Synopsis of “Chapter 13: Embed the Bible in Everything”
From MOVE: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth
By Greg L. Hawkins & Cally Parkinson

“Church leaders should bleed Scripture when they're cut.”

For best-practice churches, the Bible is less a resource than it is a defining characteristic of their church culture—something they look to as a gauge and mirror for everything they say and do. People who attend these churches constantly ask themselves, “What does God’s Word have to say about this?” This has to be second nature—tackling problems and processing issues starting not from one’s own wisdom, but from what God has to say.

The “Embed the Bible in Everything” Paradigm Shift

To think of it as a paradigm shift may seem like hyperbole, but the REVEAL database begs to differ. The percentage of congregants who say they reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives every day ranges from a low of 3 percent to a high of 42 percent. This wide variation suggests that there’s a great deal of difference in terms of attention and deference given to the Bible among the thousand REVEAL churches.

Three Key Strategies to Embed the Bible in Everything

All churches and church leaders love the Bible. But transitioning that love to congregants who have mixed levels of trust, experience, and confidence in reading and interpreting the Bible for themselves is not easy. This is the distinction of the best-practice churches—not their love of Scripture, because that’s common to all churches. It’s how they execute the transition of that love to their congregants. Following are three key strategies to make that happen:

Strategy 1: Make the Bible the Main Course of the Message

One’s teaching style may be expository, another may take the topical teaching approach, but best-practice pastors all want the same thing—to inspire people to study and know God's Word, but also to love and internalize it—so that there is “substance for them to stand on” when life gets tough.

What’s the secret to transitioning a love for something that seems abstract and intimidating to people averse to receiving it? It’s you, the leader. Your passion for using Scripture to unlock the glorious mysteries of our faith will carry the day. REVEAL’s best-practice pastors have teaching
styles that vary as much as their personalities, but they have in common a deep passion for the Word of God.

**Strategy 2: Take Away the Excuses**

Convincing people to cram anything more into their busy schedules can be an uphill battle. So best-practice churches get creative by providing a variety of avenues to help their congregants grow in biblical literacy, competence, and confidence. The purpose is to create intentionality and opportunity for them to experience their faith outside of the church. It’s about allowing the Holy Spirit to change who you are on the inside—the transformation that occurs only by God, not by us.

Best-practice churches share a focused and firm commitment to get their people to engage with the Bible in an ongoing fashion. Their expectation is that people will connect with God in a personal way, through his Word, in between weekend services. What happens between services is the lifeblood of transformation. The more time people spend engaged with God outside the church, the more likely they are to grow as disciples of Christ.

**Strategy 3: Model Scripture as the Church’s Foundation**

Pastors and lay leaders need to constantly heat up the value of going to the Word for guidance, decisions and inspiration. For example: Whatever topic is under discussion, ask participants for verses to inform the dialogue. When asking, “What would you do?” about a thorny issue, follow up with the question, “Where do you find that in Scripture?” Our first question in all circumstances should be, “What does God’s Word say about that?”

Holding staff and lay leaders accountable for using a biblical context to solve problems and counsel congregants is a consistent behavior pattern found in best-practice churches. How the Bible is treated by the leaders is more important than teaching what the Bible says.

**The “Embed the Bible in Everything” Dilemma: Can It Really Become the New Normal?**

Wouldn’t it be something if hearing Scripture quoted at the water cooler, the coffee bar, and in the church lobby was as customary, typical, ordinary, usual, and common as it is to hear it from the pulpit? Everything in REVEAL points to the need for us to shake things up—to create a “new normal” for the church. It can be done. It starts with us.