

Canoeing the Mountains

Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory -- Tod Bolsinger

Notes & Quotes

Dreamer's Prayer

Wild Spirit of the living God
Make a dreamer out of me.
Step into my sleep
And call me to new adventures
On the tides of your turning grace.
Let my night times
Be changed and charged
With the dawning day of new insights.
Let my resting in the dark
Lead to dancing in the morning
Of new revelations of the depths
And layers of your care
For the whole of me,
Sleeping and awake.
Let the ending of the day
Lead to glimpses
Of one like the Son of Man
Whose face is like the shining sun
In all its brilliance.
Amen.

(The Rev. Dr. Russ Parker, *Wild Spirit of the Living God*, 2007, p. 21)

Chapter 1: Seminary Didn't Prepare Me for This

- “Let’s summarize the five vital lessons that make up the structure of this book:
 - 1. The world in front of you is nothing like the world behind you.
 - 2. No one is going to follow you off the map unless they trust you on the map.
 - 3. In uncharted territory, adaptation is everything.
 - 4. You can’t go alone, but you haven’t succeeded until you’ve survived the sabotage.
 - 5. Everybody will be changed (especially the leader).” (p. 17)
- REORIENTATION: “Christian leaders: you were trained for a world that is disappearing” (p. 18)
- “Management models based on planning and predicting instead of resilient adaptation to changing circumstances are no longer suited to today’s challenges. Organizations must be networked, not siloed, in order to succeed. Their goal must shift from efficiency to sustained organizational adaptability. This requires dramatic

shifts in mental and organizational models, as well as sustained efforts on the part of leadership to create the environment for such a change.” (Walter Isaacson, foreword to McChrystal et al., 2015, p. viii)

- “...The ability to adapt to complexity and continual change has become an imperative (McChrystal, 2015, p. 5)
- “Adaptive challenges are the true tests of leadership. They are challenges that go beyond the technical solutions of resident experts or best practices, or even the organization’s current knowledge. They arise when the world around us changed but we continue to live on the successes of the past. They are challenges that cannot be solved through compromise or win-win scenarios, or by adding another ministry or staff person to the team. They demand that leaders make hard choices about what to preserve and to let go. They are challenges that require people to learn and to *change*, that require leaders to experience and navigate profound *loss*.” (p. 19)

Colum Cille’s (St. Columba’s) Farewell to Ireland (translated by Mick Lally)

My foot in the humming currach*,
My heart in grief and tearful,
A man distressed and astray,
Bereft of both vision and wit.
I stare back across the seas to the plain of the crowded oaks.
Great tears fill my grey eyes
Watching Ireland sink behind me”

*(currach = indigenous small boat made of skins)

- “The leader in the system is the one who is not blaming anyone.” (Edwin Friedman, quoted on p. 21)

**** EXCURSUS 1: Representational Confession**

- “**Stay calm, stay connected, stay the course**” (Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, quoted on p. 22)

Chapter 2: Adventure or Die

- “As pastors, we were trained to teach those who come on their own, to care for those who call for help, to lead those who volunteer and to administer the resources of those who willingly give and participate. **Now we are called on to minister to a passing parade of people who treat us like we are but one option in their personal salad bar of self-fulfillment.**” (p. 28)
- “It is not so much that God has a mission for His church in the world, but that God has a church for His mission in the world.” (Christopher Wright, quoted on p. 30)
- “There’s a temptation for all of us to blame failures on factors outside our control...There is also comfort in ‘doubling down’ on proven processes, regardless of

their efficacy. Few of us are criticized if we faithfully do what has worked many times before. But feeling comfortable or dodging criticism should not be our measure of success. There's likely a place in paradise for people who tried hard, but what really matters is succeeding. If that requires you to change, that's your mission." (McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 8)

- "The pursuit of 'efficiency' – getting the most with the least investment of energy, time, or money – was once a laudable goal, but being effective in today's world is less a question of optimizing for a known (and relatively stable) set of variables than responsiveness to a constantly shifting environment. Adaptability, not efficiency, must become our central competency (McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 20)
- Maintenance vs. Mission → Which are we equipping our people for?

**** EXCURSUS 2: Travelers vs. Tourists**

- "In the moment of crisis, you will not rise to the occasion; you will default to your training." (Steve Yamaguchi, quoted on p. 32)
- REORIENTATION: "If you can adapt and adventure you can thrive. But you must let go, learn as you go, and keep going no matter what" (p. 34)
- "We are canoers who have run out of water. There is no route in front of us, no map, no quick fix or easy answer. But...this is good news. This is a divine moment. This is an opportunity to express even more clearly what it means to follow and serve the God who is King of the entire world. The church at its best has always been a Corps of Discovery. It has always been a small band of people willingly heading into uncharted territory with a mission worthy of our utmost dedication." (p. 35)
- "The Celtic monks had another element sadly lacking the modern church – a sense of adventure...Both young and old need the opportunity to be *peregrinati* – to venture new things for Christ. They may achieve much or nothing. They may be hurt or helped in the attempt, but whatever happens they will have grown in knowing the ways of God, discovering themselves as people and adding to their store of experience...many of us need to walk near the edge of the cliff." (Finney, p. 71)

Chapter 3: A Leadership Model for Uncharted Territory

- "Your people need you to lead them even more than preach to them." (p. 36)
- REORIENTATION: "In the Christendom world, speaking *was* leading. In a post-Christendom world, leading is multi-dimensional: apostolic, relational, and adaptive." (p. 37)
- "To live up to their name, local churches must be continually moving out, extending themselves into the world, being the missional, witnessing community we were called into being *to be*: the manifestation of God's going into the world, crossing boundaries, proclaiming, teaching, healing, loving, serving and extending the reign of God. In short, **churches need to keep adventuring or they will die.**" (p. 38)

**** EXCURSUS 3: Adventure with a Purpose**

- ***The Voyage of St. Brendan***

Brendan was born in 484. Brendan was born near Tralee in the south-west of Ireland. He was an active planter of monastic communities. In his early 40's he felt the call to search the seas of the West. In the Voyage of Brendan this is described as a part literal exploration, and part spiritual quest for Paradise. After he returned from his voyage he continued his community planting and died in his nineties and was buried at Clonfert.

