

THE REPLANTING COLLECTION

FRESH START WHITE PAPERS

A Fresh Start is what happens when a dying church finds new life through replanting.

Eight essential papers for pastors, district leaders and partner churches who refuse to let the light go out.

BILL MALICK · KEN PRIDDY · ERIC OLESON
FRESHSTARTNETWORK.COM

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WHITE PAPER

THE CASE FOR REPLANTING

—
WRITTEN BY
BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

01



FRESHSTARTNETWORK.COM

Across North America tens of thousands of churches are in desperate need of a resurrection. If not replanted, they will die. The legacy of the past will be lost. Their light will go out, town by town and city by city.

But God has entrusted us with the task of introducing new life to our deeply struggling churches. That is what the Fresh Start Network is all about. The Church, after all, is Christ's bride. We love it, and He loves it even more. The Fresh Start Network is committed to the replanting of life-giving churches.

The greatest events recorded in the Word often start with two words: "But God"! Today, you and I are invited to live out "but God" journeys on the road to new and wonderful beginnings.

Yes, the idea of replanting a church can be overwhelming. After all, there is the old adage that goes, "It's easier to give birth than to raise the dead." I admit I repeated that line too many times over my three decades in the world of church planting. It still stands as the primary thinking of many of my planting friends. Church planters and planting organizations echo the belief that church replanting is just too hard, while others say, it is a waste of resources that can be invested in new church planting.

But hold on a minute and consider what replanting is and is not. Replanting is not church redirection or revitalization. It is rather new birth for churches in deep trouble, struggling from Sunday to Sunday just to survive. They need a resurrection.

Can a church on life support be raised from the dead? Yes, it can. And yes, it is happening! Churches today are being rebirthed, thriving again under the call and direction of God's original intent. People who have given much of themselves and their resources over the years are seeing the redemption of their work and the blessings of God. Their legacy will not be snuffed out. In fact, it will live far beyond their time here on earth.

JESUS CAME TO RAISE THE DEAD

Meanwhile, a fresh light of Christ is shining again in one community after another. Buildings are being restored and repurposed for the cause of Christ. Giving to community and world missions is expanding. Ministry positions and meaningful roles for the people of the church are opening at every turn. Christ's bride is being restored. Hope, and the smiles that it brings, shines in people's eyes. As a result of this resurrected light, an untold number of people are coming into a vibrant and eternal relationship with Jesus.

You have everything to gain by courageously taking up the opportunity to be a catalyst for replanting your church. Will it be easy? No! But God's power is infinite, and Jesus came to give life. He is risen! He has the absolute desire and power to resurrect dying and dead churches. Hold onto the powerful truth that the church is His bride.

For all of us as church leaders, whether at local, regional or national levels, we have a responsibility and a great opportunity. Ministry is more than just a job description. Many of us began this work in response to a call. Now as the years add up, the call keeps growing to the point of a burden—a burning desire to see the church advance. Consider Paul's passion as he writes to the church at Philippi.

"...but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12-14

Two powerful takeaways draw our attention. First, Christ takes hold of us. It naturally follows that we must take hold of him and his intention for us. Taking hold indicates a firm grasp. Have you taken hold of that for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of you? The intensity elevates a call to a burden.

I remember my call to serve Christ decades ago. I know where I sat in The C&MA camp tabernacle. I cannot remember the preacher's words, but I do recall The Spirit's voice. I remember my tears followed by the embrace of friends and family when the music stopped. However, it was not until years later that my call became my unexpected but welcomed burden.

I still do not consider that I have firmly taken hold of it—but I can clearly see it. For me, it is the rebirth of struggling and dying churches, one at a time.

Second, the Philippians passage says it is time to strain, to exert every effort to move forward. This will require a new lifecycle for churches across our land. The straining is forward-looking. It is taking everything that we have learned from the past and leaning into new beginnings.

CHURCHES ARE CLOSING AT AN INCREASING RATE, BUT...

The most agreed upon number of churches that close their doors and leave the community each year is at least 3,500. The Barna Group reported that "More than 4,000 churches closed in the U.S. in 2020 alone. Over that same period, over 20,000 pastors left the ministry." Behind every statistic is a group of hurting people, a lost light to the community, and a new wound to the reputation of the bride of Christ.

3,500+

churches close their doors every year

4,000+

U.S. churches closed in 2020 alone

20,000+

pastors left the ministry that year

You may be an elder, servant, or ministry leader in a church that is in significant decline. You are feeling the burden. Maybe you are in a district or regional role...maybe even a national role. You are frustrated but still earnestly seeking to lead the kind of change that can turn the downward trend into a vibrant new lifecycle.

Woodland Hills, California

JOE'S STORY

I want you to meet someone. His name is Joe Toledo, and he was an elder for decades of a long-time struggling and dying church in Woodland Hills, Calif. Here is what Joe told me in a recent interview:

"My fear was, 'Who am I to be making decisions about what we should do? Who am I to say our pastor could not move us forward?'"

Here I was with just a high school education. I worked construction. However, my wife and I and so many others invested decades in giving and time, and we loved the Lord and wanted to do right by him for all he has done for us.

I wanted to be courageous, but I had gone through church splits before. I'd seen aggressive email campaigns and divisions between the leadership and the board. Sarcastically, we were treated like we were the 'good people' and they, the people of the congregation, were the 'bad people'. That was a bad feeling for the few of us still in leadership.

In this 80 year old church, I had seen the highs and lows. But now, I began questioning my own leadership. I was fearful that I had left the flock down. I felt like a failure because I had been called to protect and feed the body."

There is a happy climax to the Woodland Hills story, which I'll save for another time. Meanwhile, many of you are reading Joe's words with empathy. You get it! I can feel it as I remember my church as a child and teenager in western Pennsylvania. The church was on its last legs. I recall the sense of helplessness. I also recall the stories of how that little church had done so much for The Kingdom in decades past. Eventually the church closed, and the light went out in the little town. Today, churches are continuing to close. So much history and legacy is lost every time.

I can honestly report to you that, in obedience and service to Jesus, North American churches are being reborn. Jesus is raising dying and dead churches to life. Of course, no church planter or replanter can raise the dead alone. The good news is that we don't have to. Resurrection power is in Christ.

So the next time you hear that it is easier to give birth than to raise the dead, don't argue the point. Just say, "My Lord does both!"

Consider

LOST VS. GAINED

WHAT IS LOST WHEN A CHURCH IS CLOSED

- Light is snuffed out
- Gospel Spread is Cut Off
- Legacy is Sacrificed
- People feel Defeated
- Community Reentry is Lost
- Ministry Positions are Lost
- Kingdom Giving is Cut Off
- Christ's Reputation Suffers
- Strongholds Gain a Foothold

WHAT IS GAINED WHEN A CHURCH IS REPLANTED

- Light is Refreshed
- Great News is Revived
- Future Generations Live On
- People are Filled with Joy
- Community is Served
- Ministry Positions are Gained
- Generosity is Unleashed
- Christ's Reputation is Honored
- Strongholds Face New Resistance

For your team

GOING DEEPER

In reading this with a team or perhaps coaching a struggling church consider these questions together.

- 1 What do you see are the biggest challenges facing struggling churches today?
- 2 What are some of the unique differences between planting churches and replanting churches?
- 3 What are some of the unique differences between replanting and restoring health to a struggling church?
- 4 What did you learn and how were you encouraged through the reading of this resource?

- 5 How did “the case for replanting” contribute to the way you think of God’s greater story in our world?
- 6 What do you see as the most important steps someone can take if they are leading a struggling church?
- 7 What do you envision are the early steps for a leader to take in replanting a church?
- 8 Imagining a successful story of a life-giving replanted church making a difference in the community, describe what you see.

Resources

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

| *Reclaiming Glory: Creating a Gospel Legacy throughout North America* by Mark Clifton

| *God’s Not Done with Your Church: Finding Hope and New Life through Replanting* by Mark Hallock

| *Pathways to Partnership: How You and Your Church Can Join the Replanting Movement* by Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock

| *Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again* by Darrin Patrick

| *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* by Thom Rainer

UP NEXT

UNDERSTANDING & OVERCOMING THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

BY KEN PRIDDY



JOIN THE NETWORK

Fresh Start Network is focused on replanting life giving churches. If you or your team is interested in learning more, discovering your next step, or simply want to be encouraged, visit freshstartnetwork.com.

VISIT [FRESHSTARTNETWORK.COM](https://freshstartnetwork.com) →

WHITE PAPER

UNDERSTANDING & OVERCOMING

THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

—
WRITTEN BY
KEN PRIDY

CHAPTER

02



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A word from Bill Malick

INTRO TO KEN PRIDY & THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

In the early 90's I asked Ken to replant a church in Phoenix, AZ. The church was down to twelve people, half from one family. These faithful people were trying to keep the doors open and maintain the old building. Ken and his wife Sharon took the challenge, applied their past church planting experience and saw God's hand at work. The result was a vibrant fresh start. Coming out of the replanting journey Ken was motivated to pursue his PhD. What Ken learned from his studies coupled with his replanting experience served to formulate the training detailed in this white paper, *Understanding & Overcoming the Lifecycle of the Church*. Now, two decades later, Ken has trained hundreds of church leaders in revitalization. For replanting or revitalization, the journey to new life begins when a struggling church honestly comes to grips with its condition.

For the remaining leaders it is an honest look in the mirror. When reality is understood and accepted the leaders become open to a fresh start. At the Fresh Start Network, lifecycle teaching continues to unlock doors to new beginnings.

We are confident that Ken's Lifecycle tool will serve you well as you work with churches at various stages of health. Especially churches on the backside of the lifecycle.

BILL MALICK

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

A church, much like a person, has a lifespan that can be characterized as a lifecycle. A person's lifespan or lifecycle is directly linked to his or her chronological age.

For example, at the age of thirty, she is unequivocally thirty years old, and at sixty, he is unequivocally sixty years old. Of course, genetics, circumstances, one's life choices, and, perhaps, other factors might make one person's experience at thirty or sixty somewhat different from another's, but a birthdate is a birthdate, and on any given date, a person is simply as young or as old as chronology dictates.

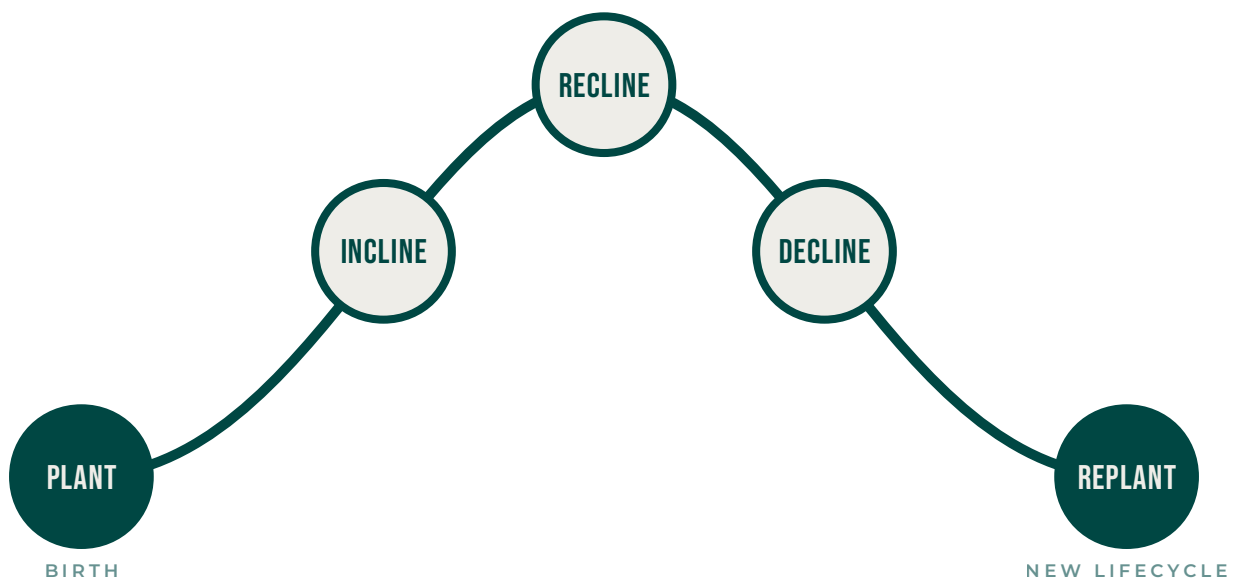
A church's lifespan or lifecycle has similar parallels that manifest in similar ways, at least in generalities. A church that was founded a hundred years ago is likely showing signs of aging such as a congregation that is getting older as it gets smaller.

A church that was planted five years ago tends to have a younger congregation that is growing in number. A hundred-year-old church is likely inwardly focused, having little impact on its surrounding community. A five-year-old church tends to be outwardly focused, having significant impact on its surrounding community.

So, a church can, indeed, feel the impact of chronology much like a person. However, while a person can't stop time and recalibrate her or his personal lifecycle, a church can. Not literally in terms of stopping time, but a church has options. A church sliding downward on the backside of the church lifecycle has a choice to make. That choice is to continue as it is and simply let the future happen, or to take bold action to end its current lifecycle and launch a new lifecycle. Such a church can be born again, beginning a new lifecycle. How? Church leaders can opt for Church Replanting.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

Church Replanting can be positioned in reference to the church lifecycle. I first developed the lifecycle schema that I use today almost thirty years ago. That schema remains tried and true. Its framework is a bell curve that spotlights three lifecycle macro-stages: Incline, Recline, and Decline.



Church Lifecycle: Macro-Stages

A key distinction to be made between Incline, Recline, and Decline is their relationship to ministry capacity. Inclining churches are expanding their capacity to minister, creating more ministry capacity over time. Reclining churches have stabilized their capacity to minister, neither losing nor creating capacity, but maintaining the status quo. Declining churches are losing their capacity to minister, able to provide less and less ministry over time.



