

History of Calvary Chapel

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Larry Jones

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History of Calvary Chapel

Mainline Christian denominations have been in a steady decline since the early 1960's. Decline is greatest among those denominations who have adopted liberal theological positions. Most mainline denominations have experienced little, if any, true growth during this period. “Although the rate of growth and decline has slowed in recent years, conservative churches continue to report growing memberships and liberal mainline churches continue to report declining memberships.”¹ Calvary Chapel is an example of a new paradigm church which has continued to grow since its inception in 1965. Calvary Chapel, and other new paradigm churches, have learned how to function, and recruit, successfully in a postmodern world by capitalizing on the therapeutic, individualistic, and anti-establishment themes of the 1960's counterculture. “New paradigm churches are growing while mainline churches are declining, because they address the issue of meaning for their audience in culturally appropriate ways.”²

Calvary's largest churches, mostly in Southern California, have experienced explosive growth. For example, Calvary Chapel – Costa Mesa, the “mother” church, seats 2,300 people. They hold three worship services each Sunday morning which fills their auditorium and frequently overflows to their seven hundred seat fellowship hall via closed-circuit television.

¹Robin D. Perrin, Paul Kennedy, and Donald E. Miller, “Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where Are the New Evangelical Movements Getting Their Numbers?,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (March 1997): 71.

²Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism. Christianity in the New Millennium*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 52. It should be noted that Miller draws on William James's analysis of religious experience and Max Weber's theory of religious change.

The Sunday evening service is equally well attended and also fills the auditorium.³ Although the larger churches garner much of the interest of church growth devotees, the median size of a Calvary Chapel congregation is 138 people with a median budget of \$70,000.⁴

Calvary Chapel is a dynamic group of loosely associated churches spread mostly throughout the United States (see figure 1) with some growth beginning to occur overseas. Only four states: North and South Dakota, West Virginia, and Delaware, do not have Calvary Chapel affiliates. Calvary Chapel's phenomenal growth in Southern California can be tied directly to the Jesus Movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's, though some scholars disagree whether Chuck Smith began the Jesus Movement or simply capitalized on an existing movement of people.



Figure 1 – Calvary Chapel – U.S. Locations. Source: <http://calvarychapel.com/affiliates/>

³Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory. A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 15.

⁴Miller, 35.

Background

Chuck Smith is the captivating leader of the Calvary Chapel movement. Smith was born in California in 1927. Following high school graduation, Smith attended L.I.F.E. Bible College in Los Angeles. After graduation, Smith began to minister in the Foursquare Gospel Church.⁵

The Foursquare Gospel movement was founded by Aimee Semple McPherson. McPherson, or Sister as she was known by her followers, was a flamboyant evangelist from the early 1920's until her death in 1944. She was born in Canada in 1890 and converted at a Pentecostal revival led by her future husband in 1907. McPherson and her husband, Robert Semple, went to China in 1911 as independent missionaries. Semple died in China and McPherson returned to the United States and married Harold McPherson in 1912. They divorced in 1921. She would marry again in 1931; and divorce in 1935. McPherson became an itinerant evangelist in 1916 and crossed America leading evangelistic services until she founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles in 1923 at the Angelus Temple, a building she had built around 1920. “The church's doctrine was based on four roles of Jesus' ministry as Savior of the world, Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, Healer of human infirmities, and returning King of Kings.”⁶

Pentecostals of that era “placed high priority on world evangelization but set out to accomplish it without first organizing the structures that would assure permanence and

⁵Gwen Newton, *Calvary Chapel*; available from: <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/calvary.html>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2001.

