

## **Chapter 13**

### **Multiplication Barriers**

*... In this world, you will have trouble ...* Jesus (John 16:33).

Jesus' words to His disciples offer us specific truth that you can take to heart as you pursue becoming a Multiplier and your new multiplication-based scorecard. It's not simply an option or possibility. Tension in our lives is unavoidable.

I don't have to tell you that church leaders aren't immune to trouble or that churches also live in a constant state of tension. As a key element of Jesus' strategy against Satan, why would we expect anything less? Regardless of whether a church is a Level 1 or Level 5 or somewhere in between, the tensions it experiences can distract and keep it from being and becoming what the Founder intends.

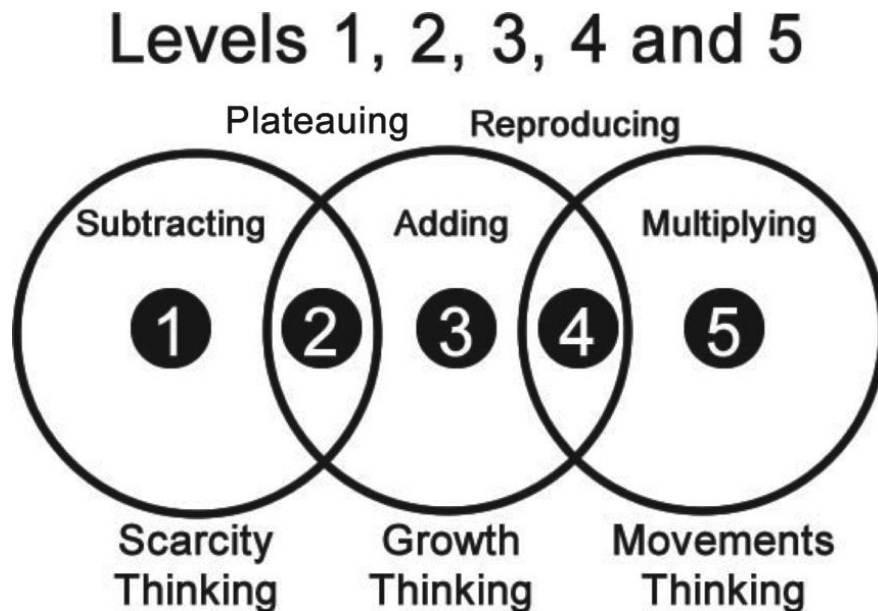
That doesn't change the fact that we try as hard as we can to avoid tension, conquer it, or make it go away.

Don't miss this important truth: *No matter what level of multiplication you find yourself at, you WILL have tension.* Nothing you do will allow you to reach a level of multiplication that is tension-free. The Level 1 church that lives in a scarcity culture will not suddenly find itself tension-free when it graduates to a Level 3 church. The tensions will simply shift to new ones.

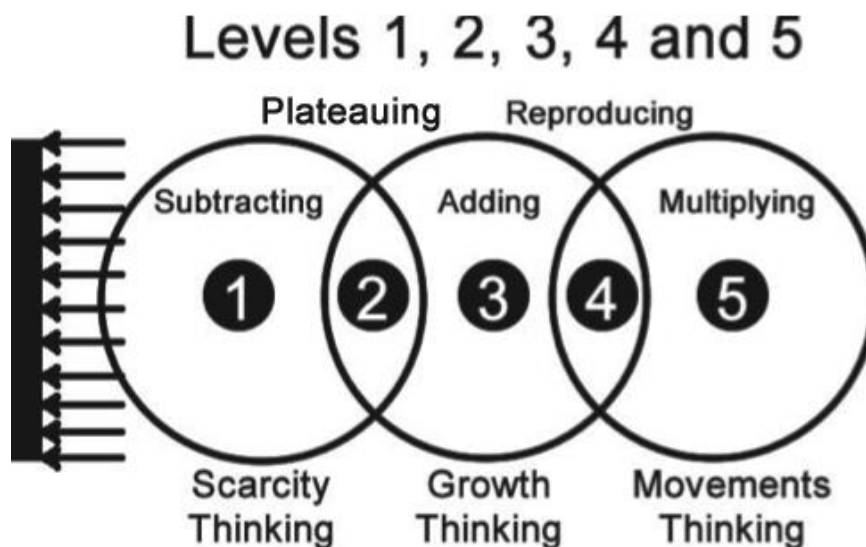
So the key questions for you are not, "Will we have tension?" or "How do I avoid tension?" The game changer is how you leverage tension to grow and more deeply embed a culture of multiplication. The profound, transformative question is always, "How do we leverage the behaviors of multiplying churches to help us maneuver and grow in this current season of tension?"

