

EIGHT BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR RECRUITING NEW VOLUNTEERS:

**Miss Any of These and
You'll Always Lack Volunteers**



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By Nelson Searcy

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INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, 7:45 a.m. Pastor Tim steps into the diner and immediately notices that something is out of the ordinary. Dirty tables sit untouched. A crowd of people waiting to be seated is forming at the front. Tim scans the restaurant and sees David sitting on the edge of their usual booth, surveying the breakfast remains of the people who had been there a few minutes before.

Tim and David, a young pastor with whom Tim has formed something of a mentor relationship, have been meeting for breakfast the second Tuesday of every month for at least three years now — always at the same time, always at the same place. Generally the atmosphere is inviting and the service is smooth, but today the classically well-run diner is different. Tim pushes through the chaos at the front to get to David.

“Hey, man,” Tim says. David stands up to greet him. “What’s going on?”

“Hey, Tim. I’m really not sure what the deal is...”

As if on cue, a waiter who often serves the two steps up and starts clearing the dirty table. “Good morning, guys. Sorry about this. Things are crazy today. We’re short two servers and one hostess. I feel like a one-man show running this place.”

“No worries, friend,” David says to the waiter. Then, to Tim, he jokes quietly, “I know the feeling. Running my church lately feels like running a one-man show. I just hope none of my services turn out like this.”

Tim chuckles along with David, but the comment concerns him. Once they settle into the booth and order coffee, he asks, “Do you really feel that way, David? About being a one-man show?”

“Well, I have to admit, sometimes I have this nightmare that I show up at church on a Sunday morning and I’m the only one there – no worship team, no ushers, no greeters, no kids workers... Just me. I mean, our church isn’t huge or anything, but things aren’t going to happen like they should without volunteers showing up. And I’ll tell you, I could use a lot more of them...”

David's not the only one who has that nightmare about being the only person to show up on a Sunday morning. I've had it a few times myself. How about you? One thing we learn early on in our work as church leaders is that the church is a volunteer-run organization. **Without people who are willing to serve, we can't do what we've been called to do.** In fact, when we try to take care of everything on our own, we mess up God's plan by stunting both our people's growth and our church's redemptive potential.

Dream with me for a minute:

What would your church look like if you could double the number of people who volunteer?

What if a full 50 percent of your people were connected through serving for at least an hour every week?

Imagine the ministries that would finally be fleshed out. Imagine the great experience your attenders would have at each weekend service. Imagine the influence you could begin to exert on your community. Abandon the nightmare and embrace this dream. It can be a reality.

God wants the people he has put in your church to be actively engaged in serving. He has no interest in you being a one-man show. In fact, connecting your people through service is a critical part of your responsibility to disciple them — a necessary element in helping them become a better reflection of Jesus.

When there aren't enough hands to do what needs to be done, things break down. Quiet chaos begins to rumble below the surface. God's vision for your church gets buried beneath the urgency of figuring out how to keep all the parts moving. People languish as consumers rather than contributors, missing God's best for their lives. Ministries aren't able to fulfill the missions they were created for. And you, as the leader, run the risk of falling into a dangerous scarcity mentality.

God has a greater plan for your church. Thankfully, he doesn't operate in lack, but in abundance. As you learn how to cooperate with God in leading people into a deeper walk with him by connecting them through biblical servanthood, you will begin to see healthy growth in your members and attenders, in all of your ministries, and in your church as a whole.

Are you ready to get started?

Eight Biblical Principles for Recruiting New Volunteers:

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community,
and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.
I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work,
the more I live.*

— George Bernard Shaw

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

— Jesus (Matthew 20:28)

When I was just starting in ministry, one of my most respected mentors said something to me that I've never forgotten. As I was venting to him about feeling like a one-man show in my young church, much like David to Tim (but perhaps with a bit more frustration), he put his arm around me and said, "Nelson, remember, every member in your church is a minister. You are not in this alone unless you choose to be."


Every member is a minister. I'm sure you've heard that assertion time and time again. It may even be one of the core values of your church. Honestly, when I first heard the statement, I wasn't sure exactly what it meant. But now, after decades in ministry and countless hours spent working with pastors around the world, I realize just how deep this truth runs and how important it is when you are working to lead a God-honoring, effective church. In fact, I've taken the concept a step further. Around The Journey Church where I pastor, we believe that every attender is a minister, whether they have taken the step of membership or not...but more on that later.

