

**Distinctives of Church Case Studies
&
Study Questions for

Exit of a Founding Pastor:
Jeff Jones slated to “replace” Gene Getz

By Dr. David R. Fletcher**

Distinctive—Expect to get “inside the heads” of the principals

The case study will allow you to “think the thoughts” of the principals, the main players in each case. You may or may not agree with their theology or decisions, but you will see the situation from their perspective and life-history. Seek to discover their “sitz im leben,” the sociological understanding of their “place in life.” This requires understanding the context of a ministry, so expect plenty of background data. Endeavor to “think their thoughts” and by analogy apply lessons to your ministry situation.

Distinctive—Expect plenty of data

Case studies are often twenty pages, single-spaced. You will be given as much background information as is practical to understand the case. It is essential to grasp as much as possible of the history and polity of the local church. *There is a key to reading case studies: the folks at Harvard suggest a “first skim” of the case, looking for pertinent information. Then, go back for a detailed reading of the material.* Sift the data of the case and sort out what you perceive to be relevant data points. Expect plenty of block quotes. These quotes allow the principals in each case study to share their “own story.” Data will come from websites, information published by the church, books and magazine articles by the principals and others, newspaper stories, and personal interviews.

Distinctive—Expect to discover principles

“Principals” are the main players in the case and you should draw the “principles,” the “main ideas” of the case that transcend church polity, geography and culture. Generally, the case will present a problem or turning point in ministry, but not the “correct answer” or the “solution.” Read the case to formulate your conclusions and be able to defend your conclusions with the case data. Why did the “main players” make the decisions that they did? What is the larger picture of what is going on, the “meta-narrative?” What “main ideas” can you analogously apply to your ministry or life?

Study Questions for “Exit of a Founding Pastor”

1. Identify the principals, the “main players.” If helpful, make a chart of what each person brings to the ministry of Fellowship Bible Church North. Examine the spiritual gifts of each principal and their role in the ministry.
2. Consider the church values of Gene Getz. What values will make a successful transition a challenge? A success? Consider the implications of a seven year transition plan.
3. How does a founding pastor influence, set or “father” the spiritual DNA of the church? Evaluate the principles of Getz’s spiritual DNA, principles that transcend church polity, geography and culture.

Exit of a Founding Pastor

Jeff Jones slated to “replace” Gene Getz

By Dr. David R. Fletcher

*“When I need the church more than the church needs me,
I have stepped over the line.” Gene Getz*

One of the greatest challenges in the business world is the exit of the founder of a corporation. Consider the words of Professor Noam Wasserman of the Harvard Business School:

My research focuses on *founder frustrations* in entrepreneurial firms, with a particular emphasis on the core issues of organization building that cause problems for founders’ abilities to achieve their goals. I’ve been especially interested in the pattern of succession in many entrepreneurial firms—specifically, that many founders are replaced by “professional” CEOs early in the life of the venture. My data shows that the percentage of founder-CEOs who “go the distance” is extremely low, especially in high-potential ventures. People like Bill Gates and Larry Ellison, who are able to lead their companies for quite a while, get all the attention because they are rare, not because they are typical.¹

Why begin with a quote from a premier business school? There are clear similarities between entrepreneurial people who found churches and founders of successful companies. Founder-CEO’s have frustrations over succession issues, just as do founding pastors. It is extraordinarily difficult for founders to step aside and let another assume the mantle of leadership.

A related story is told by the Wall Street Journal’s Jeff Zaslow. In a December 2005 article, the journalist documents the recent death of “superman,” Christopher Reeves, and a non-profit’s problem of how to “replace superman.”

¹ “The Challenge of Letting Go: Founder-CEO Succession in Entrepreneurial Firms,” Mike Roberts, *New Business*, Harvard Business School, Spring 2005. Noam Wasserman is an assistant professor and MBA Class of 1961 Fellow in the Entrepreneurial Management Unit at Harvard Business School. His paper “Founder-CEO Succession and the Paradox of Entrepreneurial Success,” published in *Organization Science* in March-April 2003, won Harvard’s 2003 Aage Sorensen Memorial Award for sociological research. With his co-author, Rock Center Entrepreneur-in-Residence Henry McCance of Greylock Partners, Professor Wasserman recently completed a case study about founder-CEO succession at Wily Technology.

In the summer of 2004, shortly after Kathy Lewis was named president of the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, she asked a staffer to draw up a “crisis plan.” How would the organization respond if Mr. Reeve were to die?

The staffer argued that she was uncomfortable creating such a plan, especially since Mr. Reeve was in relatively good health. “She protested and protested,” Ms. Lewis recalls. “But if you’re not prepared for horrible things, it can get more horrible when those things happen.”

The crisis plan finally landed on Ms. Lewis’s desk on Friday, Oct. 8, 2004. Two days later, unexpectedly, Mr. Reeve died.

The foundation had relied on the charismatic actor/activist to attract media attention and cajole donors, to inspire researchers and give hope to paralysis patients. Some people simply assumed that the foundation folded after Mr. Reeve died. But it continues, with executives masterminding an overhaul, even as its chairperson, Mr. Reeve’s widow Dana, fights lung cancer.

Many groups face similar struggles when their guiding lights pass on.²

Corporations and non-profit organizations deal with succession planning, but does the church? Ron Keener, the managing editor of Church Executive magazine writes:

Walt Kallestad, senior pastor of the 12,000-member Community Church of Joy in Glendale, AZ, suffered a massive heart attack in 2002, requiring six-way bypass surgery. Yet, while the topic of developing a succession plan has come up in the past three years, the church has no plan in place for handling Kallestad’s eventual leaving—whether to retirement, ill health or taking another post.