### **The Magnetic Force of Tensions**

Recall our integrated picture of the cultures that are core to the five levels of multiplication:



Now, consider what would happen if we placed a strong magnet to the left of Level 1. For this illustration, assume your church is now a metal object in the Level 1 circle.

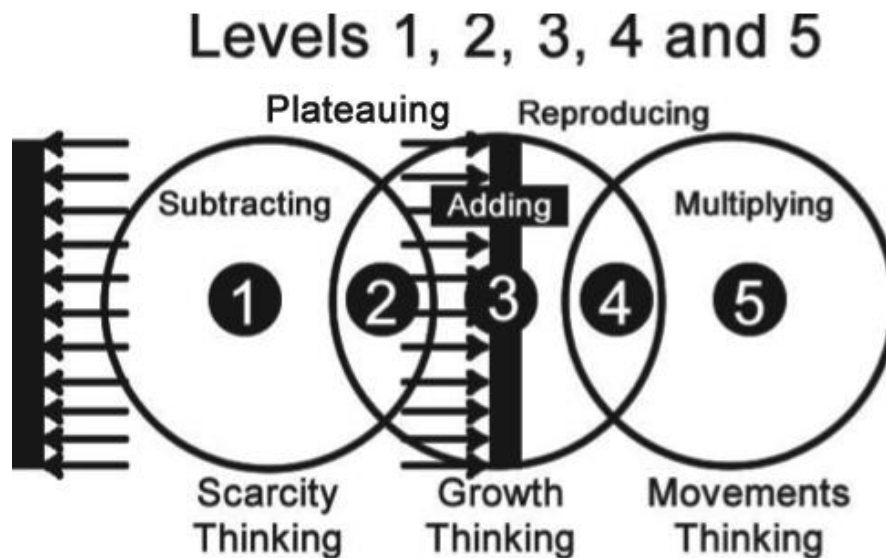


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Now think about a magnet. The closer you get to it, the stronger its attractive force. When you're a foot away, you don't even feel its force. The diagram above shows that the farther you move to the right (toward Level 2 and higher), the less you feel the subtraction magnet. Here's the corollary: The closer you get to a magnet's force field, the stronger the force and the tougher it becomes to break free of its grip.

In this illustration, the force field near the magnet represents the culture you create in your church. If you create a survival culture, you'll constantly experience the tension of scarcity that's drawing you toward subtraction.

Leaders that do break free to Level 2 begin to experience the force field of the addition magnet (see the next graphic).



In a culture driven by our addition-focused scorecards, the addition magnet is very strong. As you move toward it, the magnet's force becomes increasingly powerful and even addictive. I've previously described the journey of a Level 3 Multiplier as the continuing process of conquering the next growth barrier. This Level 3 magnet is at the center of addition-growth, drawing you closer and closer.

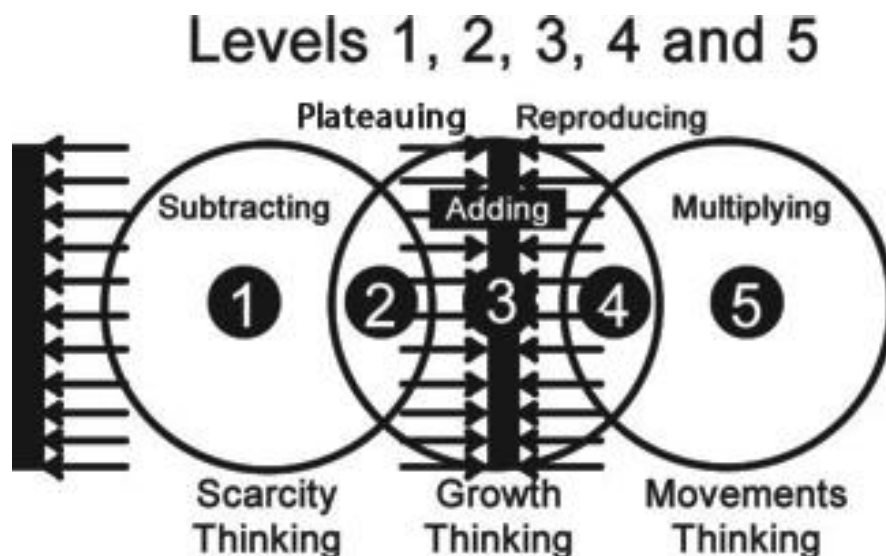
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Leaders in the Level 2 region feel the effects of both the subtraction and the addition magnets.

