

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN BECOMING A MISSIONAL CHURCH

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IN MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY

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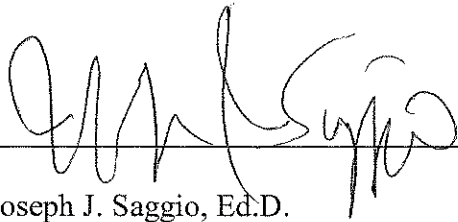
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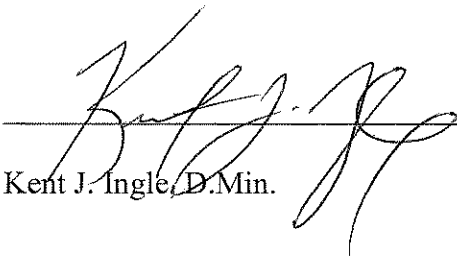
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ABSTRACT

This research project is a qualitative study, which used an interview study approach to consider the research question. The subject was pastors who turned-around plateaued or declining churches to spiritual vitality and numerical growth. The participants were ten missional pastors, seven from Washington State, two from Idaho and one from Northern California.

The main research question was: what personal transformations have these pastors experienced that enabled them to turn-around a plateaued or declining church, and what was the nature of those transformations? The six personal transformations studied were: (1) spiritual growth or transformation, (2) one-on-one relationships, (3) modeling, (4) experiences, (5) training and education, and (6) organizational development.

A questionnaire was developed, four pastors were interviewed in person, the other six responded by email. A follow-up questionnaire was given by phone to confirm or deny the previous findings of the first questionnaire.

The nature of these transformations were put into four categories: (1) moving from indecisive to decisive, (2) moving from independence to interdependence, (3) moving from indifference to relationship, and (4) moving from similarity to uniqueness.

It was discovered that pastors who want to turn-around a declining or plateaued church must: (1) have the ambition to do so; (2) acquire enough humility to deny themselves to accomplish the mission; (3) intentionally develop through personal transformations which mature the four characteristics needed to turn-around a declining or plateaued church (decisiveness, interdependence, relational, and uniqueness).

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Introduction

Christianity is the most prominent religion in America at 78.4% claiming to be Christian;¹ however, the “church,” in reference to all churches nationwide, is struggling. In America, seventeen out of twenty churches are plateaued or declining; two out of twenty are growing by transfer growth; only one out of the three is growing by conversion growth.² Our Lord Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16). If all churches are appointed to bear fruit, but only five percent are growing, that is not an acceptable statistic.

We live in a very challenging age in church leadership. The church in America is failing to become *missional* (sending people to serve the community). Churches are failing to become incarnational (being Christ in the community), indigenous (the church reflects the culture of its society) and intentional (using effective methods that are culturally specific).³ Church attendance has declined from 20.4% in 1990 to 17.0% in 2007.⁴ Evangelical churches are not reaching the culture in which they reside. Their congregations are not made up of those who live in the community. The question is not how can we move from being traditional to contemporary, but how can we become *missional*?⁵ The American church should do two things: first, plant more missional

¹ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey,” <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports> (accessed July 16, 2010).

² Melvyn Ming, Martha Ming and Steven Mills. *Leadership Development Resources Church Development Process Workbook*, 24.

³ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How Three-Hundred Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 5-7.

⁴ David T. Olson, “Turning the Church Crisis Into a Spiritual Revolution: Is the American Church Really in Crisis?” *Enrichment*, Winter 2010, 32.

⁵ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 4.

churches; second, restart, restructure, reenergize or refocus all existing churches to be missional.⁶

What forces create “*turn-around*” pastors who “*turn-around*” churches with plateaued or declining membership, then grow by conversion? In reality, some leaders are born as leaders, but most, I believe, become leaders through conditions of a personal transformation. Gary Allen has said, “A few leaders are born, some leaders are made, most leaders emerge from within the organization process.”⁷ I believe personal transformation leads to organizational transformation, i.e., a radical and fundamental change in the organization of the church, which brings about spiritual growth and numerical growth.

God brings transformation of a culture, society, nation or the entire world; but He always starts with individuals. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Israel transformed a culture. God used Moses to transform Hebrews from divided slaves to a united nation. David was taken from the shepherd’s field to a king’s palace to transform a corrupt monarchy into a godly nation (Psalms 78:70-72). Jesus changed the world by introducing the Kingdom of Heaven (Mark 1:15). Paul was used of God to transform a Jewish sect into the church reaching the Gentile world (Acts 26:17). There are no turn-around churches, only a collection of transformed lives. Church transformations emerge from single seeds of change in individual lives.

God changes, forms, molds and transforms the individual first, then at His appointed time, He uses that person as an agent of transformation. Moses was formed in Pharaoh’s palace (Exodus 2:10-11) then transformed at the burning bush (Exodus 4:13,

⁶ Ibid, 18.

⁷ Gary Allen. “Team Building and Managing Conflict,” (class notes, Northwest University, Kirkland, WA May 2009).

18) after forty years in the backside of the desert (Exodus 3:12). Moses brought about organizational transformation as he led the people in the desert (Psalm 77:20). Personal transformation always precedes organizational transformation.

We are called by Jesus, to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:13-18). To be of the world is a “similarity” with the world. If you are “similar” you are changed by the organization, society, and the world. But “not of the world” is to be “unique” and different from the world. Being “unique” is to change your organization, your society, and your world. Change begins in the individual, moving outward like ripples in a pond.

I believe that leaders who emerge from an organization, who are transformational agents, have had a transformative experience. Those individuals who have experienced personal transformation are uniquely equipped to transform an organization such as a plateaued or declining church. The aim of the project is to uncover the nexus and nature of personal transformation that enables pastors to become change agents. Effective leaders of turn-around churches have all experienced a personal transformation that was enabling in accomplishing the most difficult task in ministry: revitalizing a dying church to spiritual and numerical vitality.

Personal transformation is linked to church transformation as the salvation of one family member often brings the whole family to Christ. For example, one study found 71% of new converts came to Christ through family or friends.⁸ Another study found 97% came to Christ through an existing relationship⁹. As family and friends see authentic change in the new believer, they abandon their old lifestyles and beliefs for a

⁸ “Vision New England,” *Vision New England Recent Convert Study*, <http://www.efcneda.org/pubs/Vision%20New%20England%20Recent%20Convert%20Study.pdf>.

⁹ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 100.

new life in Christ. Likewise, you must change as a pastor in order to bring about change to individuals that will revitalize an entire church.

The problem with churches in the Assemblies of God fellowship is that until the late 1980's, as a group they were growing.¹⁰ The reality is that two-thirds of Assemblies of God churches are plateaued or declining, according to reports from 2004 and 2005.¹¹ Yesterday's solutions are today's problems. Many churches were successful in a Christian culture using an *attractional model* (use all means to attract non-Christians to themselves¹²) of ministry. Current culture has become "post-Christian," and the attractional model has few cultural Christians to attract. Therefore, yesterday's solution (attractional model) has become today's problem. Assemblies of God churches are in need of restructuring to become *missional* and find a redemptive model that is more incarnational and effective in reaching their community. The characteristics of a missional church are *incarnational* (ingrained in their communities exhibiting and offering biblical community versus just maintaining their facility), *indigenous* (reflecting the culture the church is embedded within) and *intentional* (using only effective methods while remaining biblical).¹³ Therefore, churches must change from being content with ineffective attractional models, to an intentional missional model in order to regain spiritual vitality and numerical conversion growth.

¹⁰ Richard A. Tatum, BlogRodent, "Examining Assemblies of God Statistics on Growth," Posted January 3, 2006, <http://tatumweb.com/blog/2006/01/03/examining-ag-statistics-on-growth/> (accessed July 16, 2010).

¹¹ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 25.

¹² *Ibid*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid*, 5-7

Literature Review

The purpose of this project is to look at what causes transformation in the lives of transformational leaders. Therefore, this literature review will be organized around six factors that create transformational leaders: *spiritual growth, mentoring, modeling, experiences, training and education* and *organizational development*.

Spiritual Growth or Transformation

Derek Vreeland defines *spiritual transformation* as the Holy Spirit's work in forming the Christian's heart into the character and likeness of Christ.¹⁴ Earl Creps notes that the classic spiritual disciplines practiced by most Christian leaders are prayer and Bible reading. These alone will not bring about a personal spiritual transformation for they are isolated from the rest of Christian life. Creps points out six dilemmas in prayer and Bible reading: scarcity (not practiced enough); practicality (isolated from real life); performance (is not translated into ministry success); character (many who practice have bad character); and mission (churches are full of people who pray and read scripture who resist or are indifferent to fulfilling the Great Commission).¹⁵

Spiritual formation is removal of "self" as center and putting "Christ" in the center of our life. This is essential to become a transformative leader. Creps response is enlightening to the two most common questions he fields in seminars: "If what you're saying about emerging culture is true, how should I change my church?" and "How should we do our worship services?" These are the wrong questions.

My answer, hopefully, suggests a more difficult but more primary question: *How can I be changed so that others will find me worth following in mission?* The way

¹⁴ Derek E. Vreeland, "The Relationship Between Spiritual Transformation and Leadership Growth in a Pentecostal/Charismatic Context: (D. Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2007), 12.

¹⁵ Earl Creps, *Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders* (San Francisco: JosseyBass, 2006) xv.

to develop a missional ministry, then is to be transformed into a missional person, “so that everyone may see your progress.” In the end, my best practice must be me.¹⁶

Creps points out that the vehicle often used to bring about spiritual transformation to make one effective in reaching postmoderns is a crisis. “In fact, virtually every influential leader I know in the Emerging Church points to a crisis of personal transformation as a major source of ministry to postmoderns.”¹⁷ (“Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures.”¹⁸) Creps then relates three personal transformation crises in his own life: crucified culture (confusing his culture with the mission of Christ¹⁹); crucified leadership (inviting Christ to assume the central role in practice, instead of just in doctrine²⁰); crucified spirituality (ministry moving from maintenance mode to a missionary understanding²¹). Profound personal transformation happens as we meet God in the center of our lives.²²

In a contrast to Creps, George Barna notes that a common denominator among turn-around pastors is large amounts of intercessory prayer. Reviving a dying church is almost impossible, but as Barna observes, “When a church takes a nosedive in attendance or membership, it generally does not make a comeback.”²³ This is a reflection of the desperate situation the pastor finds himself in and, therefore, pushes his people to deeper states of submission and dependence upon God.²⁴

¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

¹⁷ Ibid, 3.

¹⁸ Scot McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” *Christianity Today*, February, 2007: par. 5, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html>.

¹⁹ Creps, 7.

²⁰ Ibid, 10.

²¹ Ibid, 14.

²² Ibid, 14.

²³ George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches: How to overcome Barriers to growth and bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura: Regal, 1993) 17.

²⁴ Ibid, 69.

As one digs deeper into this dynamic of being a transformational pastor or turn-around pastor, there is little or no difference in what Creps and Barna observe. The condition of pastoring a declining church drives the pastor into a “crisis of personal transformation” which becomes the engine for the spiritual transformation.

Derik Vreeland came to a crucial observation and understanding on how the Holy Spirit brings about change. The pastors he interviewed were enabled by the Holy Spirit to make changes in their lives. “Initially, many participants would talk about how spiritual transformation brought them to a place for *them* to change things in their own lives, instead of how *the Spirit* changed them.”²⁵

Kent Ingle identifies four aspects of our inner life in need of transforming. First, one must cultivate a deep spirituality by acquiring grace through prayer, fasting, communion, spiritual conversation and worship. The inward means of grace is manifested in an outward means by acts of mercy (social ministries). Ingle wisely observes that spirituality builds the soul but ministry consumes the soul.²⁶

The second aspect of our inner life is relying on spiritual power. “The early disciples were courageous, authentic, and transformational because God’s power had infused them.”²⁷ This is none other than the work of the Holy Spirit.