Willow Creek Community Church is in active conversation with its elders about succession planning but as yet has not put up a process for the day when Bill Hybels is no longer at the South Barrington, IL-based megachurch.³

Gene Getz was 68 years old. He wasn’t planning in dying but was ready to pass the torch of ministry at Fellowship Bible Church North. After founding his third church, at least three church-related ministries, written over sixty books, developed a radio ministry, taught in a Bible College and a Seminary, Gene Getz realized that it was his time to “retire.” He wasn’t ready to sail into the sunset, but he sensed that God wanted him to transition the position of Senior Pastor to someone else.

² “Replacing Superman: How to Go Forward After A Charismatic Founder Dies,” Jeff Zaslow, December 8, 2005, Wall Street Journal. <http://online.wsj.com>

³ “How to Succeed at Succession: Too Many Churches Refuse to Face the Inevitable—The Pastor Will One Day Leave,” Ronald E. Keener, July 2005, Church Executive magazine.

Founders and followers typically disdain the word “replace,” because no one can replace the person who brought the organization/organism into existence. Founders typically never want to retire. For many church members, no one can “replace” their beloved pastor. Yet, while one can use sugar-coated and euphemistic words about the process, the core idea is the replacement of leadership.

Transition is easier said than done. The qualities that typify founders—strong, energetic, entrepreneurial, captivating and creative—make it equally difficult to step aside. Could Getz succeed in transition where so many other Senior Pastors had failed? Could Gene live in retirement? What about his future relationship with the church he founded and served for so many years?

Jeff Jones was slated as the next Senior Pastor, with a seven year window of transition from Getz to Jones. But, things drastically changed three and a half years into the transition ...

Dr. Gene A. Getz

Few Christian leaders have had as enormously successful and entrepreneurial ministry as Dr. Gene A. Getz, who prefers to be called “Gene.” To understand this founding pastor, one must gain perspective on Gene’s background.

The educational background of Gene Getz is rich and extensive. For his undergraduate work, he received a diploma from the Moody Bible Institute (Chicago, Illinois) in 1952 and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rocky Mountain College (Billings, Montana) in 1954. For his graduate work, he was awarded a Master of Arts degree from Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois) in 1958, a Doctor of Philosophy degree from New York University (New York, New York) in 1968, graduate study at Northern Illinois University (DeKalb, Illinois) and received an honorary doctorate from the Institut Theologique de Nimes (Uchard, France) in 1999.

The professional experience of Dr. Getz is as varied as his education. He had radio ministry experience with the Montana Gospel Crusade from 1952-54, and was a Youth Director with the Church of the Air (Billings, Montana) during the same time period. In 1954 he was an Assistant Pastor with Cass Community Church (Hinsdale, Illinois) and from 1955-57 he was the Director of Christian Education and music at Lisle Bible Church (Lisle, Illinois). From 1955-1968 he served at the Moody Bible Institute as an Instructor in Christian Education and became the Director of the Evening School in 1962. Beginning in 1964, and for the next 9 years, he was a Visiting Professor at the Word of Life Summer Institute of Camping (Schroon Lake, New York).

Things changed as Gene and his wife, Elaine, moved to Dallas, Texas. His first twenty years in ministry were mainly in teaching the principles of the Bible. From 1968-73 he was an Associate Professor of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary and also taught in the Pastoral Ministries Department. In 1974 he lowered his workload at Dallas Seminary, becoming an Adjunct Professor. Challenged by his students and several

interested families in Dallas, he launched the first Fellowship Bible Church, not planning to leave the Seminary as a full-time professor. However, the church grew rapidly and in 1973, he responded to the gentle nudging of the elders and became the church's full-time senior pastor.

In 1981, the editors of *Leadership Journal* documented a discussion which contains some interesting information regarding the first Fellowship Bible Church in Richardson, TX:

Gene Getz and Larry Richards are good friends who have sparked ideas off each other for more than a decade. Both men have taught in Christian colleges. When Gene was at Dallas Seminary in the early seventies, he used in his courses Larry's book, "A New Face for the Church," a process that resulted in his own book, "Sharpening the Focus of the Church."

But about eight years ago, the paths of these two men diverged. Gene's students kept challenging him to put his stimulating ideas into action. The small group he began blossomed into a home church, which has expanded into four congregations and eight branch churches. Through all that expansion, and now in his role as director of the Dallas Center for Church Renewal, Gene's ideas about how to run a church have modified as he has wrestled with the problems of growth.

Larry left his teaching position in the Wheaton Graduate School, and for the same eight years worked with churches of all types throughout the nation. He is the coordinator of the activities of the Dynamic Church Ministries team, and co-author of *A Theology of Church Leadership* (reviewed in *LEADERSHIP*, Volume 11 Number 1). In this book he states that authoritarian and managerial attitudes are not appropriate to leaders of the church.

Knowing Gene and Larry have come to a place of disagreement about certain points in Larry's book, we asked the men to dialogue with each other. Editors Terry Muck and Paul Robbins, with publisher Harold Myra, met with Gene and Larry at Chicago's O'Hare Airport. There were plenty of sharp disagreements between Gene and Larry, but seldom have we seen two people disagree so sharply yet still maintain an atmosphere of trusting camaraderie.⁴

One of the common factors in founding pastors is that they are strong leaders. This is seen in the introduction to the dialogue between Getz and Richards. It is a rare statement that there were "sharp disagreements" and "trusting camaraderie." Getz presents one of his core values in the discussion:

But wherever you have function, you have form. The church is both an organism and an organization; you can't have one without the other.