For example, a church growing toward eighty-plus people in the traditional paradigm will hit a growth ceiling (due to staffing capacity) when it reaches eighty to one hundred people—exactly in the range of the average U.S. church size. Leaders conclude they need to “add” staff to “grow.” Unfortunately, their paradigm becomes, “We can’t add staff *until* we grow. We can’t afford it.”

So today’s paradigms/models (“paid staff do the heavy lifting” and “we can only do what we can financially afford”) actually self-sabotage, paralyzing a church at fewer than one hundred people. Leaders become caught in the tension between the subtraction and addition culture magnets (tensions).

The impact is even more pronounced in Level 3 Multipliers that want to break free of the addition magnet’s grip and move to Levels 4 and 5. The graphic below is spot on. The same strong magnet (or culture) that pulls a church into greater levels of addition-growth is the very one that keeps it from moving to greater levels of multiplication.



## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

Specifically, the addition strategies used to conquer the progressive growth barriers in Level 3 include things like large, growing specialty staff; facilities with large mortgage debt; organizational/structural complexity required to manage numerous ministries and sites; and a huge demand for volunteers and strong volunteer leaders, etc.

The financial and leadership resources required to get a church to Level 3 are the same resources needed to fuel multiplication in Levels 4 and 5. When this tyranny of the *or* emerges, addition-growth usually wins out over multiplication. The practices and behaviors required in Levels 4 and 5 always seem to be in tension with the allocation of resources to fuel what has already been built in Level 3. The addition magnet (culture) simply overpowers most churches (and their leaders) that desire increasing levels of multiplication.

There is another magnet (see below) to the right of Level 5. This one is built into the intended DNA of the church by its Founder. Unfortunately, most leaders are so captive to the addition culture in Level 3 that they never get close enough to the multiplication magnet to see its force field overtake the embedded addition culture.

As leaders venture beyond their current walls and reproduce sites (campuses), they functionally press into Level 4 practices. However, most current multisite activity is rooted in Level 3 addition rather than Level 5 multiplication (multisite as a multiplication strategy has yet to be demonstrated).

### **Putting It Into Perspective**

As a linear progression, most U.S. churches are born into Levels 1 or 2, but as we've said earlier, few (less than 0.05 percent) ever make it to Level 5. Overcoming the subtraction magnet (culture) and then the addition magnet (culture) are major challenges. The normal path is linear with progression from Level 1 to 2 to 3 to 4

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

to 5. It's like a funnel with 80 percent at one end and virtually 0 percent making it to the other end.

Here are several summary truths about tensions to consider and embrace:

- Most churches are born into Level 1 or 2. The subtraction or scarcity culture is a strong shaping factor that can hold churches captive to decision making that's rooted in survival thinking. Some percent of leaders are at Levels 1 and 2.
- Approximately 16 percent of leaders find themselves moving toward Level 3 addition-growth. The Level 3 addition magnet is extremely powerful. It fosters a culture that aligns most everything the church does to addition strategies. If Level 3 leaders are not intentional about multiplying, they may unintentionally replace the target of making biblical disciples with addition-growth.
- Approximately 4 percent of leaders put some Level 4 practices in place. However, the Level 3 addition magnet is so strong that these leaders have a difficult time breaking free from addition culture's grip, and many continue functioning with Level 3 behaviors.
- Less than 0.05 percent of U.S. church leaders are Level 5 Multipliers. By leaning into multiplication and putting Level 5 practices into place, we will increasingly expose ourselves to the multiplication magnet that's embedded, but suppressed, within the church's DNA.

