

Committee Report

The



Movement

Committee Members

Wes Bartel, Chairman
Efraim Espinoza

Saturnino González
Clancy Hayes

INTRODUCTION

Action taken by the Executive Presbytery in their January, 2006 meeting requested that the Board of Administration appoint a committee to study and make recommendation concerning the G-12 and Tres Dias Movements. This study was to include its history, context, and possible guidelines regarding how these emphases could be used within a local Assemblies of God church context.

During the January 24, 2006 meeting of the Board of Administration, a committee was appointed in fulfillment of that request. The study committee, consisting of, Westley Bartel, Chairman; Saturnino González, Clancy Hayes, and Efraim Espinoza, met on April 21, 2006. The agenda for that meeting included,

- Overview of Responsibilities
- Overview of the G-12 Movement
- Available Responses from District and National Bodies
- Positive Aspects of the G-12 Movement
- Negative Aspects of the G-12 Movement
- Doctrinal Concerns
- Recommended Strategies for Response

Resources for this study included, 7 books written by Cesar Castellanos (these are referenced in the attached bibliography), and numerous articles and papers addressing this issue. We also requested input from pastors and church leaders who are using (or have used) the G-12 template of ministry. In addition, we have sought information from missionaries and other district and national leaders who have had experience with this movement.

My sincere appreciation is extended to each person who served on the committee. Their insight and wisdom were indispensable to this process. It is our sincere hope that this report will provide a balanced, honest assessment of the G-12 movement and will be useful to you as leaders in your task of providing direction and scriptural insight to our great constituency.

HISTORY

After pastoring several small churches in Bogotá, Columbia, and seeing little results of his labor, Cesar and Claudia Castellanos resigned in frustration. He states, “I turned in my letter of resignation with the intent of not doing anything until the Lord confirmed the more specific purpose of my call.”¹

Four months elapsed. Finally, while on vacation with his family on the Atlantic coast of Colombia he states that God spoke to him. He recounts the experience, “While sitting on a rocking chair by the seashore I felt the presence of the Lord like I had never before experienced. On that day, God’s voice penetrated deep into my being and He said, *“I am the Ancient of Days. Prepare your heart in worship because I’m going to use you.”* He states, “I surrendered every little particle of my existence to the Lord. Then, I listened and God said, *“I’m going to rock your chair.”* As I was still sitting, waiting for Him to do it, nothing happened. I began to rock the chair until I heard His voice again, this time telling me, *“I can rock your chair Myself, but I prefer to do it through you. I can speak to lost souls Myself, but I prefer to do it through you. I have chosen you as a pastor, Dream of a very big church because dreams are the language of my spirit! The church that you will shepherd will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. It will be so big that it will be countless.”*²

From that experience, Pastor Castellanos says, he learned the importance of daring to dream. The next month, in March of 1983, he started the International Charismatic Mission with eight people.

The expansion of the G12 model has been dramatic. It moved from South America to Britain where in 1999, Kensington Temple, led by Edmundo Ravelo adopted the system. They

¹ Adapted from the book, *Dream and you will Win the World*, authored by Cesar Castellanos

² Adapted from the book, *Dream and you will win the world*, authored by Cesar Castellanos

quickly grew from 40 to nearly 4,000 members. From there it moved to Kensington Temple under the leadership of Pastor Colin Dye. It was implemented in September of 2001. Many other churches in Britain have joined the network since that time including Metro Church with Pastor Ken Gott, and the Vine Church with Pastor Jimmie Dowds. The network has since spread to Singapore and Faith Community Baptist Church under the leadership of Lawrence Khong, Australia, Japan, and finally the United States where Pastor Larry Stockstill of Bethany World Prayer Centre in Baker, Louisiana has embraced the model. . Many others have chosen not to adopt the system in its entirety but have adapted it. Within the Assemblies of God, these churches include, Iglesia El Calvario in Orlando, Florida with Pastor Saturnino González, Calvario Templo in Santa Anna, California with Danial DeLeon as pastor, First Assembly Shreveport Community Church in Shreveport, Louisiana with Pastor Denny Duron, and First Assembly of God, Honolulu, Hawaii with Pastor Klayton Ko, and others.