⁴ "A Biblical Style of Leadership: Gene Getz and Larry Richards," *Leadership Journal*, 1981 Vol 2. Ed. 2. <http://www.ctlibrary.com/12995>

You've said the church is different from a modern business, and I agree with that. But you don't stop there. You go on to make the church so unique that you eliminate any possibility of it functioning well. There are principles in the New Testament that can be applied to church structure. I believe the reason we don't have the structure itself in the New Testament is that structure and form are cultural. If we tried to copy New Testament church structure, we would lock ourselves into the cultural forms of the first century. Therefore, God has given us functions so we can develop forms that will be relevant to any given culture at any time.⁵

One cannot be with Gene without sooner, rather than later, hearing about the difference between form and function. This is a core value to his concept of the local church. Gene continues in the discussion to describe an issue in the new church:

When we first started our ministry in Dallas, we had seven or eight elders who met regularly. As a small group, we made decisions by consensus; it was a beautiful experience. (By the way, management specialists tell us if the group gets beyond seven or eight, you're going to have problems with this style.) As the group became larger (we now have nearly forty elders), we still achieved consensus. But later we found out certain people disagreed but were afraid to express their views and possibly bog everything down. They went along because they didn't want to break up the consensus. Finally, some of them spoke up and disagreed—and they had valid disagreements. But then we didn't have consensus, so we had no way to make decisions and move ahead. Then it dawned on some of us that we really were operating with a sloppy voting system. We were saying to the group, "Does anybody disagree?" We were taking a negative vote rather than both a negative and a positive vote. What we needed to do was give people the right to say "I agree" or "I disagree," take a vote, and then agree to disagree on certain significant issues.⁶

This issue of Elder decision-making is significant as it illustrates that Getz had moved out of the seminary classroom and into the laboratory of real life. Although his book about the church came first, he was challenged to "prove it" in real life:

Dr. Gene A. Getz became involved in church planting and renewal at a very practical level while teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary. After exploring the subject for several years with his students, he wrote *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*. Prodded on by several families in Dallas who became interested in starting a new church, Gene launched Fellowship Bible Church in November of

⁵ "A Biblical Style of Leadership: Gene Getz and Larry Richards."

⁶ "A Biblical Style of Leadership: Gene Getz and Larry Richards."

1972. Committed to biblical absolutes, the church was also built on the concept of “freedom in form.” Growth was immediate.⁷

A slightly different perspective is provided by Fellowship Bible Church North:

Dr. Gene A. Getz, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, was faced with disturbing questions from his students. These students, observing the anti-institutional attitudes that permeated American culture at that time, were even questioning the viability of the local church. Gene was challenged to begin a fresh study of the New Testament church with his students. From this study, Gene gained tremendous insight. As a result of his changing views, he wrote a book called *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, which outlined the principles of church renewal.⁸

The first church plant was Fellowship Bible Church Richardson. It was to have a distinct emphasis, different from other churches in the Dallas area:

In 1972, the first Fellowship church was launched, with a vision to provide the following three vital experiences that Christians need to grow spiritually: Bible teaching, Fellowship and Outreach. The church leaders were guided by the desire to allow freedom in determining the form and structure of these experiences without changing the biblical concepts. The church grew quickly and within four years had planted four new churches.⁹

The second church that Gene founded was Fellowship Bible Church Dallas, five years after his first church plant:

In the summer of 1977, Dr. Gene Getz, who had been pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in the Richardson area, teamed up with one of his elders, real estate developer Don Kerr, to begin another Fellowship Bible Church in the North Dallas/Park Cities area. Their dream was to bring a church with a contemporary and relational emphasis to this part of Dallas. They met as a Bible class in Don Kerr's home, then held their first official church service on Sunday evening, October 9, using the rented facilities of another church. The new church was named Park Cities Bible Fellowship and later Fellowship Bible Church of Park Cities. It is now called Fellowship Bible Church of Dallas.¹⁰

Getz would found the church, but soon move on:

⁷ “Bio of Dr. Gene Getz,” Renewal Radio, http://www.renewalradio.org/phil_frame.html

⁸ “History of Fellowship Bible Church North,” Fellowship Bible Church North, <http://fbcnorth.org/Content/ContentCT.asp?P=45>

⁹ “History of Fellowship Bible Church North.”

¹⁰ “History of Fellowship Bible Church Dallas,” Fellowship Bible Church Dallas, http://www.fellowshipdallas.org/church_history.htm

After an exhaustive and fruitless search for property, the church sought God's help. Through a series of near miracles, the church purchased land and began construction on a modest facility on Boedeker south of the North Park Center shopping mall. Dr. Getz returned to the original Fellowship Church and Al Barnett became pastor until July 1980.

Carrying significant debt, the church found itself without either a senior pastor or a music leader. At the time, one of the elders heard that Bill Counts was moving from California to Dallas to start a lay seminary for Probe Ministries. The church again sought God's help and asked Dr. Counts to become part-time pastor of the 120-person congregation. In September of 1980 he agreed, and Fellowship had a new pastor.¹¹

Fellowship Bible Church Dallas, having changed from its original name of Fellowship Bible Church of Park Cities, continued to grow over the next 25 years:

In early 2005, Bill Counts retired as Senior Pastor and—after another exhaustive search—was replaced by Gary Brandenburg, who brings a dynamic new vision for the future of Fellowship Dallas Church of Dallas.

After a quarter of a century, and with over 2,500 people calling Fellowship Dallas their church home today, the leadership works to preserve the church's commitment to God's grace and continues its contemporary style. We hope that you will join us as we seek to become—as our vision statement says—"a grace-centered community so captivated by the love of Jesus Christ that it transforms us, our city and our world."¹²

The third church that Gene would personally found and pastor was Fellowship Bible Church North, again five years since his last church plant: "In 1982, Gene led another church plant, this time in Plano—Fellowship Bible Church North. After a short time, rapid growth necessitated relocation from a warehouse to a church building."¹³

Twelve "Fellowship Churches" have been started in the Dallas metroplex and numerous churches throughout the United States can trace their roots back to what has happened in Dallas. "The last 20+ years have been the greatest experiences in my personal ministry," Gene states. "I often say I spent nearly 20 years preparing men to be pastors (13 years at Moody Bible Institute and seven years at Dallas Theological Seminary) and now I'm really learning how." Getz inaugurated the Fellowship Bible Church movement, which in 2005 numbered over 340 churches.