Dear God

Brendan was as mad as a bear with toothache.

But it was a madness you loved

And you took hold of that old bear

And threw him out to sea

'Til he returned to land with such a wild tale

That even the priests laughed themselves silly.

The people danced in the surf of Bantry Bay

And a thousand coracles set sail

Into the bright breeze of your Spirit.

O Lord madden me by that same Spirit

Bring on the God-blessed flights of fancy

Inebriate me with Holy Ghost visions

And set me free to behold with the eyes of my heart Great wonders on the high seas of God. (The Rev. Michael Mitton, 17 August 2013, Dingle)

- “Just as an organism must adapt in order to thrive in a changing environment, so organizations need to adapt to the changing world around them without losing their core identity, their reason for being their core values and purpose. This kind of leadership is complex and fraught with loss, fears and anxiety, causing us to feel off-balance and insecure. But it is the essence of leadership in a changing world.” (p. 41)

THIS IS WHERE WE START: WHAT ARE ST. JOHN'S CORE VALUES?...

- Adaptive Leadership has three characteristics:
 - “1. A *changing* environment where there are no clear answers.
 - 2. The necessity for both leaders and follower to learn, especially the leaders' own ongoing *transformation*.
 - 3. The unavoidable reality that a new solution will result in *loss*.” (p. 42)
- The complexity of a rapidly changing environment:
 - “Being complex is different from being complicated. Things that are complicated may have many parts, but those parts are joined, one to the next, in relatively simple ways; one cog turns, causing the next to turn as well, and so on ... Complexity...occurs when the number of interactions between

components increases dramatically – the interdependencies that allow viruses and bank runs to spread...” (McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 57) → Conrad Lorenz’s “butterfly effect”

- “The reality is that small things in a complex system may have no effect or a massive one, and it is virtually *impossible to know which will turn out to be the case.*” (McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 59)
- “Setting oneself on a predetermined course in unknown waters is the perfect way to sail straight into an iceberg.” (Mintzberg, quoted in McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 74)
- **“Leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world.”** (p. 42)
- **“Transformational leadership** lies at the overlapping intersection of three leadership components:
 - technical competence** = leadership must earn the credibility to lead in uncharted territory by “competently managing the basic management skills that serve the organization.” / “Stewardship precedes leadership” (p. 52)
 - relational congruence** = “a leader’s ability to be the same person in every setting, every relationship, every task. The personal maturity to make calm, wise decisions creates the necessary health and trust in an organization that enable it to ‘let go, learn as you go and keep going.’”
 - adaptive capacity** = “a leader’s ability to help his or her community ‘grow, face their biggest challenges and thrive.’ It is the capacity to lead a process of shifting values, habits and behaviors in order to grow and discover solutions to the greatest challenges brought on by a changing world. And this is absolutely dependent upon the leader’s own commitment to personal transformation.” (p. 43-44)
- **“We are not adapting to merely survive but to thrive! We are called to adapt to a changing world because we are called to reach that changing world.”** (p. 45)
 - Now the LORD said to Abram, **“Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** (Gen 12:1-4)
 - ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matt 28:18-20a – “The Great Omission”)
 - ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8)

- “Go to the people.
Live among them.
Learn from them.
Love them.
Start with what they know.
Build on what they have.”
(George Hunter III, 2010, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, p. 129)

Chapter 4: Competence and Credibility

- REORIENTATION: “Before people will follow you off the map, gain the credibility that comes from demonstrating competence on the map.” (p. 53)
- “3 basic tasks that leaders must exercise with **technical competence** before they have the credibility to go off the map into uncharted territory:
 - **1. Competent stewardship of Scriptures and tradition** – “Every congregation has a history, a set of core values and beliefs, a cultural and shared DNA, a church code. These shared values...are what gives the organization life. If shared values are not ‘protected and passed down’ then the organization ceases to be...Values are the organization.” (p. 55)
 - **2. Competent stewardship of souls and communities** – “To be truly credible we also have to be shepherds...*People need to experience the love of God as they are led into the mission of God.*” (p. 55-56)
 - **3. Competent stewardship of teams and tasks**
- “**Failure** is a necessary part of learning and therefore a necessary part of leading. And if we want to make sure that we learn the lessons from our experimentations in innovation, then we need to fail with as much credibility and competence as possible...I believe that our plan A is never God’s plan A, and we can only get to God’s plan A when our plans A, B, and C fail. So, you need to *fail* as soon as you can, so we can *learn* as quickly as possible...We can fail, but we can’t suck.” (p. 59)
- Resilience = “The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure” (McChrystal et al, 2015, p. 76)
- “Robustness is achieved by strengthening parts of the system (the pyramid); resilience is the result of linking elements that allow them to reconfigure or adapt in response to change or damage (the coral reef)...to survive...we need to become both robust and resilient.” (McChrystal et al., 2015, p. 80)

Chapter 5: Preparing for the Unknown

- “Perhaps the most unexpected, challenging and delightful work of transformational leadership is when it becomes the shared work of friends.” (p. 64)
- “Refashioning narratives means refashioning loyalties” (Ronald Heifetz, 2009, quoted on p. 64)

- **“Even if we agree that we are in an adapt-or-die (even adventure-or-die) moment, the urgency of the situation is not enough. When given that particular choice, 90 percent choose dying.”** (p. 64)
- REORIENTATION: “In uncharted territory, trust is as essential as the air we breathe. If trust is lost, the journey is over.” (p. 65)
- “Trust is vital for change leadership. Without trust there is no travel. When trust is lost, the journey is over... “Trust is gained like a thermostat and lost like a light switch.” (p. 66-67)
- “There is one core principle for developing these relationships. People must be engaged in *meaningful work together* if they are to transcend individual concerns and develop new capacities.” (Margaret Wheatley, quote on p. 68) → mission trips; mens’ hikes; pilgrimage

