

God, it worked. The fact that it didn't work the 10th time, we cleverly fade out. However, this creates a fragile faith that becomes visible when the formula for success doesn't quite work out. For some, the death of the hamster is enough to trigger a medium depression.

c. The Biblical Maturity Process

Finally, let's look at the actual improvement process that is at stake for a believing Christian. We all need to grow, no matter what miracles we have seen or experiences we have. I lived in Flensburg on the street full of trees that had been eaten by the bark beetle. One evening in the dark, a heavy branch hit down behind me and missed me by only a meter. I thought how dangerous a dead tree could become when it stops growing. Afterward, I received a word from God that stuck with me: *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* (2Peter 3:18) God's word is apparent here: growth is not an option but our destiny. Every Christian is in the process of development. It is a maturing process that allows us to mature into mature Christians.

In the first phase of our faith life, we still receive a lot of input, for example, through the five ministry gifts that we have already discussed. Paul explained, they have the task *"to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."* (Eph. 4:11) He then goes on to describe the real goal of our development process: *"until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."* (Eph. 4:13) Accordingly, our maturity is expressed through faith, knowledge of the son, and unity.

By "faith" here, I'm sure we don't mean belief in a business vision, but the unshakable trust exemplified by the role models of the Bible. I like to refer to Enoch, who was 365 years old when he was raptured - a prophetic image for the Church, which will experience the same. The Bible says, *"He could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God."* (Heb. 11:5) Why was he pleasing to God? Nowhere is it reported that he built or accomplished anything significant. We

read only in Gen. 5:24: *"Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more because God took him away."* Once the Spirit of God told me, "The church that is raptured can be recognized by the fact that it lives in close union with God." So when we speak here of faith as a maturity characteristic of the congregation, we are not talking about a faith formula, a methodology, or technique. It is about the trusting relationship of faith that we build with God in the course of our lives.

The second characteristic is the *"knowledge of the Son of God."* Christians who are young in the faith know Jesus as Savior, Provider, and Healer - someone who saves us, is there for us, and with whom we can find refuge at any time. Gradually, we also discover how precious is the covenant he has made with us. But this does not mean that we know him yet. To the spiritual fathers, John wrote, *"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning."* (1Jo 2:13) Who was that? Of whom did John write that he was in the beginning? Of Jesus, of the Son of God: *"In the beginning was the Word"* (Jn 1:1). The fathers know him. They also know that part of a father's job is to raise his children. They know what it feels like to be raised by him. In Heb. 12:5, we read, *"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you"* (Heb. 12:5). In my home church, I occasionally ask the question, "How is God raising you right now? What

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Ephesians 4:13)

are you going through right now?" The answers then usually allow for very intense and, above all, honest fellowship. Some Christians, however, who are still unpracticed in educating God, think they have to resist every problematic situation in faith. They sometimes even believe the devil himself is behind their circumstances. But they are not fighting the devil; they are resisting their educator.

In contrast, the mature Christian knows when he is in the school of God and when he has run out of it. Mature Christians not only know the Son of God as Savior but also know that "Whom the Lord loves he educates with 'the necessary' severity; everyone whom he accepts as his son he also makes feel his punishing hand." The fruit that comes from this is a vital prerequisite for what comes afterward:

complete unity. *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:11)*

Let us return to our zero-defect principle. In a sense, Jesus also desires something like this but expresses it quite differently. He demanded, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48)*. Perhaps you’ve noticed that in the book of Song of Songs, the king always calls his bride “the perfect one.” The thing that made her perfect was that she followed his voice. *“Let me hear your voice” (Hl 2:14)*; she kept asking. And then she followed that voice, as can be seen in the rest of the book. In this sense, perfection simply means putting into practice what the Spirit of God has revealed and instructed us to do. There is also a very old-fashioned word for it. It is merely “obedience.” And when I think of teachers, who *“will be judged more strictly” (Jas 3:1)*, I now understand a little better certain phases of life when I was (and still am) brought up with a “stern hand.”

If we keep this process in mind, it becomes clear that Jesus has a very high goal with the Church: To be a real counterpart. A church planter and leader should always be aware of the following vision: *“We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” (Eph 4:15)*

Let’s keep in mind: From its point of view, a Christian service company works successfully when it continually improves the services it offers, and goals are achieved. Doing this does not have to reinvent the wheel repeatedly because the potential for improvement can be easily identified if common quality standards serve as a guide for this purpose. For all our single-mindedness, we are warned by James against a selfish, human zeal if it displaces our passion for the house of God, the Church. The corporate identity of the business must never replace our identity in Christ, not even close. Of course, the family-oriented Church also wants to “improve,” both numerically and in its maturity and relationship with Christ. But it is not so much driven by annual goals in doing so. After all, it is a “growth in grace” (2Peter 3:18), which implies empowerment wrought by the Spirit of God according to the pace He sets.