¹¹ "History of Fellowship Bible Church Dallas."

¹² "History of Fellowship Bible Church Dallas."

¹³ "History of Fellowship Bible Church North."

Renewal Radio was launched by Gene in 1989. The format “consists of dynamic interviews, discussions and biblical reflections.”¹⁴ Just as Gene had been successful in founding three churches, so Renewal Radio grew:

Renewal is a 15-minute daily radio program heard throughout the United States, Belize, Puerto Rico, Micronesia, Guam, the Caribbean and 124 countries around the world from Afghanistan to Yugoslavia. We are a listener-supported faith ministry seeking to meet the needs of our listening audience through biblical based innovative programming, helpful literature and free publications.¹⁵

Renewal is the essence of dynamic Christianity and the basis on which Christians, both in a corporate or “body” sense and as individual believers, can determine the will of God. Paul made this clear when he wrote to the Romans in chapter 12. The mission of Renewal is based on Romans 12:1,2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 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.”

This mission can allow us to do programming as broad as the purpose of the New Testament but as narrow as we desire in order to focus on particular biblical themes and current needs to carry the message of Renewal to people everywhere so they can become the people God intended them to be.¹⁶

The Center for Church Based Training was started by Gene in 1999. The goal of the Center is to develop “all believers to maturity and many to leadership in the local church, under the authority of local church leadership, through an apprenticeship on-the-job approach, with other churches, for Christ’s mission of multiplying churches worldwide to God’s glory.” With every church plant, Gene has stressed “the value of developing people for ministry through a mentoring, in-ministry and life-on-life approach.” This emphasis on mentoring led him to begin an intensive internship program as a means of intentionally developing emerging church leaders:

This process was formalized in 1990 when Bruce Miller was brought on staff to develop a “church-based” training program at Fellowship Bible Church North. In 1995, Jeff Jones joined the staff and The Center for Church Based Training (CCBT) was formally established. In October 1999, CCBT launched as a ministry to local churches with its first “Churches Training Leaders” conference.

¹⁴ “More About Gene Getz,” OnePlace, http://www.oneplace.com/Ministries/Renewal_Radio/Archives.asp

¹⁵ “About Us,” Renewal Radio, http://www.renewalradio.org/phil_frame.html

¹⁶ “About Us.”

Through their conferences and seminars, consultations and retreats, and the church-based training resources they are developing, CCBT is a valuable resource to local church leaders in the areas of discipleship training and leadership development. Since the launch in October 1999, the Center for Church Based Training has interacted with church leaders from 30 countries, comprising 28 denominations, and has distributed over 40,000 training courses.¹⁷

In 2004, the Center was a thriving ministry and prepared a summary of its ministry:

Thanks to your support of The Center for Church Based Training, we celebrate our 5th year as a ministry. CCBT has been blessed to meet with numerous churches this past year through our “Churches Training Leaders” Conference and One-Day Seminars. We appreciate the opportunity to bring the value of church-based training into your communities. We are also privileged to have been invited to participate in several denominational conferences and training events across the country. We are thrilled to hear about lives that have been transformed through your local implementation of church-based training.¹⁸

As is common with Getz, the Center has a well defined, and biblical, purpose statement. The purpose of the Center is worth repeating because it summarizes Gene’s vision for the local church:

“In the Church” *The Power of Context*

The training takes place in the life and ministry of the local church, which is the visible expression of the body of Christ (Acts 13:1; Ephesians 1:22-23). The church is the body of Christ, the family of God, the temple of the Spirit. The church is the hope of the world. God is at work today in a direct way through local churches.

“Under the Church” *The Power of Responsibility*

The training takes place under the authority of the leaders of the local church (Acts 20:25-31; Hebrews 13:17), who must give account to God for the training of godly leaders and for the maturity of the church’s members. In developing leaders in a local church, we are working with people who have God-given responsibility for that church or for a specific ministry in that church. In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that they were responsible for the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, and responsible for the local church that Jesus Christ purchased with his own blood. In the churches we serve, God will hold us responsible for how we use what we learn to improve the church’s ministry. This direct accountability to God gives church-based leadership development an energy that is missing from most classrooms.

¹⁷ “About CCBT,” Center for Church Based Training, <http://www.ccbt.org/about.html>

¹⁸ “About CCBT,” Center for Church Based Training, <http://www.ccbt.org/about.html>

“Through the Church” *The Power of Community*

The training takes place through a non-formal, in-ministry, life-on-life approach to maturity and leadership development (Acts 11:25-26; 2 Timothy 2:2). This kind of leadership development involves much more than just offering courses. It is a *process* built into the very fabric of a local church’s life and ministry. This is not a form of a Bible institute that operates alongside the church and meets in a Sunday school classroom. Rather, church-based people development occurs in and through the real-life, ongoing ministry activities of a local church. It includes life-on-life mentoring in the context of authentic community.

“With other Churches” *The Power of Partnership*

Churches need both autonomy and interdependence, as in the first century (Acts 11:22-24). Rarely does one church by itself have all the necessary resources for developing leaders, but we can and should work together locally and globally to develop qualified leaders for the local church.

“For the Church” *The Power of Mission*

The training takes place for the sake of the lost and for the multiplication of the local church worldwide (Acts 13:1-5; 14:21-18). We are not just learning for the sake of learning—which can lead to pride and sterility. We are developing leaders for the sake of reaching people for Jesus Christ in our community and for the sake of multiplying churches around the world.

“To God's Glory” *The Power of Worship*

Ultimately our goal is to develop people for the purpose of bringing glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Romans 15:5-6; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). When you are serving Almighty God, it changes your perspective. We should develop leaders, not just because it is an effective way to run our ministries, or even because it is the right thing to do; but because we want to bring honor and glory to our God.

