

# THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Sometime small changes can have significant long-term effects on the impact of our church's ministry.





## Other names for the Butterfly Effect would be:

- The effect of personal spiritual growth
- The effect of a changing spiritual culture
- The effect of discipleship on church health
- The effect of making disciples who make disciples
- The effect of a different strategy for teaching and learning



Many churches have built a church foundation of ministry that looks something like this:

Sunday School - for all ages, open groups, 1 hour, use curriculum

Sunday Worship - contemporary, blended, or traditional

- Worship leader with either choir or a praise team

Wednesday Programs

- Music practice, Bible groups for children, students and adults

Deacon Ministry

Men or Women's Ministry

Special Events – VBS, Christmas, Easter, Revival, Special Speakers, Fall Festival, Children's Camp, Student and Adult Mission Trip



## Questions and Answers

Question - “If we make some of these suggested additions, what is this going to cost financially?”

Answer – Almost nothing or very little.

Question – “Is it going to be easy?”

Answer – No. It is never going to be easy to change habits, or a culture. It is going to take training, acting intentionally, evaluation and correction as we try new ideas. If it doesn't work, we make course corrections and try again. It takes time and effort.



## What are the cultural challenges we are facing today?

1. Many churches are declining, plateaued or struggling to grow.
2. It used to be about 70%+, but now 10% of the new generation attends church.
3. The older people who make up the foundation of many churches are passing away and are not easily being replaced.
4. Many church members do not regularly read or study their Bible.
5. Many church members do not feel comfortable explaining the gospel.
6. Many church members have not memorized key Bible verses.





## What are the cultural challenges we are facing today?

7. Volunteer leaders in church do not always train new leaders.
8. Parents may or may not feel equipped to disciple their children. A large percentage of children who graduate high school stop attending church.
9. Living together without marriage and divorce are becoming the normal experiences of many families in America.
10. Some churches hesitate to begin Bible studies in homes in addition to S.S.
11. The average S.S. curriculum does not train teachers to facilitate learning.



## What are the cultural challenges we are facing today?

12. Seminary, books and conferences emphasize knowledge, but not skill.  
Pastors may need ideas and tools to train church staff for greater leadership.
13. Many church members feel comfortable with Christian friends but may feel uncomfortable trying to live out their faith at work and in the community.
14. Our "greeting" culture sometimes stops at saying "hello" at the church door.
15. In America, single adults (never married and formerly married) are an unreached people group. Many churches struggle to reach single adults.



## Suggestions to Consider

1. *"I have hidden your Word in my heart."* (Psa 119:11) Consider looking for ways to encourage **individual Bible reading** which includes actively engaging with what they are reading. (Examples: Underlining, answering questions, writing questions, retell it in their own words.)
  - Ask members to read the verses you will be preaching on this week before they come on Sunday.
  - Ask members to read the verses they will discuss in Sunday School before they come on Sunday. Ask them to pick out their three favorite verses and be ready to tell what they learned.
  - Ask members to join you in reading a chapter a day of any Bible book for the next month and have a way for someone to share what they learned (maybe a 1-minute testimony in worship?)





## Suggestions to Consider

2. **Personal Discipleship.** Sunday School classes often have 10 to 30 people. Look for ways to create smaller groups that have more personal relationships and do hands-on ministry together.
- Some churches have weekly small groups with 6 or 8 people.
  - Some S.S. classes break out into discussion groups with 4-6 people.
  - Some churches have D-groups with three men or three women who meet weekly for one year to study and pray together.
  - Some deacons choose a man to be their assistant and do ministry together with them.
  - Some teachers work with 2 or 3 “teachers in training” and coach them and let them practice.



## Suggestions to Consider

**3. Personal Evangelism Training.** We have heard for years the statistic that most Christians have never explained the gospel to another person and helped them come to faith in Christ. Consider ways that you can begin with staff, deacons and teachers and help them become the expert coaches in your church on “How to explain the gospel to someone else.”

Look for the baby steps that you can help church members to take:

- Practice telling their personal faith story that includes the gospel to 20 people individually.
- Memorize 10 verses on Salvation (John 1:12, John 3:3, John 3:16, John 5:24, John 6:29, etc.)
- Practice explaining the gospel to 20 Christians individually.
- Practice explaining the gospel to 20 church guests or new members individually.



## Suggestions to Consider

### 4. **Multiplication of Leaders.**

Some churches don't have an easy time recruiting leaders. It isn't always easy to find people with experience, spiritual maturity, availability, skill and passion.

Leaders who presently serve are not often asked to make training more leaders a priority.

