

# The Church in the World

Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

. . . I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

## I. Strengthening the Church

### A. Macro: The Preeminence of Jesus

John 20:28-31

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." <sup>30</sup> Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But **these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

### B. Micro: Helping People to Become Fully Devoted Followers of Jesus Christ

1. Non-competitive
2. More about practices than beliefs
3. Non-institutional
4. Developmental vs. doctrinal

❖ If we don't know our mission we can never evaluate our effectiveness

## II. Challenges We Face "Catch 22's of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"

### A. Rapid, Cataclysmic Change "Yesterday isn't all that different from today"

### B. Invisible Forces "The Trees Move the Wind"

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For **what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

Isaiah 60:1-2 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. <sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Daniel 4:33-35 (NIV)

<sup>33</sup> **Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.** He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. <sup>34</sup> At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Psalm 2:1-4 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. <sup>3</sup> "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." <sup>4</sup> The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

## C. Culture as the "enemy"

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to **the pattern of this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

❖ Syncretism has made cultural revolution possible

1. Absolute truth?

2. We are materialistic

John 12:24-25 (NIV)

<sup>24</sup> I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup> The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

❖ There is a cost to following Jesus

3. We have replaced faith in God

❖ Our imagination of government and our rights has grown much larger.

❖ Our sense of God and our responsibilities has diminished greatly.

## III. Requests

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Awaken your people

Grow in holiness

Love the truth

Humility & Fear of the Lord increase

Heavenly Father, you are the author of life and the sustainer of all things. Your light illumines our path and dispels the darkness before us. Awaken your people in this generation. Confirm your Word in our midst with great demonstrations of your power. May our hearts be turned to you in humility and great reverence. Open doors of opportunity before us and grant us the wisdom, boldness and courage to move through them. Comfort your people. Strengthen the weary, deliver the oppressed and lead us forward. May the name of Jesus be exalted through the whole earth, amen.