A COMPARISON OF DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLINE, RECLINE AND DECLINE

INCLINE	RECLINE	DECLINE
KEY INDICATORS		
Future-Oriented	Present-Oriented	Past-Oriented
Vision-Driven	Program-Driven	Structure-Driven
Community-Focused	Congregation-Focused	Core-Focused
Innovative	Routine	Complacent
High-Risk Faith leading to Faith Decisions	Low-Risk Faith leading to Resource Decisions	No-Risk Faith leading to Indecision
People Serve through Gifts/Call/ etc.	People Serve Slot-filling	People Serve by Default
Resources of Kingdom Investment	Resources for Program Provision	Resources for Preservation
New Leadership	Established Leadership	Incumbent Leadership
Growth by Conversion	Growth by Transfer	No Growth

COMPOSITES OF MACRO-STAGE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Leaders of Inclining Churches are future-oriented, always anticipating what the future holds and always seeking God's leading for the future. They are vision-driven, guided by a never-wavering commitment to aligning ministry with the Great Commission.

As such, they are community-focused, placing a priority on laboring in the harvest that is the community around the church. Inclining leaders place a high value on innovation, willing to seek out and employ new and better ways of doing ministry. High-risk faith leads these leaders to make decisions based on that faith. If God's leading seems clear, action steps are taken regardless of whether all necessary resources to support those decisions are in hand.

People throughout the congregation are mobilized for ministry according to their giftedness, callings, talents, interests, or passions, thereby promoting ministry effectiveness and satisfaction. Resources, such as finances and personnel, are invested in kingdom ministry with an expectation of positive kingdom ministry returns. Development of new leaders is a priority to avoid stagnation and to foster the expansion of ministry capacity.

Combined, these characteristics contribute to growth by conversion.

Leaders of Reclining Churches are present-oriented, desiring to freeze time in a perpetual present that keeps ministry exactly as it is. They are program-driven, believing that whatever success the church is experiencing is the product of its broad, conventional programming.

This programming is focused on the current congregation and provides what that congregation wants in the way of ministry services. Ministry operations are conducted with well-established routines that border on fill-in-the-blank ministry with each department operating as a ministry world unto itself.

Low-risk faith dominates decision-making that demands that all resources for action are in hand, and that the cost of falling short is very low with not much at stake.

So, resources and safety tend to eclipse God-dependency. People throughout the congregation are mobilized for ministry through slot-filling, making sure that serving slots needed to deliver the programming are occupied.

This provides program coverage but often places willing ministry providers in ministries for which they are not suited. Resources, such as finances and personnel, are viewed as the provision that keeps programming in operation, programming that is centered on the congregation and not on a potential community harvest.

With ministry capacity bounded, leadership positions have been identified and filled with established leaders, leaving little room for the development and placement of new leaders.

Combined, these characteristics contribute to growth by transfer as the Reclining Church tends to appeal to the already-Christian population but not to the unbeliever. This transfer growth, while it lasts, creates a false positive concerning growth because the local church might be growing though the kingdom is not.

IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THE NUMERICAL GROWTH OF A CHURCH MAY HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON THE EXPANSION OF THE KINGDOM

Leaders of Declining Churches are past-oriented, longing for a return to the good old days. The nature of decline is that the church has declined from a previous time that is viewed as preferable to the present.

When the gloss of nostalgia and the fear of a foreboding future are added to this perception, an idealized past can be quite compelling and becomes, or supplants, a vision for the future.

Leaders are structure-driven, preoccupied with the inner trappings of ministry such as finances, personnel, buildings and grounds, organizational elements such as policies and procedures, and committee work. Structure becomes the center of ministry rather than the main support for ministry.

Ministry becomes core-focused, the core being a longstanding subset of the declining congregation. These folks tend to be steadfast and faithful over the long haul, but also tend to be stuck in the past. Their leadership and financial support are often seen as indispensable, so their perspectives tend to dominate decision-making and action, or inaction, as the case might be.

Leaders in Decline have become complacent, resigned to the way things are and resigned to their inability to do anything about it proactively. Any risk is viewed as too great a risk, and the fear of making a costly, wrong decision leads to indecision. Ironically, indecision is itself a wrong decision.

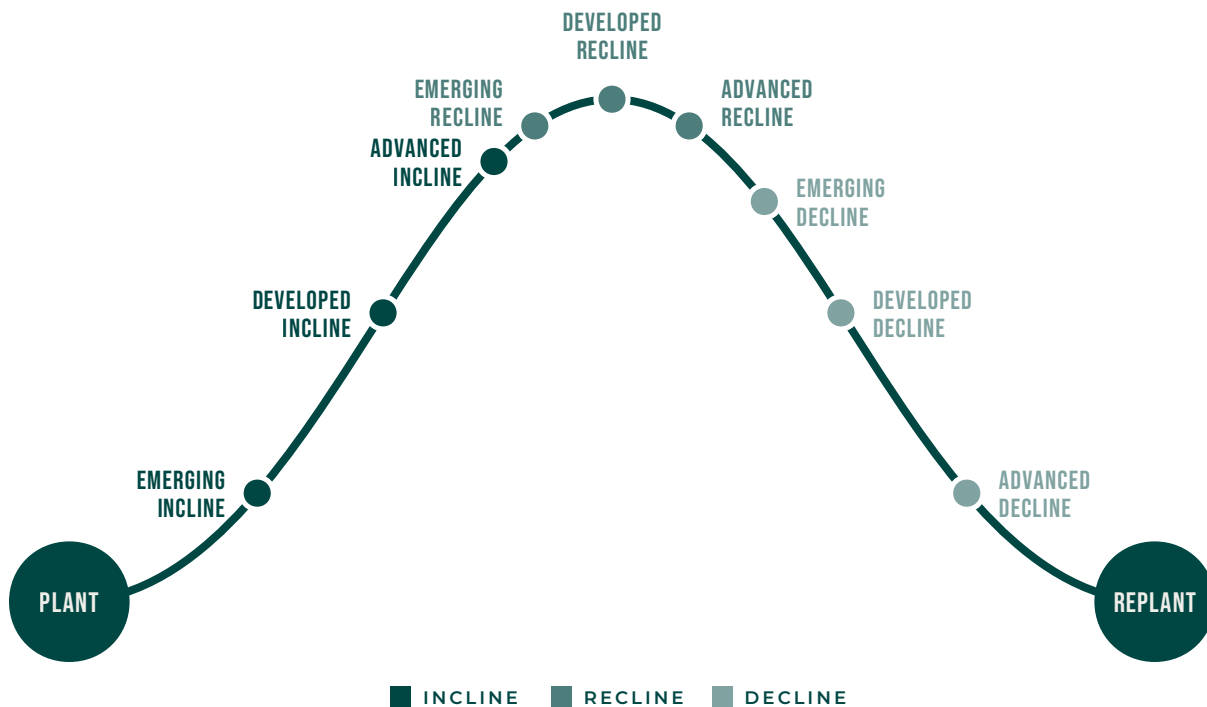
IRONICALLY, INDECISION IS ITSELF A WRONG DECISION.

The overemphasis in maintaining the structure results in the attempt to keep all structural elements alive. Therefore, there are often more structural slots to fill than people to fill them.

Consequently, folks take on multiple assignments by default as there must be a name in every slot. Resources are guarded for self-preservation, the opposite of kingdom investment. Established leaders become incumbent in their leadership positions, calcifying leadership operations. Combined, these characteristics contribute to the church's lack of growth, or, perhaps more accurately, to its negative growth.

This broad look at the Macro-Stages of the Church Lifecycle, with its Distinctive Characteristics and Macro-Composites, provides a foundational understanding of the lifecycle. There is more to the lifecycle story, but those nuances are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the following diagrams provide a brief glimpse into those nuances which manifest as a church moves through its lifecycle.





Church Lifecycle: Micro-Stages

COMPOSITES OF MICRO-STAGE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Arnold L. Cook, in his informative book, *Historical Drift: Must My Church Die?* describes the movement of a church through its lifecycle as an unconscious and unnoticed drifting through time. The dynamics of a church lifecycle are largely unknown to pastors and church leaders, so there is typically little awareness that this drift is taking place, and little attention is paid as to where a church might be on its lifecycle at any given moment.

EMERGING INCLINE

Emerging Incline is a pure form of Incline that features strong commitment to the Distinctive Characteristics of Incline. When launching a church plant, or when launching a new lifecycle, it's necessary to invest heavily in these characteristics.

However, a church that starkly features Incline and Incline only is a virtual parachurch ministry that will need to move deeper into the lifecycle to establish balanced health.



DEVELOPED INCLINE

Developed Incline continues to feature a strong commitment to the Distinctive Characteristics of Incline, but also has begun to build an infrastructure of Reclining characteristics in a subordinate position. For example, leaders remain Future-Oriented but are tending to the present. They remain Vision-Driven but are building program ministries internally. They remain Community-Focused but are shepherding and mobilizing the congregation.

This is the optimum micro-stage of the lifecycle in terms of laboring in the harvest.

ADVANCED INCLINE

Advanced Incline occurs when the commitment to the Distinctive Characteristics of Recline rises to being equal to those of Incline. Rather than producing balance, however, the result is competition between Incline and Recline for ministry preference.

Laboring in the harvest is still effective but Community-Focus and other Inclining characteristics are beginning to lose momentum in favor of Reclining characteristics.

EMERGING RECLINE

Emerging Recline occurs when the commitment to the Distinctive Characteristics of Recline pulls slightly ahead of Incline with more and more interest and momentum being given to Recline.

Laboring in the harvest can still be effective, but the church is moving dangerously close to losing its outward focus as it shifts more and more to inwardly focused ministry.

DEVELOPED RECLINE

Developed Recline occurs when Incline takes a major step back, giving way to a greater and greater emphasis on congregational ministry.

A word that could be associated with Developed Recline is the word plateau. In his book, *Turnaround Churches*, George Barna observes that churches in plateau don't realize that they are in crisis.

ADVANCED RECLINE

Advanced Recline is the most dangerous micro-stage of the lifecycle. Incline disappears altogether, supplanted by the emergence of Declining characteristics. The church has moved to the backside of the lifecycle, but leaders are rarely aware of this subtle movement which is camouflaged by the fact that Recline is dominant in both Developed and Advanced Recline.

So, on the surface, ministry appears to be the same. However, below the surface, Decline is eroding away any serious commitment to Incline.

EMERGING DECLINE

Emerging Decline occurs when the commitment to Decline pulls even and then begins to overtake the commitment to Recline. This is not conscious on the part of leaders but is evident in how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how actions are taken.

DEVELOPED DECLINE

Developed Decline occurs when Recline takes a further step back and the Distinctive Characteristics of Decline clearly move to the forefront.

ADVANCED DECLINE

Advanced Decline is the final stop on the lifecycle and occurs when all traces of both Incline and Recline have disappeared and the church is trapped in a pure, stark form of Decline that features only the Distinctive Characteristics of Decline.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE SPARKS SELF-DISCOVERY

When church leaders are first presented with an objective look at the Church Lifecycle, their tendency is to project their churches to be somewhat healthier than they truly are. Subjectively completing the Church Lifecycle Assessment, then, provides a wake-up call that ranges from informative to shocking.

EXAMPLE 1

Leaders in a small church in central Pennsylvania knew that ministry in their church was stagnant but were reluctant to own responsibility for that stagnation and make the changes necessary to turn ministry around. A Church Lifecycle Assessment forced the issue and when they discovered they were well down the backside of the lifecycle into Developed Decline, they were prompted to take action.

EXAMPLE 2

Leaders in a large metropolitan church in Kansas came into a full day training seminar on strategic planning for ministry in a friendly, jovial mood with lots of smiles and chatter. Then they were presented with the Church Lifecycle and its accompanying assessment workshop. To their surprise, eleven out of twelve workgroups discovered that their church was in Advanced Recline and the twelfth, made up of younger leaders, placed the church in Emerging Decline. Eyes were opened, the mood shifted, and, following training, leaders acted.

Overcoming the Church Lifecycle

WHEN REPLANTING IS THE RIGHT CHOICE

Often, a church is well down the backside of its lifecycle in Emerging, Developed, or Advanced Decline before alarm bells go off. By then, a church is in such a weakened state that changing course is extremely difficult.

The rule of thumb, then, is for churches to make moderate adjustments to ministry early in the lifecycle of the church from a position of strength rather than having to make severe adjustments late in the lifecycle from a position of weakness, preferring change as choice over change as a response to crisis. Still, it's rarely too late in the lifecycle to make the sacrificial commitment to turn ministry around.

The seriously Declining Church can become a Church Replant; it can be born again.

The key to new life, to being born again as a church, is lifecycle intervention. Arnold L. Cook further informs that the story of lifecycle is vitality lost over time. Without lifecycle intervention, a church will drift through its lifecycle, peaking and then waning as vitality begins to slip away.

The good news is that intervention is possible throughout the lifecycle, but, again, church leaders tend to be unaware of this dynamic and remain in the dark about lifecycle until finding their church in Decline.

Ideally, they would have intervened earlier, at some point within the scope of Incline or Recline when intervention could have been relatively moderate, and when they could have leveraged any number of proven spiritual and strategic methodologies that promote revitalization.

THE KEY TO NEW LIFE, TO BEING BORN AGAIN AS A CHURCH, IS LIFECYCLE INTERVENTION

However, churches reach a point deep into Decline when it's too late for simple revitalization. At that time, assuming there are enough assets or resources in hand to sustain viability, the right choice, the bold choice, the godly choice, is for the church to Replant. In this way, leaders can avoid further lifecycle victimization and overcome the lifecycle currently in play by launching a new lifecycle that prominently features the Distinctive Characteristics of Incline.

The Declining Church can become an Inclining Church, being born again as a Church Replant.



By Bill Malick

STORY OF THE LIFECYCLE APPLIED TO MISSION CHURCH IN REDLANDS, CA

The Redlands, CA church was blessed with many people and good leadership from members of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). When MAF relocated away from Redlands the church felt the loss. Years later they experienced the pain of the passing of their beloved pastor.