⁶*Ephemera of Aimee Semple McPherson - Collection 103*; available from <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/guides/103.htm#3>; Internet; accessed 10 April 2001.

support.”⁷ To combat that trend, the church began its own Bible College, the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute in 1926 which was later renamed the Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism. McPherson served as the first president until her death in 1944 and was succeeded by her son until 1976 when he became the president of the board of trustees. Jack Hayford, pastor of the Church on the Way, served as the president of the college from 1977 until 1982.⁸

Disillusionment with denominationalism

Smith relates that during his seminary days he was taught that the primary purpose of the church was world evangelization. As a result, all of Smith’s early sermons were evangelistic in nature. However, he:

soon discovered, . . . that the most difficult thing in all the world is trying to be something that God didn't make you to be. Paul asked are all apostles, are all prophets, are all evangelists? The answer is obviously no. Not everybody has the calling of an evangelist. Not everybody has the calling of a pastor-teacher. Not everybody has the calling of a prophet. And trying to be something that God didn't make you is the most difficult thing in the world. I was trying to be something that I was not called by God to be.⁹

During his ministry within the Foursquare Gospel Church, Smith was very successful, yet he did not feel comfortable with denominational requirements. He “began to tire of church-growth

⁷Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson. Everybody’s Sister*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 84.

⁸Material relating to the background of L.I.F.E. was obtained from <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/calvary.html> and from the college website: <http://www.lifebible.edu/history.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 March 2001.

⁹Chuck Smith; available from: <http://www.calvarychapel.com/library/smith-chuck/books/tpomocc.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 March 2001.

schemes propagated by the denominational hierarchy.”¹⁰ The most common “method” of church growth during that era was to have “pack-the-pew” contests between neighboring churches. Smith finally decided to discard the promotional materials and resolved “simply to teach the Bible.”¹¹ Amazingly, Smith’s church won a contest he had not entered. Smith felt he did not fit into the denomination and investigated several other denominations, finding “that his criticisms of the Foursquare were, in fact, endemic to all denominations.”¹² There is some disagreement regarding Smith’s next pastorate. Balmer reports that “Disillusioned with denominational officiousness, Smith soon accepted a call to a nondenominational congregation in Corona, California, where he enjoyed a similar success by continuing his emphasis on Bible teaching.”¹³ However, Miller relates that Smith started the Corona Christian Center.

Beginning of the Calvary Chapel movement

In 1965 Smith accepted the call from a small church in Costa Mesa, California named Calvary Chapel. The church had only twenty-five members, was deeply divided and on the verge of closing its doors. Smith began by modernizing the interior of the church and getting the church to agree to broadcast his Bible studies on the radio. The church grew at a rate of five percent per week. Within two years, Calvary Chapel had almost two thousand members. The church was growing faster than they could build to accommodate growth. Radio broadcasts of

¹⁰Balmer, 18.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Miller, 32.

¹³Balmer, 18.

Smith's sermons were halted because the church had no place to put the new members.

The mid-sixties were the height of the counterculture movement. Southern California served as a mecca for hippies and others disillusioned with the prevalent culture. Smith made a decision to reach out to the hippies in the beach area surrounding Costa Mesa. "Smith began to meet some of the early converts of the Jesus movement through his college-age daughter.

Initially repulsed by their long hair, beards, and politics, he was stunned by the inner transformations occurring in these young people and their zeal for sharing their new faith."¹⁴

Smith turned his home into a place where the "Jesus freaks" as they were known, could live until 1968 when their home became overcrowded.

One of Smith's early converts, Oden Fong, now a staff member at Calvary Chapel, relates "I went, reluctantly, and it was just so real. It was so much more real than anything I had seen. I found compassion and love. There was a fullness in the hearts of the people I met."¹⁵ Another young pastor at Calvary Chapel states "This balding, old guy taught the Word of God to the most bizarre hippies imaginable, and these people's lives were so changed by Jesus that they brought their friends, who brought their friends, who brought their friends."¹⁶ Fong relates the success of the Calvary Chapel movement to the cultural milieu into which it was born: "just about the same time, there was a spiritual awakening in Christianity where the walls of the traditional churches that had not allowed certain elements of the society to enter – I'm thinking of the so-called

¹⁴Miller, 33.

¹⁵Balmer, 19.

