



# EQUIPPER

A monthly ministry ezine from the Ministry Development Team of Grace Communion International (GCI) in the United States.

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[www.gci.org/MinDev](http://www.gci.org/MinDev)



Outfitted for the journey

Dear follower of Jesus,

As disciples, we share God's love and life on *the journey with Jesus*. The GCI-USA Ministry Development Team assists by *outfitting* (equipping) ministers for their part. In this issue of *Equipper*, we offer some helpful ministry resources (page 1) and a thought-provoking blog post from Charles Arn concerning church health (page 2).

*Journey on!*

Ted Johnston

P.S. Registration is now open for the 2011 Regional Conference coming to Ontario, CA in February and to Vancouver, WA in March. Register at <http://online.gci.org>. Other conference sites are listed at [www.gci.org/events](http://www.gci.org/events).

## Ministry Resources

February offers special opportunities to journey in ministry with Jesus:

- **Black History Month.** February is *Black History Month* – a time to celebrate African-American culture and important contributions of African American citizens past and present. For resources and ideas, go to <http://alturl.com/ph2iu>.
- **National Marriage Week.** February 7-14 is set aside (with NAE endorsement), as a time for churches to focus on strengthening marriages. To learn more, go to <http://www.nationalmarriageweekusa.org/>. For teaching and preaching resources, go to <http://genmin.gci.org/resources.htm> (look under *family* and *marriage*).

**Need technology help?** See the *ChurchTech* blog at <http://churchtech.gci.org/>. It's provided by GCI's IT department. Current posts discuss church websites.

Here are links to some **general ministry resources**:

- Sermons and Bible studies: <http://open.lifechurch.tv/>
- 43 top church resources websites: <http://alturl.com/m37c9>
- ChurchLeaders.com: <http://alturl.com/pf7rq>
- Preaching on stewardship: <http://alturl.com/zfnyb>
- If you need to send a digital file that is too large for email attachment, check out the free web-based transfer service at [www.yousendit.com](http://www.yousendit.com)

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Equipping pastors, ministry leaders and ministry workers for participation in ministry with Jesus.

# Indicators of Church Health

by Charles Arn

As I watch the health of the church in the 21st century, I am encouraged to see the following:

## 1. Outreach

More newsletters, seminars, national conventions, books, and magazine articles are focusing on outreach. This ingredient is essential for effective evangelism because, quite simply, churches that do not focus on outreach do not grow. Look at how a church spends its resources (dollars, staff time, facilities, committees, members' activities, etc.), and you can quickly identify the church's priorities. Over time, the natural tendency is for a church to spend an increasing amount of its resources on self-serving and self-centered activity. But doing so is the "kiss of death." Growing congregations practice "corporate tithing," which means they invest approximately 10 percent of their personnel, time, and money on reaching people in their own ministry area. When this happens, and the resources are invested wisely, God gives the increase.

## 2. Contextualization

Congregations that are effectively connecting with and reaching unchurched people are finding those connection points in the world, not the church. More and more churches are going to the people, rather than trying to get the people to go to church. The apostle Paul talked about how he successfully reached people: "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law" (1 Cor. 9:20). Look at the variety of "entry paths" into growing churches, and you will find the gospel contextualized in many creative ways. The message doesn't change, but the methods do. More and more churches are speaking to the felt needs of people—in a language those people can understand.

## 3. Church plants

It's really a timeless principle, and one that thankfully is alive and well right now: new churches equal new growth. In the first century, the gospel grew as new churches were planted (Acts 9:31). Over the past ten years, there have been more churches started than in any decade from the past century. With an average local church life expectancy of 75 to 80 years, starting new ones is simply non-negotiable. New churches are the most strategic way to reach people.



Charles Arn

Arn is the president of Church Growth, Inc. of Monrovia, CA. He also serves as visiting professor at the Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University.

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