The third aspect of our inner life understands the power of emotional intelligence. Leadership sets the tone. If our inner life is positive and affirming, our organization will

²⁵ Vreeland, 123.

²⁶ Kent J. Ingle, “Leadership for Challenging Times,” *Enrichment*, Winter 2010, Volume 15, Number 1, 76-77.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 78.

be also. However, if our inner life is anxious and stressful, anxiety and stress will be prevalent in the church.²⁸

The fourth aspect of inner life is being a constant dreamer. A dreamer has steady eyesight and focus on the God given vision given to him. Dreaming enables you to not waste time and energy on tangents away from your decisive vision. Dreaming is maintaining our destination in mind at all times.²⁹

To become a transformational leader, one must have a personal spiritual transformation. That spiritual transformation often comes in the form of a crisis. The challenge is beyond the ability of the pastor; therefore, he or she must turn to God and crucify the reliance upon his or her limited resources. The Holy Spirit gives grace to the leader and enables him or her to make the necessary changes to become a transformational leader.

Mentoring, Coaching, and Counseling

A mentoring relationship can be an agent of personal transformation. There are three one-on-one relationships that focus on personal growth: mentoring, coaching and counseling. Some writers make great distinction among these terms but others freely treat them as synonyms. Each relationship has subtle differences, but each one can be an agent of transformation. I will define these three terms and will not treat them as synonyms. The common denominator is a one-on-one relationship that has become transformational because the nature of that relationship is mentoring, coaching or counseling.

Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role

²⁸ Ibid, 78-79.

²⁹ Ibid, 80.

model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé). Mentors provide protégés with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunity in the protégé's pursuit of full membership in a particular profession.³⁰

Stoltzfus defines coaching as “helping people learn instead of teaching them.”³¹

He sees coaching as drawing out the innate “God given” abilities of others.³² Stoltzfus also draws a distinction between mentoring and coaching.

When I'm mentoring, I'm teaching a person, letting him draw from me or learn from my experience. When I'm coaching, I'm pushing a person to draw from his or her own resources and experiences. Coaching is helping people learn instead of teaching them.³³

The third one-on-one relationship focused on growth is *counseling*. The American Counseling Association defines counseling, “as a relatively short-term, interpersonal, theory-based process of helping persons who are basically psychologically healthy resolve developmental and situational problems.”³⁴ A professional counselor may be instrumental as an agent of transformation, but in most cases a mentor at times offers counseling to the protégé in an informal setting. Stoltzfus gives us this helpful comparison of coaching versus counseling.

The counselor is diagnosing the client's emotional or psychological state and helping the client become whole. By contrast, the coach pushes the client to set goals and take action to solve the problem on her own. Coaching improves your quality of life by focusing on creating a better future, instead of by fixing problems from the past.³⁵

³⁰ Brad W. Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xi.

³¹ Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership coaching: The disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach*. (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2005), 8.

³² Ibid, 10.

³³ Ibid, 10.

³⁴ American Counseling Association, “*Definition of Counseling*,”

<http://www.counseling.org/Resources/ConsumersMedia.aspx?AGuid=97592202-75c2-4079-b854-2cd22c47be3f>

³⁵ Stoltzfus, 15.

As noted before, each of these one-on-one relationships have subtle differences. Mentoring is helping one mature and grow in skills. Coaching causes the individual to bring forth latent talents and skills that are not being used but would be beneficial. Counseling is identifying and fixing a problem that is hindering growth. Mentoring, coaching and counseling are like clubs in a golf bag “Which one you use depends on the person you are working with and what you’re attempting to accomplish.”³⁶

How important or vital is a one-on-one relationship in creating a transformational leader? Jerry Wofford reports the following in a study of twenty-nine seminary students in the Doctor of Ministry program at Dallas Theological Seminary as they studied the leadership of highly effective pastors.

Nine of our ten transforming leaders told us of a mentor who had contributed much to their spiritual and leadership growth. The one who had not had a mentor expressed regret because he had served as a mentor for several younger leaders and recognized the value of their experiences.³⁷

In developing a change agent, one-on-one relationships are effective because of the complexity of transforming Christian leadership; classrooms and seminars are not sufficient.³⁸ One-on-one relationships are essential for any pastor who is attempting to turn-around a dying church. By mentoring, counseling or coaching, a one-on-one relationship is needed for personal transformation.

Modeling Attitudes and Actions

Not everyone has the luxury of having a mentor. Mentors have limitations of time and availability. A dynamic Christian leader may only have time to mentor four or five individuals at a time. If you cannot have a mentor you can have a model.

³⁶ Ibid, 15.

³⁷ Wofford, 192.

³⁸ Ibid, 193-4.

Three models are transformative: individual lives of dynamic leaders; leadership styles and philosophies on how they lead; and the organizations that they lead are all models. Wofford writes how individuals can be models of transformation.

Models behave in ways that serve as examples for others. Unlike mentors, models may not be acquainted with those who emulate them. Models of Christian leadership use exemplary behavior to show the values, attitudes, and behaviors that transform hearts and lives. In word and deed, they exhibit fundamental principles and values found in Scripture. Their attitudes portray a depth of understanding of the true nature of the servant.³⁹

The power of personal transformation comes as one adopts the values, attitudes, and behaviors of a transformational leader. First, one discovers the values, attitudes, and behaviors and then begins to emulate those into their own life. These things can be picked up in reading the works and listening to the teaching of such leaders or by observing them in action as they lead their churches or organizations. A model may not necessarily be alive for their life work in writings and teachings to give one access to their principles that guide their life. Visiting a turn-around church is another way of uncovering values, attitudes, and behaviors. At times, having a long conversation with a model may shed light on the values, attitudes and behaviors that have shaped their life.

The ultimate model for our life is Christ. First and foremost, He is the one we should emulate in our daily life. Glenn Daman explains how Jesus has always been our model right from the incarnation.

As the living Word of God, he was both the revelation of God's nature and the one who showed us perfectly how to live before God. He provided a living example of how the written Word is to be applied and implemented in the daily affairs of life. This is the same task to which we as pastors have been called. As we follow Christ's example, we become living examples for others to emulate (1Cor. 11:1).⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid, 194.

⁴⁰ Glenn C. Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 153-154.

Paul encourages modeling to the Corinthian believers in First Corinthians 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Modeling is imitation of behavior. First, a model’s life is transformational. Second, one imitates those behaviors. The problem with imitating a model is that it may not be compatible with one’s situation or one could adopt competing philosophies, which could cause internal conflict. Daniel Brown and Craig Larson talk about the dangers of adopting a “quick fix” instead of adapting models from successful churches. The problem is that we must know the “why?” behind a successful model if it is to be useful.⁴¹ The same principle can be applied to individuals as well as church models. So determining the “why” behind the values, attitudes and behaviors in a church as well as in individuals is important. The key to successfully applying a model is to understand “how” a model thinks.⁴²

Models can be an agent of transformation, but one must choose wisely. A model that may have worked in the past may be ineffective today. An ineffective model is not transformative.

Those models that are used most successfully in one generation often prove less effective in reaching the next. The reason seems obvious: those using one model see that it works and believe that if the church would just try it again, then it would work again. Members of the Builder generation often believe that a good radio ministry and a weeklong revival will get the church growing again. Baby Boomer Christians often think that if they can just make their service smoother and more professional, then they will be able to reach emerging postmodern generations. It is difficult to convince a person that what worked previously will not work any longer.⁴³

⁴¹ Daniel Alan Brown and Craig Brian Larson. *The Other Side of Pastoral Ministry: Using Process Leadership to Transform Your Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 14.

⁴² Ibid, 14.

⁴³ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 136.

Consideration of paradigm shifts is important. Models cannot be transferred wholesale from one cultural setting to another. The question is “Are values, attitudes and behaviors transferable from one paradigm to another?” Ed Stetzer considers it to be a mix, some characteristics have already been present and other patterns have been revived. Some values are new and challenging which reveal a new way of thinking that most ministers have not been trained to understand.⁴⁴ Models must be evaluated on compatibility with existing systems and culture. Before adapting a model, careful consideration of cultural context must be taken.

Experiences

The defining difference between an experience that teaches and an experience that is just an experience is reflection. Without reflection there is no application. Without application there is no learning. Experiences could be transformative in a leader if this independent experience is challenging and meaningful, self-sacrificial, creative and innovative, supporting and nurturing in identifying core values and vision. The leader becomes further developed when coached by another transformational leader who can compose a personal application.⁴⁵

Most pastors cannot have an independent transformative experience as a lead pastor or as an associate pastor of their current church, with a mature transforming leader in tow to facilitate personal application. It may happen if a pastor is given a sabbatical to spend time with a transformative and mature leader. This is not always the case. Reggie McNeal offers a solution in the absence of a coach who is also a transforming leader in what he calls *learning clusters*. “Learning communities debrief the life and ministry

⁴⁴ Ibid, 132.

⁴⁵ Wofford, 195-6.

experience of the participants. They challenge each other's biases and decisions. They create knowledge together by articulating and expanding awareness of what is going on in their lives, their ministries, and the world around them."⁴⁶

Wofford suggests that well-planned seminars or workshops can serve as meaningful experiences that would instill principles and behaviors of transformation.⁴⁷ Learning clusters on the other hand can carry out face-to-face sessions or Internet communication to study books together, invite resource people to speak, and attend conferences.⁴⁸ Learning clusters are practical while logistically feasible to accomplish. The downside of learning clusters is the lack of exposure to a transforming leader. A learning cluster could be pooled ignorance. A young leader's most effective and profound learning experience is in organizations led by strong transforming leaders.⁴⁹ If you cannot be in an organization led by a strong transformational leader, organize a learning cluster to fully unpack each learning situation.

Training and Education

The impact of training and education on being transformed and becoming an agent of transformation is vital. "Formal training and education are not as important in the overall processes of becoming a transforming Christian leader as are the kinds of leadership experiences just discussed; however, they may become crucial for acquiring a skill or gaining knowledge in a new area."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Reggie McNeal, *7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 139.

⁴⁷ Wofford, 196.

⁴⁸ McNeal, 139.

⁴⁹ Wofford, 196.

⁵⁰ Wofford, 198.

In corporate culture, one hundred hours of training per employee a year is the average for companies winning the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.⁵¹ Wofford assumes that the disparity between a transforming pastor (less ongoing training) and a secular leader (more ongoing training) is that transforming Christian leaders spend more time in personal study. If being highly educated was the only key to being a transformational Christian leader, every person who received a Master's or Doctoral degree would be a transformative pastor. That does not appear to be the case. Education and training are valuable but are not a vital element to being transformational; they may be just an amplifier of the other agents of transformation.

Mark Boucher came to the conclusion in his interviews that a D.Min. was transformative. "The greatest finding of this project occurred in the testimonies of the changed lives of leaders who dared to continue to grow and learn. D.Min. participants and graduates, as a result of God's transforming work in and through them, can serve as catalysts for transformation in the worldwide Pentecostal movement."⁵²

Education and training can be transformational if accomplished in a particular way. The kinds of education and training differ greatly. Robert Quinn addresses transformational teaching and draws a distinction between what makes a teaching transformational or not.

Developing leaders is not about getting them to imitate the thinking and behavior of other people who have been successful. It is about attracting people to the decision to enter the unique state from which their own great thinking and great behaviors emanate. This is done only when an individual chooses to become

⁵¹ Ibid, 198.