¹⁶Ibid., 20.

hippies – began to crumble.”¹⁷

Thus, the Calvary Chapel movement grew out of a disillusionment with denominational church growth plans. It was when Smith turned his attention away from a programmatic approach to church growth to exposition of the Bible that explosive growth occurred. Further, Smith intentionally chose to reach out to the disenfranchised members of society. Though he did not agree with the way they dressed or thought, he was burdened with their need for spiritual nourishment and responded. One must remember that at the time, Smith was in his early forties, making him twenty years older than most of the people his ministry focused upon. As mentioned above, the sixties were a turbulent time when anyone over the age of thirty was looked upon with tremendous distrust by the younger generation. The counterculture of the sixties, especially in Southern California, was heavily involved in drugs and an interest in Eastern spirituality was beginning to awaken. Some on Smith’s staff had experimented with Eastern worldviews and had even been Satanists. But, by teaching line-by-line through the Bible; thus focusing on cultivating healthy sheep, people who would otherwise not have been reached by evangelicals were brought to Christ.

Although Calvary Chapel has been successful in planting more than seven hundred churches worldwide, there has been dissension within the movement. It should be noted that the Vineyard movement, started by John Wimber split off from Calvary Chapel as a result of Wimber’s emphasis on aggressive evangelism, signs and wonders.¹⁸ Hope Chapel, on the other hand is a

¹⁷Ibid., 22.

¹⁸Michael D. Macon, *Frequently Asked But Unanswered Questions*; available from <http://home.wmis.net/~ixthys/fabuqa.htm#4>; Internet; accessed 8 April 2001.

Calvary Chapel-like movement which has retained its loyalty to the Foursquare Gospel movement.

Sources of Calvary Chapel Members

Looking at the size of Calvary Chapel's largest churches one must seek to discover the source of their members. The typical "member" of a Calvary Chapel is a Baby Boomer (born after 1945) or in their twenty's. Perrin, notes that "five Calvary Chapels in southern California [have a] weekly attendance over 7,500."¹⁹ While the Calvary Chapel movement is tremendously popular in southern California and Arizona, many on the eastern seaboard have never heard of the movement. It is significant to note anecdotal evidence here: WMIT – a Christian radio station near Asheville, North Carolina, owned by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association airs at least four of Calvary Chapel's biggest name pastors; including Chuck Smith's own radio broadcast, though many within the eight state listening area have probably never heard of Calvary Chapel.

Relating to conservative church growth, Perrin, Kennedy, and Miller state "most new members are evangelical switchers, or 'circulating saints.' . . . The additions to theologically conservative, Protestant churches are primarily geographically mobile evangelicals and members' children. Relatively few – perhaps 10 to 15% – *come from outside the evangelical community.*"²⁰ However, the members of new evangelical movements "cannot be reduced to church members having many babies. Indeed, most all of the adult recruits in the study have

¹⁹Perrin, Kennedy, and Miller, 72.

²⁰Ibid., 73.

come from outside the movement,”²¹ though fewer Calvary Chapel members (47%) came to the church from a conservative background.

Calvary Chapel has been very effective in conversion growth. Perrin, Kennedy, and Miller relate that “only 10% of the respondents from the 1988 Vineyard survey indicated that their conversion experience to Christianity resulted from association with Vineyard churches, . . . [while] 44% of Calvary respondents . . . were born again while they were attending their current NEM church.”²² Further, the data shows that Calvary seems adept at engaging those who may have been brought up in the church, but have discontinued their affiliations.²³

The success of Calvary Chapel can be attributed to a number of factors. They have been aggressive in pursuing outsiders. Further, Calvary Chapel exercises a high level of ecumenism. For example, baptisms at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa is an informal affair at Pirate’s Cove at Corona del Mar State Park. Balmer relates that Smith’s invitation to a baptism was relating the time and place and announcing “We’ll play volleyball, eat some hot dogs, and then baptize anyone who wants to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.”²⁴

Perhaps the most significant growth factor for Calvary Chapel is their culturally relevant worship. At southern California’s megachurches, one is apt to find worshipers in shorts and a T-shirt sitting next to someone in a three piece suit. Worshipers also gather on the lawn of the

²¹Ibid., 73-74. It should be noted that *all* of the data from Perrin, Kennedy, and Miller’s study was obtained in southern California.