Conclusion

From the above, it is evident that Jesus himself is building his Church. In doing so, he has a clear vision that he will fulfill with those who belong to his family. The family culture of a church is therefore indispensable. It will reach its goal in the end and produce a quality that has excellent value in eternity: Quality for Eternity. By this, we mean a spiritual maturity that, according to Ephesians 4, is characterized by a mature faith relationship by knowing God’s Son and a supernatural unity.

There is nothing to be said concerning their evangelistic activities against bundling initiatives or programs with an appropriate organizational form. If an association or foundation is helpful for this purpose, ministries can be planned, carried out, and optimized according to TQM quality criteria. But it has also become clear that such a service company cannot substitute for a family community. A company’s culture differs significantly from the family culture in terms of leadership behavior, vision formulation, focus on essential processes, and understanding of growth.

However, it can be a great blessing when specific ministries and gifts for evangelistic outreach come together in a ministry-performance organization. Programs can be brought together under one roof to establish a joint center in a district. People should have the freedom to attend these events.

Many staunch home churchgoers often do not want to miss the atmosphere of faith found at larger events. Nor should it be forbidden to become involved in it or even to become a member yourself to support it financially because city hall services or large public events require large sums of money to be donated.

Finally, a word to pastors: no matter how many of your church members are involved in a service organization, the Church will continue to be unrivaled. Its prevailing family culture, exceptional love, and the appreciation of its members for one another remain an irresistible magnet whose appeal will continue to grow. With the ministry’s gifts’ help, it is urgently needed to bring forth what the Bible calls maturity and maturity.

In the final picture [Fig. 3], the dynamics of the family congregations can be seen because apostolic teams are continually forming new assemblies. No line is drawn to the service

organization shown in the middle since membership there is not decisive. What is decisive is that every Christian is at home in the community of believers. Francis Chan, who has built such a network of smaller family-oriented

churches, says that today he is in the happiest phase of his life. It is what I wish for all of us, that we rediscover the joy of church development and that it is the greatest reward for us to be there at all to serve one another. ■

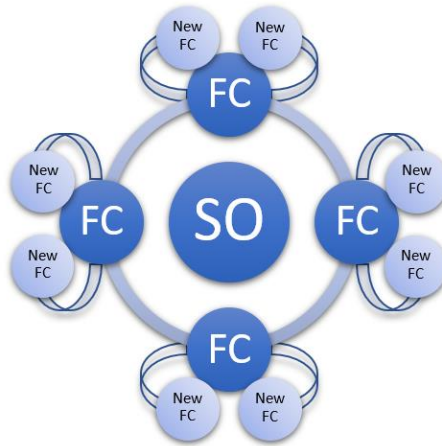


Fig. 3: New foundations of family-oriented churches (FC) and optional participation in a joint service organization. (SO)