No matter where you currently find yourself, you can choose to put Level 5 multiplication practices in place; maybe not all at once, but one step at a time. Revolutionary change starts with courageous leaders who are willing to embrace new scorecards rooted in the values of multiplication, characterized by the practices of Level 5

leaders and churches, and squarely focused on making and mobilizing disciples on mission.

### **Deceptions and Spiritual Warfare**

As Scripture tells us, Satan is a master at deception. He came to “steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10). His schemes are powerfully present in the dynamics that distract us from becoming the Level 5 Multipliers we were made to be. He continually whispers lies into our thoughts, often seeking to feed off the unhealthy attributes of our personal scorecards. We buy into the lies and begin thinking and acting with the scarcity and growth biases of Levels 1, 2, and 3 profiles, rather than the generous and abundant behaviors of Levels 4 and 5.

Satan is particularly good at introducing confusion that keeps us distracted. He knows that movements are fueled by Level 5 churches, so he simply needs to keep us consumed at Levels 1, 2, and 3. With 80 percent of U.S. churches at Levels 1 and 2, 4 percent at Level 4 and fewer than 0.05 percent at Level 5, it appears he is doing his job of keeping us distracted—via two simultaneous deceptions:

- First, he confuses our motives and our scorecards. Instead of embracing more biblical scorecards of multiplication characterized by making biblical disciples, and sending/releasing leaders to multiply, we adopt the sexier Level 3 scorecards of accumulation and consumption. We embrace the wrong personal scorecard and scorecard for our church.
- Second, he paralyzes us at Levels 1, 2, and 3 by keeping us captive to the cultures characteristic of those levels (e.g., subtraction, survival, and growth). We become so consumed and distracted within our current level that we lose sight of our intended target to make biblical disciples who make disciples that plant churches. The culture we find ourselves trapped within essentially creates a different

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

target for us to strive for—a target characterized by attaining the winning score on a particular level. It’s like getting us stuck and distracted on a specific level in a video game. Our short-term target becomes “defeating the level.” As we move into Level 3, we experience a culture that’s nearly impossible to overcome and defeat.

Amid these challenges, we buy into the following types of lies:

- We will [fill in the blank] when we can afford it;
- We can’t [fill in the blank] until we hire another staff person, but we can’t afford to hire until we grow;
- If we can just [fill in the silver bullet], we can break out of this plateau and start growing (or we can break through this next growth barrier);
- If we can get permanent facility space, then we can expand our impact;
- We will plant a church after we get stabilized and can afford it;
- Success is pioneering the latest and greatest addition-focused innovations and strategies;
- Success is breaking the next growth barrier or adding a specific number of people within a specific period of time;
- We will get our feet wet with multisite before planting a church.

### **Three Common Core Tensions: Motives, Measurements and Methods**

The lists of tensions you’ll encounter as you implement new multiplication-focused scorecards are a mile long. However, nearly all of those tensions find their roots in three common factors: motives, measurements and methods.

**Tension of motives (here or there?):** *Will the church I lead (or will lead) be about my kingdom or God’s Kingdom?* This tension is rooted in your definition of success. Is your vision limited to



## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

accumulating and growing larger *here* (where you are), or is it balanced with an equal focus and passion for sending *there* (the next church)?

Exponential speaker and 2/42 Community Church planter and Lead Pastor Dave Dummit cautions, “Start your ‘here’ (the church you’re planting) with ‘there’ (the next church you’ll plant or support) in mind. If you focus on ‘there,’ then ‘here’ will take care of itself. In that first-year phase, it’s so important to get this ‘here/there’ tension right.”

All leaders live in the tension between being *here* and *there*, with almost everything pulling them toward *here*. Having as many or more “growing there” strategies as “growing here” strategies is the difference between being a Level 3, 4, or 5 leader. Level 5 Multipliers are as passionate about *there* as they are *here*.

If you’re serious about leading a reproducing, multiplying and movement-making church, then you’ll have to start *here* but will need to go *there... there...there and there!* But understand, the tension between focusing *here* and going *there* will always exist.