Chapter 6: Eating Strategy for Breakfast

- “If one wishes to distinguish leadership from management or administration, one can argue that leaders create and change culture, while management and administration act within culture.” (Edgar Schein, quoted on p. 72)
- “Leaders shape culture by default or design.” (Bob Henley, quoted on p. 72)
- “Culture eats strategy for breakfast” (Peter Drucker, quoted on p. 73)
- “*The most critical attribute a congregation must have to thrive in uncharted territory is a healthy organizational culture.*” (p. 73)
- **Culture** = “what we make of the world.” (Andy Crouch, quoted on p. 73)
- **Organizational culture** = “group norms of behavior and the underlying shared values that help keep those norms in place” (John Kotter) / “The way we do things around here.” (p. 73)
- **Institutional DNA**: “The DNA of an organization, if not altered by design or default, keeps reproducing the same enduring characteristics.” (p. 74)
 - **“No matter how much power and authority you perceive resides in your title and position, no matter how eloquently you articulate the call of God and the needs of the world, no matter how well you strategize, plan and pray, the actual behaviors of the congregation – the default functioning, the organizational DNA – *dominate* in times of stress and change. Not only do we all default to our training, but we also run home to momma too. That is, in times of stress or change, if we do not deliberately and consciously pay attention to what we are doing, we *will* default and run to what is known, familiar and embedded within the organizational life. This is normal coping. This *just happens.*”** (p. 74)

WHAT IS ST. JOHN’S FOUNDING DNA? WHAT IS ITS CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL DNA?

- “A church culture built on meeting the needs of its members will struggle with implementing changes that depend on putting those self-interested needs aside.” (p. 75)
- “Creating a healthy culture with the capacity to experiment, innovate, take risks and adapt is one of the primary preparatory tasks of a leader.”

WHERE DO WE STAND AT ST. JOHN’S IN CREATING A HEALTHY CULTURE?

- “A **HEALTHY CULTURE** is one where...
 - 1. there is ‘minimal politics and confusion,
 - 2. high degrees of morale
 - 3. and productivity, and
 - 4. very low turnover among good employees.”
 - “If constancy is the hallmark of a trustworthy leader, then consistency is the hallmark of a trustworthy system.” (p. 77)

** EXCURSUS 4: Autopsy of a Deceased Church

- “The *primary* work of technical leadership is clarifying and reinforcing shared values.” (p. 78)
- “Before leaders begin any transformational work, *cultivating a healthy environment for aligned shared values to guide all decision making must be a priority. Indeed, the values must be truly shared.*” (p. 79)
- “It is a great paradox that **love** is not only the key to establishing and maintaining a healthy culture but is also the critical ingredient for changing a culture.” (p. 81)

** EXCURSUS 5: Fight for the Brothers You Find

“Well, how do we change any DNA?

Through sex. *You have to birth something new.*” (p. 82) →

[CHURCH PLANTING!]

- “You have to communicate that you really love them, or they will never let you close enough to them to take in the different perspective, experiences and vision that you bring. Right now, you know that you are disappointed in them, and they don’t want to do anything but resist you.” (p. 82) [autobiographical...unfortunately]

Chapter 7: Navigating the “Geography of Reality”

- “Adaptive leadership is about ‘letting go, learning as we go, and keeping going.’” (p. 88)
- Shedding light on **competing values**:

Caring for long-time members	vs.	reaching out to the unchurched
Excellence in ministry programs	vs.	increasing volunteer participation
Giving pay raises to staff	vs.	bringing on a new hire
Assuring control and unity	vs.	collaboration and innovation

WHAT ARE OUR COMPETING VALUES AT ST. JOHN'S?

- **REORIENTATION: “When our old maps fail us, something within us dies. Replacing our paradigms is both deeply painful and absolutely critical.”** (p. 93)
- “At the core of adaptive work is clarifying what is precious, elemental – even essential – to the identity of an organization. The core ideology of any group functions as both a charter and an identity statement. *This is who we are*, we say. If we stop being about *this*, we stop being.” (p. 94)
- Our moment of facing the unknown:

1. WHY DO WE EXIST AS A PARISH?

2. WHAT WOULD BE LOST IN OUR COMMUNITY OR IN OUR WORLD IF ST. JOHN'S CEASED TO BE?

3. WHAT PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES MUST WE PROTECT AS CENTRAL TO OUR IDENTITY?

4. WHAT ARE WE WILLING TO LET GO OF SO THE MISSION WILL CONTINUE?

Adventure –

- Vows for The Community of Aidan and Hilda:
 - “*God is calling you to leave behind everything that stops you setting sail in the ocean of God's love. You have heard the call of the Wild Goose, the untameable Spirit of God: be ready for the Spirit to lead you into the wild, windy or well-worn places in the knowledge that God will make them places of wonder and welcome.*” (Ray Simpson, *St. Aidan's Way of Mission*, 2016, p. 30)

* “At the heart of adaptive leadership is *learning*. To put it bluntly, *if you are not learning anything new, it is not adaptive work.*” (p. 97)

Chapter 8: My Italian Grandfather Was Killing Me

- REORIENTATION: “In a Christendom world [the past], vision was about seeing possibilities ahead and communicating excitement. In uncharted territory – where no one knows what's ahead – vision is about accurately seeing ourselves and defining reality.” (p. 101)
- “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” (Max De Pree, quoted on p. 102)
- “Healthy growth is the result of a church's congruence with its code [DNA]; poor health is caused by incongruence.” (Kevin Graham Ford, quoted on p. 104)
- Three key questions at the heart of adaptive work:
 - **1. What DNA is essential and must be preserved?**
 - **2. What DNA can be discarded?...** “People don't resist change per se. They resist loss.”