Getz the author has written 60 books which have been translated into at least 40 plus languages, from Afrikaans to Albanian and Arabic to Spanish, Swahili to Vietnamese. Many of his titles are frequently in Christian households, seminaries and colleges. Some of Gene’s major works include:

- ◆ Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Center for Church Renewal)
- ◆ Measure of a Church (Regal Books)
- ◆ Measure of a Man (Regal Books)
- ◆ Measure of a Woman (Regal Books)
- ◆ Men of Character Series (Broadman & Holman)
- ◆ The “One Another” series (David Cook Publications)
- ◆ Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church (Moody Press)

A summary of Gene’s books is in Appendix I.

Jeff Jones

What kind of person could follow such a strong leader as Gene Getz? What are the character qualities and personal gifts that mark such a person? Jeff Jones was selected to follow Gene, but with a seven year transition period. Half way through that seven year period, dramatic events unfolded.

At an early age, Jeff Jones became a Christian and desired to enter into full-time ministry. Jeff's biography page on Fellowship Bible Church North's web page begins the story:

Jeff Jones grew up in Huntsville, Alabama ... His home was a very close, encouraging environment, and he became a Christian at a young age. When he was in 7th grade, he began working as a helper with Child Evangelism Fellowship's 5 Day Clubs. His high school years were very full of ministry in his church, in his public school, and out in the community leading evangelistic Bible studies, neighborhood children's groups, and open air evangelism. During those years, Jeff became convinced that God was leading him to pursue full-time Christian ministry.¹⁹

Instead of going straight from high school to college, Jeff learned some "life lessons" while serving overseas:

After high school and before college, Jeff traveled with Child Evangelism Fellowship to Eastern Europe for several months. He worked behind the Iron Curtain, training and resourcing children's workers. Working with persecuted believers would mark Jeff's life forever, seeing believers who literally gave everything—even their freedom—to serve Christ.

He attended Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham, Alabama, and was also very active in ministry in his home church in Huntsville as well as his college church in Birmingham. It was during these college years that Jeff met Christy, who a few years later became his wife.

After graduating from college, they decided to attend Dallas Seminary, and their biggest prayer request was a place of ministry that would take their development as leaders seriously. God opened that door by providing an internship position with Fellowship Bible Church North.²⁰

The geographical location of his ministry changed after graduating from Dallas Seminary in 1993, yet the influence of Gene Getz continued. No longer was Jeff an intern learning under Gene, but now a disciple who could teach Gene's and Fellowship's principles.

¹⁹ "Meet Our Teaching Pastors: Jeff Jones, Senior Pastor," Fellowship Bible Church North, <http://fbcnorth.org/Content/47.htm>

²⁰ "Meet Our Teaching Pastors: Jeff Jones, Senior Pastor,"

Shortly after graduation Jeff and Christy moved, and eventually headed north to Alexandria, Minnesota. They served on staff at a fast-growing church plant that wanted Jeff to bring some of the Fellowship concepts of small groups and leadership development. Jeff and Christy stayed there until the fall of 1994, when Gene Getz (then senior pastor) and Bruce Miller (then Associate Pastor) invited Jeff to come back to Fellowship to work in adult education and help launch the [Center for Church-Based Training](#), an organization that helps churches around the world disciple believers and develop leaders.²¹

During this time, Jeff and a team of others wrote, edited and field tested the Church's *Discovery Series*. A primary focus of the series was for participants to learn in discussion:

Discovery is a 12 week, small group experience that tackles the issues of faith and life! Each week your group will wrestle with a different question or issue using an interactive study featuring case studies and articles written by the best Christian authors. Discovery participants don't just sit and take in information—they become a part of the dialogue, working with the group to study what God has to say about a particular issue.²²

Another focus was for participants to grow together in a community:

Discovery groups are small communities. In a Discovery group you are paired with a group of people (around 12) that will not only study together, but do life together. Throughout the process of Discovery members become friends, and friends become family as you bond together through the common goal of pursuing God together.²³

The Discovery Series is currently being used by over 1500 churches and has been translated into 6 languages.

Jeff's leadership role in the church expanded as in that time period, he joined the "SALT" (Servant and Leadership) Team, the management team of Fellowship North. Also, he began to preach on a regular basis when Gene was away.

Four to five guys on staff generally had the pulpit when Gene was gone. Then, Jeff began to preach more. People came up to Jeff and said "Do you know something we don't know?" "How old is Gene?" Jeff wondered, "How do I handle it? It was awkward."²⁴

²¹ "Meet Our Teaching Pastors: Jeff Jones, Senior Pastor,"

²² "Discovery," Fellowship Bible Church North, <http://fbcnorth.org/Content/ContentCT.asp?P=136>

²³ "Discovery," Fellowship Bible Church North, <http://fbcnorth.org/Content/ContentCT.asp?P=136>

²⁴ "Personal Interview with Gene Getz, Jeff Jones and Jack Warren," August 2005. Further quotes from Getz and Jones in this case study are from this interview.

The change came in 2000:

In 2000, Gene and the elders approached Jeff about becoming Gene's successor when he planned to retire. Jeff and Christy accepted, and the mentoring process began. In November of 2003, Gene and the elders announced his plans to pass the baton to Jeff and felt confident that Jeff was ready to assume full responsibilities as Senior Pastor. Jeff was officially installed as new Senior Pastor on the weekend of January 9/11, 2004.²⁵

The Transition

Fellowship Bible Church North announced a seven year transition plan in 2000. For some seven years may have a biblical ring to it, as in "seven years of tribulation." For others, seven years may seem just the right length to transition from one powerful leader to another.

Gene comments: Seven years is a long time for a transition to take place. However, I felt we had no choice since people were beginning to "sincerely" second-guess what was happening. It wasn't fair to Jeff. This is what prompted me to approach the elders about what was happening. They had previously encouraged me to continue until I was 75, but because of the dynamics that were taking place, I felt we needed to get out ahead of the situation.