²²Ibid., 74. NEM stands for new evangelical movement(s).

²³Ibid., 75.

²⁴Balmer, 24.

church and listen to the service via speakers on the outside of the building. Calvary Chapel has been a leader in utilizing contemporary music and instruments in their worship services, however; not to the exclusion of more traditional hymnody. Music produced by Calvary Chapel is geared toward an experiential encounter with Christ and has been vital to the success of the movement. Smith's relatively conservative theology is not much different than many conservative Protestant pastors, thus music which reaches people and draws them into an emotive experience has contributed to their cultural relevance. Calvary Chapel has also de-emphasized traditional church models. Smith states "Calvary Chapel fits somewhere in the broad spectrum between Baptists and Pentecostals."²⁵

Calvary Chapel emphasizes a literal approach to the Bible. Smith confesses inerrancy, but remains undogmatic. Calvary Chapel does believe in manifestations of the Spirit, but they do not believe in emotionalism. While Calvary Chapel has not been rocked by theological controversies as have most Protestant denominations, there are some who disagree with Smith's views. As mentioned, John Wimber was once a Calvary Chapel pastor who left to found the Vineyard movement. As one would expect, there are some detractors of the Calvary Chapel movement, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Calvary Chapel Church Planting Strategy

Calvary Chapel takes a "healthy sheep naturally reproduce" approach to church planting. The usual church planting strategy is that "typically, someone who has attended Calvary Chapel and then moves elsewhere will begin a Bible study in the new community. As this gathering

²⁵Miller, 36.

expands, the congregation will contact Calvary Chapel for a pastor, whereupon Smith encourages one of his staff member to take the position.”²⁶ Thus, the process for planting a Calvary Chapel is actually reversed from traditional church planting strategies. Pastors usually come from the staff of other Calvary Chapel’s as their gifts for ministry are recognized and cultivated before sending them out to shepherd their own flock.

Calvary Chapel of Greeneville, Tennessee

Greeneville, Tennessee is the county seat of Greene County. The city population is approximately 15,000 and the county population is approximately 58,000. Greene County/Greeneville is not a very diversified community. Only about 2.5% of the population is non-Caucasian. Approximately 10% of the population holds a college degree and 15% of the population is over the age of 65. Gary Hall is the pastor of the Calvary Chapel of Greeneville, Tennessee. He is in his early thirties and this is his first pastorate. Gary was raised a nominal Catholic but his family stopped attending church before he came of age. Gary struggled with drugs and alcohol until he was twenty-nine. At that time he entered a Christian rehabilitation program and heard the gospel for the first time. He was converted in 1991 and the elders of his church soon recognized that he had the gift of teaching. He left the church and began attending a Pentecostal congregation but soon was dissatisfied because of the overemphasis upon gifts. Gary began attending Calvary Chapel of Hemet, California where his pastor began working with him to develop his gift of teaching. Gary relates that he felt a call from God to plant a church and shared that burden with his pastor who mentored him and facilitated his training to become

²⁶Balmer, 26.

a church planter/pastor.

The pastor of Calvary Chapel, Hemet is in his first pastorate and has served the church approximately 15 years. During his ministry he has trained several men who have left Hemet to pastor other Calvary Chapel churches. The strategy of mentoring pastors within the local congregation is consistent with Smith's philosophy of church planting and has been very effective for Calvary Chapel. The ideal church planting situation, according to Gary, is to work under the direction of a pastor who can provide direction and accountability. When a church is ready to become affiliated with Calvary Chapel, the church's pastor must have a recommendation from an active Calvary Chapel pastor.