- **3. What DNA needs to be created through experimentation?** (p. 106)

Chapter 9: Don't Just Do Something, Stand There... Then Do Something

- “When what you are doing isn’t working, there are two things you cannot do: 1. Do what you have already done, 2. Do nothing.” (Kirk Kirlin, quoted on p. 108)
- “The key to surviving in a world filled with unknowns is keeping a constant posture of curiosity, awareness, and attention.” (p. 108)
- **Adaptive Leadership:** “an iterative process involving three key activities: 1. Observing events and patterns around you; 2. Interpreting what you are observing (developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on); and 3. Designing interventions based on the observations and interpretations to address the adaptive challenge you have identified.” (Heifetz, et al, quoted on p. 111)
- **REORIENTATION:** “Leadership in the past meant coming up with solutions. Today it is learning how to ask new questions that we have been too scared, too busy, or too proud to ask.” (p. 113)
- “Without question the hardest part of an adaptive learning process is to keep people from jumping to interventions too early. Again, the desire for the quick fix is really strong. But by the time a group takes the time to go through observations and interpretations, another tendency takes root: *the tendency to talk a problem to death*. Once a group starts talking it’s sometimes difficult for them to move to this third stage of experimenting. Again, it’s important to note that even beginning to *do* something is still about the *learning*. This adaptive process is iterative.” (p. 120)
- “Interventions must not violate the code of the church. Be clear on what will never change before you start messing with stuff.” (p. 120)
- “Interventions should start out modestly and playfully. The early experiments should not cost a lot of money disrupt the organization chart, upset the center of the church life too much or be taken too seriously yet. They should instead by opportunities to try some things and see how the system reacts.” (p. 121)
- “Innovative interventions will always be resisted.” (p. 121)
- **“Growth, transformation and adaptation always means *loss*. Change is loss. And even experimental changes signal loud and clear that change – and loss – is coming.”** (p. 122)

Chapter 10: The Mission Trumps!

- **“Leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb.”** (Heifetz & Linsky, quoted on p. 123)
 - **“Disappointing people ‘at a rate they can absorb’ is a skill that requires nuance: Disappoint people too much and they give up on you, stop following you and may even turn on you. Don’t disappoint them enough and you’ll never lead them anywhere.”** (p. 124)

- **“Deftly handling resistance and the disappointment that comes along with it so a community of people can accomplish a goal for the greater good is the core capacity of adaptive leadership.”** (p. 124)
- “The mission trumps. Always. Every time. In every conflict. Not the pastor. Not the members of the church who pay the bills. Not those who scream the loudest or who are most in pain. No. In a healthy Christian ministry, the mission wins every argument.” (p. 125)
- **“Mission sets the agenda; finance dictates the time-scale”** (Finney, p. 37)
- “Start with conviction,
Stay calm,
Stay connected,
And stay the course.”
- REORIENTATION: “There is perhaps no greater responsibility and no greater gift that leadership can give a group of people on a mission than to have the clearest, most defined mission possible.” (p. 128)
- Mission-statement conviction:
 - 1. What are we passionate about?
 - 2. What do we have the potential to do better than anyone else?
 - 3. What will pay the bills?
- “The leader in the system is committed to the mission when no one else is.” (p. 131)

Chapter 11: Take a Good Look in the Coffin

- “Adaptive change stimulates resistance because it challenges people’s habits, beliefs, and values. It asks them to take a loss, experience uncertainty, and **even express disloyalty to people and cultures**. Because adaptive change forces people to question and perhaps redefine aspects of their identity, it also challenges their sense of competence. Loss, disloyalty, and feeling incompetent: that’s a lot to ask. No wonder people resist.” (Heifetz & Linsky, quoted on p. 135)
- “The real challenge of leadership is not tactical or strategic but *emotional*.” (p. 136)
- REORIENTATION: “When dealing with managing the present win-win solutions are the goal. But when leading adaptive change, win-win is usually lose-lose.” (p. 137)
- “At the same time we are undergoing the adaptive shift that will help us to reframe and experiment with ways to address the challenge of a changing world *out there*, we have to attend to the resistance and sometimes even resentment among our own people who are experiencing the loss *in here*.” (p. 139)
- “A leader’s job is to regulate the heat. The leader is like the thermostat on the Crock-pot, keeping enough heat in the system so things begin to change, but not enough that individual parts get scorched. When we are all so calm that we are comfortable, we don’t want to go anywhere.” (p. 140)
- “There are two forms of heat for bringing transformation: *urgency* and *anxiety*.” (p. 140)

- 50% of “organizational transformation endeavors that fail do so because the leaders did not create an appropriate sense of ‘true urgency.’...Whenever the urgent pushes out the important, we fall into a trap of feeling as if we are busy accomplishing something while we are running on a treadmill – getting exhausted but not going anywhere.” (p. 141)
- Witness of pastor who said he knew his congregation needed transformation, but he couldn’t do anything for 5 years because “all of our money and effort is going into leaving the denomination and taking our property with us.” (p. 141)
- “True urgency...is centered on the passion and vision that comes from developing a clear conviction and mission. It is the urgency of seeing both the reality of the moment and the opportunity God has given. It is, ideally, the constant urgency that comes when the church leaders neither shield the congregation from reality...nor fail to call them to the shared mission God has put before them. When we keep our deepest purpose/mission/vision as our true urgency, it should not wax and wane; it should remain the central root of urgency around which we regulate the heat of peripheral issues.” (p. 142)
- “Often when a leader shares a dream, the organization begins to wrestle with their untapped potential, the demands of change and the realization that they are being led forward.” (p. 143)
- “Chronic anxiety is present when the threats of the past continue to hold power even though the system is no longer in danger.” → story of picking up my children from school /for St. John’s → we’re just poor farmers that can’t afford anything and have no status in diocese/world
- “People who are overly or chronically anxious don’t make good decisions” → we are called to be a non-anxious presence during anxious times
- **“This is the delicate work of adaptive leadership. We need our people feeling the urgency and healthy anxiety enough to overcome complacency and move. At the same time we need our people to calm down enough to get beyond technical fixes, false urgency and work-avoidance scrambling.”** (p. 147)
- Red Zone vs. Blue Zone (p. 148)
- To lead means to have some command of our own anxiety and some capacity not to let other people’s anxiety contaminate us; that is, not to allow their anxiety to affect our thinking, actions, and decisions.” (p. 148)

REORIENTATION RECAP

- You were trained for a world that is disappearing
- If you can adapt and adventure, you can thrive
- But you must let go, learn as you go, and keep going not matter what
- In a Christendom world, speaking *was* leading