⁵² Mark T. Boucher, "The Dynamic Role of a Doctor of Ministry Education in Facilitating the Personal Transformation of Pentecostal Leaders." (D. Min. diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2009) Abstract ix.

more purpose-centered, internally directed, other-focused, and externally open. It is an act of courage toward which people must be attracted.⁵³

To Quinn, transformational leadership is entering into the fundamental state of leadership by becoming unique; one becomes unique by pursuing ever-increasing integrity. His premise is when we are truly ourselves we are most effective and transformational. The educational process is inviting others into the fundamental state of leadership and moving away from teaching students to imitating others.⁵⁴ It would seem that those who use education to become uniquely the person God created them to be are the ones who are the most transformational. If education and training help facilitate the integrity of uniqueness instead of imitation, it would truly be an agent of transformation.

Organizational Development

Finally, transformational leaders can emerge out of organizational development. Two elements bring this about: first, a sense of urgency is present (real or manufactured).⁵⁵ Second, out of that urgency, a new form of leadership –transformative or change agent type of leadership emerges.⁵⁶

Where does a sense of urgency come from? Consider the paradigm shift or transformation that churches must undergo to reach their community. Here are five aspects of church transformation as indicated by Ming, Ming and Mills:

1. Most congregations operate from old paradigms based on church friendly cultures and need to make substantial changes – transformation – in order to fulfill the Great Commission in today's society.
2. The leadership in most evangelical congregations truly wants to see the Great Commission fulfilled, is frustrated with current results, and is not sure what to do.

⁵³ Robert E. Quinn, *Building the Bridge as You Walk on it: A Guide for Leading Change*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 221.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 221.

⁵⁵ Wofford, 199.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 200.

3. Despite good intentions, most congregations are not equipped with knowledge of what changes to make or skills to use in making these changes.
4. Change efforts involve risk, disappointing results, or added resistance for future change efforts.
5. Congregational transformation is the comprehensive set of changes needed for a congregation to discern and effectively implement a God-given vision.⁵⁷

The sense of urgency that drives personal and church transformation is a choice between change or extinction stemming from irrelevance. Without a sense of urgency, a church will not receive the needed cooperation to transform or change because of complacency.⁵⁸

Quinn advocates “the edge of chaos” or “bounded instability”⁵⁹ in that he believes as you disturb a system enough it will self-organize. I believe this is where transformational leaders will emerge.

A system based on bounded instability has the capacity to self-organize, and thus to respond to the changing environment and move naturally to higher levels of complexity and integration. Self-organizing processes tend to be transformational. The system makes a radical shift to a new form. The behavior of the new form can be forecasted in a general way but cannot be specifically predicted. We can recognize the general patterns of such a system, but not the specific path.⁶⁰

This is why a new pastor has an opportunity to turn-around a church when he first arrives, because he disrupts the system (congregation) to a point that it begins to self-organize. However, the pastor must be centered on the values and vision of the church.⁶¹ If a leader or pastor does not know the mission, purposes, values and vision of the church, it will not transform, but decline or implode under the chaos. However, this seems to be fertile ground for transformational leadership. “I have noted that building a

⁵⁷ Ming, Ming and Mills, 212.

⁵⁸ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 36.

⁵⁹ Robert E. Quinn, *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Accomplish Extraordinary Results*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 149.

⁶⁰ Quinn, *Change the World*, 150.

⁶¹ Wofford, *Transforming Christian Leadership*, 201.

transforming Christian leader is best accomplished through immersing a person in an organization in which the governing leaders are already using this form of leadership.”⁶²

Organizational development is brought about by a sense of urgency. It is almost as if the church is asleep at the wheel and does not see the impending crisis ahead. The structure of the organization of the church is no longer effective, but people continue to go through the motions. A sense of urgency, disrupting the system, chaos and a wake up call can cause the church to spring into action. This kind of development is where leadership begins to emerge that is transformational.

In the corporate culture there has been an ongoing search to develop change agents and transformative leaders. Most corporations go about the process in this way: first, by hiring a change agent from outside of the organization (a trained professional who leads transformation of leaders, followed by the organization). Second, the change agent conducts a series of programs, seminars or workshops, etc., beginning with top executives. This process will bring about transforming leadership among the top tier of leadership, which in turn, begins a trickle down of transformation to the lower levels of leaders. The programs follow a pattern of values, vision, and inspirational change, which stimulates creativity and innovation, servant leadership and other ideas.⁶³

Churches follow a similar pattern as the secular world in fostering organizational and leadership transformation. Wofford states that Christian organizations have an advantage in that their guiding values and vision are based upon the scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid, 200.

⁶³ Ibid, 189.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 190.

In viewing the “Leadership Development Resources” model of the “Church Development Process,” mission is first in the foundation phase along with purposes, core values, congregational realities and community context. Second, according to Ming, et al, the design phase includes missional focus, primary strategies, ministry model, worship service style and minimum health factor. Finally, the third phase is the vision and strategy during the implementation phase of the process.⁶⁵

Summary

What is the common denominator among the literature concerning personal transformation? A pattern emerges in each agent of transformation; the catalyst for change is that each pushes a person to become what God has created them to become. In other words, they become *themselves*. The transformative leader becomes his or her positive self. Leaders are at their best when operating in the godly nature they were intended to possess. All are at their worst when they operate in the fallen carnal nature. Any leader who becomes his or her *authentic self* has a greater chance of becoming a transformative leader or turn-around pastor. I believe an authentic self is one who functions out of his common characteristics with Christ and not out of his false self—the fallen, carnal and negative traits. Another way to view this is to shrink the gap between what the leader is and what the leader is to become. Personal transformation allows for organizational transformation.

How does each change agent shrink the gap in order for a transformation to take place? A quick review of each one is in order. First, *Spiritual Growth*: the practice of spiritual disciplines gives the ability to make personal change or transformation. Second, *Mentoring*: one-to-one relationships such as counseling (fixing), mentoring (maturing),

⁶⁵ Ming, Ming and Mills, 11.

or coaching (achieving), are transformational by removing negative traits, maturing positive characteristics, or emerging God given gifts so the individual can become his or her authentic self. Third, *Modeling*: is learning about values, attitudes and behaviors. Models are adopted or adapted to develop values, attitudes and behaviors that are more in line with our authentic self. Forth, *Experiences*: upon reflection, experiences “weed-out” philosophies, values, attitudes, behaviors, etc. that are not consistent with our authentic self that God created us to become. Fifth, *Training and Education*: is transformational, if not imitational, but invitational to become uniquely the person God created. Sixth, *Organizational Development*: as an organization becomes outdated and nonfunctional it must adapt, change and transform or die. In that chaos, the leader/pastor must self-organize himself or re-organize and shrink the gap between what he or she is and what they were meant to become.

Research Question

This review of the literature outlines at least six agents of transformation, which exist: spiritual growth, mentoring, modeling, experience, training/education and organizational development. I have read nothing to dissuade me from believing that pastors or Christian leaders who have had a personal transformation are the ones who can transform or turn-around a declining or plateaued church. Older studies suggested that these leaders are born and not made, i.e., “the great man” theory from early research on leadership and management from 1900 to 1945.⁶⁶ Other research has suggested just the

⁶⁶ Marshal Sashkin and Molly G. Sashkin, *Leadership That Matters: The Critical Factors for Making a Difference in People's Lives and Organizations' Success* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003), 18.

opposite. Wofford cites two such studies of Canadian branch bank managers where transforming leadership was developed.⁶⁷

Therefore, these questions remain: Have pastors who have successfully turned around a declining or plateaued church had a personal transformation? If so, what was the nature of that transformation? Has this personal transformation into an authentic self empowered them to become a change agent to bring about transformation in the church they have led? Due to geographic, availability of subjects and time constraints, I limited the study to ten pastors in the Assemblies of God with seven residing in Washington State, two residing in Idaho and one residing in Northern California.

Methodology

Method and Rationale

This qualitative study is designed to understand the nature of personal transformation in turn-around pastors and how this process has enabled them to become agents of transformation. Qualitative research is a means of collecting data through observations and questions, followed by interpreting the meaning of that data of a certain group.⁶⁸ In conducting this study, we interviewed a select group of ministers who had accomplished a rare achievement in the revitalization of a church. Therefore, this project seeks to find an element of uniqueness among turn-around pastors; mainly as to how their effectiveness springs from being authentically whom God has called them to become. To explore and understand this uniqueness, we will use a qualitative approach, which is systematic and empirical inquiry into meaning. Sonia Ospina provides a working definition for us:

⁶⁷ Wofford, *Transforming Christian Leadership*, 188.

⁶⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 3e. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009), 4.

Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (p. 5). By *systematic* he means “planned, ordered and public”, following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. By *empirical*, he means that this type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. *Inquiry into meaning* says researchers try to understand how others make sense of their experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an *interpretive and naturalistic* approach: “This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”⁶⁹

A qualitative study is appropriate in this research project because of the complexity of transforming a church from a declining fellowship to a dynamic, growing, and healthy body. A qualitative study may be the best way to discover a relationship between what changed the man that enabled him to change the organization. Is there a relationship between what made each turn-around pastor exceptional? What are the common themes of that relationship? These questions can be answered best with a qualitative study.

This study of personal transformations was performed on select group of pastors, in their natural element. One goal was to find out what they learned from their experiences and culture in which they pastor. From this study, agents of personal transformation and the nature of that transformation were identified. Additional information on how that process enabled pastors to become change agents in turn-around churches was discovered.

Sample

The pastors interviewed were ten male Assemblies of God pastors, seven of which reside in Washington State, one of which resides in Northern California, and two of which reside in Idaho. Pastors from the Northwest or the West Coast are preferable

⁶⁹ Sonia Ospina, “Encyclopedia of Leadership,” *Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2004) http://wagner.nvu.edu/leadership/publications/files/Qualitative_Research.pdf, 3.

for they are the most similar to my current situation, as a pastor residing in the northwestern United States. The nature of the transformations discovered were confirmed or disconfirmed by an additional telephone interview. By these means the data was triangulated, meaning the researcher verified the finding by an additional method.

Ed Stetzer defines a turn-around pastor or comeback church by two factors—numerical growth and spiritual health, after being stagnant or declining for five years. Comeback churches had numerical growth of 10% per year, and a membership to baptism (conversion) ratio of 35 to 1 over a two to five year period.⁷⁰ Since only 1% of the participating denominational churches could qualify,⁷¹ I chose a much lower standard. The criteria I utilized were churches that in the last five to ten years had been in decline or plateaued numerically who had experienced one or more of the following factors: numerical growth, spiritual vitality, restoration of church health, becoming more missional in focus, and those who had been successful in community outreach. A poll of Northwest Ministry Network officials of the Assemblies of God was taken and I was given ten names of pastors who qualified. Only seven out of those ten participated. I recruited an additional three qualifying AG pastors (from Washington, Idaho and Northern California) to round out the list to ten participants.

According to Barna's research, turn-around pastor are very rare.⁷² Stetzer and Dodson found on average only one percent of participating churches and denominations in their study could qualify as a comeback or turn-around churches.⁷³ These leaders have many similarities with other pastors but their uniqueness sets them apart. Only a turn-

⁷⁰ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, xiii.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷² Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 15.

⁷³ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 24.

around pastor can reveal how personal transformation enables him to be a change agent in church transformation.