THE G12 VISION

After founding the International Charismatic Mission, Cesar Castellanos journeyed to Korea where he spent considerable time with Dr. Yonggi Cho. This resulted in the adoption of Cho's cell church model. By the end of 1991 he had begun over 70 cells. However, he was still unhappy with the rate of growth within the church. He states that, in a vision, God showed him the missing link; the concept now called G12.

This "vision" has two core components. The first is a very strict adherence to the "Government of 12." He writes, "I began to see Jesus' ministry with clarity. The multitudes followed, but He didn't train the multitudes. He only trained 12. Then the Lord asked me another question: *"If Jesus trained 12, should you win more than 12 or less than 12?"* He goes on to state, "The model of 12 is something supernatural that the Lord Jesus implemented. He intended that His ministry should grow and move forward in this direction. The model came

from the heart of the Father to the heart of Jesus and as I sought a vision to win great multitudes, it came to my heart from the heart of Jesus.”³

He carries this thought further when he asks: “What is the significance of the number twelve? How important is that number? Well, I ask you, where would Christianity be today if Jesus had not chosen twelve disciples? Who would have written the Gospels? What would Israel be if Jacob had not had twelve sons? The nation of Israel would never have had twelve tribes. Throughout the Bible, we see that the number twelve is the number God chose to represent government.” He then states, “When God created man, he established time and space. That means that God used what was eternal and established twelve governments. He called them months, and the sum of these twelve months would equal one year. This is how He created time. God established the G12 to bring order and organizational structure to the church.”⁴

The second component is the “Ladder of Success.” At this stage, everyone is encouraged to attain a leadership qualification through the School of Leaders. This entire process is developed through steps called, “The Ladder of Success.”

The steps in this process are; Winning, Consolidating, Discipleship, and Sending.

- ***Win Them:*** It is at this stage that evangelism takes place. It is achieved primarily through the function of cells and also in the larger congregational meetings. Aggressive evangelism is considered a normative practice with anyone who is part of the G12 experience.
- ***Consolidate Them:*** Consolidation is the foundation on which new disciples are built. This process usually takes place in the cell or in the church with a team of specially trained leaders. Members of the consolidation team are assigned to new believers to enroll them in weekly Life Cell gatherings and guide them through a short “Pre-Encounter” course. They are then registered in an “Encounter Weekend.” During this weekend they “Encounter God” through teachings on inner healing, deliverance, generational curses, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the vision of the church. Following the retreat, they are encouraged to attend a ten-week new believers’ class called “Post-Encounter.” The purpose of this is to verify the conversion experience and to teach “correct” attitudes toward life.

³ Adapted from the book, *Successful Leadership through the Government of 12*. Authored by Cesar Castellanos

⁴ Adapted from the book, *The Key to Multiplication* authored by Cesar Castellanos

- ***Disciple Them:*** Immediately after the completion of the consolidation process, the new disciple enters the School of Leaders. This consists of three ten-week trimesters of study. During the second trimester, the individual will begin their own cell group. However, they will also continue meeting in their original group which now becomes their leadership or G12 group.
- ***Send Them:*** As the disciple progresses through the School of Leaders, he begins his personal Cell Group and starts to develop his own twelve. The process begins again and he leads each member through each step of the process of the G12 vision, winning them, consolidating them, discipling them, and eventually sending them out.

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POSITIVE ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Participation in small groups or cell groups has risen dramatically within the past few years. In the United States alone, it is estimated that nearly 80 million adults are involved in some form of small group ministry.⁶ Within the church, there are numerous ways of defining small groups. Hadaway, Wright and DuBose categorize them as, home Bible Study, the home fellowship group, base-satellite units, the home cell group, and the house church⁷. In its pure form, G12 is a home cell church movement.

While, there are substantial areas of concern regarding the G12 movement (which will be addressed later), there are some positive elements that should be acknowledged.

Intentional, aggressive evangelism: A term often used in G12 churches is “Multiplication.” Cesar Castellanos states that in 1991 God revealed to him the potential for multiplication using the G12 vision. He states, “I could hear deep in my heart the voice of the Holy Spirit, *‘If you train twelve people and reproduce Christ’s character in them which is in you, and if each one of them does the same with another twelve, and if these in turn do the same with*

⁵ Information adapted from the book, *The Ladder of Success* authored by Cesar Castellanos

⁶ Statistics taken from the book, *The State of the Church: 2006* compiled by George Barna. He estimates that nearly 55 per of all individuals involved in small groups are from Evangelical background.