- In a post-Christendom world, leading is multidimensional: apostolic, relational, and adaptive
- Before people will follow you off the map, gain the credibility that comes from demonstrating competence on the map
- In uncharted territory, trust is as essential as the air we breathe
- If trust is lost, the journey is over
- When our old maps fail us, something within us dies
- Replacing our paradigms is both deeply painful and absolutely critical.
- In a Christendom world, vision was seeing possibilities ahead and communicating excitement
- In uncharted territory, vision is accurately seeing ourselves and defining reality
- Leadership in the past meant coming up with solutions
- Today leadership is learning how to ask new questions we have been too scared , too busy, or too proud to ask
- There is no greater gift that leadership can give a group of people on a mission that to have the clearest, most defined mission possible
- When dealing with managing the present, win-win solutions are the goal
- But when leading adaptive change, win-win is usually lose-lose
- In uncharted territory, visionary leadership is more likely going to come from a Corps of Discovery while the board manages the ongoing health of the organization
- In uncharted territory, where changes occur so rapidly, leaders cannot assume success until after they have weathered the sabotage that naturally follows
- Those who had neither power nor privilege in the Christendom world are the trustworthy guides and necessary leaders when we go off the map
- Those without power or privilege are not going into uncharted territory. They are at home
- Exploration teaches us to see the familiar through a new frame and demands that we become our best selves
- Uncharted leadership is absolutely dependent on the leader's own ongoing exploration, learning, and transformation

“...Christian leaders function almost constantly in dual relationships. For the pastor, the church that pays the salary (and in most cases, not all that well) also asks the pastor’s family for tithes and offerings to contribute to the budget (with the expectation that we will be role models of faithfulness and generosity). The staff they hire also ministers to their families and friends. The youth director under review and facing dismissal for not meeting expectations is the beloved mentor to the pastor’s own teenage son (and is bringing his new fiancé to dinner, too!). The choir member upset about the change in the worship direction is the biggest giver to the church. The beloved Sunday School teacher who is like a grandmother to a whole generation of children is showing signs of dementia and poses a potential risk to the children she loves.

Chapter 12: Gus and Hal Go to Church

- “Leaders are lauded for their boldness and creativity, and then in the very same breath shouted down for suggesting that the change effort will require each of us to change personally.” (p. 155)
- “After finding a missional conviction and regulating the heat, to bring change we must *enact relationally*.” (p. 156)
- Everybody has a constituency...and everybody wants to be a hero of their constituency (p. 158)...
- But, THE FIRST COMMITMENT OF VESTRY PERSONS IS TO THE WHOLE CHURCH (p. 158)
- **African proverb: “If you want to quickly, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”**
- Six different Teams we need to attend to in order to bring about change:
 - 1. Allies = “anyone who is convinced of the mission and is committed to seeing it fulfilled”; “allies are INSIDE the system...*aligned and in agreement*” (p. 158)
 - 2. Confidantes = a person who cares “more about you than they do the mission.” OUTSIDE the system. (p. 159)
 - “Remember: in a healthy organization the mission trumps, even their friendship” → a real obstacle for a generational family church
 - 3. Opponents = “...Those who are against the particular change initiative” (p. 161)
 - 4. Senior Authorities = Vestry... “stay connected...stay in relationship and close proximity with those above you.” (p. 161)
 - 5. Casualties = “**In any transformation leadership effort there will be casualties**...the leader is the one who *assumes the responsibility for these inevitable casualties*” (p. 162)
 - 6. Dissenters = “The early naysayers are the canary in the coal mine. They will help you see how opposition will take form and will raise the arguments that eventually will come to full volume. Dissenters have the uncanny capacity for asking the tough question that you have been unwilling to face up to yourself or that others have been unwilling to raise.” (p. 163)

- “Every visionary leader needs both a group to keep attending to the necessary work and a team to lead the transformation of the organizational culture. And while they may be one and the same in some circumstances, a great idea needs at least *two* groups of people to see it through: the *maintaining mission group* and the *transformation team*.” (p. 165)
- REORIENTATION: “In a Christendom world, visionary management usually comes from the board of directors. In the uncharted world of post-Christendom transformation, leadership will more likely come from a small Corps of Discovery who serve as a transformation team while the board manages the health of the organization currently.” (p. 165)
 - **WHO ARE THE TRANSFORMATION TEAM AT ST. JOHN’S?**
- Intentional Actions:
 - 1. Give the work back to the people who most care about it
 - 2. Engage the mature and motivated
 - 3. Stay connected to your critics
 - 4. Expect sabotage

Chapter 13: Et Tu, Church? – Sabotage and Staying the Course

- “It is only after having first brought about a change and then subsequently endured the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful.” (Edwin Friedman, quoted on p. 170)
- **“To lead you must be able to disappoint your own people. But, even doing so well (‘at a rate they can absorb’) does not preclude them turning on you. In fact, when you disappoint your own people, they will turn on you.”** (p. 173)
- REORIENTATION: “When on the map, leaders could assume that once an affirmative vote was made, the challenge of bringing change was finished. In uncharted territory, where changes occur so rapidly, leaders cannot assume success until after they have weathered the sabotage that naturally follows.” (p. 175)
- **“Sabotage is natural. It’s normal. It’s part and parcel of the systemic process of leadership...Saboteurs are usually doing nothing but unconsciously supporting the status quo. They are protecting the system and keeping it in place...Many who sabotage you will even claim that they are doing you a favor by doing so. Friedman describes these ‘peace-mongers’ as ‘highly anxious risk-avoiders’ who are ‘more concerned with good feelings than progress’ and consistently prefer the peaceful status quo over the turbulence of change – even if change is necessary.”** (p. 174)
 - 1. *Expect sabotage* – “Remember, all change, even necessary change, brings loss. Loss heightens anxiety, and anxiety can lead people to do things that even hours before they wouldn’t have considered. Expecting sabotage enables us to stay calm when it comes.” (p. 175)