A proper theology of ministry will rapidly expand your ministry system, while a small theology of ministry will constrain it.

The belief that every member is a minister is something that most of us hold as a basic tenet of our theology of ministry — even if we don't realize we have a theology of ministry in place. Our problem lies in that lack of realization. You and I, as leaders in God's kingdom, cannot afford to have a weak, clichéd, or underdeveloped theology of ministry. Sure, we may believe that every member is a minister, but if we haven't worked through the associated *why* and *how* of

that belief, we will have a hard time fleshing out its reality. Before you can start implementing the ministry system and increasing your number of volunteers, you have to take the foundational step of clarifying your theology of ministry; you have to make sure that the assumptions you are working with about service are built on prayerful study of the New Testament rather than on old tradition.

A proper theology of ministry will rapidly expand your ministry system, while a small theology of ministry will constrain it. The theology you adhere to will determine your convictions and the confidence with which you call people to serve. In other words, once you have a strong theology of ministry in place, you will have deeper assurance and more passion about the details of ministry in your church. You will be more likely to invite people to take action steps of faith, and you will be able to do so with increased confidence.



After a slightly longer wait than usual, the waiter reappears with Tim and David's breakfast. The two took advantage of the lag time to chitchat about the upcoming playoffs. Tim hadn't brought David's comments about being a one-man show back up yet. But once their food was situated, he decided not to let David's words sit any longer. Capping the blueberry syrup and cutting into his pancakes, Tim says, "David, let me ask you a question. Have you really thought about why people serve at your church?"

"Well, sure," David answers. "Some of them just want to. I guess they know serving is good for them... and there are so many things that need to be done every week, their serving is good for me, too!" David chuckles as he takes a bite of his toast.

"Yeah, but the real reason your people need to be connected in serving runs deeper. Not to sound preachy, but the truth is, when people serve, they become more like Jesus. When you encourage them to serve and then do what it takes to get them involved, you are discipling them – which is your role as their pastor. It's not just so things at the church get done," Tim says.

"I hear you, Tim. I do," David wipes his mouth with his napkin and leans back in the booth for a minute. "Honestly, I'm really not sure what to do to get more people involved. I feel like there are all of these needs, but I don't want to impose on anyone. I mean, I do understand that serving is biblical and that I am not actually asking them for my own benefit, but it still feels that way sometimes."

Tim puts his fork down, leans in, and looks David in the eye. “Listen, David. I am giving you permission, right now, to ask your people to serve. You aren’t supposed to be a one-man show. God wants your people involved in building up his church, and he has put you in a position to make sure that happens. If you keep hesitating, you won’t only be hurting yourself; you’ll be hurting all of your people. Believe me, I learned this lesson the hard way....”

Tim sits back and takes a sip of his coffee, then continues, “The first thing you have to do, though, is make sure you know what you believe about serving.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, you have to nail down your theology of ministry... Do you have a piece of paper handy?”

David pulls a notebook out of his bag, hands Tim a pen, and leans in, eager to learn what it takes to put an end to his constant volunteer shortage.

At The Journey, we have built our theology of ministry around eight theological foundations. Now, you don’t have to adopt our theology of ministry carte blanche, but here’s what I do ask of you: **Use these eight principles to help you think critically about how and why people serve in your church.** As you work through each one, let it spur you toward clarifying your own theology of ministry, so you can move forward with building your ministry system on a proper foundation.

Principle #1: **Ministry simply means to serve.**

We often confuse people with our language. When your members hear you say that you want them to get involved in ministry, they don’t understand what that really means. The word *ministry* causes them to tailspin into thoughts like, “Ministry? Oh, I’m not qualified. I would have to go through a bunch of training or get ordained or something.... I can’t commit to that.” You and I understand that we are simply asking our people to volunteer. We are calling

them to engage the gifts and abilities God has given them, by serving Jesus through the local church. Make sure your members understand that being involved in ministry doesn't mean they have to go to seminary or join the staff. Ministry simply means to serve.