When Gary believed he was close to being ready to leave Hemet to plant a church he consulted a pastor's wanted list, which is a list of people who have moved away from areas with Calvary Chapel churches and desire a Calvary Chapel where they presently live. Gary connected with a group of three families in Greeneville, Tennessee who had a Bible study group meeting in their homes. These families had similar backgrounds (two of them had moved to Greeneville from California) and been unable to find a local church which met their needs. While they conducted their home Bible studies, they had tithed their income into a savings account to prepare to begin a fellowship and had saved almost \$10,000. Thus, the core group had already formed before the church planter came to the area and had already begun the process of raising money to begin a church.

Gary had been serving as the singles leader at the church in Hemet. When he left, the group gave him \$1,500 as a going away present. His home church did not provide any other financial assistance. Smith believes church planters should be responsible for raising their own support

and should not rely on those outside the local fellowship for support. His reasoning includes his belief in the autonomy of the local church as well as the pastor learning to rely upon God for financial support.²⁷ That is not to say that financial support will never come from other Calvary Chapel's; however, external support would be the exception rather than the rule. Gary's home church told him they would consider helping him if needed, but there was no guarantee of financial assistance.

When Gary arrived in Greeneville, he lived with one of the families in the core group for six months. He began the process of starting a church by securing facilities, advertising, and all of the myriad of tasks which must be completed to start a church. He placed an advertisement in the yellow pages as well as the newspaper. He ran a public service announcement (PSA) on the local radio stations and inserted a press release into the newspaper. Gary said the newspaper advertising was not effective – it was very expensive and produced few, if any, results. Their primary advertising is now word of mouth and the Internet. He reports they have visitors at every Sunday service. The church has grown from fifteen at their first service just over four years ago to around seventy people, including children. They have outgrown their storefront facility and are actively planning the construction of a new building. They have some money saved for the building and hope to make a substantial down payment on their property soon.

The church in Greeneville meets in a converted storefront just over a mile from downtown Greeneville. The church is near what used to be a large Magnavox (consumer electronics) plant. It is also near a large grocery store chain. There are several other industries near the church. A mobile home park sits just across the street, and a middle class neighborhood is just over the hill

²⁷Miller, 35.

from the mobile home park. The road in front of the church is heavily traveled. The “retail area” of the storefront is their sanctuary and also serves as a common area for church gatherings. This space is also the adult Sunday School area. Classrooms are provided in the rear of the building for children and youth. They are using a homiletics approach to teach their children’s Sunday School class and Gary reports the children are enjoying this approach.

Gary is the only paid staff person at present. At one point he was bi-vocational, but now serves full time. The church does not formally receive an offering. Instead, a box is placed at the rear of the sanctuary and members respond accordingly. Gary says he does not appeal for money, but simply lets needs be known. Their present budget is approximately \$3,000-\$4,000 per month. The church gives 10% of their offering to missions (they support a New Tribes missionary as well as several independent missionaries).

The worship services at Calvary Chapel, Greeneville could best be described as contemporary. They use mostly praise and worship songs with a variety of instruments (including a dulcimer), but also use traditional hymns. The church does not maintain a membership list which is characteristic of Calvary Chapels. Their standards for “membership” are a consistent fellowship with a particular local congregation. Further, there is no requirement that a person be baptized in order to be considered a member. In fact, many Calvary Chapels do not give an invitation at the conclusion of services. Most salvation experiences take place in small groups.

Gary’s vision is to teach the Word and to love the people. He wishes to win people to Christ, disciple them, and then send them out (either locally or to other locations) for ministry. He stresses a personal relationship with Christ. His vision is to see Calvary Chapels in other

cities and towns in east Tennessee and he remains open to planting other churches himself.