Church transition has parallels to those in business. Noam Wasserman of the Harvard Business School was interviewed by "New Business" on the subject of transition of founder-CEOs:

NB: For those founders who do give up the CEO role, do they often stay around in some capacity? Does that generally work?

Wasserman: This is another way that founder-CEO succession can differ dramatically from large-company CEO succession. In large companies, after the CEO is replaced, that person almost always leaves the company. However, in entrepreneurial companies, the board often tries to find ways the founder can remain within the company in a different role, such as remaining on the board or taking a lower-ranking executive role. Because those founders are so central to their companies, losing them completely could be very disruptive for the company. The ideal situation is where the board and the founder can craft an appropriate non-CEO role, one that the founder willingly takes on. However,

²⁵ "Meet Our Teaching Pastors: Jeff Jones, Senior Pastor," Fellowship Bible Church North, <http://fbcnorth.org/Content/47.htm>

given how hard it is to convince many founders that they should step down, there is also a big cost to keeping a disgruntled founder active in the company.²⁶

Fellowship Bible Church North found itself in the same situation as a company with a founder-CEO. The church's transition was not crafted as "Gene's out and Jeff's in." Also, since it was Gene who initiated the transition, there was not the angst of an angry founder. The operative thought from Wasserman, as applied to Fellowship is: "the ideal situation is where the board and founder can craft an appropriate non-CEO role, one that the founder willingly takes on." Could Fellowship craft such a position for Getz? Could the transition happen over the seven years, from Senior Pastor to this new role?

Wasserman continues, and in doing so sheds valuable light on the transition between Getz and Jones:

From the new CEO's perspective, it can be very hard to come into the company while your predecessor—the founder who used to be CEO—is still around. This is particularly true if the founder's new role is chairman of the board, looking over the shoulder of the new CEO. It gets even more interesting if, in addition to becoming chairman, the founder has taken an executive position below the CEO, for instance, as chief technical officer. In that case, the new CEO is both "reporting" to the founder-chairman and having that same founder-CTO as a direct report. Taking over a company is quite a challenge for any new CEO, but doing it in that kind of situation brings the challenge to a very different level.²⁷

The challenge for Getz, Jones and Fellowship, would be the timing and nature of the transition.

At 68 years old, Getz knew that sooner or later he would leave the position of Senior Pastor of Fellowship. Ron Keener writes: "High-profile pastors, often well regarded within the evangelical community, can be pulled away from their congregations just as readily for a new opportunity as they might leave due to retirement, ill health or death—and their churches are just as unprepared."²⁸ Was Getz going to leave Fellowship unprepared? Keener continues:

Planning is contrary to human nature, believes Gary Kinnaman, pastor of Word of Grace Church in Mesa, AZ, where 4,100 people worship each week. "It is not a church problem," he says, "it is a problem with human beings. The crisis over Terri Schiavo is symptomatic of the general unwillingness of people to plan for transitions in life and death."

Kinnaman says that even to raise the "R-word" (retirement) at his church creates a

²⁶ "The Challenge of Letting Go: Founder-CEO Succession in Entrepreneurial Firms."

²⁷ "The Challenge of Letting Go: Founder-CEO Succession in Entrepreneurial Firms."

²⁸ "How to Succeed at Succession."

ripple of uncertainty. “I’ve had to be very careful how I communicated my aging life because of the way people respond to that negatively.” He turned 56 in April.²⁹

Getz had long taught, and Jones had long believed, that the local church could have only one strong leader, only one Senior Pastor. Steven J. Cole is a pastor in Flagstaff who wrote of an experience with Gene:

I remember eating dinner at a conference in 1982 with Gene Getz, who has done a lot of thinking and has extensive experience with the subject of biblical church government through the Fellowship Bible Churches he has planted. He was arguing that even though there should be a plurality of elders in a local church, the pastor needs to be the one in charge in the sense that the buck stops there. I countered that such responsibility could be shared mutually and that only Christ needed to be in charge. But over the years, I’ve come around to his point-of-view. In both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in church history, you can see how God uses strong, godly leaders to accomplish His purpose.³⁰

Gene had long taught that the local church could have only one person in the lead role even though he believes firmly in multiple leadership and accountability. He describes his role in his book “Elders and Leaders”:

First, I look to my fellow elders as my spiritual counselors and advisors. Ultimately, I am accountable to them. I have asked them to take final responsibility to make sure I am fulfilling my role properly. They have final authority to guide me, correct me, and if need be, remove me from my position should I fail to function as a competent spiritual leader.

Second, I view my role as an elder/pastor as “one among equals” in the decision-making process. Though I bring recommendations and proposals to the elders, final decisions are made by the *total* body of elders. I consider myself as one of the decision makers when decisions are being made, even though I chair our meetings.

Third, I view my role as serving as a pastor and leader to the elders. Each of them has a right to look to me as their spiritual shepherd and leader. In this sense, I am a “pastor to the pastors” and a “leader of the leaders.” I am also responsible to take the lead in consultation with the other elders to make sure all staff and nonstaff leaders measure up to biblical qualifications and fulfill their functions.”³¹

²⁹ “How to Succeed at Succession.”

³⁰ “How God’s Work Gets Done,” Steven J. Cole, Flagstaff Christian Fellowship, Flagstaff, Arizona, www.fcfonline.org

³¹ “Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church,” Gene A. Getz, Moody Publishers.

Gene was at a time in his life when he needed to live out his long held principles of leadership in the local church. But this time, the application would be most difficult because it would be he who would leave a position of authority and responsibility. Gene Getz had made a career out of seeing principles in the Bible and applying them in his life and ministry. The following story illustrates this concept:

At 27, Tony Evans's path appeared planned. After eight years of Bible college and Dallas Theological Seminary, he'd earned his master's degree with honors. And the seminary offered him a full-time teaching position.