—→ **Principle #2:**
**Serving is the act of putting the needs of others
before our own needs.**

Serving is an expression of selflessness. Unfortunately, our modern cultural mindset is one of wanting to be served rather than serving — and that's as true in our churches as anywhere else. In fact, I believe that selfishness is one of the greatest sins we face in today's church. Everyone wants to be served; few are interested in serving. Even those who are willing to volunteer often let selfishness creep into their service. You've seen it: People who become overly comfortable in *their* position and are unwilling to give anyone else an opportunity; or servers who will do their job willingly, but have no interest in bolstering the kingdom by training others.

Selfishness, which does nothing but foster the status quo, is comfortable. Putting others' needs first can be awkward and messy. But just as you and I have been called to serve selflessly, so have each and every one of our people. We have a duty to lead them toward the life of service that Jesus emulated. As he says in Matthew 20:28, "For even I, the son of man, came here not to be served, but to serve others."

—→ **Principle #3:**
**The goal of the ministry system is to
help people become like Jesus.**

As church leaders, you and I are responsible for helping our people become more and more like Jesus. That's God's goal for every individual he has placed under your care. As Paul wrote to the early Christians in Rome,

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And

having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. (Romans 8:29)

God chose each one of us and called us to himself so that we would become like his Son. That's the ultimate goal. So, as you begin to think about developing an effective ministry system and doubling your volunteer base, the real question isn't "How many more volunteers can I have?" but rather "How many of my people are more like Jesus because they are connected in serving?"

→ **Principle #4:**
**You cannot become like Jesus Christ
unless you learn to be a servant.**

Helping people learn to be servants, then, is an essential part of discipleship. In order to strip away selfishness and move people toward being servants, we need to model servanthood, teach on servanthood, and challenge volunteers onward as we celebrate and reproduce the Jesus-like characteristics in their lives. Just remember: Serving is essential to becoming like Jesus.

"Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."

— Philippians 2:2-5 (NLT)

→ **Principle #5:**
**Serving opens people's hearts to God
and therefore is part of worship.**

This foundation has profound implications for both Christians and non-Christians. Before an unbeliever can come to know Jesus and worship him in truth, God has to open his heart to the reality of the gospel. In my experience, non-Christians who find themselves in serving situations become receptive to God's work in their life much more readily than those who don't serve. Here's my theory: The portion of a person's heart that is closed to God is guarded by a door that swings on the hinges of service. When someone starts serving others, the hinges loosen up and that closed door begins to swing open.

For Christians, service not only opens people's hearts to worship but also stands as an act of worship in and of itself. When we present our bodies and our time to God as willing servants, we are worshiping him. Take a look at another piece of Paul's letter to the Roman church:

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice — the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. (Romans 12:1)

Believers who give themselves to God through service, as an act of worship, are essentially pouring themselves out for the benefit of others. They are putting the needs of someone else before their own needs. Then, when these servants approach God in their quiet time or in corporate worship, he finds their sacrifice acceptable and is faithful to refill them — so they can go and pour themselves out again.

Too often you and I are hesitant to call people to ministry because we think the request will be seen as self-serving. We fall into feeling like we are trying to recruit people for our own purposes. Such thinking is completely off base. If your vision is aligned with God's purposes for your church, asking people to get involved with that vision is asking them to start doing the most important thing they can do in life. You are calling them to an act of worship.

 **Principle #6:**
**If people aren't serving, they aren't truly
worshiping and growing in their faith.**

Given this theological foundation, serving is a good way to measure worship and growth in your church. Let's get practical here. You can use serving to measure how deeply people are worshiping and how much they are growing by implementing the **30/50/20 Rule**. Studies have shown that growth in most churches correlates with the number of people serving. In the majority of churches, the numbers aren't great. Typically, 95 percent of the people are sitting, soaking, and souring while 5 percent are serving. Have you ever pastored that church? I know I have.

One of my favorite images of ministry is the football game analogy. Go to any college or professional football game and you'll see 22 people on the field who are

in desperate need of rest and tens of thousands of people in the stands who are in desperate need of exercise. Too often, that's how our churches look. We have lots of people sitting on the sidelines who desperately need to grow, while the small minority who does everything desperately needs to take a break. That game plan may work in sports, but it will hinder your church in terms of both spiritual and numerical growth.