⁷ Information used from the book, *Home Cell Groups and House Churches*. Nashville, Broadman Press [1987]

another twelve, transmitting the same to each, you and your church will experience unprecedented growth.” He further states, “I immediately realized the multiplication of ministerial development that we would soon have. After God showed me a vision of multiplication at an exceptional rate, and how to do it in only one year, the only thing I could say was, ‘My God, this is extraordinary.’”⁸

Growth within the G12 movement is due to the fact that in the model everyone is challenged to define and embrace their own personal and ministerial growth objectives. Everyone involved in a group of twelve must commit to aggressive personal evangelism. Personal spiritual success is defined by the establishment of a personal group of 12. Cesar Castellanos states, “When someone discovers the power and the authority that can be developed by being a leader of twelve persons, he then desires to enable others to acquire their own group of twelve.”

The true success of this movement will ultimately be measured in light of its remaining fruit. However, we must acknowledge that this church has been expanding at a phenomenal growth rate. From 70 home groups at the beginning, CMI now claims over 30,000 cells.

It is probable that every pastor in our movement claims a like passion for souls and for multiplication within the church. However, the facts of a 2004 research project led by Thom Rainer are sobering. He found that it presently takes 86 church members in America one year to reach a person for Christ. I realize that these kind of statistical studies are imperfect. However, if it is even close we must face the reality that the church is not reproducing itself.

Effective Assimilation: While I do have some definite concerns regarding the “Encounter Retreats” I must acknowledge the effectiveness of the “consolidation” efforts within the G12 vision. This process is very intentional. It begins with verification of the individual’s

⁸ Adapted from the book, *Successful Leadership Through the Government of 12* authored by Cesar Castellanos [Page 123]

conversion experience. Then they are inserted into an intensive training and teaching regimen that addresses issues such as past sins, forgiveness, etc.

The “Encounter Retreat” is an important part of the consolidation process. This event anchors and inserts the new believer into the fellowship and establishes an accountability structure. The stated aim of the “Encounter” is *total transformation that will give birth to the character of Christ in the believer.*”⁹ While I am not convinced that this is in fact what always takes place, I do believe that we could derive some effective assimilation strategies from the Consolidation process that the church could (and should) use to effectively assimilate new believers.

Leadership Development: Someone has described today’s church as being very similar to Super Bowl Sunday. This is a day where 22 men desperately in need of rest are being watched by 22 million men desperately in need of exercise.

The stated goal of the G12 movement is, “To form every believer into a Leader.” This is accomplished through participation in the School of Leaders.

After completing the consolidation process the new disciple enters this intensive training venue. This school consists of three ten-week trimesters of study. During the second trimester, the student will actually begin their own cell group. The reality of this process is that new converts move from their initial conversion experience into church leadership within a six month period.

While it can (and should) be argued that this is not enough time to effectively develop spiritual leaders, it does provide a scenario that intentionally moves the new believer from audience to participant. It seems to me that this is a goal we should all strive for.

⁹ Adapted from the book, *The Ladder of Success*, Authored by Cesar Castellanos

CONCERNS WITH G12 MODEL

In light of the obvious success of the G12 movement in International Charismatic Mission in Bogotá, Colombia and in other churches around the world, should we question it?

The answer is yes!

Unfortunately, large numbers and spectacular growth can sometimes be very misleading. Our decisions concerning acceptable church growth methods must be based on more than a simple pragmatic evaluation. The fact that an available method works is not in itself, reason to embrace it. My fear is that many leaders will embrace this new concept without sufficient, critical, comprehensive study.

Our study of the G12 movement has identified some areas of concern that should be addressed before any endorsement or positive response is warranted within the movement.

DOCTRINAL CONCERNS

Spiritualization of the number 12: As referenced earlier, Pastor Castellanos contends that he received a special divine revelation concerning the spiritual implications of the number 12. I do not wish to challenge that claim in this report. Only time will prove or disprove its truth. However, I must acknowledge that the eisegetical application of the scriptural texts he provides to support his claims leave me almost speechless.