- 2. *“Embrace sabotage as a normal part of an organizational life. Even the saboteurs aren’t really to blame. Systems like stability.”* (p. 175)
- 3. *“Don’t take it personally. The people following you may be shooting you in the back, but it’s really not you that they are sabotaging, it’s your role as leader. They are sabotaging the change you are bringing.”*
- 4. *Focus your attention on the emotionally strong, not the saboteurs. We are so focused on quieting critics, appeasing or answering our accusers and shielding ourselves from the friendly fire that is often knocks us off course.”* (p. 176)
- **“The art of leadership is helping the system override the instinct to self-preservation and replace it with a new organizational instinct to be curious about and open to the terrifying discomfort of asking, Could God be up to something here?”** (p. 175)
- [Apollo 13 film clip → make a new air filter out of what you’ve got on board]
- “If you as a leader can stay calm and connected, you get the opportunity to help others in the system work through their own sabotaging instincts so the system can begin to change, and possibly the saboteurs will become leaders themselves.” (p. 178)
- Blue Zone Decisions: Staying the Course Amidst Sabotage
 - (Remember: Red Zone decisions are “all about me”)
 - What furthers the mission?
 - What principles are at stake here?
 - What values are we expressing?
 - What pain must we endure?
 - How will we support those who are experiencing loss?
 - **“Perhaps the hardest truth to swallow for most Christian leaders trying to lead change is this: *You must choose principles over personal need.*”** (p. 179)
- **JESUS’ OWN ACTIONS CHALLENGE ANY TEMPTATION TO USE BIBLICAL RATIONALE TO SUPPORT LITTLE MORE THAN WELL-MEANING DYSFUNCTION, FEAR, AND FAILURES OF NERVE.”** (p. 180)
- **Failure of Nerve** = leaders’ tendency to ‘adapt to immaturity.’” (p. 181)
- In the face of opposition and sabotage, leaders (p. 181-182)...
 - 1. Must act decisively
 - 2. Continue to calmly stand on conviction in the face of it
 - 3. Inspire
 - 4. Must not act alone...for a leader to become a leader, someone must follow
- “The paradox of transformational leaders is that the very conviction that causes a leader to be willing to ‘disappoint you own followers at a rate they can absorb’ is what ultimately – when handled well – wins ‘your own followers’ to join you in the cause.” (p. 183)

Chapter 14: How a Nursing Mother Saved America

- REORIENTATION: “Those who had neither power nor privilege in the Christendom world are the trustworthy guides and necessary leaders when we get off the map. They are not going into uncharted territory. They are at home.” (p. 191)
- “The future is already here; it is just on the margins.” (p. 191)
- “A church bred under the protection of the state is not trained to fend for itself on the streets. So when the state and society withdraw their special favor towards the palace-trained church, it gets a very rude awakening. Disorienting and painful, it can lead to despair, anger and denial.” (p. 193)
- “People can meet God within their cultural context, but in order to follow God, they must cross into other cultures because that’s what Jesus did in the incarnation and on the cross. Discipleship is cross-cultural.” (p. 194)
- “Men talk about building trust, women talk about building community.” (p. 201)

Chapter 15: The End of Our Exploring

- “We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
- REORIENTATION: “Exploration teaches us to see the familiar through a new frame. Exploration brings differentiation. Exploration requires us to become expert experimenters. Exploration demands our best selves.” (p. 206)
- Common characteristics of ‘imaginative gridlock’:
 - 1. An unending treadmill of trying harder
 - 2. Looking for answers rather than reframing questions [“Hallmark of a truly great leader”]
 - 3. Either/or thinking that creates false dichotomies
- “Perhaps this spirit of exploration – this adventure-or-die attitude – is the great gift uncharted leaders can give to the church in a post-Christendom world.” (p. 207)
- Differentiation – “You must bring yourself to your role, but you are not your role... There must be a healthy separation of role and self to be a healthy, functioning leader in a healthy organizational system.” (p. 211)
- “...It is worth noting that most leaders are at their best when facing a challenge, and that the desire for safety and security can lead us into the most insecure, indeed, precarious personal positions.” [David & Bathsheba] (p. 215)
- REORIENTATION: “While on-the-map leaders are praised for being experts who have it all together, uncharted transformational leadership is absolutely dependent on the leader’s own ongoing exploration, learning and transformation” (p. 215)
- In order to lead change in a changing world, “requires that leaders are first and foremost committed to their ongoing transformation. In a changing world, the leader must be continually committed to ongoing personal change, to develop new

capacities, to be continually transformed in ways that enable the organization's larger transformation." (p. 216)

- "Leaders thrust off the map in a rapidly changing world must trust that God is taking us into uncharted territory to extend the healing, justice, and loving rule of God to all the world, *and at the same time* to transform *us*."
- "If we want the organizations and communities we serve to thrive, focus on what God needs to do in you, change in you, makeover in you so He can use you in His mission. Focus on how you need to grow in technical competence, relational congruence, and adaptive capacity, and especially focus on what you need to leave behind, let go and even let die so your church can become more and more effective at fulfilling its part in God's mission. Don't focus on whether your church is dying; keep your focus on being transformed into the leader God can use to transform His people for His mission." (p. 217)

The church wants us to be both professional and personal.” (p. 221)

The Consequences of Not Going into the Promised Land...

Joshua 13 – The Spies in The Promised Land

13 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a chief among them.” ³So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the people of Israel...

¹⁷Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, ¹⁸and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, ¹⁹and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, ²⁰and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

²¹So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebohamath. ²²They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴That place was called the Valley of Eshcol,^[a] because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there.

²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. ²⁶And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.”

³⁰But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” ³¹Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” ³²So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. ³³And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Evangelism & Church Planting

- “So while it is true that a sizable minority of people have ‘Pauline’ conversion the majority do not. For them the biblical paradigm is not the Damascus road but the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.” (Finney, p. 41)
- “Christians should be more prepared to explain the spiritual life they have already begun to enjoy than to seek to persuade others of doctrinal truth.” (Finney, p. 43)
- “Evangelism is about helping people to belong so that they can believe.” (Finney, p. 47)
- “Today’s church often wants mission without movement, and it becomes no more than a polite request to the world to come and hear the gospel. When the world just as politely declines, the church is nonplussed and wrings its hands over human obduracy [stubbornness].” (Finney, p. 66)
- “Both the Celts and the church-planters believe in the importance of the team. A group of people can pray and think together. They inspire and encourage each other. The single entrepreneur is too easily prey to self-doubt and loss of vision...The Celtic team were centered on discipline and prayer. When they settled in an area they carried on the regime of prayer which they brought from their home monastery: the offices were recited and the Scriptures were studied. If a priest was present they celebrated the Eucharist. A Christian colony was established and drew in people from the neighborhood. The church-planting movement needs to learn from this.” (Finney, p. 68)
- “It is better to take risks and correct people if responsibility is misused, than to be risk-free and achieve nothing.” (Finney, p. 70)

- ***Judges 6-8 – Gideon’s Army***

- *Chapter 6*

- ¹¹Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. ¹²And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” ¹³And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴And the LORD^aturned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” ¹⁵And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.” ¹⁶And

the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.”...