Instrumentation

I recorded and transcribed four live interviews. Audio recordings, along with note taking, are preferable over audio taping alone in case of equipment failure.⁷⁴ Recording captures all the words spoken, while note taking may only capture my perceptions of what was said. A recording also allows for free flowing conversation and captures spontaneous responses which were insightful. I received written permission to record the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, I made additional calls to some of the pastors I interviewed in person to bring clarity to some of their answers. The remaining six interviews were conducted by email with a follow-up phone call to clarify questions I had concerning their survey.

The following list of interview questions was posed to each participant:

1. Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)
 - a. How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?
 - b. What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?
2. Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?
 - a. Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?
 - b. What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?
3. Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?
 - a. Who or what were these models?
 - b. How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?
4. Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development?
 - a. How did it change you?

⁷⁴ Creswell, *Research Design*, 183.

- b. Did this experience alter any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?
5. Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?
 - a. “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?
 - b. “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?
6. Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?
 - a. “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.
 - b. Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?
7. “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, the following three steps were taken: first, an Informed Consent form was signed and kept in a confidential file at Northwest University; second, I informed the participants that the interview presented a low risk of any potential damage, financial liability or embarrassment, but that their insights would be very beneficial to other pastors; third, their names would be kept confidential as I would change their names and data with a pseudonym; and, fourth, I would destroy the data at the end of the study.

Analysis and Validity

After transcribing the oral interviews and reading through the written surveys, it was obvious that each pastor had multiple personal transformations they thought were significant. In analyzing the data, I looked for patterns and themes about the nature of each personal transformation, of which I found four. The validity of the project was

determined by comparing the *agents* of transformation (causes) to current literature, and by comparing the *nature* of this transformation (outcomes) to additional literature. The oral and written interviews confirmed that all six of the agents of transformation brought about significant personal transformation. The nature of these transformations was narrowed down to four significant themes. An additional follow-up interview was conducted by phone to all ten participants. This process verified that the four themes of the nature of their personal transformation were the same as my conclusions.

Delimitation

Only male pastors were interviewed in this study. No female lead pastors who were turn-around pastors were interviewed for this project. The results are, therefore, only representative of male pastors in the group of participants. This study cannot make any assertions on how these findings would be reflective of all pastors, especially female lead pastors. Additionally the scope of this study is of pastors residing in the northwestern United States and may not be reflective of pastors from other regions.

Data

The presentation of the data in this section came from two main sources: first, the answers to four live interviews and six email responses to the interview questions above; second, after the data was analyzed, a second phone interview was conducted of the original turn-around pastors to test the validity of the four categories of the nature of their transformations.

To better understand the pastors who participated in this study, a table of demographic information is provided below which reflects the diverse communities (urban, suburban and rural) and cultural settings (eastern Washington, western

Washington, northern Idaho, southern Idaho and Northern California) in which they reside.

Table 1. Demographic Information and Attendance N=10

	Pseudonym	Area of Ministry	Attendance High Point	Attendance Low Point	Current Attendance
1	Vern Fisher	Urban Puget Sound	383	160	*383
2	Don Olson	Suburban Puget Sound	1518	1222	1518
3	Rick West	Suburban S.W. Washington	582	432	582
4	Duncan Bright	Rural W. Washington	205	150	205
5	Randy Clark	Urban Puget Sound	1377	1021	1377
6	Doug Christiansen	Suburban N. Idaho	288	244	244
7	Gary Caplow	Suburban N. California	800	150	800
8	Mike Smith	Suburban S. Idaho	1020	750	1020
9	Larry Harris	Rural W. Washington	103	72	103
10	Bob Ruiz	Rural E. Washington	160	130	160

Source: 2009 Annual Church Ministry Report, Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God,⁷⁵ 2008 AG Statistical Reports⁷⁶ and Pentecostal Evangel.⁷⁷

Note: *Vern Fischer experienced almost a complete turnover in adherence. Of the 400 original parishioners, only 40 remain of the 400 current attendees.

⁷⁵ Northwest Ministry Network, "2009 Annual Church Ministry Report," http://www.northwestministry.com/site/start.php?11=level_1_2&dtls=1&id=726, (accessed July 2, 2010).

⁷⁶ 2008 AG Statistical Reports, "Fastest-Growing U.S. AG Churches in 2008," http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/Statistics_2008_public.pdf, (accessed July 2, 2010).

⁷⁷ Pentecostal Evangel, "Trinity Life Center Revives in Sacramento," http://rss.ag.org/articles/detail.cfm?RSS_RSSContentID=13011&RSS_OriginatingChannelID=1184&RSS_OriginatingRSSFeedID=3359&RSS_Source=search, (accessed July 2, 2010).

The following table depicts the spiritual health of the churches pastored by the participants in the study. This table reveals the tenure of the pastor, conversion or water baptisms, in addition to Holy Spirit Baptisms and the percentage of the congregants who are involved in discipleship.

Table 2: Tenure, Baptism Ratios and Small Group-Discipleship Ratio N=10

	Pseudonym	Tenure of Ministry	Water Baptism Ratio	Holy Spirit Baptism Ratio	Small Group-Discipleship Ratio
1	Vern Fisher	10 years	0%	0%	5%
2	Don Olson	10 years	2%	-3%	56%
3	Rick West	4 years	2%	5%	45%
4	Duncan Bright	8 years	9%	3%	67%
5	Randy Clark	15 years	3%	1%	91%
6	Doug Christiansen	3 years	2%	5%	101%
7	Gary Caplow	2 years	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Mike Smith	4 years	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	Larry Harris	11 years	9%	0%	65%
10	Bob Ruiz	7 years	0%	4%	44%

Note: The ratio is determined by dividing the category number by the current year weekend worship attendance.

All Six Agents are Transformative

Of the six agents that were discovered in the literature review (spiritual growth, mentoring, modeling, experiences and organizational development), all ten pastors responded that each agent had brought about some type of transformation in their life. Only one pastor could not think of an experience that he thought was transformative, but earlier in the interview he talked of a mission trip that was transformative (experience). The last question was answered in the affirmative, “My personal transformation enable me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be” in all ten

except one who may have thought the answer was too obvious. “Isn't that the very definition of discipleship and sanctification?” More typical answers were: “Totally!” or as Pastor Doug Christiansen said, “Yes. Clarity and Alignment in purpose was critical for myself and my church—and this is centered on the work God does through his Spirit.”

True transformation is to become more like Christ in character and calendar. The obvious link is that the more you are like Jesus, the more effective in ministry you will become. Consider how Pastor Rick West responded to the question.

I agree with that. Absolutely. The reason I believe that is by nature I am a servant, my bucket is filled when I am serving...I was able to authentically serve people as Jesus would. It has only solidified my heart and further clarifies how lost people really are and the depths they would go...it also positioned me to be a voice to families, young students...to lay a spiritual foundation in their life...

Pastor Duncan Bright saw personal transformation as a means of spiritual formation in becoming Christ like, simplifying ministry and a model of discipleship.

Oh yes, because it took me out of the equation. It took models out of the equation. It took paradigms out of the equation. When I simply realized that all I have to do today was what God has set in front of me. There is no gap. Just follow what He wants me to do. I encourage my guys to do the same thing.

Pastor Randy Clark feels God places a higher significance on character than behavior, but all the pastors interviewed would agree that character without Christ-like behavior is nothing. “I believe this is ongoing and will continue until Jesus comes back or I die. But there is no mistaking the fact that God is interested in who we are more than what we do. Both are important, but character and conviction are crucial.” Pastor Doug Christiansen saw his personal transformation in becoming more Christlike increased effectiveness. “Yes. Clarity and Alignment in purpose was critical for myself and my church—and this is centered on the work God does through his Spirit.” Pastor Gary

Caplow gave us this secret to his extraordinary leadership ability. “Agree. My background was not conducive to being a leader. When I discovered gifts that God had given me that only needed to be watered and nourished, change took place.”

Pastor Mike Smith, another extraordinary leader sees shrinking the gap is the essential difference in life and ministry.

Absolutely agree. No one starts at the finish line. I feel that I should be further down the road in almost every aspect of my life and ministry but rest in the fact that I’ve come a long way!!! I desire to become more like my Savior Jesus. I may look alright compared to someone in desperate need and lost...but as I am growing older...I am learning the only difference between someone homeless and me is Jesus.

Does the individual make the church or does the church make the individual?

Pastor Larry Harris sees that the church made him the man God wanted him to be.

Wholeheartedly agree... God revealed to me his purpose in placing me as pastor... ‘The reason I have you there as pastor is not because you have any special thing to offer. I could use anyone to pastor the church. The reason I have YOU specifically there is because it is the best way/place for me to shape and form you to become more like Me.’ (Church) is God’s tool to shrink the gap between who I am and who I am becoming.

Categories of the Nature of Transformation

The analysis of the data revealed four categories concerning the nature of transformation that was enabling in becoming a change agent in a turn-around church. Those categories were: moving from insecure to decisive; moving from independence to interdependence upon God and others; moving from indifference to relationship; and, also moving from similarity to uniqueness in one’s calling and ministry.

Insecure to Decisive

The first transformation experienced by many turn-around pastors was movement from insecurity in their leadership to becoming more decisive in their leadership,

becoming confident, clear, firm and an ability to make quick decisions. For example, with Vern Fisher, God used a prophetic dream (i.e., Gen. 37:8, prophetic guidance from the Lord in a dream), to remove the fear of failure and doubts and to create decisiveness: “Whatever the doubts or the failures and all that were associated before it was done...It has made me a little more unstoppable from the standpoint the natural pressure of the status quo that tries to stop a train that’s turning onto a different track.”

As iron sharpens iron (Pr. 27:17), so as the pastor molds the church, that experience creates decisiveness in the leader. Pastor Don Olson said,

The way it has changed me is that I know for sure the power of decisive leadership. When you are a decisive leader you will take people who are leaders in your church and they will follow you. If you are an indecisive leader you will get people who aren’t even leaders that won’t follow you.

As Pastor Rick West analyzed organizational development, the picture of what should be done became clear, hence decisiveness. “LDR (Leadership Development Resources) cohorts was influential on a personal level...we were doing church on a paradigm that was thirty to fifty years old...Change is positive, we need to embrace change...It showed us how truly lost our culture is.”

Turn-around pastors, such as Randy Clark, have a clear vision that is enabling in becoming a change agent.

The senior leader is the crucial change agent. He must find God’s vision, set priorities, establish objectives, be passionate...in short, be a Nehemiah leader. Even though it is God’s work, he must have a sense about him that it is all on his shoulders and live with that passion and deep commitment and dependency on God.

Pastor Doug Christiansen saw how a mentoring relationship showed him how to be decisive.

Having direct access to my pastor during my formative years was a huge asset. I would say that it didn't seem to always make an impression at the time, but I can easily look back through the lens of leadership and see how he led and how he made decisions.

Pastor Gary Caplow, who in his seventies has turned-around his third church, realized God created leaders for movement not maintenance. "More of a realization that it was not fun to be status quo. God created us to lead with courage and boldness, always asking for His wisdom to do the right thing." Pastor Mike Smith, in his fifties, in the middle of his second turn-around church, expressed that personal transformations which bring decisiveness are clarity of vision from status quo to change.

The main thing that comes to mind here is that I have prioritized a climate from acceptance to change. It starts with me...and every executive leader must get there, too. Making the tough decisions regarding aligning every staff member is always challenging but necessary; we must all speak the same language and have the same heart. We have different gifts and talents but the same heart. Our hearts must beat as one. When the totality of your executive leadership has complete buy in to your heart and vision...the people will follow.

Several pastors touched on how God used negative experiences to bring about positive changes. Pastor Larry Harris summed it up this way, "To be quite frank, I think some of the models I grew up with or were exposed to were more helpful in showing me what NOT to do." God also can use positive role models to move pastors to become more decisive as he did with Pastor Bob Ruiz. "I would say that serving under leaders who were willing to embrace change in themselves has led me to seek out and welcome change in myself, and thus be reflected in my own leadership as well."