The tension of motives is about declaring this day that multiplication matters and embracing it as a core value—not just a nice program to add on, but a value that shapes and influences your decisions, strategy, staffing, facilities, and budget. With any transition to a new core value comes the need for new scorecards (personal and in your church) and lens for defining and measuring success.

**Tension of measurement (grow or send?):** *Will this church I lead be about growing or sending?* This tension is rooted in where you prioritize your focus: Where do I focus my time, talent and treasure? Your methods (or practices and behaviors) are where you bring a multiplication culture to life. How do you balance the tension between building local capacity to grow bigger local churches, *and* building global capacity to send and release resources to start new churches? Will your primary measurement

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

of success be about your church or how many churches you can start?

Missiologist Alan Hirsch reminds us that living “sent” is not just a cool idea or term some savvy leader coined: “Being a sending church takes us to the core theology of the Church as the primary human agency of the Kingdom of God—which means there is no such thing as an “un-sent” Christian! (John 20:21, Matt. 28:19). We send because all Christians and churches are sent by God into the world.”

Dave Ferguson reminds us that growth requires us to consistently ask ourselves: Will we increase seating capacity or sending capacity? “If your answer is ‘sending,’” he says, “then you’ll have to develop new metrics because, ‘what you measure improves and what you celebrate gets repeated.’”

The word “sending” that Dave uses is the same word as the root of the word for mission (*missio* = “sent” in Latin). Our commitment to “send” measures our impact *beyond* the church, not just *in* the church.

In the tension of measurement, hard questions surface:

- How much energy are we directing toward optimizing systems at the mother church versus the amount of energy we’re directing toward a system to develop leaders and staff to send to a new church plant?
- Are we hanging on to our best staff members, or sending them out as church planters?
- Are we developing our best leaders to run our programs and staff the mother church, or are we intentionally growing leaders to send them out?

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

- Do we have an excellent leadership residency program?  
Have we emphasized excellence in our leadership development/sending structures?

Level 5 Multipliers focus on sending *as much as* growing. We will never see a Level 5 multiplication movement until we're as passionate about sending as we are growing. When we embrace new scorecards focused on releasing and sending leaders, we must then rethink our addition-focused behaviors and methods to realign them with multiplication.

At this point, the conversation moves from “dream” (what we *want* to do) to practical and personal (what we *will* do). This is where courageous leadership makes all the difference. This is where the culture-shaping decisions come to life. This is where we sweat, but also where we live out our core values with integrity.

**Tension of methods (safety or risk?):** *Will I live out my years coasting through life, or will I take risks to do something new and to grow God's Kingdom?* At the core of this tension is how you allocate your time (activities), talents (leadership), and treasures (finances) to building local *and* Kingdom capacity. What will you actually *do*, and what hard decisions will you make to become and grow as a Multiplier? Good intentions will not move you from Level 1 to 5.

Our methods (or practices and behaviors) are where we bring a multiplication culture to life. How do we balance the tension between building local capacity to grow bigger local churches, *and* building global capacity to send and release resources to start new churches?

Three specific multiplication tensions center on actual execution and the difficult decisions leaders will need to address and resolve as they seek to build local and Kingdom capacity:

- Facilities and place
- Finances

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

- Relaxing versus risk-taking

*Facilities and place:* In the U.S. Church, one of the tensions that leaders will quickly experience is the reality of needing facilities and place: Do I build buildings or plant more churches? Do I send out my first staff before I build? Do I start a new church before I build?

Make no mistake. Buildings can be a great help to accomplishing the Great Commission. People like having a “place.” Most churches see an attendance bump with new spaces. *But* they can also be a hindrance to the mission because buildings are a huge expense, costing both money and time to raise the capital. They require upkeep (more money and time), and they often create an unintended culture that focuses on *here* versus *there*.

Sending out people to plant a church before the church takes on significant building debt sends a very specific message to the church and instills a multiplication DNA. The likelihood of becoming a Level 4 or 5 multiplying church significantly increases when we choose Level 4 and 5 behaviors over Level 3 behaviors.

The building issue gives us numerous questions and decisions for us to wrestle through:

- Do we put more time into our church-planting strategy than we do into our future facility strategy?
- If we do decide that a building will move our mission forward, how will we use that platform to attract and train more leadership residents and church planters?