We are told for instance, that the number twelve was the primary key and catalyst to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Pastor Castellanos writes, “Jesus chose twelve disciples, yet there was one whose role was a weak link because he had his own agenda. The chain could not flow effortlessly because there was a loose link that prevented them from moving forward and conquering. For three-and-a-half years, the twelve did not multiply. Neither was there growth or worldwide revival because a link was not in sync, and that

prevented advancement. Subsequently, that link had to be replaced. The Lord removed that link and substituted it with another one. When that happened, Matthias' season began. Finally the wheel was complete and could function perfectly. When the final link was in place, the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the day of Pentecost. On that day Peter arose and they all received the anointing to be soul winners; 3000 people were added to the church that same day. For the course of three-and-a-half years they had not won any souls, but as soon as the last link was in place, 3000 conversions occurred.”¹⁰

We are instructed that, Habakkuk, the Prophet was upset and uncomfortable as he viewed the spiritual leaders around him and saw them doing things their own way. In response to his complaint in Habakkuk 1:14 God responded and said, “*Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.*” Castellanos affirms, “The Lord was talking about a vision of government that would come forth in the end times. It would reach the four corners of the earth....He was speaking of the Vision of the Government of Twelve.”¹¹

We are told that Ezekiel's vision represents the Government of Twelve. “That is why God showed the Prophet Ezekiel the vision of the restoration of the temple. In this vision, he saw water coming out from under the altar. The altar represents the Government of Twelve (the 12 stones of the altar). The vision Ezekiel witnessed was to be fulfilled in these last days. God's altar will be restored when we re-establish the Government of Twelve and come together in unity.”¹²

Ezekiel's vision provides yet another proof of biblical support for the Government of 12. According to Cesar Castellanos, the vision of the four living creatures represents the “Ladder of Success” and the vision of the wheel within the wheel represents the multiplication that happens

¹⁰ Adapted from the book, *The Key to Multiplication* [page 46] authored by Cesar Castellanos

¹¹ Taken from the book, *52 Teachings for the G12 Meetings* [Page 31] authored by Cesar Castellanos.

¹² Taken from the book, *52 Teachings for the G12 Meetings* [Page 32] authored by Cesar Castellanos.

when each leader functions in one spirit with the leader in the establishment of the Government of 12.¹³

We are told that Elijah would not have chosen Elisha if he had been plowing with eleven instead of twelve oxen.¹⁴

We are told that Moses, inspired by the government of 12, chose twelve spies to inspect the land. When this team of 12 was in place, the Lord then gave the strategic plan for the conquest of Canaan.¹⁵

There is little doubt that the number 12 is significant in Scripture. It does signify government and authority among men. However, other numbers are also very significant in Scripture. The number 10, the number 7, the number 40, and the number 3 are all representative of different scriptural truths. Yet, there is no evidence that these numbers were intended by God to provide a template for ministry or that the future success of the church depends in any way on their application. It is my opinion that any serious student of the Word of God will find the exegetical approach that Cesar Castellanos embraces very troubling.

Visualization Theology. Even a cursory reading of G12 documents and books reveal a troubling penchant toward this aberrant theology.

In his book, *Teachings for the G12 Meetings*, Pastor Castellanos writes, “We must understand visualization and practice it. We must see God’s hand removing evil and bringing blessing.” He also instructs his leaders, “Once you know the miracle you want and can see it clearly, you only have to give the word of authority for it to be revealed exactly as you dreamt. Then what we conquer in the spiritual realm can be brought by faith to the natural realm. And so in this way the Lord can transform the chaotic into something beautiful. He had only to decide

¹³ Taken from the book, *The Key to Multiplication* [Page 42] authored by Cesar Castellanos

¹⁴ Taken from an Audio Cassette. Bethany World Prayer Center, International Cell Conference, 2001

¹⁵ Taken from the book, *Successful Leadership Through the Government of 12*. [Page 132] authored by Cesar Castellanos

and then speak in order to see the miracle of creation fulfilled. And we are participants in this divine nature.¹⁶

To paraphrase, we visualize the miracles we want; which then only requires our words of authority. Since we are participants in this divine nature, we have the same authority as Christ to make it happen.