Independence to Interdependence

The second category concerning the nature of transformation was movement away from being independent upon self to become more interdependent with God and seeing oneself as God's partner in building His church. Pastor Vern Fisher, whose

church transformation included almost a complete turnover in his congregation, moved to interdependence as he made Christ his mentor and model.

Well I think as I started living out everyday, working really hard intentionally living out a behavioral Christ-likeness and representation of that it started to leak into every conversation before long in every sermon. The term 'behavioral Christ-likeness' became repeated over and over. Beginning to disqualify Christ-likeness that was in character only that wasn't in schedule. Starting to really draw a line between the two. Christ-likeness previous to that had been love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness...it has been only in character basis as far as most Christian teaching...let's don't worry about the character part, let's talk about the schedule...if Christ had your (life) how would He do you? We would serve that vision instead of what you would usually do.

Silence can speak louder than words. Pastor Don Olson became more interdependent as he faced a very serious health crisis.

First off, I think my experience with God was so unique in this sense of wanting to hear from God but not hearing from God. I had certain expectations how I wanted God to work in my life and I found out how loud the silence of God can be. God speaks in the midst of that silence. No matter how mature I get in Jesus, I always am a child who depends upon the Father.

Pastor Rick West became more interdependent on God as he went through a difficult legal battle. "You cannot pour out from an empty cup. Leaders pour out of the abundance that is happening in their own lives...if my tank is empty, I cannot expect to draw on those resources to give to other people."

Amazingly interdependence brings clarity of vision and decisiveness as Pastor Duncan Bright discovered, "Part of it was experiential. I know there is something more because I have tasted something more. The old paradigm, 'I cannot lead where I have not been' has helped me to see this model and that model...this is not what God has called me to." This is a quote from a pastor who had more people in his church on Easter Sunday than the number of people who currently reside in the entire population of the town in which the church is located.

A common theme in moving from independence to interdependence is that God has a clear division of labor. There are things that only He can do and we cannot, and jobs we can only do and he cannot as expressed by Pastor Gary Caplow.

When Jesus said He would “build His Church,” I had a realization that He would use humans to do that. I believe that knowledge has caused me to grow into a partnership in leadership that makes a difference.

Similarly, Pastor Randy Clark, also saw partnering with God, but staying clear of His vocations.

It is a certain realization that ‘unless the Lord builds the house those who labor labor in vain’ and that ‘if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.’ There is a clear conviction that this is God’s church and we are here to ‘stay out of the way’ and ‘not mess up’ the good He wants to do in and through us. But it is not because of us...it is because of Him. Phil 2, Gal 2:20 are crucial life passages that remind us that we are instruments in His hands. This is a God thing.

Pastor Doug Christiansen moved to interdependence by remembering to make Jesus the hero of every sermon. Pastor Mike Smith remains dependent upon God by remembering his life before Christ. “My personal spiritual disciplines are never forgetting where I came from. That there is a God who pulled me out of the drug culture and raised my daughter from the dead! There is nothing that He cannot do. I focus on trying to create a climate from the Lord to move in. I live it. Preach it.” Pastor Larry Harris stays transformed by remembering a promise from the Lord: “God told me that if I would make my relationship with him the priority, he would use the ‘overflow’ of my personal spiritual growth to fuel my pastoral ministry.” Pastor Bob Ruiz leans on the Holy Spirit for clarification. “Much more than simply copying - it is a culling of principles from others and allowing the Holy Spirit to modify the implementation as required by our community context.”

Indifference to Relationship

The third category concerning the nature of transformation is a change from indifference to becoming more relational inside the church as in increased fellowship and closer relationships with parishioners, and outside of the church as in making relational connections in the community, and also with God. Most pastors saw this category as significant in their turn-around of the church, but three out of the ten turn-around pastors did not mention relationships as significant in their transformation. Pastor Rick West saw being more relational as essential to getting over the past and reaching the lost.

One of the things that (extreme difficulty) taught me is that we get so caught up in our own desires and wants in the church that we forget about the people we pass everyday that are far from God...I have felt that the one thing that God used after the destruction of this church to turn-around the church is relationships. Learning to trust, value that individual, whether or not I agree with them...

Of all the pastors I interviewed, Pastor Duncan Bright felt his relationship with God was not only transformational but the key to his success in life and ministry.

And it all comes from seeking the face of God not His hands, but His face. His hand represents His power, might and strength, so we seek what we can get from God's hand...seeking God's face refers to intimacy with God, so the intimacy with God and the disciplines comes with the intimacy with God that's where the transformation takes place.

Pastor Duncan goes on to explain on how intimacy with God and relationship with God has become the basis of his philosophy of ministry. Granted this fits his personality and God has tailored a philosophy of ministry uniquely to him. There is much we can learn from him.

If I have come to the place where all of my friends are inside the church then I have blown it. I cannot fulfill the call of Christ and the call of ministry. If all my relationships are in the church, I have done a disservice to the sanctuary. Everything we do is relational, it has to be relational. That's the model we want to be a relational model. We are very low in structure; we are very low in Robert's Rules of Order. When we have our business meeting, we will follow

everything we are supposed to do, but will do it across the table with a piece of pie. Then, what is God going to do with us the rest of the year...“When did you stop loving God’s people? Bottom line.” The more relationship you have the less of those problems you are going to have...(we have a) sign in the sanctuary “Trust the heart, forgive the hands!”

Pastor Randy Clark found that becoming more relational was transformative in his life. “I work with and around seasoned leaders both inside and outside the church who have impacted my life in ministry and leadership.” Pastor Mike Smith knows you can only reach the lost you know. “For many years I raced motocross and was involved in leadership in (racing) clubs...which I used as a side door to my church. I have heard over and over how people found out about Jesus and my church on the starting line of a race. My goal is to mobilize a church with a heart for God and lost, broken, hurting people.” Becoming more relational has other benefits as this pastor expressed. “I consistently spend time in God’s Word, in prayer, worship, and in relationships of mutual encouragement, support and accountability with other Christians.”

Similarity to Uniqueness

The fourth and final category identified in the nature of a personal transformation that was significant in turning-around a declining church is moving from similarity with other pastors, models, and ministries to uniqueness of calling and ministry. This category did not run extremely strong, but it was included in every interview. One pastor, in particular, who had the most radical personal change also had the most radical church transformation from a typical “Assemblies of God church” to a unique and cutting edge emerging church.

We have simplified so much, it’s astronomical, because we just can’t find it until the Constantinian turn and suddenly the world got weird...I got the whole church pretty interested in “how did we get here and why are we doing this?” “Why is the gospel of the Bible not showing up today? And why is our version of

Christianity honestly having little Biblical merit? So we dared to become radical orthodoxy in nature. That has been a very powerful driver for us. It has allowed us to question and destabilize and unfreeze many things...the benefit we had was that we were crashing...so we couldn't make the change by virtue of a new idea we had to do it as a matter of survival. I realize that was an opportunity for us that a lot of churches don't share.

Moving from similarity to uniqueness is often a reflection of two realities: the pastor's personality and the church's community context or culture it finds itself in.

Pastor Don Olson saw that this was key. "The more comfortable I am with myself the less I model after a person. Adapt models rather than adopt models...I think one of the keys to transformational leadership is to be uniquely you and a church needs to be uniquely itself." Pastor Rick West also used his experience in youth ministry and fine arts festivals, to match up with community in unique ways. "But those models that seemed to use creativity and an aggressive expression of worship, drama, what we call the fine arts, (video, etc.). Those are the ones who really influenced me. There are many methods to preach the gospel and people are different learners."

A common theme among pastors was that education and training led to a uniqueness that connected to their community. As Pastor Randy Clark explained, "Training is helpful in leading you down a road of discovery. However, you need to do something with what you discover. In our case, my training was a springboard that helped us craft a philosophy of ministry and commitment to building community that we never had before. It has led to significant growth and health in our church." Pastor Doug Christiansen found training led to personal discoveries, which led to uniqueness.

Good ideas are those that work in your own ministry context. Typically, it is the experience of learning and discerning how to discover what my own ministry needs were so it really can't be 'one size fits all.' Probably having the courage to lead has been one of the ongoing emphases in these training opportunities.

The following two pastors could see that training and education develops the uniqueness God has placed in them. Pastor Gary Caplow wrote, “Agree...Encouraged to expand your personality and abilities, rather than curtail them. Believed in the opportunity to be a ‘world changer’.” Pastor Mike Smith remarked,

I am unique, original, created by the very hand of God. I want to always stay true to who I am and make sure that I continue to grow as a Christian and as a pastor... I am very driven to become who God created me to be. Exposure to education/training I believe waters the seeds of greatness that God has deposited within each of us.

Pastor Larry Harris summed up the sentiments of the majority of the pastors when he wrote the following: “In the past, I have attempted to duplicate what I have observed in others or watched them do. I have found that unless it is genuinely part of my own natural gifting and talents, it feels fabricated both to me and everyone else. I gave up a long time ago trying to be anybody other than myself in ministry.”

A second interview verified the nature of the transformation. This information is shown in Table 3. This was a phone interview with four questions allowing each pastor to elaborate after each answer. Each question asked if their personal transformation moved them from being: less insecure to more decisive; less independent to more interdependent; less indifferent to more relational; and less similar to more unique.

Table 3: References made to Nature of Transformation in First Interview N=10

	Pseudonym	Insecure to Decisive	Dependent to Interdependent	Indifferent to Relational	Similar to Unique
1	Vern Fischer	7	2	N/A	3
2	Don Olson	6	2	1	3
3	Rick West	2	2	5	1
4	Duncan Bright	2	3	8	1
5	Randy Clark	7	5	2	1
6	Doug Christiansen	8	3	1	1
7	Gary Caplow	8	5	N/A	3
8	Mike Smith	2	6	8	5
9	Larry Harris	5	6	2	4
10	Bob Ruiz	5	N/A	5	3
	Totals:	52	34	32	25

Note: Bold face indicates each pastor's preference.

Table 4 below shows the results of the second interview. This interview was to verify the nature of transformation seen in the data from the first interview. The participants in this study generally agreed with the nature of their transformation.

Table 4: Second Interview - Agree or disagree on the nature of transformation N=10

	Pseudonym	Insecure to Decisive	Dependent to Interdependent	Indifferent to Relational	Similar to Unique
1	Vern Fischer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Don Olson	No	Yes	No	Yes
3	Rick West	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Duncan Bright	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Randy Clark	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Doug Christiansen	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
7	Gary Caplow	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both
8	Mike Smith	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Larry Harris	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Bob Ruiz	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Ratios	9/10	10/10	8/10	9/10

Disconfirming Evidence

The first question in the follow-up interview conducted by phone was: The transformation you experienced has enabled you to move from being less *insecure* in your leadership to becoming more *decisive* in your leadership (i.e., confident, showing an ability to make decisions quickly, firmly, and clearly)? Yes or no? And why do you say that?

Concerning the first question in the follow-up interview on the phone, some discrepancies did arise. Pastor Vern Fischer did not feel comfortable with the word “decisive” and preferred “courageous” as a more fitting word. All of the other pastors agreed with that assessment. Pastor Gary Caplow commented that decisive and courage should go along side of each other. After personal transformation one should not only be decisive but very courageous. Pastor Don Olson had an interesting comment in saying that in some areas he was less secure of himself, but more courageous, however, he felt he knew where the answers were. Pastor Don Olson’s answer surprised me, of all the pastors I interviewed, he seemed to be the most decisive, and even said so in the original interview.

