

# Biblical Church Revitalization

Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches  
by Brian Croft

Micah Felber - October 23, 2020



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Download  
the Class  
Handout



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## Introduction

- Approaches for Change
  - The Pragmatist - "seeks to revive and grow a dying church through clever gimmicks and appealing to programs that work to bring about specific, desired results." (AKA: it's all about the numbers)
  - The Purist - "strict adherence to biblical principles based on the centrality of God's word." (AKA: intentional distancing from pragmatism)
- A Biblical Approach (Defined, Diagnosed, Done)

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## Section I

### Church Revitalization - Defined

- Power: How does God revitalize a dying church?
- Preparation: How does a pastor prepare to revitalize a church?
- Perseverance: How does a pastor persevere in revitalizing a church?
- Plan: How is church revitalization accomplished?

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## Section I

### Church Revitalization - Defined

- Power: How does God revitalize a dying church?
  - The Israelite Example (Ezekiel 36-37)
    - God breathes life where there is no life (Ezekiel 37a)
    - God unites where there is enmity (Ezekiel 37b)
  - God revitalizes by giving spiritual energy and spiritual unity.
- Preparation: How does a pastor prepare to revitalize a church?
- Perseverance: How does a pastor persevere in revitalizing a church?
- Plan: How is church revitalization accomplished?



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## Section I

### Church Revitalization - Defined

- Power: How does God revitalize a dying church?
- Preparation: How does a pastor prepare to revitalize a church?
  - What do I do?
  - Where do we go?
  - How do I survive?
  - How do I know that I'm called?
- Perseverance: How does a pastor persevere in revitalizing a church?
- Plan: How is church revitalization accomplished?



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## Section I

### Church Revitalization - Defined

- Power: How does God revitalize a dying church?
- Preparation: How does a pastor prepare to revitalize a church?
- Perseverance: How to not get fired within the first two years at the church.
  - Trust the Word
  - Shepherd souls
  - Love All People
  - Pray Hard
  - Celebrate older members
  - Be patient
  - Expect Suffering
  - Pick battles wisely
- Plan: How is church revitalization accomplished?



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## Section I

### Church Revitalization - Defined

- Power: How does God revitalize a dying church?
- Preparation: How does a pastor prepare to revitalize a church?
- Perseverance: How does a pastor persevere in revitalizing a church?
- Plan: How is church revitalization accomplished?
  - Centrality of the word and prayer
  - Application of the Gospel
  - Shepherd every redeemed soul



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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?
- Membership: To whom am I accountable?
- Unity: Who is my brother?
- Worship: Why do we gather together?

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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
  - God -> Jesus Christ -> God's Word -> Pastors -> Congregation
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?
- Membership: To whom am I accountable?
- Unity: Who is my brother?
- Worship: Why do we gather together?



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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?

**There are only two Biblically defined offices: Pastor & Deacon**

- Membership: To whom am I accountable?
- Unity: Who is my brother?
- Worship: Why do we gather together?

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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?
- Membership: To whom am I accountable?

**Sin - Suffering - Discouragement - Affirmation**

- Unity: Who is my brother?
- Worship: Why do we gather together?

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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?
- Membership: To whom am I accountable?
- Unity: Who is my brother?

**old & young, men & women, slave & master**

- Worship: Why do we gather together?

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## Section II

### Church Revitalization - Diagnosed

- Authority: Who is in charge?
- Leadership: Whom do I follow?
- Membership: To whom am I accountable?
- Unity: Who is my brother?
- Worship: Why do we gather together?

- Preach the Word
- Pray the Word
- See the Word (Ordinances)
- Read the Word
- Sing the Word

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## Section III

### Church Revitalization - Done

- History and Background
- The Storm: The first five years
- The Ship Turns: The next five years
- Important Lessons Learned

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### Section III

#### Church Revitalization - Done

- History and Background
  - In 2003, Brian Croft accepted the call to pastor Auburndale Baptist Church.
    - He resolved to faithfully preach the word.
    - He resolved to stay for ten years.
  - Two Realizations
    - He knew the congregation was broken.
    - He learned that he himself was likewise broken.
- The Storm: The first five years
- The Ship Turns: The next five years
- Important Lessons Learned

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### Section III

#### Church Revitalization - Done

- History and Background
- The Storm: The first five years
  - Firing Effort One: Authority
  - Firing Effort Two: Membership
  - Firing Effort Three: Leadership
- The Ship Turns: The next five years
- Important Lessons Learned



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### Section III

#### Church Revitalization - Done

- History and Background
- The Storm: The first five years
- The Ship Turns: The next five years
  - Plurality of Pastors
  - Purged membership rolls
- Important Lessons Learned

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### Section III

#### Church Revitalization - Done

- History and Background
- The Storm: The first five years
- The Ship Turns: The next five years
- Important Lessons Learned
  - The Epiphany of Patience
  - The Sweetness of Tough Love
  - The Discerning Perspective of Scars
  - The Inevitability of Suffering
  - The Steadfastness of the Chief Shepherd

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Christ's strength shines through  
your weakness.

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Love in brokenness - be prepared and willing to be emotionally vulnerable

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## Chapter 1

God's Power in Church Revitalization

Is the valley of dry bones a good motivation to revive a dispensationalist church?

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"If there are two primary marks of churches needing revitalization, it would arguably be the absence of spiritual life and the presence of hostile division among those in the church. Either of these realities can single-handedly kill a church overtime, but when both are present, death is imminent."

Biblical Church Revitalization ~ p. 30

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	Biblical	Worldly
What do I do? (Pastoral Theology)	Be a Pastor	Pragmatism
Where do we go? (Healthy Ecclesiology)	authority, leadership, membership, bible knowledge, gospel love for one another and neighbors	Its all about the numbers
How do I survive? (Personal Soul Care)	1. Acknowledgement of Jesus' approval, favor, and presence. 2. Awareness of needed internal work.	insecure, defensive, controlling, perfectionistic, legalistic, fearing man, manipulative, passive, stoic, ungracious

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"...how can a man know if he is fit and called for this difficult, but noble work? The answer is best summarized by an internal and external call."

Biblical Church Revitalization ~ p. 40

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### Chapter 3

Perseverance in Church Revitalization

When pastoring in a church revitalization project, what would be a legitimate reason to leave after two years?

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	Gospel Focus
Past	Salvation from the <u>penalty</u> of sin.
Present	Salvation from the <u>power</u> of sin.
Future	Salvation from the <u>presence</u> of sin.

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### Chapter 4

Plan for Church Revitalization

Is it the pastor's job to "care for widows"? (p. 58)

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### Chapter 5

Authority

"Since God's Word defines what is right and wrong, what authority does the pastor actually have since he oversteps his bounds when he goes beyond the commands already given in Scripture?"

How would you answer?

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Pastor

Teaching  
Oversight  
Shepherding

Blameless Reputation  
Manager of Home  
Godly Character  
Spiritual Maturity  
Plurality\*

Deacon

Well-Taught  
Service  
Practical Doing

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**Chapter 7**  
Membership

**As a Christian, refusal to officially join the church membership is sin.**

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**True? or False?**

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**Hebrews 13:17**

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

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