- *Chapter 7*
- ²The LORD said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ ³Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.
- ⁴And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ shall not go.” ⁵So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.”⁶ And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. ⁷ And the LORD said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.” ⁸ So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.
- ⁹That same night the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.”

EXCURSUS 1: Representational Confession

Exodus 34

⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. ⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands,^[a] forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.” ⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. ⁹ And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

Daniel 9

³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷ To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. ⁸ To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him¹⁰ and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

EXCURSUS 2: Travelers vs. Tourists

Mark Buchanan, *Your Church is Too Safe*, 2012, from Chapter 5, “Going to Mordor,” p. 59-60:

Historian Daniel Boorstin documents a momentous shift that occurred in North America in the 19th Century: we stopped calling people who went on trips travelers and started calling them tourists.

Traveler literally means one who travails. He labors, suffers, endures. A traveler – a travailer – gets impregnated with a new and strange reality, grows huge and awkward trying to carry it, and finally, in agony, births something new and beautiful. To get there, he immerses himself in a culture, learns the language and customs, lives with the locals, imitates the dress, eats what’s set before him. He takes risks, some enormous, and makes sacrifices, some extravagant. He has tight scrapes and narrow escapes. He is gone a long time. If ever he returns, he returns forever altered.

In a sense, he never goes back.

A tourist, not so. A tourist means, literally, one who goes in circles. He’s just taking an exotic detour home. He’s only passing through, sampling wares, acquiring souvenirs. He tastes more than eats what’s put before him. He retreats each night to what’s safe and familiar. He picks up a word here, a phrase there, but the language, and the world it’s embedded in, remains opaque and cryptic, and vaguely menacing. He spectates and consumes. He returns to where he’s come from with an album of photos, a few mementoes, a cheap hat. He’s happy to be back. He declares there’s no place like home.

We’ve made a similar shift in the church. At some point we stopped calling Christians disciples and started calling them believers. A disciple is one who follows and imitates Jesus. She loses her life in order to find it. She steepes in the language and culture of Christ until his word and his world reshapes hers, redefines her, changes inside-out how she sees and thinks and dreams and, finally, lives. Whatever values she brought into his realm are reordered, oft-times laid waste, and Kingdom values take their place. Friends who knew her before scarcely recognize her now.

A believer, not so. She holds certain beliefs, but how deep down these go depends on the weather or her mood. She can get defensive, sometimes bristlingly so, about her beliefs, but in her honest moments she wonders why they’ve made such scant difference. She still feels alone, afraid, sad, self-protective, dissatisfied. She still wants what she always wanted, and fears what she’s always feared, sometimes more so. Friends who knew her before find her pretty much the same, just angrier.

You can’t be a disciple without being a believer. But – here’s the rub – you can be a believer and not a disciple. You can say all the right things, think all the right things, believe all the right things, do all the right things, and still not follow and imitate Jesus.

The Kingdom of God is made up of travailers, but our churches are largely populated with tourists. The Kingdom is full of disciples, but our churches are filled with believers. It’s no wonder we often feel like we’re just going in circles.

EXCURSUS 3: Adventure With a Purpose – John Eldredge

- Seven miles off the rugged west coast of Ireland a wild fang of an island juts out of the sea. Its sheer flanks are uninhabited for all sane reasons. Only seabirds live here, and only in summer, when the fierce North Atlantic storms have subsided. But to thirteen men this was just the place.

Sometime in the late 6th century, after Rome fell and the continent plunged into a barbarous age, a band of Irish brothers paddled for five hours in a small handmade boat to reach this island. They ascended the eastern slope, and near the brink, on the leeward side, they built stone huts and called the place home.

They were monks and they seemed struck with madness.

That is, until you understand the wild, wonderful blend of Christianity and the Celtic warrior.

The Celts of ancient Ireland—like their brothers and sisters in Wales and on the continent—were a fierce and heroic people. They scared the bejesus out of the Roman legions because they would strip buck naked before battle and rush the field screaming and singing. They practiced slavery and human sacrifice and they often warred with the clans next door. They thought the earth itself was sacred, and nature filled with spirit.

So when Christianity reached these wild Celts, they took to it like a duck to water because they already understood the need for a heroic story in which to live. They loved the earth which this Creator God had made, and they were ready for an epic battle against evil.

However, these warriors quickly ran into a dilemma: having given up raiding the coast of England for slaves, and their own internal wars, they needed something to satisfy the need for the epic within them. They needed something heroic for God.

Taking the model of Jesus and his disciples, they set off in groups of thirteen men to remote outposts like the outcrop called Skellig Michael, which they named after the great warrior-angel Michael (a very Celtic act—they did not choose Gabriel, the annunciation angel; they chose for their outpost the name of the greatest warrior they could find).

In these untamed places on the edge of the known world they founded little communities of warrior monks, who through their prayers and discipleship felt they were doing their part to battle the dark forces bent on the destruction of mankind.

Think of a sort of self-imposed exile into Siberia or the Australian outback—but for spiritual purposes. Sort of YWAM meets Man vs. Wild.

Here on the Island of the Archangel they harvested sea birds and their eggs, fished the ocean when the storms weren't raging, and even tended small gardens in the milder seasons. They built stairways up the steep slopes, hewed rock with hand tools, and laid stone steps that have endured for more than 1400 years.

When the gales blew outside, they took refuge in their stone huts, studied the scriptures, and practically saved civilization (according to Thomas Cahill) by copying manuscripts and preserving learning while the barbarians pretty much burned down every library in Europe.

Here, on this remote outpost, a community of brothers lived out a fierce kind of faith for more than *five hundred years*. (The Incan empire, by contrast, lasted about three hundred years.) It was full-blown adventure—survival skills and all—but with a purpose. Something heroic for God.