The church continued to decline and was struggling as it decreased to a few dozen people. At the same time, I was working with a church in Woodland Hills, CA that was successfully replanted. When I met with the leaders at Redlands to discuss possibilities for a new beginning it was clear that they wanted help.

However, they were reticent to “let go of the wheel” and allow new leadership and a partner church to walk with them on the journey to a new beginning. I recall sitting with the Redlands leadership as we watched the video story about the Woodland Hills church. They were intrigued as they watched the video testimony. While their interest was piqued, they continued to hold back. Eventually as they understood the lifecycle training they agreed to a new beginning. What was the trigger? It was the introduction and grasp of Ken’s teaching on the church lifecycle. It became their ‘Oh No’, followed by their ‘Ah Ha’ moment. ‘Oh No’ we are in deep trouble, ‘Ah Ha’ there’s help and hope for us. The result over the next year was a vibrant new beginning that continues to this day.

OH NO

We are in deep trouble

AH HA

There’s help and hope for us

For your team

GOING DEEPER

The Book of Nehemiah, a widely recognized biblical model for renewal and revitalization, begins with an assessment. Its opening verses explain that Nehemiah, who was serving in exile at the court of the King in Susa, received a report from eyewitnesses concerning the Jews back in Jerusalem who had survived the exile.

That report, revealed in Nehemiah 1:3, reads,

“The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall in Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates destroyed by fire.”

Nehemiah 1:3 (ESV)

View this assessment data through the lens of the Church Lifecycle and consider these questions:

- 1 In what ways do Jerusalem's broken-down walls and destroyed gates foster "great trouble and shame" for these remnant survivors?
- 2 In the nomenclature of the Church Lifecycle, is this remnant in Incline, Recline, or Decline? How so?
READ NEHEMIAH 1:4-11
- 3 How does the report from Jerusalem impact Nehemiah? How does he respond?
- 4 In what ways does Nehemiah respond spiritually?
- 5 In what ways does Nehemiah respond strategically?
READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTERS 2 & 3
- 6 In what ways does Nehemiah, blessed by the hand of God, launch a new lifecycle?
- 7 In what ways does this account of Nehemiah's actions inform today's local church remnants in terms of possible responses to their current lifecycle positions?

Going further

RESOURCES

Historical Drift: Must My Church Die by Arnold L. Cook: Note the in-depth treatment of lifecycles in Chapter 3: The Cursed Curve, pp. 43-62.

Turnaround Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church by George Barna: Note Chapter 1: Reshaping the Lifecycle, pp. 19-29, and Chapter 2: The Symptoms of Decline, pp. 31-40.

Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson. Note Chapter 12: Making a Comeback, Top Factors and Biggest Challenges, pp. 199-208, and Chapter 13: Comeback Conclusions, pp. 209-219.

Building Nonprofit Capacity: A Guide to Managing Change Through Organizational Lifecycles by John Brothers and Anne Sherman: Note the treatment of lifecycle and the Logic Model (developed by the TCC Group) on pp. 3-28.

How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In, by Jim Collins: Note the Five Stages of Decline summarized on pp. 14-26.

Jumping the Curve: Innovation and Strategic Choice in an Age of Transition by Nicholas Imparato and Oren Harari: Note Chapter 3: Rising to the Occasion, pp. 53-77, and Chapter 4: The Innovation Imperative, pp. 81-102.

Church Lifecycle Assessment: Free online at assessment.church, provided by Ken Priddy.

Community Demographics: Percept Group, online at perceptgroup.com. Note Percept Group's Ministry Area Profiles.



JOIN THE NETWORK

Fresh Start Network is focused on replanting life giving churches. If you or your team is interested in learning more, discovering your next step, or simply want to be encouraged, visit freshstartnetwork.com.

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UP NEXT

03

HOLY DESPERATION

BY BILL MALICK



WHITE PAPER

HOLY DESPERATION

Opening the Door to a New Beginning

—
WRITTEN BY
BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

03



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Holy desperation is the critical early step on the journey to replanting life-giving churches.

Mark Hallock, leader in The Calvary Family of Churches, uses a phrase that further describes holy desperation—Humble Surrender. It's the place most leaders of struggling or dying churches need to come to, but where they are reluctant to go because it involves taking their hands off the wheel and entrusting new leadership. For these legacy leaders, humble surrender doesn't come easily. It is a process that takes time. It requires a lot of prayer and trust.

Concerned leaders of struggling or dying churches are often frustrated and hurting. Other times they are complacent; not because they don't care but because they've tried everything, only to arrive right back where they started. This creates a hopeless feeling in them. They simply don't know what to do or where to turn, so they faithfully press on, only to be discouraged as their churches continue to decline. Frustration and complacency fester into desperation.

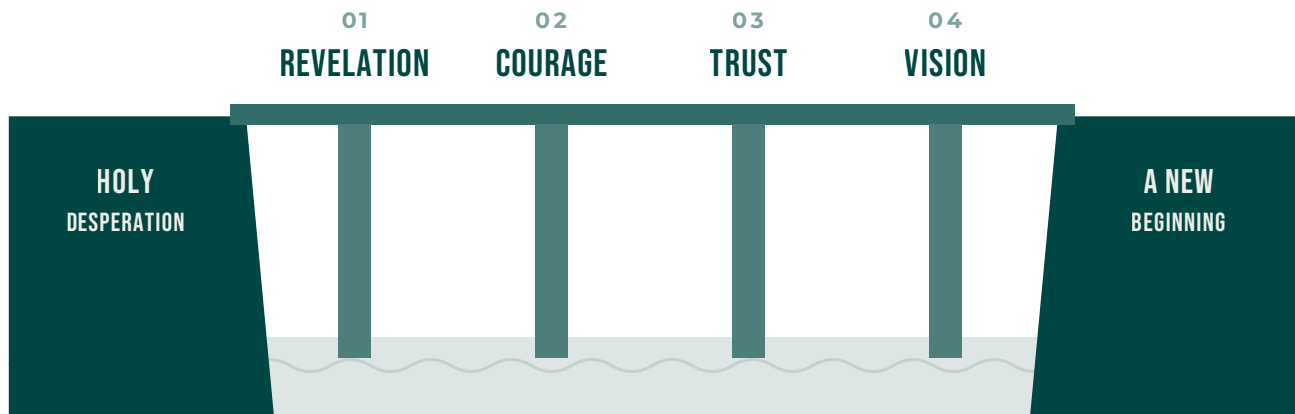
"We tried everything we could think of only to see the pattern of decline continue," the pastor of a church that experienced a great fresh start told me. "We asked God, why are we not seeing anything new here when we see it in other places. Why not us, God?"

They were desperate, but desperation is not the same as holy desperation. Holy desperation is the deep realization that only God can carry us to a new beginning. In his book, *Holy Desperation*, Vance Havner, the beloved and renowned revivalist of the 20th century, wrote:

"Every one of the great heroes of faith were desperate people, Daniel in the lion's den, the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, Elijah and Isaiah, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, the disciples in the storm, Jacob at Jabbok, Moses at the Red Sea, David facing Goliath, the four lepers at the gate of Samaria every one of them on the spot, desperate. God delights in blessing those who are desperate for Him. When we feel far from God and need a fresh touch from Him, when we want to obey Him more than anything else, we are becoming desperate. And when we desperately need God and want God more than anything else we will find Him and be blessed. If you're tired of mediocrity and long for a move of God in your life, you need Holy Desperation!"

The holy desperation Havner describes is the intense need for God and the willingness to let Him take the wheel. But the reality is that when leaders of struggling churches ask for help, many aren't ready to let go. Early on in my work to persuade church leaders to accept a new beginning, my mistake was to assume they were willing to let go when they asked for help. However, in almost every church, this was not the case. There was a significant chasm between desperation and the willingness to do whatever it took to change the direction of the church.

On one side of this chasm there is complacency, frustration, confusion, discouragement, and desperation. On the other side is a new beginning and brighter future. We have to build a bridge to span the chasm. Based on my extensive experience replanting churches, I've found that four supports are critical to the stability of that bridge: Revelation, Courage, Trust, Vision.



01 Bridge to a New Beginning · Support #1

REVELATION

After repeatedly meeting with five elders from an eventually replanted church, I will admit I was growing frustrated. After all, they had called me for help more than a year earlier, so I thought they were ready. Yes, they wanted help, but they were not ready to relinquish control. For that church, and others to follow, a revelation tipped the first domino leading to decisions that, up until then, were unreachable.

I'll never forget the breakthrough moment that led to a revelation for these elders. Running out of ideas to move things forward, an unrehearsed question came to mind that proved to be God's Spirit inserting Himself. I turned to one of the men, a retired doctor of internal medicine, and said, "Suppose you have a cancer patient who has an operable tumor . . . ?" Before I could complete the question, he raised his hand and said, "I vote we let go and go to redevelopment." (In the case of this church, redevelopment was the official term for letting go and trusting someone else to guide the new beginning.)

The doctor had a clear understanding that surgery was essential to save his patient. His medical training allowed him to make the natural connection between the health of his patient and the health of his church. This was a revelatory moment. It was the "Oh No" moment before the "Ah Ha" moment. To my amazement, three of the remaining four elders immediately raised their hands in agreement.

If you counted the raised hands, you noticed there was a lone dissenting elder. Soon after, he and his family left the church. He was a good man, nevertheless, opposition often comes from people with good intentions. However, it is still resistance. How to recognize and address opposition is the subject of an [upcoming FSN white paper](#) based on Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The same kind of opposition he faced can surface in a church replant.

That paper is now part of this collection: **Navigating Opposition**, Bill Malick's look at Nehemiah and the early church.

[GO TO NAVIGATING OPPOSITION →](#)

THE ENEMY DOES NOT WANT CHURCHES TO BECOME LIFE GIVING AND WILL DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT IT. THE DORMANT OR STRUGGLING CHURCH HE WILL NOT RUFFLE.

Revelation that leads to discovery is a key to change. The revelation that happened with the good doctor was far more effective than exhortation. It caused him to see that without surgery his patient was doomed. Meds by themselves were not enough. He saw that the status quo was more dangerous and deadly than venturing into the unknown. In a *Harvard Business Review* article, John Kotter quotes the CEO of a large company as saying, "The purpose of all this activity is to make the status quo seem more dangerous than launching into the unknown."

The imminent danger for struggling and dying churches is to be locked into the status quo and not see the opportunity for a vibrant new life. Revelation can open leaders' eyes to the need for radical change. That's a start, but it's not enough. Revelation needs to be followed by Courage.

02 Bridge to a New Beginning · Support #2 COURAGE

The Lord said to Joshua as he was about to walk through the water into a new land,

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9

Courage is a key component of change. Joshua was reminded of this reality repeatedly, and not just at the start of his journey. This was not accidental nor incidental as he later realized through one battle after another.

In the White Paper, [The Case for Replanting](#), you met Joe, the lead elder in the first church I worked with for a fresh start. I once asked him an important question: "What finally helped you let go and persuade the people of your church to trust God for a new beginning?" Without hesitation he

replied, “Courage!” He went on to say something extremely insightful: He said, finding the courage to do what needed to be done in the church was more difficult than almost anything else I’ve ever done. He then told me an incredible story of how God used a Hollywood celebrity for whom his construction company was working to speak to him.

“The lady knew my wife and me. She knew we’d dropped out of our church for personal reasons after years of service. She wanted to share something with me but was hesitant because she thought I might take it the wrong way. I was thinking, me and my crew are about to get fired!

‘Here goes,’ she said. ‘God has a message for you. He told me to tell you to get off your rear (not her exact word) and put the armor of God back on and get back into the battle. God has a purpose for you at your church. I had a vision that you were in heaven. I saw you leaping because you saw the people there you had been able to help.’

That vision was remarkable, and her courage to speak really left a deep impression on me. We immediately went back to our little church and the rest is history. Her words changed my life. Her courage gave me the courage to do what I needed to do as a leader.”

Joe only has a high school education, but he’s one of the wisest men I’ve ever met. Listening to him and watching him take on huge challenges reminded me that there are a lot of people we might think of as “ordinary Joes” in our churches who are actually extraordinary. They can and will lead the way to new beginnings. We should never look past the ordinary Joes who may have the courage to move forward.

IT REQUIRES COURAGE TO TELL SOMEONE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AND TO LEAD THEM IN THAT DIRECTION.

Revelation and Courage are key supports of the bridge to a new beginning. To them must be added a third: Trust.

03 Bridge to a New Beginning · Support #3 TRUST

A third support of the bridge to a new beginning involves earning the trust of the legacy leaders of the church. These leaders are often wonderful and faithful people who have been part of the church for years, decades even. They love God dearly and don’t want to quit; they just want a sustainable way forward—a way to please God and help people. Conversely, there are some in leadership who are motivated by the need to be in control. Discerning the motives of leaders is vital. It can be revealed through prayer and observation of how they react when help is offered.

One church leader we walked with through the replanting of his church spoke about the trust that took root in the hearts and minds of the leaders as we met together:

“When you came in, you didn’t stonewall us but were willing to listen to us. That was a game-changer. Over time, we prayerfully figured that this was God leading us. In our times together we got answers that we needed from the regional leaders who had authority over our church. We mainly were ready because you listened to us. You didn’t say, ‘We know what to do so you guys should get out of the way.’ Trust was the winning factor for us. We needed to take responsibility. I knew I couldn’t be a good elder if I wouldn’t come to grips with the fact that I was partly to blame. You showed us a path that we weren’t envisioning. We came to the point that we trusted you.”

To help create trust in one church after another, I established with the legacy leaders a written agreement telling the people we would not sell their building and leave the community. We were not there to gain an asset. We came alongside to seek God together in restoring the church to its original purpose.

Church after church we heard stories of their history and their ongoing desire to be witnesses for Christ in their cities and towns. They wanted to restore the outward focus and obedience to God that was the driving force behind the long-ago days when their church was first planted.

Revelation, Courage, and Trust all lead to a willingness to establish the fourth support: a fresh Vision.