Everything looked excellent. Tony could teach biblical truth, enjoy a secure family income, and conveniently pursue a doctoral degree.

"But then pastor Gene Getz reminded me of all these theoretical ideas I had," recalls Tony. "He challenged me to put them into practice. And faculty member Charles Ryrie told me that the world didn't need another ideologist [but] someone who'd demonstrate theology worked out in the local church."

The two urged Tony to turn down the teaching position and plant a church in Oak Cliff, a Dallas suburb. This option carried limited pay, fewer immediate opportunities, and no prestige. Tony accepted the challenge.³²

Tony Evans founded Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, now one of the largest African-American churches in the country.³³ Getz proposed to the elders at the first Fellowship Bible Church that they pay Tony's full salary for the first three years—which they did until the church was able to pick up his financial support.

As would be expected with a strong founding-pastor, Getz took a leading role in the succession planning, as Getz explains:

I went to each Elder one-on-one and asked "Who should replace me in seven years when I am 75?" One hundred percent said "Jeff." One man hesitated, not because of Jeff but because he wanted a few minutes to process. I asked the senior staff and they all said 'Jeff.' My son, Kenton said in 1993 "Dad, keep your eye on Jeff. I believe he may be the one to replace you when you retire."

Then I approached Jeff and his wife Christy—they took time to think, pray and respond but agreed to it.

³² "From Nothing to Double," Heather Jamison, Leadership Journal, August 15, 2004 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/moi/2002/004/aug/15.15.html> originally published by Kindred Spirit, May-June 2000.

³³ See XPastor's case study, "To XP or Not to XP, that is the Question: Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship"

Then, we went to the congregation and there was no negative feedback. They felt secure for seven years and good about Jeff.³⁴

A seven year transition is lengthy and this one was not a guarantee. Jeff comments that “The process was open-handed and authentic, no guarantee but our intention that it work. If it didn’t work out, there wouldn’t be failure but a sense of God leading us different directions.”³⁵ Thus, during or at the end of the seven year transition, the whole thing could be called off.

The first steps were for Jeff to become the Associate Pastor and an Elder. Gene commented that “we were growing and becoming compartmentalized—which happens in any large organization. We needed to refocus on our core values and make sure everyone was on the same page. So, I asked Jeff to lead us in a process of alignment—which took two years. Jeff built leadership credibility with the staff and eventually did 50 percent of the teaching.”

Jeff began to realize that things were changing in the church. With hindsight he said that “succession takes on a life of its own after 1 year and ours was more successful than expected.” Because “Gene released and empowered,” Jeff was able to realign the staff to the vision of the church and build credibility with the congregation.

In August 2003, three-and-a-half years into the transition, one of the elders who was retired from business and who spent a lot of time in the office, sat down with Gene and Jeff and said he sensed that the staff particularly was not certain whom to go for communication and clarification. He also pointed out that Gene and Jeff were deferring to each other when it came to making leadership decisions—which the staff appreciated—but at the same time felt some insecurity.

Gene summarized the issue:

It just hit me that I had helped Jeff emerge as a co-pastor. Consequently, a bit of organizational paralysis was beginning to set in. I had to take leadership if I was going to be the Senior Pastor for another three-and-a-half years.

However, this posed a serious problem. If I did step up and take a stronger leadership role, people would draw one of two conclusions—neither of which would be true. First, some would conclude that the elders didn’t trust Jeff to continue to be in line to replace me. Or some would conclude, I wasn’t able to let go—which would have been a false conclusion that would invalidate everything I was committed to.

Three and a half years into a seven year transition—what would Dr. Gene A. Getz do?

³⁴ “Personal Interview.”

³⁵ “Personal Interview.”

Appendix I—Books by Gene Getz

Back To The Bible

Interacting With God in Ephesians 1-3
Interacting With God in Ephesians 4-6
David: Anchoring Your Heart Close to God
1 Thessalonians: Moving Forward in a Backward World

Broadman & Holman

The Walk
"Men of Character" Series
Abraham: Holding Fast to the Will of God
David: Seeking God Faithfully
Elijah: Remaining Steadfast Through Uncertainty
Jacob: Following God Without Looking Back
Joseph: Overcoming Obstacles Through Faithfulness
Joshua: Living as a Consistent Role Model
Nehemiah: Becoming a Disciplined Leader
Daniel: Standing Firm for God
Moses: Freeing Yourself to Know God
Samuel: A Lifetime Serving God
The Apostles: Becoming Unified Through Adversity
Paul: Living for the Call of Christ

Center For Church Renewal

Sharpening the Focus of the Church

Chariot-Victor Books

God's Plan for Building a Good Reputation
Serving One Another
Building Up One Another
Loving One Another
Encouraging One Another
Praying for One Another

Howard Publishing

Rich in Every Way

Moody Press

Filling the Holes in Our Souls
Biblical Theology of Material Possessions
Real Prosperity
Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church

Regal Books

Measure of a Church
Measure of a Family
Measure of a Man
Measure of a Woman
Partners for Life

Serendipity House

Overcoming Adversity—Insights into the Life of Joseph
Shoulder to Shoulder—Insights into the Life of the Apostles
Unwavering Tenacity—Insights into the Life of Elijah
Fearless Leadership—Insights into the Life of Joshua
Weighing Anchor—Insights into the Life of Samuel

Word Publishing

Effective Church Growth Strategies

Video Series

Doing Church in the Twenty-first Century
Measure of a Man
Measure of Spiritual Maturity
Dynamics of a Successful Marriage

Appendix II—Senior Pastor Job Description Fellowship Bible Church North

Job Title:	Senior Pastor
Reports To:	Board of Elders
Prepared By:	Jeff Jones
Prepared Date:	June 24, 2005
Approved By:	Elder Personnel Team
Approval Date:	June 28, 2005

Summary

The Senior Pastor must possess a mature and strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and be willing to lead the church, with his fellow elders, as Christ directs. Much of the Senior Pastor's job description involves *being*; his spiritual life, character, education, deportment, training and attitude always representing Christ and his church well.