If this kind of statement were isolated or limited in the writings or curriculum, it would create less concern. However, it is not limited. The writings and curriculum developed by Cesar Castellanos are filled with this kind of instruction.

Kingdom Now or Dominion Theology. Between 1989 and 1990, Cesar Castellanos states that an important milestone was reached when his wife, Claudia began her political life in Colombia and they began to try to influence the government. They both have had active political careers since that time. From 1992 to 1994 Mrs. Castellanos was a State Senator. In 1998 Pastor Cesar Castellanos was elected to the Colombian House of Representatives.

It is important to stress that political involvement in itself is not wrong. In fact, it is to be commended. The problem in this instance however, is not the involvement itself, but the possible motive behind that involvement.

Cesar Castellanos states, “The principle of the twelve is a concept from God imprinted in Scripture as an inspiration for proper government, and a strategy for the conquest of nations.”¹⁷

The term, “conquest of nations” is a term used often in the writings of Cesar Casellanos. It is his stated opinion that, the principle of the twelve is the imminent biblical strategy to conquer entire nations.

¹⁶ Taken from the book *Developing a Supernatural Leadership*, authored by Cesar Castellanos

¹⁷ Taken from the book *Successful Leadership Through the Government of 12*, authored by Cesar Castellanos.

While it is entirely possible that this emphasis is more cultural in its intent than theological, it is important that we guard against doctrinal aberrations such as Kingdom Now Theology, Dominion Theology or Replacement Theology.

Apostolic Leadership Abuses. For Christians who still have a vivid memory of the shepherding movement and its controversies, the G12 movement looks almost like a re-incarnation. In fact, study shows us that the authority structures are almost identical.

Both incorporate a top-down structure which provides for a descending chain of authority that is “pyramidal” in practice. The problem with this hierarchical system is that it causes almost total inability of followers to challenge leaders. Unfortunately, the nature of man is corrupt, and so is his exercise of power. ¹⁸Cesar Castellanos writes, “When someone discovers the power and authority that can be developed by being a leader of twelve persons, he then becomes concerned about training, commitment and also gathering his twelve.” ¹⁹

OTHER CONCERNS

Excesses within Encounter. While it is my opinion that there are assimilation benefits associated with the encounter weekends, there are major areas of concern also. The encounter weekends address the following areas:

- Repentance
- Forgiveness
- Breaking of Curses
- Deliverance
- Inner healing
- Baptism with Water
- Baptism with the Holy Spirit
- The G12 Vision

¹⁸ Adapted from *Dominik's Journey Blog Archive*. [www.reinmund.net/Journey]. This provides interesting comparisons to the Shepherding Movement.

¹⁹ Taken from the book, *Successful Leadership Through the Government of 12*. authored by Cesar Castellanos

Unfortunately, the approach used to address some of these necessary areas has resulted in excesses. Some of these excesses include forgiving your mother for hurts while you were in the womb (Regression Therapy), forgiving ancestors for curses they placed on you, forgiving God for disappointing you or having “done you harm.” In one country, this included going to the cemeteries to talk to the dead, writing them letters and participating in reconciliation ceremonies forgiving the Spaniards for having invaded their country.²⁰

** Special note: Although Cesar Castellanos claims the “Encounter” as part of the vision given him by God; it is interesting to note that its schedule, its rules, and its opening and closing ceremonies are almost identical to the Catholic Cursillo and the Tres Dias Movements.

The “Franchising” of the G12 model. Franchising is a word that seems out of place when addressing issues of the church. However, that is exactly what has happened with the G12 model. Just as a McDonalds franchise has to follow exact standards, so do churches embracing the G12 vision. Pastor Castellanos states, “To implement the model of Twelve requires abandoning traditional methods and embarking on a totally different way. Growth is guaranteed if it is approached in faith. Don’t act like those who want to take the easy road trying to adopt a little from here and a little from there, thinking that if they take the best of the Korean model, the best of the El Salvadorian model, the best of the Honduran model and the best of the Colombian model, they will have the perfect model. This will never work because the model of Twelve is very specialized. You either embrace it entirely, or you do not, there is no middle ground for compromise.”²¹

When a church becomes a part of the G12 system, it must agree to several things:

²⁰ The Assemblies of God and G12. Judy Bartel Graner, Ph.D. Intercultural Studies, Latin American Advanced School of Theology

²¹ Taken from the book *Successful Leadership Through the Government of 12*. [Page 203] authored by Cesar Castellanos.