04 Bridge to a New Beginning · Support #4 VISION

Vision is a clear picture of a desired future. Over 30 years ago, my ministry mentor, the late Dr. Don Taylor, told me time and again, “People tend to go in the direction they’re headed.” That stuck with me. I’ve tested that maxim over the years and found it almost always true. Any exceptions were miracles!

Struggling and dying churches are heading in the wrong direction, and at Fresh Start Network, we’ve been called and burdened to help them change direction, whatever that takes. We are not alone in this. Christ is the head of His church and He has entrusted us to help provide new direction when needed.

So, how do we change the direction of struggling churches? While every church must seek God’s specific “sacred call”—its unique reason for existence—there’s one clear direction for all churches: Outward! We hear it in the instructions Jesus gave to His followers:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”

Luke 19:10

Jesus's response to those questioning His priority as it pertains to whom He spent His time with. He was "seeking" the lost.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,"

Matthew 28:19a

Post-resurrection directive to His followers with the high-priority impact of a personal and final instruction. "Go!"

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem (a place nearby), and in all Judea, (a place nearby where people are similar to you), and Samaria (a place nearby where people are different than you, and to the ends of the earth)"

Acts 1:8

Jesus's last words of instruction that carry a particularly heavy weight and priority. And a clear direction—outward into the world!

JESUS'S DIRECTIVES TO HIS FOLLOWERS POINT THE CHURCH IN AN OUTWARD DIRECTION.

Jesus's directives to His followers point the church in an outward direction. If ignored, the church will be sucked inward by the natural centripetal force that is our default setting. To counteract this, we need a vision that looks beyond the walls of the church and that involves becoming an equipping and sending body.

It's so important to keep God's purpose for the church in front of His people as a clear and encouraging reminder. That purpose is stated in God's Word, which is more powerful than any human arguments. His Word is able to change hearts and minds where we cannot. And remember, we are working together with Christ who gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19. Don't miss the implication of the "co" part. We are expanding the church together with Christ. What an honor to be "co"-workers with Him!

WHAT IS THE VISION FOR A REPLANTED CHURCH?

Several years after the replanting of his church, I invited Joe, whom you met earlier, to share his experience at a church conference. He started to cry as he began to speak. After composing himself, he explained,

"Here's why I cried. I see God's hand on every aspect of the replanting! When I walk into the church today, I just smile. I can't help it. I love it. I love the people. We're not a big church, but we're a strong church. There are children everywhere. We are reaching people. We are

investing in ministries outside our building. We are training up and sending out leaders. We are investing in a sister ministry of great need in Watts, California. The lady's vision courageously declared to me years ago has already come true here on earth. And one day I'll be leaping in heaven as I see the people I was able to help. I can't wait!"

The legacy leaders of dying churches are often stuck in desperation. When desperation graduates to holy desperation, the leaders, in humble surrender, let go of the wheel and trust God for a new beginning—a fresh start. When this happens, we see God do immeasurably more than any of us could imagine!

One resource available for churches on their journey from desperation to a new beginning are partner churches. The white paper, [Benefits of a Partner Church](#), details how partnering church/es come alongside to help with replanting. It shares first-hand accounts of how everyone benefits. Replanted churches and partner churches are bolstered by a fresh vision of a desired future. The churches are empowered as the Holy Spirit breathes new life in and through them.

Read the first-hand partner church stories from Northridge, Crosstown and The Grove.

[GO TO BENEFITS OF A PARTNER CHURCH →](#)

For coaches and leaders

COACHING POINTS FOR HELPING A STRUGGLING CHURCH CROSS THE BRIDGE TO HOLY DESPERATION

- 1 There are many wonderful people in struggling and dying churches. Treat them with respect. Listen to them. Earn their trust.
- 2 The good people of the church who have stayed are at various stages of readiness for replanting. Work to recognize where they stand.
- 3 Never assume the people or the leaders in struggling churches understand the need to let go. Do the hard work of painting a picture of the bridge from desperation to holy desperation and a new beginning.
- 4 Exhortation usually will not make people open to change. Work toward moments of discovery. Pray. Listen to God for the right questions to create a context for discovery.
- 5 There are almost always key influencers in every church. They are often in leadership but not always. Sometimes a key influencer is the spouse of a leader. Ask around to find the influencers. Speak to them in a language they can understand.
- 6 There are people who will oppose God's purpose for the church. Find the source and uproot it.

- 7 God wants His church to thrive. The lost need the good news so stand your ground for their future benefit.
- 8 Encourage and applaud courage.
- 9 Be patient. Commit to stay in the community.
- 10 Build a track record of trustworthiness one church at a time and tell their stories.
- 11 Teach and promote the biblical mandate of Christ's purpose for the church.
- 12 Paint a clear picture of the future for the church. Include the people in the painting.

Going further

RESOURCES

| *Holy Desperation: Finding God in your Deepest Point of Need*, Vance Havner, compiled by Dennis Hester

| *Replanting 101: How you Can Revitalize Dying Churches*, Mark Hallock

| *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*, John P. Kotter

| *Benefits of a Partner Church*, Bill Malick. [Read it in this collection](#)

| FSN videos and replanting tools, freshstartnetwork.com/papers

UP NEXT

THE REPLANTER PROFILE

BY ERIC OLESON



JOIN THE NETWORK



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WHITE PAPER

THE REPLANTER PROFILE

—
WRITTEN BY
ERIC OLESON

CHAPTER

04



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**“IT’S EASIER TO GIVE BIRTH
THAN TO RAISE THE DEAD.”**

CHURCH PLANTER

**“JESUS SPECIALIZES IN
RESURRECTIONS.”**

CHURCH REPLANTER

There is an adage in the church planting world: “It’s easier to give birth than to raise the dead.” Often delivered with a confident (nearly smug) attitude, it’s an argument for planting a new church, rather than revitalizing an old one. Early in my ministry, when presented with the statement by a respected mentor, my response (also likely smug), was, “But Jesus specializes in resurrections.” In my mind were the examples all over Scripture like the widow in Luke 7, Jairus’ daughter in Luke 8, Lazarus in John 11 and Jesus himself!

One immediately apparent distinction between the church planter and church replanter is their focus and calling. The planter wants to start something new, something with no history, and especially no baggage. The replanter wants to see new life emerge from something dead or dying. Church planters typically feel they are being held back by a residual congregation. Replanters are compelled to shepherd that remnant and lead them to embrace the future of a vital, refreshed, replanted church. Planters and replanters are wired distinctively differently.

THE REPLANTER WANTS TO SEE NEW LIFE EMERGE FROM SOMETHING DEAD OR DYING.

Of course, it’s not just the focus of the replanter that differentiates him from the planter. It is also gifting and ability. Look at what the Bible has to say about leadership gifting: In the New Testament we see clear leadership distinctives. 1 Corinthians 12:4 says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.” Not only do we each have our own unique gift mix, but our gifts and abilities are given for unique purposes. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” God created us, with specific gifts and abilities that he intended to match with specific “works” that he pre-planned.

Clearly, The Spirit, the gift-giver, is the source for our calling and our success. It is critical to carefully consider if a leader has the array of traits (which include gifts, abilities, experience, and calling) consistent with effective church replanting. We don’t want to embody Proverbs 26:10, “Like an archer who wounds at random is one who hires a fool or any passer-by.” Let’s begin with the Replanter Ministry Traits.

REPLANTER MINISTRY TRAITS

As we look at the unique set of traits and the measurable behaviors of the replanter it is important to recognize that while some are common to other ministry roles, they require a higher presence in the life of the replanter. This is all due to the unique degree of difficulty for an effective replant. Further, the replanter must have what we call “add-on” traits that the replanter can tap when needed. For example, the typical church planter typically doesn’t possess a high degree of shepherding.

The replanter must have the ability to “add-on” shepherding for the remnant congregation and lead his team. Now for a closer look at these traits and confirming behaviors.

VISION PROFICIENCY	STRATEGIC PROFICIENCY	PARTNER WITH AUTHORITY
CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS	ENTREPRENEURIAL ORGANIZATION	TEAM BUILDER
EMOTIONAL HEALTH	PRIORITY BALANCE	FAITH
PATIENT PERSISTENCE	STRONG LEADERSHIP	EVANGELISTIC

01 VISION PROFICIENCY

The replant leader must be strong in vision and philosophy of ministry. This means he has proven ability to discern, model and communicate a clear, compelling vision and recruit others to carry out that vision. This includes the ability to create an integrated philosophy of ministry that accomplishes the key strategies necessary in replanting. The replanter must be able to discern and communicate this vision to all the parties involved in the replant project.

02 STRATEGIC PROFICIENCY

The replanter must have a deep understanding of church planting and replanting tools and methods and know how to use them. These are integral to the replant church. Additionally, the replanter must understand the complexities and challenges of the replant, especially regarding the remnant of the former church. Those who are willing to learn, grow and adapt have the greatest success.

03 PARTNERS WITH AUTHORITY

Though the typical church planter understands the need to be under some authority, they can feel restricted when there is more reporting to multiple boards. They just want to run. However, the replanter understands and values the additional stability and input that the various leadership entities add to the replant project.

The replanter has the demonstrated ability to partner with authority, work harmoniously with multiple leadership entities, and balance input from the church board, denominational authority, and the partner church.

04 ENTREPRENEURIAL ORGANIZATION

The church replanter, like the church planter, must have experience successfully starting new programs or ministries from nothing. These don't necessarily need to be enormous undertakings but the replanter does need to have started a ministry, club, band, business etc. and brought sustaining organization to the new venture. One person I met launched their first of many businesses at five years old. He had a rake and a wagon and started raking his neighbor's leaves. We call this entrepreneurial organization. Entrepreneurial organization is marked by focus. The replanter becomes energized (not overwhelmed) at the thought of starting something from scratch and seeing it grow to impact.

05 CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS

By the time a church is ready to be replanted, most, if not all, ministry to the immediate community has ceased. The dying church has typically lost touch with the surrounding neighborhoods and feels hopeless in knowing how to reach those around them. The replanter must be capable of gathering insight into who God is calling the new church to reach. Therefore, the replanter must have contextual awareness, understanding local demographics (numerical facts on the community) but also psychographics (who they are personally, attitudes, etc.) and sociographic (who they are as a community).

06 TEAM BUILDER

In restarting a church, the replanter inherits a ready-made congregation that may or may not be in support of the new vision for the church. It's complicated. Yet, some may be ready to grieve the past and move forward with what God is doing in the next season. While shepherding the remnant church, the replanter must also be very effective at recruiting and developing, and leading enduring teams. The replanter must understand team building, team leadership, and have experience uniting

teams around a common goal greater than the sum of their individual parts. The replanter must be able to recognize gifting and strengths, value the different contributions everyone brings, and celebrate both team and individual success.

A great resource for studying team building is the book of Nehemiah. He was the ultimate team builder. A careful review of the first six chapters of Nehemiah's book will be helpful for every replanter working to build a team.

In addition, note how Nehemiah dealt with the persistent opposition that he and all of the people received. His skill in negotiating the opposition while keeping the people moving forward is not only noteworthy, it is also a necessary proficiency for the replanter in leading his people through the journey.

07 EMOTIONAL HEALTH

All ministry is difficult; replanting, though extremely rewarding, is especially so. It can be pressure packed with more spiritual dynamics, spiritual warfare, stress, tasks, roles, and meetings all while the replant is still in full swing. The replanter must be emotionally healthy and have a healthy, biblical identity in Christ, accompanied by humility and self-confidence with the ability to accept criticism and affirm others.

08 PRIORITY BALANCE

Like all ministry, the pressure and complexity of a replant can take its toll on the marriage and family. The replanter must start the replant with healthy family relationships where they communicate openly and warmly with their spouse and have regular spiritual interaction with the spouse and family. In addition, the family must be a demonstrable priority that includes love, joy, discipline, and fun.

Why is this so important? One of our replant pastors, who was assessed, trained and well-coached said that replanting is a "recipe for soul disaster." He had a moral failing. Thankfully he is fully restored, still married and back in ministry. The replant is still running strong. This is another miracle of God's grace. Nonetheless, it could have all fallen apart through priority balance issues.

09 FAITH

The replanter must have a strong faith that God will do great things, even if they aren't apparent yet. The book of Hebrews tells us "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1). The replanter has seen God work and has a hope-filled

expectation that God will work again. The replanter has a strong biblical perspective that Jesus is always at work (John 5) and that he will build his church (Matthew 16:18). He has seen evidence of God's power in ministry and believes in the potential and the giftedness of others. The replanter recognizes that it is not just his own work and his own gifting that God will empower to begin the new church. Total trust in God will carry the replanter.

10 PATIENT PERSISTENCE

Many of our church planting pastors are high-capacity sprinters. In fact, we often say of the church planters, "you have to let the horses run." However, the replant process typically doesn't move forward at the same pace as a church plant. In order to move together with the new team and the remnant church, the replanter must adopt a slower, steady pace. Perhaps a track analogy is helpful here. The church planters sprint the 100m. The typical pastor runs a marathon with a slow steady pace. The replanter runs the mile. That race is not a sprint, but it does require pushing the pace through the entire race. Both the planter and replanter are faster than the typical pastor who is more often a distance runner. The replanter sets a steady pace and maintains a careful balance of both persistence and patience.

The replant must move forward steadily, persistently, but not so fast as to lose those members from the former church who could want to move forward but aren't yet up to speed. The replanter is able to continually push the team to move forward while not becoming frustrated with those who need time to grieve the past.

A Replanter's profile and story

One of the replanters I assessed several years ago was a mild-mannered, introverted leader. On the surface, we weren't sure he had the drive to start something new. However, in talking with his references they said things like "strong work ethic," "strong leader," "started several ministries," but also said he "leads the church in conflict resolution," is "patient," and "caring." This is what patient persistence looks like. His replant remains as a model of how to get it done.

11 STRONG LEADERSHIP

All pastors, planters and replanters must be leaders. However, replanting requires more significant leadership gifting than most ministry roles because there isn't a structured church to lead in the beginning. The replanter must have the ability, and adaptability, to utilize appropriate leadership styles at different stages of the replant to recruit and unite the team around the vision. The replanter leader must be adept at planning, strategizing and goal setting while demonstrating a servant-leader's heart.