The second question of the follow-up interview was: Could you say that this transformation has enabled you to move from being less *independent* to more *interdependent* (relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation, or interaction) with God and seeing oneself as God’s partner in building His church? Yes or no? And why do you say that?

Pastor Doug Christiansen had an interesting follow-up, after going through LDR cohorts, he and the church become more interdependent upon God and prayer increased

as they focused on being missional. Becoming more interdependent upon God was why Pastor Gary Caplow felt he has become more decisive, for God himself is decisive. All of the pastors felt this was crucial in the nature of their transformation.

The third follow-up question was: Has your personal transformation moved you from less *indifference* (lack of interest, care, or concern) to becoming more *relational* inside and outside of the church and also with God? Yes or no? And why do you say that?

Pastor Vern Fisher and Pastor Don Olson became more strategic in where they invested their relational capital. Many of the other pastors felt they were already “wired” to be very relational, and their transformation had little effect in moving them in that direction. Pastor Gary Caplow felt it was crucial in developing trust which allowed people to follow you more readily. Pastor Randy Clark commented that it has “given me a greater desire not to be a respecter of persons.” If they are down and out or up and coming, they have value to God and, therefore, they must be valued by him also.

The fourth question in the follow-up interview was: Would you say that your transformation has moved you from a position of *similarity* with other pastors, models, and ministries to *uniqueness* in your calling and ministry? Yes or no? And why do you say that?

Two pastors had an interesting perspective on this question. Pastor Doug Christiansen saw his transformation in moving from similarity to uniqueness then back to similarity as he picked up the tools (similarity) of other ministries that best “fit” his current situation. Pastor Gary Caplow answered this question as “both.” His “uniqueness” because of growth, created a “similarity” with other leaders that had also

become transformational. At times, it is beneficial to be unique; at other times it is best to move in the direction of similarity.

Data Summary

It is obvious that the agents of transformation are enabling in nature to become a change agent in turning-around a declining or plateaued church. I believe the nature of those personal transformations are just as important. Becoming more decisive is result of a clear vision of what needs to be done. Moving to interdependence is enlisting the help of God and others to accomplish that vision. Becoming more relational is developing trust and consistency. Movement to uniqueness is appreciation of whom God has created and using such to carry out the vision. The nature of these personal transformations parallel the four strategies for taking charge.⁷⁸ Every situation calls for decisive action, interdependence, being more relational and uniqueness, to accomplish the task of church transformation.

Analysis

After looking at the data, I conducted an analysis of the themes. In reviewing some of the current literature on leadership, I saw a correlation between the nature of transformation that I have found and the characteristics of effective leadership, which brings about transformation in churches and organizations.

Insecure to Decisive

A personal transformation develops a clear vision; a clear vision points to decisive action to bring about what could and should be. Many people have visions but often

⁷⁸ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) 25. The four strategies for taking charge are: (1) attention through vision, (2) meaning through communication, (3) trust through positioning, (4) the deployment of self through positive self-regard and the Wallenda factor

those visions are fuzzy. A man who cannot find his eyeglasses is incapable of making a clear decision because his vision is fuzzy, so it is with people who do not have a clear vision. Much has been written on the importance of having a decisive vision but what seems to be elusive is how great leaders and pastors arrive at having such a great, courageous, and decisive vision. This data shows that the answer to vision is to experience personal transformation through spiritual growth, mentoring, modeling, experiences, training and education, and organizational development.

Vision creates focus,⁷⁹ animates, inspires, and transforms purpose into action.⁸⁰ There many ways to accomplish a task, but only one plan can work. Similar to climbing a mountain, there are multiple routes to the top, but you cannot take every path, you can only choose one to get to the top. Vision is that focus on that one path you take. Vision inspires others to come with you on your journey to the top. A courageous and decisive vision takes the goal on the wall and makes it a reality down the hall.

A decisive vision is part of the process in constructing a future that we want.⁸¹ Hebrews 11:3 states, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (English Standard Version). Everything in the universe was first envisioned in the mind of God and it came to be out of nothing at His spoken word. Moving from indecisive to decisive first starts with a clear, God given vision of the future in our minds that is the first step in becoming a reality.

⁷⁹ Bennis and Nannus, *Leaders*, 26.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

⁸¹ Sashkin and Sashkin, *Leadership That Matters*, 93.

This study shows that if leaders are not intentional in this leadership they will not be followed. “Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion.”⁸² Being decisive is being so possessed by the passion to fulfill the vision that you would do it alone to see this vision become a reality. Personal transformations give leaders road maps of where they want to make decisive decisions to move forward.

The difference between CEOs and pastors is that pastors may not appear to be as decisive as they could be because they face “complex governance and diffuse power structures common to social sectors”⁸³ (one of which are churches). This explains an earlier comment by one pastor I interviewed. In some areas he was less secure of himself, but more courageous, but he felt that he knew where the answers were. Decisiveness is more complex for pastors than for CEOs; therefore, it becomes imperative that pastors experience a personal transformation that helps them become more decisive and visionary.

Concerning the pastors I interviewed moving from indecisive to decisive or even courageous, the word that comes to mind is *movement*. In crisis being decisive offers hope. Notice how Pastor Vern Fisher became decisive by creating movement, not just any movement, but movement toward redemption or, in essence, accomplishing the mission of the church.

There was so much failure happening around so much decline and there was not an organizational answer to fix this. In fact it seems exactly the opposite was true. Walking away from organizational structures offered more promise than trying to “Well let’s get the right staff guy in here. Well let’s get the right program. Well let’s change the service format.” We turned around and went the opposite of all that and drift in the way of the organic and drift in the way of the

⁸² Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 32.

⁸³ Jim Collins, *Good To Great and the Social Sectors: a monograph to accompany Good to Great* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 10.

simple church becoming a very mono-focused group that revolved around redemption period!

Being decisive is important only if you are creating movement toward the mission of redeeming people for Jesus. These pastors felt passionately that they must create movement towards the mission of the church. As in the case of Vern Fisher, he chose to create movement, risking the immediate future of the church, because in the long run the church would not survive the crisis.

Pastor Don Olson speaks of vision as going somewhere when he stated, “Having an idea and an objective of where you are going and giving people a sense of that vision.” This is movement created by being decisive. I can be decisive if I know the objective and the vision of where I need to go, but that movement must be toward the mission. Pastor Rick West called it, “keeping the main thing the main thing.”

Pastor Duncan Bright is decisive and creates movement toward the mission within his church model based on relationship. The movement Duncan is accomplishing is attracting men to an Easter presentation of the gospel and an invitation to receive Christ.

Relationship is what does it...we love each other, we help each other...out of that relationship, God will build His church...God has built the church out of those relationships that I have established around the town (school board, fire department, etc.)...that puts me in contact with whole group of guys. Every time I spend time with those guys I put money into that bank account, and when it comes time to make a withdrawal, like this Easter, I will make it...

A good example of being decisive but creating movement only toward the mission is Pastor Randy Clark’s statement, “For our church, we have zeroed in on five purposes and have thrown everything in that direction. We have anchored in a biblical mission and directive that has helped us know what we are about and what we are not about.” Notice, movement toward the mission and the purposes of the church (worship,

fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism), but not toward non-missional activities, “what we are not about.”

The pastors I interviewed moved from indecisive to decisive by seeing a clear vision of mission of the church and then constantly moved in that direction to accomplish the mission. It seems simple, but like most pastors, I can quickly become involved in matters that have nothing to do with accomplishing the mission of the church. Paul gave Timothy three illustrations: soldiers do not get involved in civilian affairs; athletes compete to win; and, farmers are first to receive a share of the harvest (2Timothy 2:4-7). According to the study leaders must take away is to keep moving toward the mission and not get sidetracked. The leader must put the effort to accomplish the mission as if he or she were running to win a race. The leader must be as diligent as a farmer in raising a crop because they know it will be rewarded as they accomplish the mission Jesus has given me. The leader must be decisive in moving toward accomplishing the mission.

Dependent to Interdependence

This study also found a vision with decisive action will not come to fruition if it is not communicated in such a way to create interdependence by aligning and organizing behind that vision in order for it to become a reality. In spite of my previous comment concerning being possessed with passion and vision to the point of doing it alone to see it accomplished, the bottom line is no one can accomplish any great task unless he has a team behind him. Brian Tracy gives us the following definition of a leader: “Leadership is the ability to get people to work for you because they want to.”⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Brian Tracy, *How the Best Leaders Lead: Proven Secrets to Getting the Most Out of Yourself and Others* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2010), 29.

One common denominator among top leaders is their ability to have crucial conversations and carry on a dialogue: “The free flow of meaning between two or more people.”⁸⁵ A crucial conversation fills the pool of shared meaning, which leads to better decisions via shared meaning to create synergy, cooperation, unity and movement to accomplish the goal.⁸⁶ Personal transformations have led leaders to become more interdependent through dialogue and communication. Transformative leaders can capture a group of people by decisive vision and create interdependence by filling up the pool of shared meaning, thereby, aligning everyone in the same direction.

Interdependence is created as vision becomes personal. “A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision.”⁸⁷ When teams begin to accomplish vision, not because they are told to do so, but because they have a personal stake in the vision and are committed to see it come to pass, is what a leader would hope to see happen.

Interdependence is created as significance is realized. Leaders must influence and organize through communicating meaning for the members of the organization.⁸⁸ It becomes important to the organization, to the individual, and to the groups of people in the church. We only do what we really think is important.

Interdependence is achieved when a process is clearly communicated and understood by the people.⁸⁹ Personal transformations, such as organizational development, lead to a clear process, and when that is communicated effectively,

⁸⁵ Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 21-23.

⁸⁷ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday-Currency, 1990), 206.

⁸⁸ Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 37.

⁸⁹ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's process for Making Disciples* (Nashville TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 111.

followers begin to move on that process. In a study of vibrant growing churches, 52% of the church leaders agreed they had a clearly defined process, whereas only 25% of comparison non-growing churches agreed.⁹⁰

The goal of interdependence through communication and dialogue is to create “buy-in” by all those involved. It involves constant proclamation and interpretation and diligence to keep the church on mission.⁹¹ If we use David as a symbolic lens to see a great truth, we must have interdependence to accomplish the Mission of God. Based on this study, turn-around pastors have learned that they need mutual assistance, support, cooperation and interaction from God first but also from their team. It cannot be done without God’s help (Psalm 127:1; John 15:5). It also cannot be done without a team (2 Samuel 23:8). David lost everything when he “thought to himself” (1 Samuel 27:1). He obtained it all back when he “inquired of the Lord” (1 Samuel 30:8; 18). Independence brings death. Interdependence is partnering with God and people.

The Lord told Peter He would build His church on the Rock (Matt. 16:17-19). Turn-around pastors have come to the realization that it is God who builds the church, but He uses humans to accomplish this task. We are not merely agents of Christ; we are a “little Christ” in our world building His church as He would in our corner of the world. Paul’s metaphor for the church was a body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). Turn-around pastors acknowledge that God’s will cannot be discerned or even accomplished without the body of Christ working in unity.

On the other hand, turn-around pastors showed little tolerance for those who acted independently and created disunity in the body of Christ. For example, Pastor Duncan

⁹⁰ Ibid, 113.

⁹¹ *The U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual: Be, Know, Do* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 168.

Bright's attitude concerning early opposition, "there have been some unbelievable spiritual things which have transpired, people have come in and said, 'we don't agree with this and this, and were out of here.' I said 'fine, God Bless you, and I'll buy your gas.'" After that point, he began to reach men from the community.