The Pareto Principle, also known fittingly as “The Law of the Vital Few,” holds that approximately 80 percent of all results come from 20 percent of causation factors. In our language, this principle would equate to 80 percent of the ministry is done by 20 percent of the people. Sadly, in most churches, the percentage of involvement is much lower. Which is why, I suppose, all of the books I've ever read on ministry contend that getting the Pareto Principle going in our churches would be an impressive feat; they think that having 20 percent of churchgoers doing 80 percent of the work would be a good thing. I don't agree; I believe God has more in store for our people and his church. The Pareto Principle, while it has its place in many areas of economic thought, shouldn't apply to our ministry efforts. God's plan is for far more than 20 percent of his children to be actively involved in his work. Let's challenge such limited thinking and take on God's point of view instead.

To that end, here's how the 30/50/20 Rule: At any given time, I want 30 percent of our church to be sitting on the sidelines. I think of them as pre-servers. There's never been a week where we missed that goal, as you can imagine — sometimes we greatly surpass it! Next, I want 50 percent of our church serving one hour per week. They may be leading a growth group, singing on the worship team, serving as an usher or greeter, working in the kids' area, or whatever else they are best suited to do. The point is that they are involved in serving in some way for an hour each week. As the church grows, the number of active servers expands accordingly. **If you consistently hit that 50 percent mark, you will never be lacking for volunteers.**

The 20 percent part of the measurement doesn't directly concern the ministry system. Briefly, I want to have 20 percent of the church involved in some kind of evangelism or outreach ministry. For example, they may invite a friend to church or take part in a formal evangelism project or event. That may not be where you want to focus the last 20 percent. Feel free to modify the measurement in the way that best fits your church.

The church is a body, made up of systems. Well, the 30/50/20 Rule provides you with an accurate snapshot of your pulse and blood pressure combined. If you are hitting close to the 30/50/20 mark, you have a healthy heart rate. Maybe right now, your equation looks more like 85/10/5. Start working to move those numbers in the direction you want them to go. Your first goal may be to change

your current equation to 65/20/15. The important thing is to figure out where you are, and then set your benchmarks and work toward them.

—→ **Principle #7:**
**Mobilizing people for ministry is
part of discipleship.**

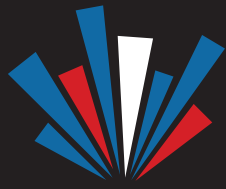
If someone in your church is not serving, he is not growing as a disciple. If he isn't serving, he's less likely to be sharing his faith, spending time in Scripture and in prayer, and giving in a God-honoring way. In short, if he isn't serving, he is not going to be able to honor God with all of the other areas of his life. Your job and mine, as church leaders, is to disciple people. We are called to help them down the path of offering their whole lives to God. Mobilizing them for ministry is an indispensable part of that discipleship.

—→ **Principle #8:**
**The role of the pastor is to equip
people for ministry.**

As a pastor, if I am doing everything by myself, I am robbing the people in my church of opportunities to grow. Having a do-it-yourself attitude is dangerous when it comes to ministry. It's in my best interests not only as a pastor but also as a kingdom builder to mobilize as many people as possible to be involved in ministry. I am called to equip them. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:11-13,

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

Our responsibility is not to be a one-man show; our responsibility is to equip people to do God's work, and to build up his church in doing so.