When asked what he would do differently if he were starting from scratch, Gary responded that he would have taken more training in business, finances, and leadership.²⁸

Calvary Chapel of Johnson City, Tennessee

Johnson City, Tennessee is the sixth largest city in Tennessee and the largest city in Washington County. The county seat of Washington County is Jonesborough, which is the oldest city in Tennessee. The population of the county is approximately 101,000 and Johnson City is home to 54,000 people. Over one million people live within 60 miles of the city. The median age is 36.3; the largest age group (by a large margin) is twenty-five to forty-four year olds(30.6%).²⁹ The city is situated in the upper northeast corner of Tennessee and forms an area known as the Tri-Cities along with Kingsport, Tennessee, and Bristol Tennessee/Virginia (Bristol lies on the state line). Johnson City is more culturally diverse because of the presence of a state university and medical college.

Rob Kayser is the pastor of Calvary Chapel, Johnson City, Tennessee. His church is in a building which used to be a liquor store. They had twenty at their first service three years ago and are now running forty-five to sixty. At their current growth rate they will be out of their present building in one year. Their budget is approximately \$1,200 per month. Rob is the only staff member and is bi-vocational. He stated that most Calvary Chapel church planters begin

²⁸Pastor Gary Hall, interview by author, Greeneville, TN., 12 April 2001.

²⁹Johnson City, TN, available from <http://www.johnsoncitytn.com/index.php?community>; Internet, accessed 13 April 2001.

their pastorates as bi-vocational pastors.

Rob was saved at the age of twenty-three in 1976 at Calvary Chapel of San Diego while attending San Diego State University. He was raised in an unchurched family though his grandmother was Catholic. His parents did not go to church though they did send Rob and his brother. Since his conversion he has served on the foreign mission field a number of times. He went to the Calvary Chapel school of evangelism for one year; studied for one year with Dr. Ralph Winters at the U.S. Center for World Missions; and also took one year of training with International Teams. Like Gary, Rob is also from southern California. When asked if most Calvary Chapel pastors came from southern California he stated that since the movement began in southern California that most pastors would naturally come from that area. He also shared how the highest profile pastors in the Calvary Chapel movement came from radical backgrounds (except Chuck Smith).

Rob relates that the Calvary Chapel approach to planting a church is very simplistic. They do not have a master plan where churches are to be planted. Indeed, if one examines the map in figure 1, it is evident the majority of Calvary Chapel churches have been planted in the southwest. However, Calvary Chapel seeks a need and tries to answer that need. He relates that he received no financial support in planting the church in Johnson City which is a Calvary Chapel hallmark. The pastor is expected to find his own financial support.

Calvary Chapel places a strong emphasis upon home fellowships. Calvary Chapel encourages a home fellowship to stay smaller than eight people. Rob stated that it is within the home fellowships that ministry, teaching, accountability, and prayer takes place. The church comes together on Sunday for worship, but ministry takes place within home fellowships.

When Rob came to Johnson City he secured a job and began the process meeting people. He did no advertising other than placing an ad for the church in the Yellow Pages under non-denominational churches. He invited people to come to a Bible study held at his home. They soon outgrew his home and moved to their first building which was secured for a very small amount of money (\$450 per month – utilities included). Rob indicated that this is the typical way a Calvary Chapel church begins. Later, the church canvassed the neighborhood with flyers which produced no response. Rob related that the people who respond are those to whom the body speaks. He also indicates that Calvary Chapel is not in competition with any other local church, but that they work in conjunction with the body of Christ to reach all people. Rob also reported that he did not have a particular target group or age, which is also a distinctive Calvary Chapel church planting characteristic.

Calvary Chapel has been successful in part because of the tremendous importance they attach to discipleship. Rob indicated that the philosophy is to pass discipleship from one believer to another. The pastor will disciple a new believer who will then be expected to disciple the next new believer who comes into the church. Rob stated that it should be a natural function of everyday life to share one's faith and meet the needs of people. His vision is to be faithful to teach the whole counsel of God to the body of Christ, to meeting their needs as best as the body can, and to reach out to the community.

The worship at Calvary Chapel can be characterized as contemporary. Rob reported that they used mostly Christian contemporary music with Maranatha! music predominating. They use some hymns and Rob would like to use more if they were played correctly.