Of all of the pastors I interviewed, I noted that they "valued people" over "using people." It was an attitude they reflected to the people in their congregation that said, "We are in this together," or as Pastor Bob Ruiz stated, "Experiencing alongside with them." Bob showed value for people in the following comment he made, "my role as [the] senior associate pastor 'devolved' into one of helping piece back together the lives that the senior pastor and his wife had torn to shreds though their insecurities and manipulations."

This research demonstrates that turn-around leaders recognize that people matter to God. Communicating that *value* wins the hearts of people. In the follow-up phone interview regarding becoming more relational, Pastor Randy Clark conveys that God is no respecter of persons, applies to this area. He began to see that every person has value to God, not just the ones who can get you to where you want to go. In other words, I need this person, not because of what I can get from him, but because he is valuable to God and, therefore, he must be valuable to me.

People are valuable to the mission. During the follow-up phone interviews, this statement came out strongly, that the mission could not be accomplished unless you value people. The reason is simple, as a pastor, I cannot lead everything, as Pastor Rick West said, "it is all about equipping and releasing people." As a pastor, I am not an expert at everything, I need assistance to accomplish the mission. As Pastor Duncan Bright

confessed, he was not good with finances; however, the men on his team strengthened that area for him. Pastor Doug Christiansen saw interdependence grow in his church as the church discovered the mission and purpose of the church because the church began to realize that it was the responsibility of the entire church, not just the pastor, to accomplish the mission of reaching the lost for Christ.

Indifferent to Relational

The nature of personal transformation is to become more relational and thereby develop trust. Leaders are predictable, have known views, persevere, and out of that relationship, trust is developed.⁹² This study helped to underscore the fact that trust cannot be formed outside of a relationship. A leader can have relationship without trust; however, I would consider that a “bad relationship.” If your relationship is not predictable or lacks integrity, trust cannot be developed. Consequently, you cannot have trust without a relationship.

Trust is important to create a safe place in times of constructive conflict.⁹³ Paul told the Ephesians to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), because love makes it safe to tell the truth. This is the essence of trust. Without the truth, you cannot make the correct decision.

By emphasizing low-profile relationship-building over high-profile control, effective younger leaders avoid the pitfalls of loneliness and a lack of accountability of top tier leadership.⁹⁴ In this transitional age (modern to postmodern, Christian to post-Christian), relationships will become ever increasingly important to maintain integrity,

⁹² Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 41.

⁹³ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Temptations of a CEO: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 118.

⁹⁴ Eddie Gibbs, *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), 108.

trust and sanity. Effective churches are not just friendly; they demonstrate true concern, empathy and care for others.⁹⁵ Becoming more relational is essential for effective church growth.

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons stated that relationship is key to turning younger generations' negative and hostile feelings towards Christians into positive sentiments. "One of the clear implications of our research is that the negative image of Christians can be overcome, and this almost always happens in the context of meaningful, trusting relationships."⁹⁶ Many pastors in the study used meaningful and trusting relationships as the starting point for leading others to the Lord.

The pastors I studied became more relational in three aspects. First, they developed a more dependent relationship with God. Second, they fostered fellowship inside the church among believers. Third, they became more intentional in connecting with the lost outside of the church. The fountainhead for becoming more relational starts with Father God. "Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1John 4:21). Our relationship with God enables us to love others. The nature of this transformation is to have genuine concern for individuals in the body of Christ and the lost in our communities.

Concerning developing a dependent relationship with God, Randy Clark stated, "There is a clear conviction that this is God's church and we are here to 'stay out of the way' and 'not mess up' the good He wants to do in and through us. But it is not because of us...it is because of Him." The turn-around pastors I interviewed felt a *conviction* that they were building "His" church and not "their" church. God has a certain responsibility

⁹⁵ George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 74.

⁹⁶ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and why it Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 209.

to build his church. There is a conviction that when pastors do certain things, God honors them by growing the church. Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God makes the church grow (1Corinthians 3:6-7). This conviction is freeing because it allows pastors to have a realization that it is not all on their shoulders to grow His church. God has a responsibility in this joint venture. As Gary Caplow remarked concerning Jesus building His church, "I had a realization that He would use humans to do that. I believe that knowledge has caused me to grow into a partnership in leadership that makes a difference." This research demonstrates turn-around pastors have a conviction that they are building God's church and they are His partners in this endeavor.

Turn-around pastors fostered fellowship inside their church. I do not believe that this is accomplished by structure, i.e., starting home groups or hosting potlucks. The key to increasing fellowship in a church must flow out of spiritual growth. I believe Bob Ruiz revealed a secret when he said, "I truly do believe that a local church is not distinct from the individuals that comprise it - if they are experiencing spiritual growth, then (by definition) the "church" is experiencing spiritual growth." Creating fellowship and developing relationships within a church is not a matter of facilitating it with programs, rather it is a matter of spiritual growth. When individuals grow spiritually, they naturally connect relationally. It is like fruit on a tree. As in Peter's list of virtues to add to faith, one is *brotherly kindness* (1Peter 1:5-9), it comes out in spiritual growth. In the course of conducting this research, I observed that turn-around pastors established spiritual growth first, and then as fellowship occurred, they facilitated it with organizational structures, such as small groups. As Pastor Don Olson said, "The thing that is important here is to

understand that good structure doesn't create church growth, but poor structure can hinder church growth.”

I believe turn-around pastors become more intentional in connecting with the lost outside the church not because of evangelism programs, but out of a sense of God's love for the lost. Pastor Mike Smith commented, “My churches have growth due to creating and modeling a climate of acceptance...God loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way.” The logic is simple; God loved the leader enough to send his Son to rescue the leader (John 3:16). Therefore, He must love the rest of the world as much. A passion for reaching the community flows from a secure knowledge that God loves the world and has paid a significant price to have a relationship with all mankind. Paul prayed that the Ephesians could comprehend Christ's love so they could have the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-21). When the leader comprehends God's love, he or she is compelled to accomplish His mission of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10).

Similar to Unique

How the leader manages his or her inner life is more important than how he or she manages the physical world. If a leader does everything right (has a decisive vision and develops interdependence and relational trust), but fails “in the task of driving emotions in the right direction, nothing they do will work as well as it could or should.”⁹⁷ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee call this emotional intelligence, comprising our personal and social competence. The components of personal competence in how we manage ourselves are *self-awareness* (gut feelings, knowing strengths and limitations, and self-confidence) and *self-management* (impulse control,

⁹⁷ Kent J. Ingle, “Leadership for Challenging Times,” *Enrichment*, Winter 2010, Volume 15, Number One, 79.

integrity, flexibility, achievement, initiative, and optimism). The two parts of social competence which determine how we manage relationships are *social awareness* (empathy, organizational awareness and accommodation) and *relationship management* (being inspirational, relational, influential, a people developer, a catalyst for change, resolving conflicts, and a team builder). All of these components are learned abilities which are not innate at birth.⁹⁸ It is similar to the fourth strategy, “the deployment of self through positive self-regard” by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. As a leader, your inner life is soon reflected upon the organization as a whole, either positive or negative.⁹⁹

The powerful truth in looking through the symbol of baptism is the more we are like Christ in character and behavior the more effective we are in carrying out His mission. This is the classic definition of spiritual formation (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20). The writer of Proverbs understood how important it was to control our inner-life. “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” (Prov. 16:32 ESV)

The personal transformation many pastors possessed was one that helped them come to terms with trial and error until they found success. Discovering what your identity is in the community and then adapting, not adopting, tools that fit your identity is important. Harold Westing wrote, “The point is that a church, like an individual, must have a distinct personality and a highly specialized emphasis that makes it different from all other churches at that moment in history.”¹⁰⁰ Uniqueness manifests as you manage your inner life. Uniqueness is the source to reaching our community for Christ. If we are

⁹⁸ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), 38-39.

⁹⁹ Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 52-3.

¹⁰⁰ Harold J. Westing, *Create and Celebrate Your Church's Uniqueness: Designing a Church Philosophy of Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Resources, 1993), 65.

called to a unique community and God created us to be unique, then we are uniquely created to fulfill our calling.

Some of the pastors I interviewed shared great insights into how their personal transformation helped them accomplish the calling God had given to them. I observed that they were shaped by the place and task of their calling. Their transformations made them uniquely qualified to accomplish their task. For instance, Vern Fisher's comment concerning his spiritual growth, "Fully coming more deeply to terms, versus what I wanted to accomplish in my ministry, instead of being effective in the church growth mindset" as he was no longer satisfied with redundantly going through the motions of ministry and meeting the expectations of church growth experts, peers and colleagues. He had come to terms with the fact that he was sent to a community of people by God to reach them for Christ, not to just maintain a dying church that was ineffective in its mission. The essence of this transformation, moving from similarity to uniqueness, transfers expectations from people to Jesus. These expectations are self-imposed, as pastors are always trying to meet expectations. Church members, District and General Council officials, and those outside the church all have expectations of pastors. In a way, it is as if God were saying, "I have uniquely created you and called you to accomplish this task in this unique community."

Gary Caplow's spiritual transformation was a realization that he was not satisfied with the status quo because God had created him to lead with courage and boldness. His training and education encouraged him to expand his personality and abilities, rather than curtail them. Gary's realization was that God had uniquely gifted him to accomplish the mission of building His church and reaching the lost and it was not acceptable to

maintain the status quo. He would have to give an account of the stewardship of his unique gifting in fulfilling the task. As Paul charged Timothy, “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:15). I have a responsibility as a pastor to develop my inner life, gifts and talents that God has uniquely given me so that everyone can see my progress. God is expecting progress. Disciple-making (Matthew 28:19) is an expectation for everyone not just pastors.

This study also showed that turn-around pastors recognized their need to get their inner-life in line with Jesus and that they must be authentic Christ-followers. Every part of my inner-self must be in the order that Jesus desires. That is moving from similarity (the world’s expectations) to uniqueness (Christ’s expectations). Pastor Larry Harris captured it so well in this response to how his experiences transformed him.

The ones that have been most pivotal have been the ones that brought me face to face with my own insecurities and needs for approval. It is in these times when I have been brought to the end of myself, stripped of all my masks and facades, hurt by those who I had trusted – that I find God, gently yet reprovably asking me to once again surrender all of myself to him – all of my insecurities, all of my fears, all of me.

Of all the pastors I was privileged to interview, it appeared to me that each one took responsibility for his inner-life. None of the pastors were trying to meet the expectations of the world. Each one desired to meet the expectations of a loving savior who was forming them uniquely to accomplish His purpose and goals in their community. In an ongoing work of sanctification, each one must root out negative tendencies of his inner-life such as insecurity, selfishness, timidity and arrogance, until those tendencies come in line with Christ’s expectations of whom He has uniquely created each to be: an image of Himself in the world.

The nature of these personal transformations is not set in stone. The community context plays a big factor in this reality. Ideally, the church's unique culture (values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions which defines the life of a church¹⁰¹) should reflect its community context (ministry area and demographics of the unchurched).

Implications

The implications of this study for pastors who are struggling to attempt to turn-around a church are significant. First, pastors should pursue personal change before attempting organizational change of a stagnant or declining church. Second, pastors should pursue personal change by varied means. Third, pastors should direct their personal change to develop four key leadership traits. Fourth, pastors must find the motivation to take on personal and organizational change. Fifth, pastors must face the reality of the cultural transition in which we live.

Pastors should first pursue personal change before attempting organization change of a stagnant or declining church. Even though this study has shown that organizational change brings about personal change, the starting point should be personal change. This study does not advocate that pastors pursue personal change exclusively before pursuing organizational change. However, a wise place to begin is with personal change.