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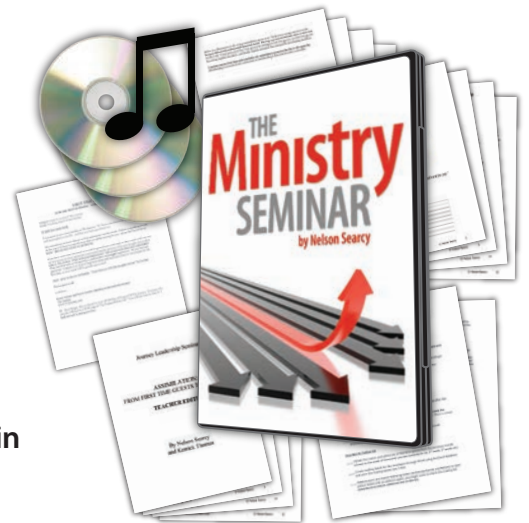
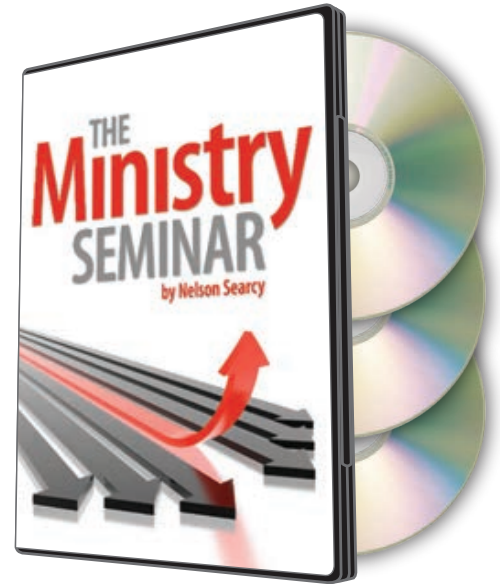
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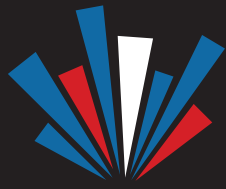
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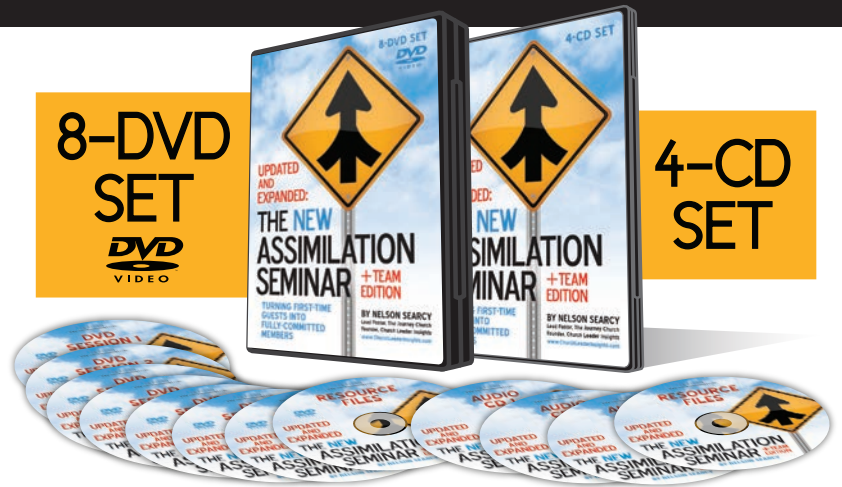


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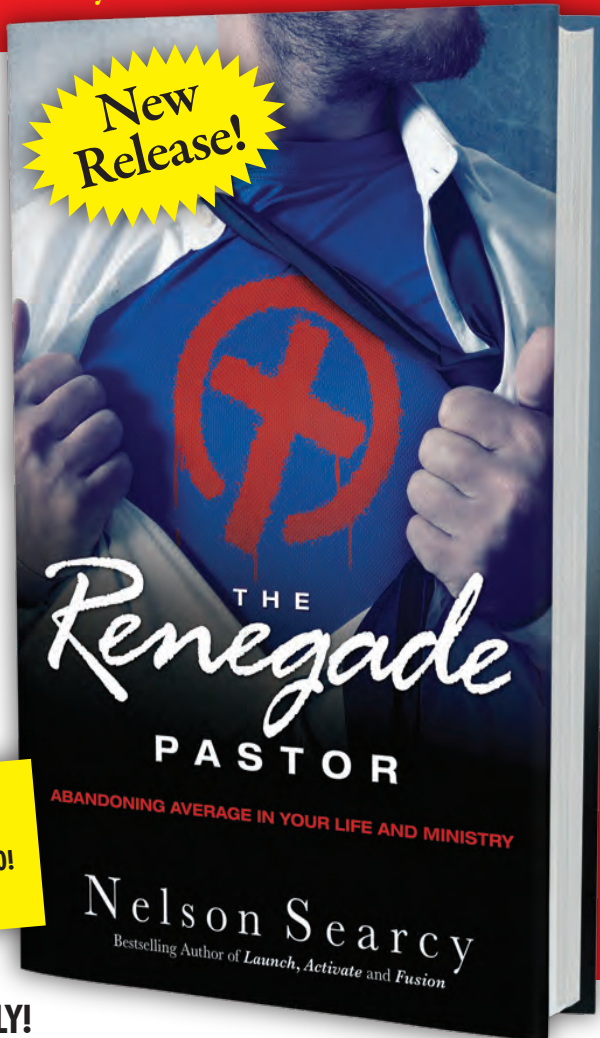
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NELSON SEARCY is the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church. Started in 2002 in New York City, this ground-breaking church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently meets in Manhattan, Queens, San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL. He is the author of over seventy-five church-growth resources and ten books. Nelson is also an experienced church planter, coach and church-growth strategist. He is also the founder of ChurchLeaderInsights.com, the Church Leader Training Ministry of Nelson Searcy and The Journey Church.