12 EVANGELISTIC

One of the attractions of church planting or church replanting is that God uses both to bring new people to church, and even more exciting, bring new people to faith. In fact, church planting and church replanting historically are significant ways God uses to bring people to Christ. As a result, the replanter must be someone who not only has the desire to see people come to faith but is actively involved with people outside the church. The replanter must be able to articulate the gospel clearly as the Spirit leads and must be someone who regularly leads people to Christ. This expression of evangelism is both about relationship building and communicating the gospel.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLANTERS & REPLANTERS

CATEGORY	CHURCH PLANTER	CHURCH REPLANTER
PACE	Move Fast	Move Determined
ATTITUDE	Give Birth	Raise the Dead
WORK ENERGY	Work Hard Rapidly	Work Hard Steadily
STRUCTURE	Break Loose	Work Within
DEPENDENCE	Independent	Collaborative
VISIONARY	Visionary Catalytic	Visionary Catalytic
PATIENCE	Action Oriented	Persistent
EVANGELISM	Personal Evangelism	Personal Evangelism
TRACK EVENT	100 Meter Sprint	Marathon

Self-assessment

COULD YOU BE WIRED TO BE A REPLANTER?

Taking the traits and behaviors, I've developed a simple self-assessment tool intended to help you discover whether you could be wired to be a Replanter. Your answers will be a good indicator of ministries that attract you. **Give each statement a score of 1-5 on the following scale: #1 is Not So Much and #5 is, That's Me.**

1 Not So Much	2 Seldom	3 Occasionally	4 Frequently	5 That's Me
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- ☐ You drive by older, dying churches in your town and dream of what God might do to bring new life and ministry to that church.
- ☐ You have an enthusiasm for ministry and the expansion of God's kingdom that people find motivating.
- ☐ When going to the gym, coffee shop, or local store you try to catch the name of the cashier or gym attendant hoping to strike up a friendship leading at some point to an opportunity to share your faith.
- ☐ When confronted with obstacles, you have learned to pivot or adjust direction or methodology to accomplish the mission of the church.
- ☐ You get energized at the thought of bringing together a group of older, faithful leaders and younger, energetic leaders and together discerning God's vision to start something new.
- ☐ You have strong confidence that God will do great things in difficult situations.
- ☐ You have both strong persistence and patience in leading individuals and ministries to grow at a gradual but steady pace.
- ☐ You have proven ability to bring strategic leadership and change and now are looking for a new challenge.
- ☐ You have faced very difficult personal or ministry challenges and found you were able to stand stronger than you previously thought by relying on God.
- ☐ Though you have a strong desire to lead forward you also enjoy caring for people who are experiencing change, disruption, or disappointment.
- ☐ You have in your heart to start a new church and are comfortable collaborating with a sponsoring church and the denomination to restart something together.
- ☐ When you communicate the Bible, you strive to use words that are meaningful to the wider community so that you can demonstrate the relevance of the Bible to their personal lives.
- ☐ You love recruiting, training, and leading teams to accomplish a task that is way bigger than you are.
- ☐ You get energized by the thought of seeing new life come from the ashes of an older, ineffective church.

Reflect

TO CONSIDER

- 1 As you read through this white paper, what resonated with you?
- 2 After rating the traits, which traits in the list of 12 came most natural to you?

- 3 Overall, did you see yourself reflected in the traits of the replanter?
- 4 It would be a rare person who is proficient in all the traits of a replanter. What steps could be taken to strengthen your top traits? What steps could be taken to build up those that are not as strong?
- 5 Did God bring someone else to mind who just might be a church replanter? If so, consider passing this white paper on to them for consideration.

Going further

RESOURCES

Am I a Replanter: 30 Days of discerning God's call, Bob Bickford & Mark Hallock, Acoma Press, acomapress.org, also available on Amazon

Be a Barnabas: Helping your replant be all God wants it to be, Mark Hallock, Acoma Press, acomapress.org, also available on Amazon

UP NEXT

05

BENEFITS OF A PARTNER CHURCH

BY BILL MALICK



JOIN THE NETWORK



Fresh Start Network is focused on replanting life giving churches. If you or your team is interested in learning more, discovering your next step, or simply want to be encouraged, visit freshstartnetwork.com.

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WHITE PAPER

BENEFITS OF A PARTNER CHURCH

—
WRITTEN BY
BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

05



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God certainly has the authority to act alone in human affairs. But He doesn't always work that way.

The Bible often shows partnerships that led to great victories: for example, Aaron and Hur holding up the arms of Moses, or Gideon and 300 men conquering more warriors than they could count. All the while the miracles are God's.

Partnering was firmly in the heart of the Macedonian churches, who "in the midst of a very severe trial" nevertheless "urgently pleaded with us [Paul and his team] for the privilege of sharing" with the Jerusalem churches in a time of need (2 Cor. 8).

Then there was Nehemiah, burdened by God to rebuild a devastated city—and helped by a most unlikely partner, the Babylonian King Artaxerxes. The monarch sent Nehemiah across the Euphrates with his blessing and more resources than requested or expected. What an unexpected partnership!

Today, God's hand plus a healthy church or churches are forging partnerships to restart struggling and dying churches. Just as we are called to plant churches, we are also called to replant churches.

In the body of this white paper you will find three stories from the pastors of churches that partnered with one or more struggling congregations. All the congregations that opened their arms to a partner church experienced a wonderful new beginning. My goal is to inspire and encourage your church to take up the life-changing opportunity to become a partner church.

Before hearing from our pastors, I want to recommend the book, *Pathways to Partnership* by Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock, two veterans of replanting. The book provides the nuts and bolts of partnering. It discusses the foundations for partnership, it defines the relationships, it tells how to create thriving partnerships followed by a roadmap for the partnerships. Bickford and Hallock, in addition to laying out the details for partnering, include pastors from across the U.S. sharing teachable moments from their inspiring journeys in partnering.

Story 01 • Crossing Ethnic Lines

NORTHRIDGE CHURCH

Northridge, in the San Fernando Valley of southern California, is a densely populated and diverse community. It was home to the thriving Community Christian Alliance Church (CCAC) before their strategic move to nearby Granada Hills. CCAC was planted several decades ago as an English language Chinese church intended to reach upcoming generations. It has succeeded and prospered in doing that while adding Mandarin and Cantonese congregations.

In more recent years, CCAC chose to become a partner to replant a church in great need. This investment has crossed ethnic lines for the effective relaunch of a multi-cultural church. Here is the testimony of David Clotfelter, the lead pastor of CCAC at the time of the new beginning.

David Clotfelter · Lead Pastor, CCAC

"We had wanted to plant a daughter church for years. We talked about it, prayed for it, but never got around to it. Then the district leadership came along with a different idea. They told about a struggling church on the southwest corner of our Valley in the community of Woodland Hills. What if the Northridge church partnered with that church for a fresh start, instead of trying to start a new one from scratch? The elder board was intrigued."

David goes on to describe what happened along with some previously unanticipated benefits to everyone:

"The plan was to help in any way that we can. We decided to go all in and release whoever wanted to go and help. Some of our key leaders including three elders decided to go. The commitment continued to grow legs and my right-hand man, our associate pastor, Tom Sugimura sensed the burden to go and lead this new beginning.

I will admit that I and the remaining elders were quietly a bit nervous in sending so many key leaders. A lot of experience answered the call and went and began doing ministry immediately. Sure, it was great for Tom and the new beginning in Woodland Hills, but our faith was rewarded as we watched God work from his great supply.

The new rebirth was underway. We stayed in touch with one another. I got together from time to time with Tom. When problems arose, we worked out solutions. We fielded questions. We didn't try to tell anybody what to do, but we served as a resource through it all. One of the elders who went supervised the complete restoration of the Woodland Hills building. They also took our by-laws, along with policies and procedures adding to their structural foundation.

Today, that church is, multi-cultural, alive, and dynamic, they are intentionally raising up leaders, sending them out to plant churches at home and overseas. They are incredibly generous. People are coming to know Christ and now New Life Church in Woodland Hills is truly life-giving and so are we! The whole experience has been very beneficial.

Yes, the Northridge church has faced costs, not only financial but also in surrendering valuable people. But the greatest benefit has been to remind us to be Kingdom-minded. When you give up people—whether to the mission field or to start a new church plant or a replant—you pay a price. But in all of this you reinforce what God's Kingdom is about. We are supposed to be growing. We are supposed to be reaching new people.

The entire experience has given us a bigger sense of what God is doing in the world. Even though we surrendered some very good people, our church soon began to grow to new highs. And our giving increased!"



As a side note, recently CCAC has secured a larger building with lots of additional needed parking in nearby Granada Hills as they continue to grow.

Story 02 · Into the Rural Highways and Byways

CROSTOWN

On the opposite side of the country, in a deeply rural area, lies Wellsville, New York, a town of 7,000 souls. The nearest airport, Buffalo Niagara International, is a two-hour drive away. Into this small community back in 2009, a new pastor couple, Jeremy and Erin Gorham came to a small struggling church.

But God smiled on their efforts to evangelize and replant, lots of changes were made, people came to believe in Christ and the original 40 people at Wellsville saw the church grow to 170 in two years. Then the church soon grew to 185 as they sent off 30 people to replant again in Olean, NY. Here is Jeremy's partnership story.

40 → 170

Wellsville in two years

30

sent to replant Olean, NY

5

rebirthed churches and counting

Jeremy Gorham · Crosstown Alliance

"The church in Olean, New York, some 40 miles west, was a church in deep trouble. When we heard their story, we were drawn toward them as Nehemiah was to Jerusalem. We understood and shared in their despair. Wellsville partnered with the church in Olean and from a few people they vibrantly grew to 150 by 2014. We call our partnering network, Crosstown Alliance. We have become better together under one governance and leadership team. Meanwhile,

Wellsville kept growing. All of this became so contagious that we did it all over again with a third campus in another town. We simply could not stop dreaming about replanting additional churches in nearby towns."

Jeremy goes on to tell the story of the rebirth of purpose in the people, with one new beginning after another.

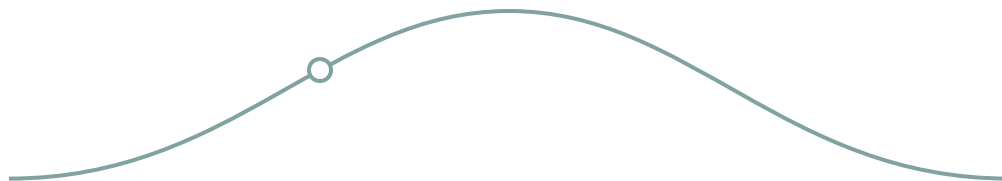
"Our underlying motivation is the gospel and the beauty of a church remaining in its community. You've got to care outside of your four walls. You are going to give to people you never met or a church that you may never step into. But that's okay because we are partnering for the sake of The Kingdom!

The apostle Paul talks about partnerships in the gospel (see Phil. 1:5; Philemon 6). We haven't done this kind of work just to save a church. We believe in moving the gospel forward. Critical for us is that the struggling churches agree with this and be truly interested. We ask the question. Do they just want to maintain their building, their traditions, their legacy? Some we approached had no interest in reaching out, and so we turned our attention elsewhere.

We also have learned that before entering any partnership, it is vital for both parties to communicate their expectations. All sides must be on the same page. Clarity has saved us several times from going down an unhealthy road.

At Calvary Alliance Church in the small town of Arcade, New York, people had prayed for many years that God would use them to reach the community. They were open-handed. Their pastor was retiring, and they could not afford to hire a new one. Again, they didn't have the strategy, vision, or resources. They were struggling to exist. But now they have a new beginning. This year's Vacation Bible School hosted 60 kids, whereas the year prior they had only three kids in the entire church.

Most recently at The Savior's Chapel in Greece, New York, a suburb of Rochester, the people clearly wanted to reach out and join Christ's call. They also, did not have the strategy, vision, or resources. They embraced our partnership, and now there is yet another wonderful new beginning! Crosstown Alliance is now five rebirthed churches and counting."





Story 03 · A Divine Calling

THE GROVE

Tom Lance is now pastor emeritus at The Grove Community Church, a large church in Riverside, California. Under his ministry and the team around him God has partnered to bring incredible blessing and the church grew into the 4000's. Countless number of people have come to know and grow in Christ. The Grove has become a church of considerable influence to the community. Tom and everyone involved give all the credit and glory to God.

As I observed The Grove over the years, it became clear that acts of generosity became the source for God's blessing. But as Tom has stated many times, he was not interested in just trying to create clones and start a lot of "little Groves." God birthed another specific call into Tom's heart...

Tom Lance · Pastor Emeritus, The Grove

"Some 15 years ago, after spending some time in prayer, the Lord spoke directly to me saying, 'You must help the poor and hurting—and that includes churches that are struggling.'"

At that time as a church, we were in financial jeopardy ourselves. However, in the process of partnering with churches in trouble our church actually grew. The other churches were helped, and we continued to benefit as we sent out some valuable people. We also saw new people move into the empty spots on our team.

We sent two pastors next door to Redlands, California; an impactful church is there today that would otherwise have been gone. It was good for our people who remained here to rally to the cause and step up. We were able to send our culture to elevate people and to serve. It was good for them, and it was good for us!

Soon after, we sent Mike Barnes, our greatly loved men's ministry pastor, up to the resort mountain town of Big Bear, California, to take on the lead role in another fresh start. We originally worried that our men's ministry would be hurt. But the opposite happened. Mike is a gifted evangelist, and many here at The Grove had been leaning on that. Since he has gone, others have stepped up to become more intentional witnesses.

It was very much the same story with other people who left to help. They actively dug in and brought maturity to the new beginnings. Meanwhile, people back at The Grove were energized by the generosity of giving away people and money.

We now have a two-year program for training and sending people out. In all of this, I've learned that you don't lose when you give for the right reasons. As for the Big Bear church, it is thriving and has grown from under 100 to over 400 people. God is working through Mike's passion to seeing people come to know Jesus. It's working there. Big Bear is now a vibrant sending church."