Level 4 and 5 leaders also live in the tension: “Do we build a building?” or “Do we plant churches?” Their bias is toward planting as they figure out the “and.”

*Finances:* In Luke 14, Jesus tells His disciples that they will need to count the cost of following Him. For leaders that want to become Level 5 Multipliers, very real costs and risks are

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

involved—particularly in a financial sense. Without a strong core conviction to multiply, you'll likely gravitate toward financial security instead of doing the hard work of navigating perceptions and questions. For example:

- Key givers in a church will naturally want to know the return on investment in planting new churches.
- Staff and other leaders will wonder how prioritizing the church's financial resources toward multiplication will impact their current ministries.
- Resources allocated to multiplication are not available for the local addition-growth activities that fuel attendance growth. Just like you teach your congregation to, "look at your checkbook to know your true priorities," the same is true for a church.
- Will our church at least tithe to church planting on capital campaigns and other special offerings, as well as general offerings?
- Will our church sacrifice to plant a church?
- Will our church put funds toward training church planters and developing a leadership residency?

*Relaxing versus risk-taking:* Many senior leaders find themselves in a comfortable place at Level 3. The financial strains of addition-growth are different than those in the survival culture of Levels 1 and 2. They have planted their church and have worked hard to grow it. Their church has grown to a certain size, and they're drawing a good salary. They are at a place in their leadership where they make more impact with less effort simply because their words have more weight now.

The questions then become:

- After working really hard for years, do I just relax now? Or do I keep taking risks?
- What about starting a network? Or a whole movement of churches?

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

- Am I building systems that allow me to coast/relax, or am I still engaged and taking risks?
- Am I investing myself in the next generation of church Multipliers with the same zeal I gave to conquering the Level 3 growth barriers?

At an Exponential gathering, Fellowship Monrovia Pastor Albert Tate encouraged leaders with the truth that, “God is not done with you. He has something greater for you.” Drawing from the lives of Moses and Abraham, Albert pointed out that God has a reputation for tapping us on the shoulder just when we’re comfortable in life and saying, “Trust Me and let’s begin again!”

Navigating this tension of methods and these questions requires leaders to honestly assess their personal energy and resiliency.

### **Onward and Upward**

In this chapter, we’ve highlighted the most common types of tensions you’ll face in seeking to move beyond addition thinking to multiplication thinking. Be prepared. Every multiplying leader would tell you that this is a dangerous journey and will require you to put to death some of the things you’ve grown to idolize. Leveraging these tensions takes courage, persistence and intentionality.

One of the greatest tensions you’ll face centers on sacrifice and surrender. To change the Level 3 addition-growth scorecard, you must put to death those motives, measures and methods and be a courageous change maker who bucks the old wineskins opting for new, and better, wineskins. Think of a specific tension you’re currently dealing with in your church and ask yourself: *What would it look like to respond to this tension the way a Level 5 Multiplier would respond? If my future and the future of my children and their children depended on me becoming a Level 5 Multiplier, what would I do differently than what I’m doing now? What would I do with urgency?*

## *Multipliers: Leading Beyond Addition*

As a leader, one of your most difficult (and rewarding) tasks is to raise up and train other leaders—becoming a hero maker! In a multiplying church, the tension will surface: Do we send out these leaders and make heroes out of them or do we hang on to them because they help us grow our ministry (our kingdom)? Our actions speak loudly and trump our narrative.

This is what courageous leaders who value multiplication do. They lean into the future and create a new normal. They are hero-making Multipliers who take action. In the next chapter, we've outlined specific priorities with concrete short-term actions that move us toward multiplication!

### **Putting it Into Practice**

- *Think of a specific tension you're currently dealing with in your church. What would it look like to respond to this tension the way a Level 5 Multiplier would respond?*
- *What are the "forces" pulling you to Level 3 addition?*
- *How is Satan confusing your motives and scorecard?*
- *What are the tensions keeping you from moving from "here" to "there"?*
- *Are you developing your best leaders to run your church's programs and staff the mother church, or are you intentionally growing leaders to send them out? Name five to ten people you've released and sent out in the last few years.*
- *Are you building systems that allow you to coast/relax, or are you still engaged and taking risks?*
- *Are you willing to make church multiplication a higher priority than building/expanding permanent facilities?*