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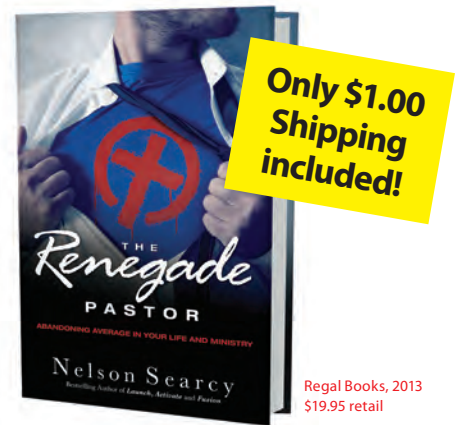
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Do the math: that's \$813.20 in bonuses!

Just a few of the benefits you'll receive:

- A **monthly Leadership and Strategy Briefing LIVE conference call** with me where you'll be challenged and guided to maximize your ministry each month. Each call is packed with content and gives you the opportunity to engage directly with me during a "pastor to pastor" Q-and-A section. You'll learn a "fatal flaw" in your church systems and several practical tips to better fulfill your calling. **PLUS, if you can't make the live call, you'll receive MP3 and CD recordings of the complete conference call.**
- A **monthly Equipping Interview Call** where I'll interview a leading author on their newest book. Past interviews include Gary McIntosh, Tim Stevens, Steve Stroope, Patrick Lencioni, Bill Easum and Larry Osborne.
- **MP3 and CD recordings of both the briefing and interview calls.** Don't worry if you can't make the live calls – you won't miss a thing.
- **FREE Church Growth Champions newsletter**, featuring pioneers of church growth and evangelism to inspire you and your ministry.
- **30 FREE book summaries per year**, provided through a partnership with the premiere executive book summary service available to pastors.
- **FREE Growth Points Newsletter**, written by church growth expert Dr. Gary McIntosh, Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot School of Theology. You'll be able to keep up with the latest research and learnings on church growth and church health.
- **Members-only online hub**, where you can access your files, resources and recordings at all times.
- **Continually updated Renegade Pastors documents and directory.**
- **And much more!**



Regal Books, 2013
\$19.95 retail



Also, as a member of the Renegade Pastors Network, you always have access to the best discounts on any new event or resources opportunity:

- You're the first to know about my new resources, and can grab them at an exclusive discount.
- My LIVE events always have special pricing just for Renegade Pastors, and we host regular Renegade Pastors Conferences – always in a travel destination like Orlando or LA – that are FREE for you to attend!
- You get a members-only 30% discount on all Church Leader Insights resources.

Are you ready to go Renegade? Get your NEW *Renegade Pastor* book, PLUS TWO FREE MONTHS of the Renegade Pastors Network – for just ONE DOLLAR!
Grab your copy here: www.RenegadePastors.com/onedollar

**ACCELERATE
YOUR
GROWTH!**

A SPECIAL INVITATION FROM NELSON SEARCY



Dear fellow Senior Pastor,

I want to give you the best opportunity to make this the most impactful year yet for your ministry, so today I'm inviting you to take the next step in your church growth by joining my **Senior Pastor Coaching Network**. The window is closing to get into the network at this special rate - there are only a few spots left. Once it's filled, that will be it.