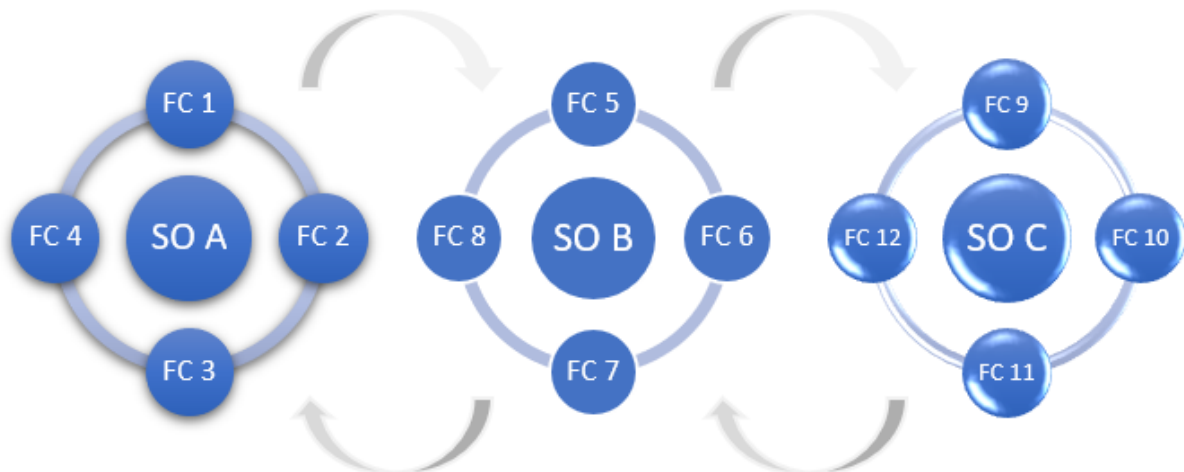


Fig 4: A network of family-focused churches (FC) with optional participation in various shared service organizations (SO)

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Endnotes

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¹ Hartford, Denny (2007). Bill Hybels: “*We Made a Mistake*”. Seeker-Friendly Churches Messed Up. Vital Signs Ministries. Web 31.10.2007 <http://vitalsignsblog.blogspot.com/2007/10/bill-hybels-we-made-mistake-seeker.html>

² Betriebswirtschaftlicher Verlag Dr. Th. Gabler GmbH, Wiesbaden 1996.

³ Verband der Automobilindustrie e.V. (VDA 6.3) (2016) *Dienstleistungsentstehungsprozess/ Erbringung der Dienstleistung*. Berlin/Frankfurt: Hnrch Druck + Medien GmbH.

⁴ Warren, Rick (1995). *The purpose driven church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. P. 125.

⁵ Maresco, Peter A.: Can Business Leaders Learn From Leaders of Today’s Megachurches? In: *Leadership. The Online Journal*. (2008) Vol. 6 Issue 1 Winter. Web 31.12.2020 https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1246&context=wcob_fac

⁶ Pohlmann, Andreas (2012). *Sustainable application of total quality management: ministry principles in Christian churches: developing quality for eternity*. University of Wales Trinity Saint David. British Library: EThOS.

⁷ Verein Deutscher Ingenieure (1996). VDI 5500: *System zur Zukunftssicherung. Total Quality Management*. Berlin: Beuth-Verlag.)

⁸ Warren (1995), P. 155.

⁹ Jones, Ezra Earl (1993). *Quest for Quality in the Church: A New Paradigm*. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources Editorial office, P. 8-9.

¹⁰ Ebd.

¹¹ Warren (1995), P. 155.

¹² Pattison, Stephen. (2007). *The Faith of the Managers: When Management becomes Religion*. London: Wellington House, P. 102.

¹³ Ebd., P. 96.

¹⁴ Chan, Francis (2018). *Letters to the Church*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook. / Deutsche Ausgabe (2020). *Briefe an die Kirche. Gemeinde neu entdecken*. Aurach: LUQUS Verlag, 2. Aufl., P. 59.

¹⁵ Ebd.

¹⁶ Garvin, David (1988). *Managing Quality: the strategic and competitive edge*. New York: Free Press, P.40.

¹⁷ Vokurka 2000, *The Applicability of Total Quality Management Principles to Church Management*, p. 23.

¹⁸ Abromeit, P. 9.

¹⁹ Ebd. P. 13.

²⁰ Since there are many overlaps among the departments - e.g., they all have to do with finance - a matrix organization is occasionally found. In contrast to the organizational structure, work and decision-making steps that have to be carried out one after the other can run like processes in which all areas participate.

²¹ Chan, Francis (2018). *Letters to the Church*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook. / Deutsche Ausgabe (2020). *Briefe an die Kirche. Gemeinde neu entdecken*. Aurach: LUQUS Verlag, 2. Aufl.

²² Ebd, P. 9.

²³ Pohlmann, Andreas (2019). *God Works. Working out our calling in the midst of our profession*. Pfullingen: Quality for Eternity Verlag. Amazon [Link](#).

²⁴ Landsmann, Michael (2016) *Hilfeleistung*. Durchbruch Verlag.

²⁵ Madhav, Sinha N. (2000). The Best on Quality. Milwaukee, WI. In: ASQ Quality Press. Vol 11, S. 42

²⁶ In Japan, Deming was called the "father of the quality movement", cf. Masing, Walter (1988). *Handbuch der Qualitätssicherung*. München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, P. 12.

²⁷ Zollondz, Hans-Dieter (2001). *Lexikon Qualitätsmanagement – Handbuch des modernen Managements auf der Basis des Qualitätsmanagements*. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH, P. 87.