Partner church Pastors David, Jeremy, and Tom serve their churches with open hands. They are partnering with God in His purpose to see churches born again.

Repeatedly, I have been surprised along the way by the benefits that accrue not just for the replanted churches but also within the churches that helped them. In fact, in all three examples the pastors told me that they got back more than they gave. This is a true, but not always trusted, God principle.

THEY GOT BACK MORE THAN THEY GAVE.

So, what were some of the core benefits, both for the partnering and the receiving churches.

BENEFITS TO A PARTNER CHURCH

HEIGHTENED KINGDOM AWARENESS

As people rally to a powerful cause beyond their doors, mission engagement grows. The people sense more of what God is doing in the world. Their Kingdom awareness breeds outward focus. Excitement builds as the church steps into a greater story. Increasingly the people are being ministered through, not merely ministered to.

GENEROSITY BECOMES CONTAGIOUS

Not only does attendance increase, but so does giving. The pastors and team members witness God providing in previously unimagined ways. As one pastor said, “Our people were energized by the generosity of others. In fact, generosity became contagious!”

DEVELOPED LEADERS ARE SENT OUT

People sitting quietly in reserve start to blossom as they take up the vacated spots of others that have gone out. Well-trained people receive an outlet to serve. Wonderful surprises surface as new people are raised up into ministry.

EXCITEMENT AND ENERGY IS GENERATED

As one pastor said, “Our people were invited into a sense of adventure. They were motivated as they entered a fresh vision. New relationships were born as people got to know people from other churches.”

BENEFITS TO A REPLANTED CHURCH

POWERFUL PRAYER BASE

The power from the prayers of partner-church intercessors are unleashed on the new beginning, guiding and protecting them throughout the process.

EXPERTISE

Mentors surface from the partner church in a variety of ministries. Expertise is given in proven systems and structure. Financial help is often available in the early months. Survival support and encouragement for the replanting pastor is there in discouraging times. Other benefits include help for special events, or hands-on experience for such work as construction and remodeling.

CONFIDENCE

Overwhelming confidence continues to grow in the reality that the restarted church is not alone. People keep coming to help. Old and young work together. The laughter of children fills the hallways. Partner churches and reborn churches celebrate with one another.

EXCITEMENT AND FRESH ENERGY

Despair is gone, guilt is relieved, purpose is rekindled, smiles return...People look forward to living out what Christ intends for their lives. Discouragement is replaced by Celebration!



Seeing dying churches rise to new life requires strategic partnerships. Some partners may be nearby—but this is not always necessary. There are many ways to help that are not dependent on proximity. At times there will be opportunities for more than just one church to join in partnership.

There is great power and significant benefits in partnering with churches in need. It has always been God's way! Prayerfully seek God as Nehemiah did over the course of several months. Ask God what He would have you do. Consider the Biblical call to help those in need. If you are at all fearful that the cost would be too high for your church to come alongside another, pray and consider God's word to Moses in Numbers 11:23...

"Is the Lord's hand too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

Numbers 11:23

His hand is never too short. Test Him in this—you will see God's power unleashed in your church in ways that you never imagined!



Consider

CORE & BONUS BENEFITS

BENEFITS TO A PARTNER CHURCH

CORE BENEFITS

- Heightened Kingdom Awareness
- Generosity Becomes Contagious
- Developed Leaders Are Sent Out
- Excitement and Energy Is Generated

BONUS BENEFITS

- New Leaders Emerge
- God's Call to Go Lived Out
- God's Blessing Experienced

BENEFITS TO A REPLANTED CHURCH

CORE BENEFITS

- Powerful Prayer Base
- Expertise
- Confidence
- Excitement and Fresh Energy

BONUS BENEFITS

- Community Impact
- Missional Opportunities
- Multi-Level Growth

For your team

GOING DEEPER

As you read this white paper with a team or coach a struggling church, consider these questions together:

- 1 Are there ways that your church has previously partnered to help another church or organization outside your walls?
- 2 Has your church ever considered helping a struggling church?
- 3 What value does your church hold that would be a catalyst in helping another church?
- 4 What led to an 'ah ha' moment or maybe an 'oh no' moment as you read this paper?
- 5 In what ways did this paper contribute to how you think about God's greater story?
- 6 What are some of the ways you believe your church could partner with a struggling church?
- 7 Are you aware of struggling churches in your community?
- 8 Do you or someone from your church have any relationships that could be fostered to open the door to a conversation to partner with another church?

Going further

RESOURCES

Pathways to Partnership: How You and Your Church Can Join the Replanting Movement, Acoma Press, Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock

Be a Barnabas: Helping your replant be all God wants it to be, Acoma Press, Mark Hallock

Replant 101: How you can help revitalize dying churches, Acoma Press, Mark Hallock

Making the Case for Replanting Churches: White Paper by Bill Malick. [Read it in this collection](#)

UP NEXT

06

LEADING THE TRANSITION FOR A FRESH START

BY BILL MALICK



JOIN THE NETWORK

Fresh Start Network is focused on replanting life giving churches. If you or your team is interested in learning more, discovering your next step, or simply want to be encouraged, visit freshstartnetwork.com.

[VISIT FRESHSTARTNETWORK.COM →](https://freshstartnetwork.com)

WHITE PAPER

LEADING THE TRANSITION

For a Fresh Start

WRITTEN BY
BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

06



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“IT ISN’T THE CHANGE THAT WILL DO YOU IN; IT’S THE TRANSITION.”

William Bridges · Managing Transitions

Ensuring an effective transition is essential for achieving a successful new beginning. Transition is the process of creating a new lifecycle. As Dr. Priddy puts it, “a new lifecycle moves the church from vitality lost to vitality gained.”



INTRODUCTION

The true purpose of the struggling church’s transition is transformation. This involves shifting from an inward focus to embracing Christ’s commission for the church. It requires creating a new lifecycle that moves from lost vitality to renewed vitality. Successfully leading this transformation demands key proficiencies and specific steps aimed at transforming the church.

For more on Understanding and Overcoming the Church Lifecycle, see the white paper [The Church Lifecycle](#) by Ken Priddy.

[GO TO THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE →](#)

It will necessitate an investment in both the current faithful remaining people and newcomers, helping them toward becoming all that Christ intends. Ultimately, the leaders will also experience their own transformation as they lead the journey.



Part One

FIVE KEY PROFICIENCIES FOR LEADING A CHURCH THROUGH TRANSITION

01 Proficiency #1 THE ABILITY TO CONVERT AUTHORITY INTO INFLUENCE

When you find yourself in a position of strong authority, the temptation is to be more autocratic in working to achieve the objective. While there can be advantages to holding authority, operating unilaterally often has negative consequences.

“THE TRUE MEASURE OF LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE—NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.”

John Maxwell

Ogne and Roehl in *Transformational Coaching* identify four approaches that grant leaders credibility leading to greater influence:

POSITION Authority granted by your role.	EXPERTISE Authority derived from experience and knowledge.	SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY Authority conferred through divine anointing and favor.	RELATIONSHIP Authority through healthy connections.
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Converting authority into relational influence is a valuable skill that yields significant benefits:

- Remember people respond positively when they feel valued.
- Leaders who build trust create motivation, foster creativity, and encourage ownership of the vision.
- Unity and synergy increase when trusted leaders actively listen and collaborate with their teams.

Building value, trust, and ownership exponentially increases influence for maximum impact.



02

Proficiency #2

THE ABILITY TO EMPOWER THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT: “THE BARNABAS EFFECT”

Barnabas modeled the qualities of a great coach and influential leader. Referred to as “The Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36), Barnabas exemplified support and empowerment. In Acts 11:22-26, he was sent to check on the new church in Antioch and encouraged them to stay close to Jesus and continue His work. He did not hold a high position, but he was a leader through his character, spiritual vitality, and positive influence. His actions resulted in a greater harvest, demonstrating that encouragement builds value and drives transformation.

03

Proficiency #3

THE ABILITY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS THROUGH CHALLENGES

Effective leaders model resilience and problem-solving. By embracing challenges, they cultivate patience, learn from mistakes, admit faults, empower others, give and receive grace, confront issues with wisdom, and celebrate successes together.

A STRONG LEADER:

- Develops patience throughout the process.
- Learns from mistakes and admits failures.
- Delegates authority, not just responsibility.
- Trusts God and stands firm during obstacles.
- Confronts bad attitudes and sinful behavior.
- Gives and receives grace.
- Lives from promise to promise rather than problem to problem.

SOURCES OF OPPOSITION

At times, opposition may stem from deeply rooted control issues within the church. Prayerful discernment and seeking wisdom from trusted advisors help navigate these challenges. This is the value of the experienced leader of your partner church. The pastor/leader must recognize that some resistance is driven by misunderstandings rather than ill intent, creating opportunities for bringing clarity leading to fresh thinking.

While sometimes the contentious person is the direct source of opposition, other times it can be a spouse or another person in the church, and behind it all, the evil one! There are those who are being used by the devil to disrupt or in some other way hold the church back. Sometimes it's under the cover of wanting, as they say, to be good stewards.

“BE ALERT. OPPOSITION MAY BE COMING FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN!”

However, when the evil one is solidly behind the opposition, the foot dragging and hallway conversations are intended to influence people away from the vision and mission. Some will even make threats that they will leave, almost boasting that many others will leave with them.

In truth, when incorrect motives are in play by the one doing the threatening, most everyone will stay. In fact, some will approach and thank you that someone finally took a stand.

“NEVER TAKE FOOT-DRAGGING PERSONALLY. THE ENEMY’S ATTACK IS ON THE MISSION!”

When facing opposition pray first. Check your heart. Have someone you trust speak into you before addressing the resistance. Put on the full armor and take up the helmet, shield, and sword laid out in Ephesians 6:10-14.

There are times you must stand! The passage speaks of the multiple points of resistance of the evil one. It tells us to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Be strong and stand against, stand firm, stand your ground, and after having done everything, to stand! Paul uses repetition driving home this truth.

You are not fighting this battle alone!

For more on how to Stand Firm see the White Paper titled [Navigating Opposition](#).

[GO TO NAVIGATING OPPOSITION →](#)

04

Proficiency #4

THE ABILITY TO STAY ALIGNED WITH THE SPIRIT FOR POWER AND DIRECTION

Titus 3:5 teaches that the washing of rebirth and renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit. Alignment with the Spirit is essential for a church to experience the kind of transition that results in transformation. The Spirit empowers, directs, redirects, protects, and provides wisdom. Leaders must seek divine guidance through prayer and counsel, especially when confronting opposition.

The process of being and staying aligned with the Spirit is detailed in the White Paper [Caught by the Wind](#).

[GO TO CAUGHT BY THE WIND →](#)

ALWAYS REMEMBER THIS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE:

EMPOWERS

DIRECTS

REDIRECTS

PROTECTS

“EFFECTIVE LEADERS LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT AND ALLOW HIS GUIDANCE TO SHAPE THEIR DECISIONS.”

John Maxwell

05

Proficiency #5

THE ABILITY TO VIEW TRANSITION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

Transition is not merely a contractual or transactional process—it is a time of transformation. Changed lives lead to renewed churches. This is the primary reason we do what we do. It is at the heart of God’s desire for you and for the people entrusted to you.

The late Steve Ogne and I worked closely together for nearly 30 years. His coaching was highly regarded, and his legacy is alive and well. In his book *Transformissional Coaching* he writes,

“Leadership honors and values people as an answer to prayer, a sacred trust from the Lord, each having a key part on His Kingdom team. Leaders help people find where they fit and flourish personally in God’s greater Kingdom work.”

In Steve’s words:

“people grow personally as they live The Great Commandment. They make a valuable contribution to the Kingdom of God as they fulfill The Great Commission. Transformed leadership impacts everyone! Through transformed lives more and more people are introduced to Christ. As we listen and pray, we can trust and obey . . . and the Lord gets the glory!”

Part Two

TEN STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

- 01 **Invest in People** · Learn their stories, build trust, see what God sees in them.
- 02 **Address Emotional Concerns** · Understand the fears and uncertainties of the people.
- 03 **Leverage Church Legacy** · Use historical inspiration to fuel the future.
- 04 **Build Missional Thinking** · Live out God's Great Commandment.
- 05 **Provide a purpose, a plan, and a part to play** · Give people clear roles in the transition.
- 06 **Develop a leadership team** · Invest in emerging leaders.
- 07 **Exercise Creativity** · Consider what is already in your hand and envision what could be.
- 08 **Overcommunicate** · Assume you were not heard the first time.
- 09 **Celebrate Wins** · Build a culture of success and hope.
- 10 **Keep on seeking divine guidance** · Rely on prayer for discernment, direction, and power.

01 INVEST IN PEOPLE

Learn their stories, build trust, see what God sees in them.

Make it a priority to spend time one-on-one with your people. Discover their stories. Get to know what gives them energy. Conversely, ask them what wears them down, what drains them. Their answers will help you discern their best fit for maximum potential. You will also have opportunities to share your heart and vision.

“THE GREATEST LEADER IS NOT NECESSARILY THE ONE WHO DOES THE GREATEST THINGS. HE IS THE ONE THAT LEADS THE PEOPLE TO DO THE GREATEST THINGS.”

Ronald Reagan



02 ADDRESS EMOTIONAL CONCERNS

Understand the fears and uncertainties of the people.

Take to heart the perceptions of the people, especially the folks that have been around for a long time. You can't help them until you connect with what they are experiencing. In the process of arriving at this place where they were willing to accept change, they have been through a lot.

WHAT THE PEOPLE MAY BE FEELING...

- Loss of purpose and identity...who are we now as a church? Who am I now?
- Investments of time & money may no longer be valued
- Going forward, what is important may be compromised
- Fear of broken fellowship and even friendships
- Feelings of guilt and failure
- Loss of influence
- Something I love is slipping away
- A current difficult physical illness or difficult family circumstance

A heavy list, yes! Certainly, there will be some who embrace the vision early on and are ready to go. But you need as many people as possible. In fact, all these people have been entrusted to you. They are all important to The Kingdom!