Just like everything else, leadership is a learned skill that takes practice - lots of practice.

In every area of our church ministry, we need to have a leadership training strategy.

In the children's ministry, student ministry, adult ministry, music, preaching, evangelism, discipleship and missions, we need to constantly be helping prospective leaders to practice.



# Suggestions to Consider

## 5. **Helping Parents Disciple Their Children**

Parents who did not grow up in church may not feel confident in their own spiritual growth or their ability to help their children understand the Bible and grow spiritually.

They need tools. What simple one-page tool could we give parents to lead a family devotional?

They need training and practice. What kind of practice workshop can we provide once a year?

They need support. Who will be following up to provide ongoing coaching?

They need a strategy. When does the parent talk? When does the child read/study on their own?

When do family members share with one another what they are learning in a group setting?

When does the family practice serving others and putting what they learn into action?



# Suggestions to Consider

## 6. Home Bible Studies

There is nothing wrong with providing options – Bible study groups at church and at a home.

Home groups provide some advantages:

- You could include a meal and the informal fellowship/friendship time that this provides
- You have more time – 1 1/2 to 2 hours is not uncommon
- You have flexibility to choose a variety of curriculum materials or none at all (just the Bible)
- You have the option to be a closed group with homework and greater accountability.
- It provides a chance to train more group leaders
- It is often easier to invite friends and family who cannot come on a Sunday morning





# Suggestions to Consider

## 7. **Sunday School Teachers Who Facilitate, Not Lecture**

Lecture is not the best way to teach or to learn. Ask yourself what you remember from the sermon you heard a month ago or the conference speaker you heard three months ago.

Learning needs several different ways of **engagement** and lots of **practice** before it becomes a habit and part of our long-term memory.

Engagement - read, write, hear, discuss, demonstration, explaining to someone else

Practice - we need teachers who help facilitate repetitive practice in their classes - praying for someone else, reading and sharing what they learned, explaining an idea to others, leading a discussion group, and many different ways of serving others - children, adults, friends, strangers



# Suggestions to Consider

## 8. **Mentoring Staff Members**

In an ideal world, you would hire someone and set them free to follow their passion and vision.

We don't live in an ideal world.

We need to brainstorm as a team to find the best ideas.

We need to evaluate after each event to find ways to improve and gain excellence.

We need to train and coach so that we are all on the same page and going in the same direction.

New leaders/young leaders often don't have the experience to avoid pitfalls and dangers.

We, the more experienced leaders, need to understand our role as a coach in order to help young pastors and ministers have a long and fruitful ministry.



# Suggestions to Consider

## 9. **Church Members Serving the Community**

Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

We help others when we serve, and our heart for people grows larger.

Urge every class/small group to do service projects together several times a year.

Make community opportunities known and form teams who can meet some of those needs.

Could you have a wall, a bulletin board, or monthly emails that celebrate service projects.

Do special mission trips, and local churchwide service projects occasionally.

Enlist families who will do neighborhood service projects or block parties several times a year.



# Suggestions to Consider

## 10. **Training More Greeters**

Sometimes our vision for the “Greeter” ministry is too small.

- What if we had greeters who gave tours of the church on Sunday morning for a new guest?
- What if we had greeters who walked with guests to introduce them to a S.S. teacher?
- What if we had greeters inside the worship center having conversations?
- What if every S.S. class had greeters who walked with guests and sat with them in worship?
- What if greeters met people in the parking lot, not just at the front door?
- What if greeters visited the home of every new guest with information about the church?
- What if we had a monthly reception lunch for new guests and new members?



# Suggestions to Consider

## 11. **Greater Sensitivity to Single Adults**

- It's rare for churches to reach out to students on the college campus.
- It's rare for a church to have a large number of college students attending their church.
- Single adults (never married & formerly married) are an unreached people group in your city.
- Consider having a goal to start a small group Bible study for each decade of single adults (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60+)
- Consider starting a divorce support group and a grief support group
- Looks for ways you can provide additional support and encouragement for single parents.





# The Butterfly Effect Could Change the Lives of Families and Your Church

In addition to the foundational ministries of your church:

- Increase individual Bible reading, evangelism training, and help parents teach their children
- Increase personal discipleship and start more small groups in homes
- Coach new leaders and mentor the ministry staff at your church
- Change the teaching strategy of your groups – more homework, more discussion, more practice
- Look for more ways to send individuals and groups into the community to meet needs
- Radically grow the greeter and hospitality ministry
- Think about new ways to reach out to single adults who make up 40% of your city

*Mt 25:23 Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.*

*1 Thess 2:8 Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.*