relationship with Jesus Christ remains important when circumstances become difficult.

We must also create space for honest conversations. Children and young people may encounter questions concerning faith, suffering, relationships, and cultural expectations. We should not assume that every difficult question represents spiritual rebellion. In many situations, questions provide opportunities for deeper understanding. When we respond with patience and biblical wisdom, we help establish an environment where faith can develop through personal conviction rather than external pressure alone.

Our responsibility is not to control every future decision our children will make. We cannot guarantee their spiritual outcomes. But we can remain faithful in teaching, prayer, example, and love. We can demonstrate that following Jesus Christ is not simply a family tradition, but a continuing relationship that shapes the way we live.

The spiritual legacy of our homes will be influenced by the small decisions we make consistently. A conversation at the dinner table, an apology after an argument, a moment of prayer during uncertainty, or an act of generosity toward someone in need may become part of the foundation upon which future convictions develop.

11.6 A Final Challenge to Tampa Life Church

For Tampa Life Church, the message of The Birthing Church presents a collective responsibility. We are called to become more than a congregation that anticipates spiritual multiplication. We must develop the maturity, relationships, and ministry practices necessary to nurture the people we are praying to reach.

This begins with a renewed commitment to apostolic doctrine and the power of the Holy Ghost. We must continue proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, inviting people to repentance, teaching baptism in His name, and encouraging believers to receive and walk in the Spirit. These convictions form an essential part of our identity and mission.

But we must also strengthen the discipleship that follows spiritual birth. New believers need meaningful relationships and continued biblical instruction. Families need encouragement and appropriate support. Children and young people need opportunities to develop personal convictions. Emerging leaders need

training, mentoring, and accountability. Mature believers need to recognize that their experience can become a blessing to others.

Our multicultural ministries should reflect the unity of the body of Christ while communicating the gospel across language and cultural boundaries. We should celebrate the opportunity to serve different communities without allowing those differences to weaken our shared commitment to Jesus Christ.

We must also remain attentive to the health of our relationships. A congregation cannot faithfully nurture spiritual life while allowing gossip, bitterness, competition, and unresolved conflict to shape its environment. Unity requires intentional humility, honest communication, biblical accountability, and a willingness to forgive.

The future of our church will not be determined exclusively by the plans we develop or the resources we possess. It will also be influenced by the spiritual culture we cultivate through everyday decisions.

If we desire to become a birthing church, we must become willing to prepare, nurture, disciple, and serve.

Final Declaration: We Will Not Stop at the Moment of Birth

The message of The Birthing Church reminds us that spiritual life is precious, but it also carries responsibility. The Word of God calls us to obedience. The Holy Ghost empowers us to become witnesses. The mission of Jesus Christ challenges us to make disciples. And the love of God calls us to nurture those who are growing in their relationship with Him.

We will not measure spiritual fruitfulness merely by the excitement of a service or the size of a congregation. We will seek the kind of maturity that becomes visible through biblical understanding, consistent prayer, genuine holiness, compassionate relationships, and faithful service.

We will recognize that our families are part of the mission. Our children need more than religious routines. They need a living example of faith. Our marriages and relationships need more than good intentions. They need humility, forgiveness, and obedience to God's Word.

We will remember that the people who enter our congregation are not simply attendees. They are individuals created in the image of God, deserving of dignity, compassion, and opportunities for meaningful spiritual growth. We will celebrate the moments when people respond to the gospel, but we will also accept the responsibility of walking alongside them as they develop into mature disciples.

We will remain committed to reaching beyond our walls. We will not allow familiar routines or personal preferences to become unnecessary barriers to the mission of Jesus Christ. We will seek opportunities to communicate the gospel across communities, cultures, languages, and generations.

And above all, we will remain dependent upon Jesus Christ, the source of spiritual life and the foundation of the church.

We are not simply asking God to give us a moment of spiritual birth. We are committing ourselves to become a spiritual family that will faithfully nurture what He brings to life.

The delivery is not the end.

The responsibility continues.

And through the grace of God, the mission will continue into the generations that follow.

THE BIRTHING CHURCH

From expectation to obedience. From spiritual birth to discipleship. From one generation to the next.