The Senior Pastor's responsibilities involve providing leadership for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. This includes oversight of the general spiritual condition and direction of the staff and congregation. He must be effective through the vision and

direction that he provides; delegating through those reporting to him the oversight of the church's ministries, general personnel, financial and facilities, as well as partnering with the church leadership in the shepherding of the people.

Senior Pastor

Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

- ◆ Provide vision and overall direction for the church.
- ◆ Ensure that relevant sermons are planned and delivered each week.
- ◆ Provide oversight of healthy teaching and doctrine.
- ◆ Develop leaders for the work of ministry.
- ◆ Build and nurture meaningful relationships with staff, leadership, members and the local community.
- ◆ Ensure a vibrant outreach by the entire church to those who do not know Christ.
- ◆ Provide management through church staff of ministry functions.
- ◆ Ensure that the staff and members are equipped (spiritually and physically).
- ◆ Maintain a balanced personal and professional life.
- ◆ Work to help secure financial resources to carry out the ministry.

FBCN Staff Pastor

Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

- ◆ Commit to doing ministry as a team:
 - Develop interdependence among team members.
 - Be authentic with team members.
- ◆ Commit to participate in the core functions of Fellowship Bible Church North.
- ◆ Advise and care for people using a biblical grid in general interaction with the body.
- ◆ Be available to perform sacerdotal functions (weddings, funerals, communion and baptisms).
- ◆ Regularly attend and participate in staff and pastoral meetings and/or training.
- ◆ Be an effective and wise steward of the supplies and equipment provided by the office, and in the use of all budgets.
- ◆ Be available to assist other ministries and pastors with projects or by handling specific assignments.

Appendix III—Executive Pastor Job Description Fellowship Bible Church North

The Executive Pastor position was added in the transition. Jack Warren had served at Fellowship for many years and was asked to take this new role.

Job Title: Executive Pastor
Reports To: Senior Pastor

Prepared By: Jack Warren
Prepared Date: May 15, 2005
Approved By: Senior Pastor
Approval Date: June 1, 2005

Summary

The Executive Pastor will lead the staff in executing the vision of the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders for Fellowship Bible Church North, and will coordinate the ministries of Fellowship Bible Church North for maximum efficiency.

Executive Pastor

Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

- ◆ Develop church strategy (strategy, priorities, metrics)
- ◆ Direct the ministries
- ◆ Develop and shepherd the staff
- ◆ Direct future initiatives
- ◆ Direct communications
- ◆ Direct relocation

Work primarily with the following two teams to accomplish primary goals:

Strategic Team: Jeff Jones, Jack Warren, Mike Hogan, Don Overton, Glen Brechner.

Management Team: ***kidzone*** Pastor, Student Ministry Pastor, Adult Ministry Pastor, Worship Arts Pastor, Outreach Pastor, Support Team Leader.

Develop church strategy

- ◆ Build a plan to accomplish mission and overall strategy
- ◆ Determine priorities (Jeff, Elders, Senior Leadership Team)
- ◆ Determine goals (Senior Leadership Team)
- ◆ Determine overall metrics – one or two for each strategy
- ◆ Build and implement a planning cycle

Direct the ministries

- ◆ Determine needed roles
- ◆ Select personnel with appropriate approval (resource: Sally)
- ◆ Build plans and programs according to strategy – aligned plans (resource: Glen)
- ◆ Determine budget (resource: Kenton)
- ◆ Determine next level of metrics for plans and goals for plans (resource: Glen)
- ◆ Build consistent process for reporting metrics and progress (resource: Glen)
- ◆ Evaluate ministries (monthly, semi-annually, and annually)
- ◆ Work together – Interdependent, Encounter, Assimilate, Engage, Leadership Development, Extend

Develop Staff and Shepherd Pastors

- ◆ Develop pastors as a team and individually by discussing a pertinent book each quarter, monthly shepherding with direct reports, pastors' retreat, team

development by team leaders, best practices trips.

- ◆ Develop staff
 - Informational meetings on the first and third Monday of the month
 - Prayer meetings on the second Monday of the month
 - Fun/team building meeting on the fourth Monday of the month
 - Fun days (fun, appreciation)
 - Trainings
 - Annual performance evaluations with quarterly check-ups

Direct Future Initiatives

- ◆ Oversee Strategic Consultants in development of key initiatives (2005/06 initiatives)
 - 501 c 3—Mike Hogan and Kevin Dahlstrom
 - Stewardship Plan—Darrell Baldwin
 - Long Range Planning—Mike H. and Kenton

Direct Communication

- ◆ Work closely with Communication Consultant to develop, implement and evaluate communication strategy.
 - Tommy Rosson builds and oversees plan for communication
 - Tommy gives Jack and Jeff feedback, evaluation

Direct Relocation

- ◆ Capital Campaign oversight (resource: Brian Berry, Kenton)
- ◆ Design of future site - Billy Hinton, Brian Holmes (Jack + Brian – role of decision makers with elders).
- ◆ Construction oversight – Dan Debenport
- ◆ Communications - Tommy

FBCN Staff Pastor

Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

- ◆ Be available to perform sacerdotal functions (weddings, funerals, communion and baptisms)
- ◆ Preach as requested (usually twice a year)
- ◆ Participate in the worship services as requested
- ◆ Communicate staff needs and morale to senior pastor
- ◆ Read four to six books a year for professional growth
- ◆ Prioritize my personal development and faithfully carry out my responsibilities as a husband and father
 - Pursue spiritual growth
 - Pursue family health and growth
 - Pursue social growth and influence in our community