John Eldredge, Ransomed Heart blog, “Adventure with a Purpose” October 13, 2014

EXCURSUS 4: Autopsy of a Deceased Church

Thom S. Rainer (2014)

[My contention is that The Church as we know it in North America is dying...so, all of these observations are relevant to every church]

Perspective:

Healthy Churches:	10%
Symptoms of Sickness:	40%
Very Sick:	40%
Dying:	10%

Early Symptoms of Sickness:

- Ministries and programs are shifting towards those inside the church rather than those outside the church.
- Some people may be added each year, but no sense of true disciple making taking place.
- No clear plan for making disciples and disciple makers.
- Lots of programs and ministry clutter but many contribute little or nothing to making of disciples.
- Lots of busyness and activities but much of it has no sense of a real purpose.

Prayer: God, open my eyes that I might see my church as You see it. Let me see where change needs to take place, even if it is painful to me. And use me, I pray, to be an instrument of that change whatever the cost.

Ten Factors Leading to Death

1. **Slow Erosion.** Some in facilities, some in ministries that once had impact, but mostly in the prayer life of those in the church.
Prayer: God, please let me be part of the solution and not the problem. Show me what I need to see. Open my eyes to Your reality. And give me courage to move forward in the directions You desire.
2. **The Past is the Hero.** There are several points in decline where the church can turn around, but the key influencers refuse to listen. They are blind to the reality of the declining church. Areas we cling to: worship styles, facilities, pastors of the past, our own needs rather than the needs of those without Christ, the way we have always done things so we are comfortable.
Prayer: God, give me the conviction and the courage to be like the heroes of Hebrews 11. Teach me not to hold onto those things in my church that are my personal preferences and styles. Show me not only how to let go, but where to let go, so that I may heed Your commands more closely.
3. **Refusing to Look Like the Community.** Losing the children and grandchildren of those in the church, when the church does reach out, they ask the community to

come to them rather than the church going to the community, the church becomes a fortress, keeping people and possessions on the inside safe while keeping people on the other side out. Church stops reaching and caring for the community.

Prayer: God, give my church and me a heart for our community. Let me see people through Your eyes. And give me the courage and the wisdom to let go of this church, so that others who best reflect this community can lead us and teach us.

4. **The Budget Moves Inwardly.** Pastor and staff are expected to mostly care for those already in the church. In dying churches, the last expenditures to be cut are those that keep the church people comfortable. First cuts are to ministries and programs with an outward focus. The basic pattern is funding to keep the machinery of the church moving and members happy rather than funding for the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Prayer: Lord, help me grasp that all the money I think I have is really Yours. Help me to grasp that all the money our church has is not the church's, but Yours. Give us healthy giving hearts to use these funds according to Your purpose.

5. **The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission.** The methods we use for reaching out become the focus rather than the Great Commission itself. The church decides not to act on the Great Commission commandment to make disciples by their actions. The church stops going, stops making disciples, stops baptizing, stops teaching people to obey. Chilling quote from book:

“Members had a convenient omission in their recollections. They wanted the same results as yesteryear, but they weren’t willing to expend the efforts...members of the dying church weren’t willing to go into the community to reach and minister to people...they just wanted it to happen. Without prayer. Without sacrifice. Without hard work. Members of the dying churches really didn’t want growth unless that growth met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable.”

Prayer: Lord, remind me that I am to be a Great Commission Christian in a Great Commission church. Remind me that, in Your strength, I am to do whatever it takes to reach out into my community with the transforming power of the gospel.

6. **Preference-Driven Church.** Attitude is self-serving, self-giving, self-entitled. A church by definition is a body of believers who function for the greater good of the congregation. When church members increasingly demand their own preferences, the church is steadily not becoming the church. The church dies because its members refuse to be the church.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the needs of others. Show me how to live more like Your Son, who always put others’ interests first. And especially show me that attitude as I serve in my church.

7. **Pastoral Tenure Decreases.** The pastor comes to the church and leads in a few changes. The members don't like the changes and resist. The pastor becomes discouraged and leaves. The cycle repeats.
Prayer: Please give our pastor a heart and a vision to reach and minister to people beyond our walls. Teach me to be the kind of church member who encourages and supports our pastor, so discouragement and disillusionment does not lead to departure.
8. **The Church Rarely Prays Together.** Prayer becomes routine and ritual. "Prayer meetings" are not really times of prayer. Prayer and the health of the church go hand in hand. Failure to pray is tantamount to a failure to breathe. Prayer is the lifeblood of the church. Chilling quote from book:
"We stopped praying with the passion we once had. That's it. That was the beginning of the decline that led to our death."
Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray. Teach me to pray consistently. Teach me to be a leader in prayer in my church. And teach me to keep passionate and believing prayer as the lifeblood of this church.
9. **Church Has No Clear Purpose.** Routines, traditions and rituals replaced the original purpose of being a gospel-driven, disciple-making people. Quotes from past members of dead churches:
- ☞ *"We were going through the motions.*
 - ☞ *Everything we did seemed to be like we were in a rut or bad routine.*
 - ☞ *We became more attached to our ways of doing church than we did asking the Lord what He wanted us to do.*
 - ☞ *We were playing a game called church. We had no idea what we were really supposed to be doing.*
 - ☞ *We stopped asking what we should be doing for fear that it would require too much effort or change."*
- Prayer: God, reignite the hearts of our church members, including me, to have a passion for the gospel. Teach our church to share the gospel with others. Teach us to live as men and women who are true bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ. Remind us of our purpose. Convict us of our purpose. Empower us to live our purpose.*
10. **Church Obsesses Over Facilities.** Memorials, pulpits, rooms, etc become more important than the Great Commission. Severe battles emerge over windows, pews, paint color, carpet, etc. Business meetings bring back those who have left the church to deal with the threat of change, then these people leave again.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the proper stewardship of all the material items You give me personally and in my church. Help me never let that stewardship evolve into obsession and idolatry, especially where I lose my perspective on what really matters.

EXCURSUS 5: Fight for the Brothers You Find

"Longmire: The Great Spirit (#2.8)" (2013)

Ada Black Kettle: What did the First Warrior say to the Great Spirit?

Henry Standing Bear: The first warrior looked out on the land that is his home. He saw the hills and the stars and he was happy. For giving him his home, the first warrior told the Great Spirit that he would fight and win many battles in His honor. But the Great Spirit said, "No, do not fight for me. Fight for your tribe, fight for the family born to you, fight for the brothers you find. Fight for them," the Great Spirit said, "for they are your home."

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