Many people love their church because of the safety and stability it offers. When stability is threatened, it can cause disconnect to you and the church creating a negative reaction to your vision and ideas.

Listen not just with your ears but with your heart. Remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings. The objective is to discover what may be behind the curtain. Take a few days of prayer and quiet and ask God to speak through The Spirit. Pray for the people you are leading one by one.

*"It is a piece of their world that is being lost, not a piece of yours." Be patient with people.
"Being reasonable is much easier if you have little or nothing at stake."*

William Bridges · Managing Transitions



03 LEVERAGE CHURCH LEGACY

Leveraging history to fuel the future.



The Washington Union Alliance family in the 1950s

A story from the past that ignited a fresh vision for Washington Union Alliance Church, New Castle, PA.

The church faced a slow decline, prompting renewal from a place of holy desperation. Thirty faithful members embraced the theme “The Faith of the Faithful.”

While exploring the church’s storage, I discovered a 1950s photograph of a covered wagon with about 100 people, emblazoned with “Let’s Go” and “Pioneering with Christ.” This image inspired a revival of the pioneering spirit. Recognizing that “every number has a story, and every story has a name,” we reignited our mission, leading to 22 baptisms over the next year. The church was reborn, growing as the pioneering spirit flourished once more. Long-standing members experienced renewed vitality, proving that legacy individuals can lay the foundation for new beginnings.

Landon Stuart • Replanter of Washington Union Church



04 BUILD MISSIONAL THINKING

Living God's Great Commandment.

Transitions are a time to build "being on mission" thinking. It is a great time to return to the call of Christ to go across the street, neighborhood, and world. This is not so much about individuals working their circles of influence. It is about a group effort of the church to meet a community need. Look for historical initiatives of the church from the past. Imagining and creating ways for the church to look outward is vital to new life.

A SUGGESTED FOUR-WEEK SERIES ON THE INSTRUCTIONS JESUS GAVE TO THE CHURCH

WEEK 1

MATTHEW 28:18-19

WEEK 2

LUKE 19:10

WEEK 3

ACTS 1:8

WEEK 4

MATTHEW 24:14

05 PROVIDE A PURPOSE, A PLAN, AND A PART TO PLAY

Give people a clear role in the transition.

When purpose has been lost it is crucial to replace what was lost with hope. Hope is regained when people understand their purpose. God's desire is for every follower to become all He intends. Personal fulfillment encourages and motivates!

People also respond well to a good plan as they clearly discern their part to play. Help your people discover their purpose, God's plan, and the part that they can play. The result is the body will be built up.

A story of renewed purpose: The long-time elders of Heartwood Church in Covington, WA



The replanting pastor for Heartwood Church, Jubal McDaniel tells the encouraging story of the three former elders finding new purpose during the transition to a new beginning. Heartwood Church is the new name for the church that previously closed, and is being restarted.

Three elders, with 25 to 40 years of service, sustained the church after the former pastor retired during COVID-19, providing pastoral care and guiding discussions about the church's future. Two elders were old enough to be my grandfather, bringing lifelong wisdom and faithful service to the transition.

I consulted my coach, Bill Malick, on collaborating with these men. Concerned they might resist relinquishing long-held responsibilities, I met with them, anticipating negative reactions to losing their titles. Unexpectedly, they embraced the changes, expressing no need for titles or authority.

I invited them to continue shepherding the congregation and to mentor me, valuing their wisdom and experience. We now meet monthly to pray, study, and support one another. The oldest elder remarked, "We have never been trained before. We have never been poured into."

Together, we are building a foundation for future leaders, with these men serving as pillars for the next generation.

Jubal McDaniel • Replanting Pastor, Heartwood Church

Jubal's love and approach was disarming and empowering. It reminds us that everyone really does desire a purpose, plan, and part to play.

06 DEVELOP A LEADERSHIP TEAM

Invest in emerging leaders.

Laying the tracks for leadership development is a critical first step for new and ongoing growth in the church. This is more than about the numbers. New effective leaders will grow the roots deeper for greater stability, growth and sometimes deploying some of those leaders to go out on mission.

There are numerous plans available for leadership development. A comprehensive plan is described in the book, *The Leadership Ladder* by Ogne and Priddy. An accompanying implementation guide is also available.

07 EXERCISE CREATIVITY

Consider what is already in your hand, and envision what could be.

- What about the current church and people is an asset to the community?
- How can you leverage what you have to make an impact on the lives of the people around you?

- What could be done to make your facility safer for children and the security and the peace of mind of parents?
- What needs to be renovated?
- What would make your facility inviting to the community?
- How could you engage with your partner church to play a role in making improvements?

Here is a good starter question for you and your leadership team. What are some creative ways we can communicate our love for the people all around us?

08 OVERCOMMUNICATE

Assume you were not heard the first time.

When it comes to the people in the church, resist listening to the excuses to limit communication.

Examples of common excuses to hold back information...

“THEY DON’T NEED TO KNOW YET...IT WILL JUST UPSET THEM NOW.”

Warning: It is easy to create mistrust and believe me, the grapevine is already at work. Don’t lose control of the message.

“THEY ALREADY KNOW. WE ANNOUNCED IT.”

It takes time and repetition to sink in. **Warning:** as Bridges says, “Threatening information is absorbed remarkably slowly.” Through communication people can begin to envision the purpose, a plan, and a part to play.

09 CELEBRATE WINS

Build a culture of success and hope.

People often carry good memories from the past. Create new ones and make them memorable! Communicate how these wins are a fulfillment of Christ’s biblical mandates. Acknowledge and celebrate the work and generosity of the people. Appreciation can come in the form of a note or small gift of appreciation. Schedule regular times of Celebration. One idea is an annual volunteer dinner. What are some other possibilities?

“CELEBRATE YOUR WINS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, TO BUILD MOMENTUM AND CONFIDENCE.”

Lou Holtz

10 KEEP ON SEEKING DIVINE GUIDANCE

Rely on prayer for discernment, direction, and power.

Being aligned with the Holy Spirit is the single greatest imperative for the leader of a church being replanted or revitalized! Jesus practiced being aligned with His Father. It is what 120 people, post resurrection did constantly. Under this power and direction, the church was born and spread.

A comprehensive look at becoming and staying aligned with The Holy Spirit is explored in the White Paper, [Caught by The Wind](#). In it you will find five practical action steps for moving forward.

[GO TO CAUGHT BY THE WIND →](#)

Part Three

THE INCREDIBLE VALUE OF FOLLOWERS

“A LEADER IS ONE WHO KNOWS THE WAY, GOES THE WAY, AND SHOWS THE WAY. BUT WITHOUT FOLLOWERS, THERE IS NO LEADER.”

John Maxwell

VALUE
ONE

THEY ARE AS IMPORTANT IN GOD’S SIGHT AS YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM.

They too, are God’s workmanship. Followers are not merely a commodity available to meet the objective of the leader. God wants to work through them and their gifts to bring them alive in their personal walk and to advance the mission.



**VALUE
TWO****FOLLOWERS ARE CRITICAL TO GOD'S MISSION**

The Bible reveals that the leader on mission is follower-dependent. God could have done any of the following miracles on His own. Nevertheless, He chose the leaders and carried out His plan through the followers.

- Joshua needed his team to take Jericho.
- Nehemiah required all kinds of builders to reconstruct the walls and gates.
- Gideon by God's instruction relied on 300 men to defeat too many Midianites to count.

God works through all of us as we unite. Try to imagine Joshua by himself marching and blowing his horn. Try and picture Nehemiah clearing the rubble and building the walls and gates with no help. Think of Gideon as a one-man band, blowing his horn and breaking his pot that covered his lone lantern. At least it would have provided entertainment to the mighty Midianites.

**VALUE
THREE****EVERY FOLLOWER IS A LEADER WITH THE POTENTIAL TO EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE.**

Everyone has influence. It could be with their family. They may have influence with a neighbor or friend. They may be leaders at work. They may be natural encouragers of others. This list has no limits. Some followers will step into a significant leadership role in the church. And remember they are leading someone right now!

**VALUE
FOUR****EVERY LEADER IS A FOLLOWER**

Continue following in Christ's footsteps. Remember, whoever wants to be great must be a servant of the people. Great leaders learn from the experiences of their people. The church and people you are leading are intended by God for your growth.

"Leadership is the ability to translate vision into reality, and the best leaders are the best followers." The late Warren Bennis, regarded as the pioneer of contemporary Leadership Studies.



WAYS FOLLOWERS HELP FULFILL THE VISION

Followers play a vital role in bringing a vision to life. They can:

- Pray
- Discern and confirm God's direction
- Share local knowledge and the community's history
- Advocate for the leader and support their mission
- Listen to and encourage others during times of change
- Offer financial support to sustain the vision
- Mentor and bless younger generations as they serve the Lord
- Serve in roles where they can thrive and make the greatest impact
- Share past church stories that provide insight for present decision-making

For your team

QUESTIONS FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM TO CONSIDER

- 1 What will you do to create and cultivate a strong prayer support team?
- 2 Who are the intercessors in the church that you can empower and celebrate as they pray?
- 3 Who will you listen to so you can learn the “glory days” of the church’s history?
- 4 What are you hearing from the people about their hopes and dreams?
- 5 What needs in your community would energize your church to be ‘on mission’?
- 6 Who are the people that you need to schedule one-on-one or couple-to-couple conversations?
- 7 Who are your possible “Persons of Peace” that can help make connections to the community?
- 8 Who are you identifying as future potential leaders?
- 9 Who are you connecting to that can contribute to your learning and growth? (Possibilities include; other fresh start pastors, partner churches, a coach, a mentor)
- 10 What will you do to create a culture of celebration?

Going further

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING

| *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry* by Jeff Iorg

| *Managing Transitions* by the renowned consultant, William Bridges

| *Transformissional Coaching* by Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl

| *Stuck* by Terry Walling

| *Game Plan: Developing Intentional Missional Ministry* by Tim Roehl

| *Sent* by Heather and Ashley Holleman



UP NEXT

CAUGHT BY THE WIND

BY BILL MALICK



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WHITE PAPER

CAUGHT BY THE WIND

Being Aligned with the Spirit

—
WRITTEN BY

BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

07



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Caught by the Wind highlights the work of the Spirit in the Church, illustrated by a sailing analogy. Imagine church planters, replanters, and revitalizers thriving in God's call as they are caught by His direction and power—His Wind.

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.” It was the wind of the Spirit in Acts 2:2 that launched and propelled the church forward. More than 3,000 souls were saved that day. The rest of the book of Acts focuses on the church pioneers as they are repeatedly caught in The Spirit's flow. It is our desire to see today's church trailblazers empowered by the rushing wind of God's Spirit as they navigate the storms of today's cultural and societal waters.

THE BACKGROUND FOR THE TITLE

While sailing in the Gulf near Clearwater Beach, Florida, I learned quickly that without the wind, both the boat and I were powerless. Without wind, we were simply ‘in irons’, a fitting metaphor for a church that is stuck.

Church planters and leaders have the great opportunity to catch the wind of God's Spirit, positioning themselves to be propelled by His transformative power. This requires an initial commitment and ongoing realignment—remaining aware and responsive to His shifting wind.

God's love is boundless, and His wind is ever-present—sometimes gentle, sometimes forceful. Our role is to prepare ourselves and our churches to be receptive to it. Preparation and waiting on the Spirit are active endeavors, demanding intentional planning and a posture of expectancy.

Reflecting on my many years in ministry, I am humbled by how God has carried me beyond my own dreams and capabilities. Just as the wind propels a sailboat, the Spirit of God propels His church.

LET'S BEGIN

Francis Chan, in his impactful book *Forgotten God*, shares a deeply reflective statement: “I do not want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit.” This is a profound challenge for every one of us as we seek to serve Christ.

“I DO NOT WANT MY LIFE TO BE EXPLAINABLE WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

Francis Chan

Chan states the reality that gifted individuals can build churches through charisma, leadership skills, and strategic planning. However, when human gifts operate apart from the Spirit's direction and power, the temporary success ultimately leads to spiritual emptiness, failure, or even harm. A truly impactful ministry is one that is supernaturally built—one that cannot be explained apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout my own ministry journey, I have experienced victories that are only explainable by God's power. However, I also confess that at times I have plowed ahead in my own strength, missing opportunities for greater impact.

Thankfully, God was patient and willing to navigate a course correction when necessary. His interventions are gifts to us from His grace and mercy! Chan's declaration about living an unexplainable life is one that every leader would do well to embrace.

HIS INTERVENTIONS ARE GIFTS TO US FROM HIS GRACE AND MERCY!

By aligning our hearts and minds with the Spirit, we position ourselves and our churches to fulfill God's unique purpose. This alignment requires a commitment to proactive waiting, much like a sailor setting the sail waiting to be caught by the wind.

THE POWER OF ALIGNMENT: INSIGHTS FROM SAILING APPLIED TO THE CHURCH

Piloting a boat powered by wind-filled sails through sometimes towering waves and heaving swells is exhilarating. However, the movement does not happen by chance. It requires careful preparation, alignment, ongoing realignment, and responsiveness to changing conditions. It is a continuous action subject to ever-changing conditions.

Waiting is not passive—neither in sailing nor in ministry. The 120 followers in the upper room actively prepared themselves to be caught by the Spirit's wind, and “devoted themselves . . . to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Those of us who are initiators and change agents often struggle with waiting. We assume we know what to do, believe we can figure things out along the way, and expect people to catch up as we go. But moving too quickly can lead to setbacks, unnecessary struggles, and may hurt people in the process.

“SOME LEADERS ARE LIKE A BULL IN A CHINA SHOP, AND THE PEOPLE ARE THE CHINA.”

Ken Priddy

Ken Priddy, a leader in church revitalization, says, “Some leaders are like a bull in a china shop, and the people are the china.” This humorous but sobering analogy reminds us of the importance of patience, wisdom, and sensitivity in leading change.