- Establish a covenant relationship with ICM to follow the G12 system in its entirety. This usually is in the form of a written agreement that also allows the participating churches to use ICM's materials and curriculum.
- They must follow the exact training track established by ICM which includes,
 - The Pre-encounter
 - The Encounter Retreat
 - The Post-encounter
 - The School of Leaders
- Promote the number twelve as God's special number.
- Become a part of the ICM network of churches, which also requires numerous trips to Bogotá or other designated locations.

Exclusivity of Model

In today's spiritual culture there are many different expressions of the church. They vary from traditional church to home church and they all have their unique strengths and weaknesses. Without question, God is employing many different methods to impact the world. It would be extremely arrogant to contend that only our unique church model is legitimate, or blessed of God. Yet that is exactly what Cesar Castellanos attempts to affirm.

It is his opinion that there is only one legitimate approach to developing an effective church. He states, "We have entered a new millennium and the Church must continue fulfilling the Great Commission with greater zeal. The harvest in this century will be so great that only those churches that adopt the cellular vision will reap its benefits. There is no alternative. The cellular church is the Twenty-first Century Church." He goes on to assert, "It can be said that any pastor who does not embrace cellular growth is stunting the spread of the gospel." He continues; "The parochial style of church, where there are no more than 200 people, will not be included in the cell model because each church that implements this model will have the capacity to possess at least 100,000 members." Then he reveals what he considers to be the only

legitimate cellular church, “It will have a specialized pastoral team coordinated through the government of Twelve, impacting an entire city or nation.”²²

It is not wise to emphatically state that any specific model is the only biblical way to structure the church. I would agree that the New Testament does offer support for the cell based church model. From a purely pragmatic view, it is an effective way to provide both small group and large group expression necessary for worship and celebration. However, I would reject any philosophy of ministry that contends it is the only way.

The Division Caused by this Model. Perhaps the best way to address this issue of concern is to reference an article by Dr. Joel Comiskey, a leading proponent of the cell-based church. He is also an author of a book *Groups of Twelve* (Touch Publications, 1999) that was very complementary to the G12 movement. He states: “My understanding of ICM comes from visiting ICM each year from 1996-2000 in order to write my two books..[but]...I [am] deeply troubled by what we are observing in the G12 movement today.” He then identifies the division caused by the movement as a primary area of concern: “In a very real way, the G12 movement has separated themselves from the cell church movement, claiming to be God’s new wineskin for the last days.” Listen to Ralph Neighbour’s appeal in a paper he submitted to the Cell Church Missions network in November 2002, “The concept of building a multilevel marketing structure that peaks in the authority of a special Global Apostle with his hand-picked assistants has now come into existence. Bedazzled by the promise of fast track growth for their congregations, pastors are kneeling to kiss the gold rings worn by the Apostles. At the same time, they are severing relationships with fellow cell church workers who are not among the devotees. In many parts of the world, painful reports are coming about pastors who one or two years ago were very

²² Taken from the book *Dream and you will Win the Word*, [Pages 201-204] authored by Cesar Castellanos

intimately involved in helping each other and working together in the cell movements in their cities but who now shun fellowship with others who did not bow before the Apostle's strategy."

"I hesitate, for example to freely send pastors to iron-clad G12 churches because instead of receiving an open-ended cell church message based on principles, they'll receive a one-way model that is either accepted or rejected. I am greatly saddened by the cleavage this is causing."²³

RECOMMENDATIONS

While Scripture does articulate some definite unchanging principles regarding church governance and structure it is seldom that any organization can claim that there is a specifically "right" or a "wrong" model. To reach our world, our communities, and our culture we must be willing to develop creative and flexible methods that tenaciously embrace scriptural principles, yet are willing to make necessary adjustments to those methods. Where would the church in China be if it were not for the Home Church model? Where would the church in Latin America be if it were not for the Cell Based model?