Senior Pastor Coaching helps you go in-depth with me on the **Eight Systems of a Healthy Church** through online, on-demand coaching modules that you can access anytime!

The results? **An average 25% increase in your attendance and a 20% increase in giving!**

There's never been a better time to join: You'll lock in a **VIP RATE** and save up to **\$1,800.00** a year!

Thank you for considering this invitation!

Your coach,

*Filling up -
act now before this
network closes!*

Here are just a few examples of the typical results that pastors see as part of my Senior Pastor Coaching Network:



"Joining the Senior Pastor Coaching Network will be a personal and ministry- impacting experience. It brings real clarity to what's required to lead a growing church. It will be an investment into yourself and your ministry."

Jesse Giddens, Destiny Christian Center, Apple Valley, CA



"Being a part of this network has helped me to lead our church more effectively, reverse what had been a slow decline, mobilize greater numbers of our people in outreach and service, reach and retain more new people, and significantly raise the level of generosity in our church."

Robert Haynes, New Life Community, Olive Branch, MS



"Second only to my relationship with God is my family. In a growing church this can be a challenge. I am thankful for Nelson's coaching to keep my priorities God honoring. I have seen so many pastors struggle in their marriage and their kids end up resenting the church. The principles I have learned have helped me make my marriage better than ever and both my boys love the church. All the while having 6 years of steady growth the church is now 5 times larger than we started. It is possible."

Michael Shreve, Mountain West Church, Stone Mountain, GA

**NELSON SEARCY
COACHING LADDER
FOR CHURCH HEALTH
AND GROWTH**

**SENIOR PASTOR
COACHING
NETWORK**

- Online, on-demand modules
- In-depth training on all 8 systems
- Direct access to Nelson and the CLI team
- Over **\$1,679.00** in **FREE CLI** resources

**RENEGADE
PASTORS
NETWORK**

Foundational
network

**Yes Nelson, I want
to join NOW!**

**I'm ready to join the NEW online Senior Pastor Coaching Network!
Visit www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com/Coaching**

You can also call Scott Whitaker at 561.921.8488 ext. 5



NETWORK OVERVIEW

- Systems Overview
- Assimilation
- Stewardship Part 1
- Evangelism Part 1
- Evangelism Part 2
- Small Groups
- Worship Planning
- Stewardship Part 2
- Ministry
- Leadership and Staffing
- Personal Leadership
- Strategy



PLUS, you'll receive a "Coaching Blueprint" that gives you specific next steps!

As you prepare to join, please consider that:

- One new tither will pay for this network.
- The average increase in attendance is 25%.
- The average increase in giving is 20% of your overall budget.
- I'll be there step by step to help you implement.
- There's no other network like this!

In just the first year of the Senior Pastor Coaching Network, you'll receive:

- Monthly online sessions: Hands-on coaching from Nelson on all eight systems.
- Over \$1,679.00 in FREE resources from Church Leader Insights (including all eight systems seminars) in your first year, PLUS special discounts on any new resources.
- Regular group Q-and-A calls to ask your specific questions.
- Unlimited email access to me and my entire CLI team.
- FREE attendance at CLI (live or web) training events during your network (up to \$1,249.00 value).

Add the online Senior Pastor Coaching Network to your membership now, and get immediate access to the Systems Overview as soon as you join!

ON-DEMAND:

Available now via a new **on-demand, online module format**, where you can participate at your convenience each month. Your experience will be identical, no matter when you log in.

IN-DEPTH:

Led by me, this network is based on the **8 Systems of a Healthy Church** that I've identified and taught to thousands of churches, through books, resources and live events. You'll receive **online coaching sessions** over the course of this network that you can fully participate in anytime. And unlike other networks, **you'll receive both the audio and video.**

I want to grow in 2016!

AFFORDABLE:

Lock in the lowest monthly rate available now, saving up to \$1,800 in the first year! Get FREE access to the Renegade Pastors Network, PLUS over \$1,679.00 in new bonus resources, including all eight Systems Seminars!

Yes Nelson, I want to join NOW!

**I'm ready to join the NEW online Senior Pastor Coaching Network!
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