When asked what he would change if given the chance, Rob reported he would not change

anything. He readily admitted he had faced struggles and made mistakes, but he had grown through those mistakes and would not change anything. Like Gary, he said he would like to have more business and finance training. He also said he did not realize the scope of starting a church in the United States because of the red tape. He has started churches in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore but reported it was much more difficult to begin a church in the United States.³⁰

Conclusion

Calvary Chapel represents a new paradigm in church planting. Miller notes that as a result of the success of new paradigm churches, Christianity may be entering a postdenominational era and lists twelve trademark qualities of churches within the new paradigm:

1. They were started after the mid-1960's.
2. They majority of congregation members were born after 1945.
3. Seminary training of clergy is optional.
4. Worship is contemporary.
5. Lay leadership is highly valued.
6. They have extensive small group ministries.
7. Clergy and congregants usually dress informally.
8. Tolerance of different personal styles is prized.
9. Pastors tend to be understated, humble, and self-revealing.
10. Bodily, rather than mere cognitive, participation in worship is the norm.
11. The “gifts of the Holy Spirit” are affirmed.
12. Bible-centered teaching predominates over topical sermonizing.³¹

In particular, Calvary Chapel has been successful in mobilizing their laity to engage in ministry. Balmer relates an experience in which a group of fifty to sixty people from Costa

³⁰Pastor Rob Kayser, interview by author, Johnson City, TN. (telephone), 14 April 2001.

³¹Miller, 20.

Mesa went out to Balboa Pier at 10:00 P.M. on Saturday night for the purpose of evangelism.³²

Thus, for a church plant to be successful the planter and the church must go *where* the people are *when they are there*. Further, Calvary Chapel has been successful in instilling in the laity a desire to plant churches whenever they find themselves living in a community without a Calvary Chapel.

American society has become characterized as a therapeutic society. New paradigm churches have been successful in responding “to the therapeutic, individualistic, and anti-establishment themes of the counterculture.”³³ They generally substitute Biblical advice for therapy, often in a very direct manner. New paradigm churches have also learned to cater to the radical individualism characteristic of America in general, but pandemic to twenty-first century Americans. Rather than asserting a highly structured authority to which a person must submit, new paradigm churches work accountability into their small groups where mentored friendships are valued. That is not to say that new paradigm churches are not structured. The typical Calvary Chapel has a strong pastor who will ensure that radical deviations from Calvary Chapel philosophy are minimized. Yet, the assertion of pastoral authority occurs within a casual atmosphere and is not forced unless the situation so dictates.

Calvary Chapel’s strongest point, however, is their ability to communicate cultural relevance. Pomp and circumstance are not a routine part of their worship. Pastors do not wear robes and in many churches it would be difficult to spot the pastor if one’s only cue was clothing. Music; long a dividing point for Evangelicals, is diverse in Calvary Chapel’s worship.

³²Balmer, 26-27.

³³Miller, 21.

They use a style of music which communicates the message and touches the worshipers emotively. Calvary Chapel allows, even encourages, emotional as well as cognitive worship. Finally, in communicating their cultural relevance, Calvary Chapel reaches out to those other congregations do not want. Smith admits that he had a burden for the hippies and beach people, but that he did not really want to reach out to them in the early days because they were so different. Yet, reach out to them he did and the results have been tremendous. Over the years, Calvary Chapel has added ministries to meet almost any need. These ministries tend to meet in members' homes and be led by laypeople; both factors point to a democratization of work typically considered to be the area of "religious professionals."

As shown above, many Calvary Chapel churches are not planted according to contemporary church planting wisdom, and yet, the planted churches grow, and reproduce. While it would not be prudent to adopt Calvary Chapel's strategy as the norm, their success in making Christianity relevant to thousands of unchurched people beckons the denominational church planter to consider all the ways they can reach people with the good news of Jesus Christ as they plant growing, ministering, reproducing churches. Thus, *old*-paradigm churches must learn from *new*-paradigm churches to return ministry to the laity as well as serve as a facilitator which helps people encounter God.

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