For this reason, we reject the claim that the G12 movement is uniquely and singularly God's approved template for effective church structure. While it may be effectively and successfully used by some, it should not be considered an unchangeable principle to be ***adopted*** but instead, a method that can be ***adapted*** to fit the specific need and vision of the individual congregation.

It is important to understand that the G12 model is, in its simplest form, a cell based church model. For most existing churches, implementing a cell based church model is at best very difficult, often disastrous. Many cell based church consultants acknowledge that the

²³ Taken from web sight, www.members.tripod.com. *Concerns about the G12 movement*, authored by Dr. Joel Comiskey

traditional church structure is incompatible with the new structure and so must change completely. Since all church ministries now find their expression within the context of the cell, all former programs such as Sunday School, music programs, children's ministries, youth ministries, midweek Bible studies, etc. must be discontinued. For that reason, a "transitioning" effort is usually recommended before implementation is attempted.

There are however, some principles currently embraced by the G12 movement that can be adapted to assist the local church.

- **Growth by multiplication instead of division:** The focus of many traditional churches is "Come." The focus of the G12 movement is "Go." This concept is both biblical and necessary if the church is to be effective in evangelism. Their method can be modified and used very effectively to experience church growth.
- **The Ladder of Success:** The "Ladder of Success" embraced by the G12 movement does provide a visible method of effective ministry from conversion to leadership. It could be used as it is or it could be adapted to fit individual church needs. It is interesting to note that our "We Build People" discipleship initiative provides almost identical steps (Membership: Include them, Maturity: Instruct them, Ministry: Involve them, and Mission: Invest them).
- **Consolidation:** The G12 consolidation process does have value in that it is an intentional method for confirmation of conversion. It then provides a method of assisting the new convert in breaking with their past and assimilating them into the church body. This method could be effectively adapted by the local church and would allow them to delete the questionable issues arising from the existing methods.
- **Intentional Leadership development:** G12 insists that every person can and should become a leader. They do that by moving the new convert into forming their own personal Group of 12. I embrace the idea that every person should become involved

in active ministry and this concept can and should be adapted to make involvement in the church desirable and intentional.

- **Effective and clear leadership training:** Many of the leadership training methods utilized by G12 are effective and can be used. One must guard however, against some of the “visioning” excesses embraced by the author.

In his book, *From 12 to 3*, Joel Comiskey cites some common principles and patterns found in all of the fastest growing worldwide cell churches. They include,

- Dependence on Jesus Christ through prayer
- Senior pastor giving strong, visionary leadership to the cell ministry
- Cell ministry promoted as the backbone of the church
- A clear definition of a cell group (weekly, outside the church building, evangelistic, pastoral care/discipleship, clear goal of multiplication)
- The passion behind cell ministry is evangelism and church growth
- Reproduction is the major goal of each cell group
- Cell and celebration attendance expected of everyone attending the church
- Clearly established leadership requirements for those entering cell ministry
- Required cell leadership training for all potential cell group leaders
- Cell leadership developed from within the church itself, at all levels
- A supervisory care structure for each level of leadership
- Cell leadership promoted to higher leadership positions based on past success
- Follow-up system of visitors and new converts administered through cell groups
- Cell lessons based on pastor’s teaching to promote continuity between cell and celebration

He states, “Without a clear understanding of basic cell church principles, the structure will only be a lifeless skeleton.”²⁴ I agree! However, when one reads through the above list, there is cause to wonder, why these same principles cannot be applied to any church system, whether traditional or otherwise?

²⁴ Adapted from the book *From 12 to 3*. How to Apply G-12 Principles in your Church, authored by Joel Comiskey

Often our solution to the problems of the past is to discard those past methods and create some new and dynamic method of ministry. To give it validity we often cloak it as a new revelation or a prophetic vision. However, the problem often lies not with our methods, but with the application of our methods. It is my opinion that the G12 Vision is, in reality, a method. When I look back at the history of the church, I realize that it is not even a new method. Like all methods, it has its weaknesses and its strength. It even has its dangers. My hope is that we will not make the same historic mistakes that we have made in the past but will view this new method through the lens of what history has revealed to us.

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