The Upper Room

A MODEL FOR PREPARATION

Before the church was launched, Jesus spent 40 days preparing His followers. He instructed them to wait for the Spirit’s power. While waiting, they actively positioned themselves for what was to come.

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:3-5



WHAT DID THEY DO IN PREPARATION?

- › They invested in constant prayer.
- › They absorbed Christ’s teaching on the Kingdom.
- › They prepared by building a leadership team.
- › They waited expectantly for the power of the Spirit.



Their actions placed them in perfect alignment to be caught by the wind when the Spirit moved in Acts 2:2. This same process is key for church leaders today. By following their pattern, we can prepare ourselves and our churches for Spirit-led renewal and mission.

LESSONS FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

01 PRAYER ALIGNS US WITH GOD'S POWER

- Prayer humbles us, aligns our hearts with God's purposes, and cultivates gratitude and humility as we reflect on all that He has done and will do.
- Jesus prayed for alignment in John 17 and made The Lord's Prayer a priority for all of us. It was also a prayer of alignment for himself, his disciples, and the church today.
- Jesus modeled the importance of prayer daily. The early church followed His example.

02 LISTENING PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

- Listening requires intentional focus. It is easy to be distracted by our own thoughts, plans, and agendas.
- Good practices for listening prayer include removing distractions, as we journal and test what we hear against Scripture and with one another.

03 RETREATING FOR DIRECTION STRENGTHENS LEADERSHIP

- Leaders who intentionally set aside time to seek God's direction find greater clarity and strength.
- Time in solitude with God is not a luxury—it is a necessity for sustained Spirit-led leadership.

**GOD IS IN FULL CONTROL OF TIME; HE WILL MULTIPLY
YOURS WHEN YOU PRAY.**

04 SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION IS REAL

- Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10-17 that we battle against spiritual forces of evil.
- Leaders must put on the full armor of God and lead their churches in spiritual preparedness, to be battle ready!
- Be under protection BEFORE the attack happens; the enemy is strong but the Lord and His Name is stronger.

“Our battle is against the devil’s schemes, rulers and authorities of this dark world, the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms, and the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Memorize and pray Ephesians 6:10-17 often.

05 THE KINGDOM OF GOD MUST BE OUR FOCUS

- Jesus, after His resurrection and before His ascension, spent 40 days teaching about the Kingdom of God, making it a clear priority. (Acts 1:3).
- Understanding and prioritizing the Kingdom is a major factor for being aligned in our ministry with God’s purposes.
- The parables of Jesus provide the instructions for you and your church

Teach the parables as they focus on the Kingdom of God. Your to-do list revealed by Jesus is the parables

Hear and understand the Word

Plant the Word

Drop the nets

Practice righteousness

Invest in what matters

Light the lamp

06 PREPARE YOUR TEAM

The rest of Acts revealed that the people were positioned to lead, with . . .

JOY

because He is alive.

INTENSITY

to live out their lives for the mission set before them.

COURAGE

to face whatever may befall them.

PEACE

with the knowledge that eternity is in front of them.

Consider the Impact when Caught by the Wind of The Spirit

- **Peter** the denier becomes the leader and bold proclaimer of the good news.
- **Stephen**, the deacon, preaches the consequential sermon that cost his life but spread the church around the world.
- **Philip** becomes the first missionary proclaiming Christ in Samaria.
- **Saul** becomes Paul, the leading church planter, and New Testament author.
- **Barnabas** emerges as a great encourager to the churches.
- **Silas** joins Paul to help him plant churches.
- **Lydia** plants a church in her home in Philippi.
- **Thomas** goes to India, we later learned from historical proof
- **Countless others** were acknowledged by Paul as gospel partners.

THEY WERE EXPECTANT BEFORE KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT!

THE SOURCE OF POWER, DIRECTION, REDIRECTION, AND PROTECTION

We do not create or initiate the wind. We put ourselves in the place to receive it! It is encouraging to know that we are pursued by God out of His kindness and love. We are generously washed by the Spirit for the purpose of rebirth and renewal. We are justified by Jesus Christ by His grace.

"But when the kindness and love of God our savior appeared, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by The Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our savior, so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life."

Titus 3:4-7

"Rebirth and renewal are the work of the Father, Son and Spirit; our role is to be aligned to receive the power, direction, redirection, and protection."

As Francis Chan said, “I do not want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit.” May this be your heart’s desire as you seek to lead churches that are vibrant, and multiplying, full steam ahead by the power of His Wind.

For further resources, visit FreshStartNetwork.com for The Life of The Church Evaluation and additional White Papers, including the related White Paper entitled [Navigating Opposition](#).

[GO TO NAVIGATING OPPOSITION →](#)

Put it into practice

ACTIVITIES FOR YOU AND YOUR CHURCH TO BE IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

01 DEVELOP A PERSONAL AND CHURCH ALIGNMENT PLAN

- Write down key elements needed for spiritual alignment.
- Create a flowchart outlining steps for Spirit-led renewal.
- Prioritize alignment with your people

02 REFLECT ON PAST MINISTRY DECISIONS

- Identify a time when you have moved too quickly and lost momentum.
- Identify a time when you have seen the benefits of waiting on God’s timing.

03 ENGAGE YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Identify potential obstacles to alignment and renewal.
- Determine how you will proactively remain aligned.

04 TEACH AND PREACH ON ALIGNMENT WITH THE SPIRIT

- Use Titus 3:4-7 and Ephesians 6:10-17 as foundational texts for teaching.
- Acknowledge daily that the Spirit is the source of power and direction.

05 PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR DIRECTION AND POWER

- Seek divine appointments, wisdom, and provision.
- Ask God to raise up leaders and bring renewal to your church.

UP NEXT

08

NAVIGATING OPPOSITION

BY BILL MALICK



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WHITE PAPER

NAVIGATING OPPOSITION

WRITTEN BY
BILL MALICK

CHAPTER

08



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“OPPOSITION IS THE CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION, NAVIGATING IT WELL REQUIRES FOCUSED DEPENDENCE ON GOD.”



“Through the Spirit, we can anticipate, recognize, and mitigate the enemy's tactics.”

PREPARING FOR THE WAVES

It is impossible to describe the depths and horrors of sin. From the moment Jesus rose again the defeated one with ungodly determination set his power to try and cut off the flame before it could be fully ignited. When the Holy Spirit came the enemy redoubled his efforts.

For the centuries that followed and still today that flame is burning and spreading in the hearts of countless millions. A primary source for the unstoppable fire is the courage of martyrs who died unspeakable suffering and death. Not only through the suffering and death of the disciples but for tens of thousands for the generations that followed. The suffering continues today through a persecution that is beyond comprehension. Puritan pastor, Thomas Brooks in the mid 1600's captured the enemy's intensity with this declaration:

“Satan being fallen from light to darkness, from joy to misery, from heaven to hell, from an angel to a devil, is so full of malice and envy that he will leave no means unattempted, whereby he may make all others eternally miserable with himself.”

Thomas Brooks • Circa 1662

So, what can the church bring to the battle for men's souls? The most incredible strategic weapons ever conceived: The finished work of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and the power, protection, and direction of the Holy Spirit.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it... He was in the world, and though the world was made by Him, the world did not recognize him...Yet, to all who receive Him, to those who believe in HIS NAME, He gave the right to become children of God."

John 1

This paper is not a comprehensive look at all we will face. But it is a look at the patterns of attack that have been used for generations to compromise, interrupt, slow down, and neutralize living out God's purpose. These devices are used against us personally AND against our churches.

Earlier I cited Thomas Brooks. His book now over 350 years old is titled *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*. I recommend that you download a copy on Kindle. I mention Kindle as the print in the physical book is extremely small, tightly spaced, and hard to read. In Kindle it is laid out well.

Brooks goes into great depth to single out Satan's devices and follows each one with the precious remedies that make it possible to stand firm. His work learned and applied will help you navigate during times of opposition.

SETTING THE ALIGNMENT

When facing opposition Pray First. Check your heart. Have someone you trust speak into you before addressing the resistance. Put on the full armor, take up the helmet, shield and sword as Paul directs in Ephesians 6:10-14.

There are times you must stand! The passage speaks of the multiple points of resistance of the evil one. It tells us to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Be strong and stand against, stand firm, stand your ground, and after having done everything, to stand! Paul's repetition drives home the importance. The battle is The Lord's, but as Paul directs, you are not granted an exemption from the warfare.

Remember who you are battling. Paul breaks it down in six forms:

THE DEVIL	THE RULERS	THE AUTHORITIES
THE POWERS OF THIS DARK WORLD	THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS	THE EVIL ONE WITH FLAMING ARROWS

This is a scary list! BUT GOD has made available to you the necessary 'Heaven Issued' protection. You have direct access to the Sword of The Spirit which is the Word of God! It is active and able to cut through the problem and is profitable for the wisdom you will require. Consider how Nehemiah and the early church navigated and leveraged opposition for the purposes of God.

N e h e m i a h ' s

PREPARATION, RECOGNITION, AND RESPONSE

THE PREPARATION

Nehemiah's success began with preparation and alignment. In response to distressing news about Jerusalem he spent four months in intense prayer and fasting. His prayer included confession, a claim on God's promises, and a request for favor before the king. Facing uncertainty and risk, Nehemiah sought divine direction and power, acknowledging his dependence on God. So, what did he receive for his prayers of alignment?

- Favor in the eyes of the king
- His fear was relieved
- Commission to go to his city and rebuild it
- Letters to governors for safe passage
- Provision of the beams to rebuild the gates
- Wood to build his new home in Jerusalem
- The king threw in army officers and cavalry for protection
- The people enthusiastically took up the call to start building

But the enemy was not done fighting.

THE RECOGNITION

To successfully advance, we must anticipate, identify, and respond to opposition tactics. Nehemiah and his people faced:



THE ENEMY'S TACTICS	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	NEHEMIAH'S RESPONSE
1. ANTAGONISM	Opposition to outside assistance (2:10)	Moved forward undeterred (2:11)
2. DISCOURAGEMENT	Rationalizing the option of retreat (2:19)	Declared God's promise of success (2:20)
3. INTIMIDATION	Ridicule and mockery (4:1-3, 6:14)	Prayed for God to handle the insults (4:4-5)
4. THREATS	Destruction and failure (4:11)	Set a guard against opposition (4:13)
5. FEAR-MONGERING	Internal persuasion to stop (4:12)	Reminded the people of God's power (4:13)
6. DECEPTION	Pretending to have your welfare in mind (6:2)	Recognized the scheme and pressed on (6:3)
7. LIES	False concerns (6:6)	Exposed the falsehood and prayed for strength (6:8-9)

The enemy often tells us we cannot accomplish what God has called us to do. Moses, Gideon, and Joshua all faced similar doubts. God repeatedly told Joshua to be strong and courageous. Similarly, Nehemiah, burdened by God's calling, prayed, "Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this servant...Give your servant success today."

Where God places a burden, He provides! But make no mistake the enemy constantly opposes God's work. Too many times I have been blind-sided. Most of those times I was not looking. Bruised shins and stubbed toes and sometimes much worse have taught me the necessity to become and stay battle ready!

WHERE GOD PLACES A BURDEN, HE PROVIDES!



Lesson from the Early Church

SERVING AS A LIGHTHOUSE



“A Lighthouse stands as a beacon of protection and hope. It provides a focal point of clarity amidst difficult seas. It provides guidance for the sailor to determine his position as he navigates opposing seas.

Like Nehemiah, leaders of the early church encountered daily resistance. What did they encounter and how did they respond? What can we learn, teach, and do from their preparation and responses?

THE ENEMY TACTIC	THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH
FEARFUL ISOLATION	They prayed, and waited for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1)
RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION	They boldly proclaimed Christ (Acts 4:18)
PHYSICAL BEATINGS	They kept preaching the good news (Acts 4:20, 5:18)
IMPRISONMENT	They worshiped and won converts (Acts 16:22-31)
STONING	They preached Christ and forgave enemies (Acts 7)
PERSECUTION	They scattered and spread the gospel (Acts 8:1)

As churches sprang up, Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus how to be prepared and what to do.

EPHESIANS	HOW TO BE PREPARED
IMITATE GOD	by Walking in love and gratitude (5:1-2)
PRACTICE UNITY	by Cultivating humility, patience, and peace (4:1-3)
MAINTAIN BALANCE	Using spiritual gifts in harmony (4:11-16)
WALK WITH PURPOSE	by making the most of every divine opportunity (5:15-16)
STAY FILLED	by continually relying on the Holy Spirit (5:18-20)

NAVIGATION ACTION POINTS...

- 01 **Build a Pray First Culture** · Prioritize prayer as you lead your people in prayer and fasting to seek God's guidance.
- 02 **Encourage Boldness** · Remind them that fear is a tactic of the enemy; encourage stepping out in faith.
- 03 **Recognize Opposition Tactics** · Train your people to quickly identify the source of discouragement, intimidation, and deception.
- 04 **Empower with Scripture** · Regularly teach and apply biblical truths to counteract spiritual attacks.
- 05 **Strengthen Community** · Foster unity and accountability within your group.
- 06 **Promote Perseverance** · Teach resilience in the face of trials, using Nehemiah and early church examples.
- 07 **Equip for Spiritual Warfare** · Provide training on spiritual disciplines and the armor of God.
- 08 **Act in Faith** · Encourage people to step out boldly, knowing God will provide and direct.

FINAL THOUGHT

Persecution is not a deterrent—it's an opportunity for growth. Today, we are seeing churches in persecuted countries growing at inexplicable rates.

"But we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, HOPE!"

Romans 5:3-4

PEOPLE WILL RISE UP WHEN THEY HAVE HOPE!

It is by standing firm in faith, aligning with God's Spirit, and recognizing the enemy's tactics, that we can successfully navigate opposition.





Jesus is present in the storm

Going further

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

| *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, Thomas Brooks

| *Authority of the Believer*, John A. MacMillan

THE COLLECTION

EIGHT PAPERS. ONE MISSION.

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