Pastors should pursue personal change by varied means. This study has uncovered six agents of personal transformation, but not every pastor interviewed needed transformation in all six areas. The six agents of personal transformation are spiritual growth, one-to-one relationships, models, stretching experiences, training and education, and organizational development. If a pastor desires to be a transformative leader, he or

¹⁰¹ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 6-7.

she should first consider what transformations are most beneficial and what resources are available to make those possible. For example, mentors are very transformative, but there are not enough mentors to go around. However, models are abundant (i.e., model person, model churches, etc.) through books, podcasts, emails and other media.

Pastors should direct their personal change so that they develop four key leadership traits. This study has shown that some of these traits already existed in some turn-around pastors, but most had to develop some of these traits. This study has also shown that pastors should pursue personal transformations which would help them move from being indecisive to decisive; independent to interdependent; indifferent to relational; and, similar to unique. Pastors should self-evaluate which areas need development and which areas would be most beneficial in attempting organizational change in their prospective churches.

Leaders must find the motivation to take on personal and organizational change. But many pastors need to ask, “Can I learn to become a turn-around pastor?” Based on the findings of this study, they can if they possess three components. First, pastors must have the desire and drive to accomplish the mission of reviving a church. Second, they must continually deny themselves in humility in order to put the needs of others ahead of theirs for the good of the whole. Third, pastors must intentionally develop themselves through personal transformations, which mature the four characteristics (decisiveness, interdependence, relationship, and uniqueness) needed to turn-around a declining or plateaued church.

Jesus summed it up best when He said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). The major problem I see

is that pastors and churches lack the ambition to carry out the mission of church transformation and sufficient quantities of self-denial to make the personal sacrifices needed to reach the lost.

Another implication is that we are living in a great time of transition. When I interviewed Vern Fisher, he referenced Leonard Sweet's comment that we are in a tri-fecta of a perfect storm of change as we see the melt down of modernism to postmodern, Christian to post-Christian and humanity to post-STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).¹⁰² The challenge we face as pastors is bigger than anything we have ever faced. If pastors do not take personal transformations seriously and develop the characteristics needed to turn-around a declining church, the church they pastor will ultimately die. Jim Collins noted that many of his level-five leaders "had significant life experiences that might have sparked or furthered their maturation."¹⁰³ The pastors I interviewed had personal transformations, which developed leadership characteristics that enabled them to turn-around churches in a most difficult era.

Conclusion

The positive conclusion to this study is personal transformations lead to organizational change in turning-around a declining or plateaued church. A question for further examination is concerning the inner life of a turn-around pastor. An area in need of more academic study is the spiritual authority of the pastor. The same Peter who cut off Malchus' ear at Gethsemane (John 18:10) was intimidated at the fire and denied Jesus (John 18:27). In interviewing these pastors, a sense came forth that they did not give up

¹⁰² Leonard Sweet, "Outstorming Christianity's Perfect Storm." in *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, Leonard Sweet, ed., (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008) 6-36.

¹⁰³ James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 37.

their spiritual authority and acted boldly whenever the need called for boldness. This spiritual authority is something beyond crucial conversations; it's a boldness that overcomes intimidation and strong controlling personalities which enable turn-around pastors to achieve the transformation of the church. A pastor may possess a decisive vision, cast a compelling vision, develop trust and have a strong inner life but become intimidated by a strong personality, thus derailing the church from becoming missional. Many churches do not become missional because individuals or families control them.¹⁰⁴

Other questions for consideration: how can personal ambition to accomplish the mission of the church be enlarged along with an increase in self-denial and humility? A pastor may possess the *four characteristics of leadership*, but if he or she does not have the drive or ambition to accomplish the mission along with enough self-denial to put others and the mission ahead of his or her personal needs, he or she will not accomplish the task of turning-around a declining or plateaued church.

Keeping a focus on the mission of creating Christ-followers is difficult during transitional times. As one Pastor in the study said, "There is no such thing as a turn-around church, only a collection of turn-around individuals." The lost do not come to Jesus in an organization or because of an organization. They come in the context of a loving and caring relationship of another believer who has a relationship with Jesus. The focus should always be on the lost as an individual, for that is what is near and dear to the Savior's heart. The best way to facilitate that process is to have a decisive vision, develop interdependence through communication and trusting relationships which are lead by pastors who are uniquely themselves in Christ.

¹⁰⁴ Olson, *Enrichment*, 34.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Informed Consent Form

I am conducting research on “turn-around” pastors and how personal transformations may have enabled them to revitalize plateaued or declining churches. If you decide to participate in this study, you will answer questions concerning the nature of the personal transformation which may have influenced your leadership ability. The interview will last one hour or less. You will receive no compensation for participating. To ensure the accuracy of my findings, I would like to conduct interviews with an associate pastor or other pastoral staff member who knows you and your ministry well. I would like to receive your consent to have this additional interview. You have the authority to approve or disapprove of this additional interview.

This study involves minimal risk or discomfort. All your responses will be kept confidential and you will not be referred to by your real name in the study or by any identifiable landmarks. Any recordings or transcripts of the interview will be kept under lock and key in my files. No names will be placed on any data that are stored, only code numbers. The list linking names and code numbers will be stored separately. The recordings that are made of the interviews will be destroyed as soon as the recordings are transcribed. You will have the option of determining whether or not the transcript is destroyed at the end of the study. If you choose to take part in this study you will benefit by adding to the knowledge of how personal transformation can affect church revitalization and, therefore, increase the likelihood to see more churches transformed. Taking part in this interview is up to you, and you will not be penalized in any way if you choose not to participate. If you do take part, you may stop at any time. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (360) 560-5104 (Cell Phone); (360) 703-3508 (Home Phone); or (360) 423-8560 (Office Phone) or contact Dr. Kevin Leach the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at (425) 889-5248.

You will receive a copy of the form.

Sincerely,

REV. NICK A. BUHLER
Senior Pastor, Kelso First Assembly of God

I agree to take part in this project. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time without any adverse effects or consequences.

Signature

Date

I agree to an additional interview of one of my staff pastors. I know authority to approve or disapprove of the other interviewees.

Signature

Date

I would like to have my transcripts destroyed at the end of the study. (*Circle one*)

Yes No

I certify that the above information is true and that I will follow the research procedures and method for obtaining consent as approved by the Human Subjects Review Board during the duration of this study. I will also submit any further changes to the Board for review.

Principal Investigator Date

Faculty Advisor Date

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)
 - a. How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?
 - b. What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?
2. Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?
 - a. Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?
 - b. What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?
3. Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?
 - a. Who or what were these models?
 - b. How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?
4. Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development?
 - a. How did it change you?
 - b. Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?
5. Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?
 - a. "This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?
 - b. "This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?
6. Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?
 - a. "I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader." Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.
 - b. Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?
7. "My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Appendix C: In Person Transcriptions of Interviews

Interview #1 – Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Pastor Vern Fisher

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.) How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church? What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Vern - Fully coming more deeply to terms, versus what I wanted to accomplish in my ministry... (instead) to being effective in the church growth mindset. I became a lot more comfortable with daily servanthood, with daily behavioral Christ-likeness. ... If Jesus lived (here)...and His house was here, how would the neighbors and surrounding community know Him by? ...And how do they know us by? And what is the disparity between the two? That question became a knife in our psyche. Because we instantly had to admit that what we believed that the community would know him by was not how they knew us by."

Researcher - Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Vern - "Well I think as I started living out everyday, working really hard intentionally living out a behavioral Christ-likeness and representation of that it started to leak into every conversation before long in every sermon. The term 'behavioral Christ-likeness' became repeated over and over. Beginning to disqualify Christ-likeness that was in character only that wasn't in schedule. Starting to really draw a line between the two. Christ-likeness previous to that had been love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness...it has been only in character basis as far as most Christian teaching...let's don't worry about the character part, let's talk about the schedule...if Christ had your (life) how would He do you? We would serve that vision instead of what you would usually do."

Researcher - Follow up question: "How do you define that relationship with Jesus?"

Vern - "One of the early church things that we have kind of lost that I found in some of my reading and research was that, when they would baptize somebody they would say 'another Christ sent to the world' or they might do it with somebody at communion say... 'I am another Christ' ... God looks at me as another opportunity for His Son's life to be relived again in practical form."

Researcher - Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? Who or what were these models? How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Vern - I think somewhere at the roots of my personal change story I really locked into the radical orthodoxy mindset ... I came to terms with the fact that the concepts of Christianity and the concepts of church that were very normal to me were actually a copy of a copy of a copy of how many generation that have been alive since Jesus was here and somehow I found a great desire to try to dare to go back to the very first story, and study it deeply and try to do an exact match-over just from that to this generation in time rather than the copies of the copies...dare to ask that question of almost every theological concept and every ecclesial construct for that matter, and I found just a number of things that absolutely they were not...I found a number of things that are common and typical in our world today there is simply no evidence in the early church in type or motivation I found myself eliminating a lot of that from life and the church life. It has been a major part of our meltdown. We have simplified so much, its astronomical, because we just can't find it until the Constantinian turn and suddenly the world got weird...I got the whole church pretty interested in "how did we get here and why are we doing this?" "Why is the gospel of the Bible not showing up today? And why is our version of Christianity honestly having little Biblical merit? So we dared to become radical orthodoxy in nature. That has been a very powerful driver for us. It has allowed us to question and destabilize and unfreeze many things...benefit we had was that we were crashing...so we couldn't make the change by virtue of a new idea. We had to do it as a matter of survival. I realize that was an opportunity for us that a lot of churches don't share.

Researcher - Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Vern - "They changed me in my inward confidence level, my inward perception of myself in ministry was dramatically different after both of those dreams than it was before, never too really to return, I mean after those nights. What changed as a result of those dreams never went back. Whatever the doubts or the failures and all that were associated before it was done. A new level was reached to never slide back to what it was before...The other experiences was more confirming in nature that all of this was worth the risk."

Vern - "It has made me a little more unstoppable from the standpoint the natural pressure of the status quo that tries to stop a train that's turning onto a different track. I'm a real consensus kind of leader (my natural default)...I had never been given the discernment to say no. (Spent ten years earning the right to become a wrecking ball in order to reorganize the church for its very survival. This experience made him capable to be that for the Lord.) I saw this as a matter of assignment not a matter of personality; this is needed for the call now. This is going to bring a little blood, do your best to do it gently, but their going to bleed, and you are going to make them bleed, this is just what has to happen.

Researcher - Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Vern - M. Div. track. It pumped a tremendous amount of information. It set me in an environment where I am going through deconstruction, construction, deconstruction, and construction all the time. That was very valuable to me. It put me next to leaders who were very accomplished. Whether I am next to them in a book or next to them in formal instruction.

Researcher - "This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Vern - No. I didn't find many people who were doing this kind of ministry to emulate. I did take on the attitudes of scholarship...The ability to hold things without clutching them...Individuals effective in the emerging church were most comfortable with tentative...comfortable with ambiguity and spiritual leadership in trial and error...Able to get away from the whole, "I'm God's man, so I have to hear from Him and the whole world will judge it if it worked." When people started coming off with that, I literally blew them off to their face, not mean like. I just laughed at it. I said, "For whatever reason God is comfortable with trial and error and you are going to have to be comfortable with it, too! Because I am not going to be held up to scrutiny on the basis of perfection here!" So I became very blunt in refusal of any notions, that my leadership was not credible just because someone found error, I was usually the person to point out "Wow that's not working." Becoming comfortable with trial and error and ambiguity is something I really learned. It was a real calming thing I observed from those that were really moving the kingdom forward the most in this transformational age. Trifecta of transformation as Sweet calls it. (See follow-up conversation)

Vern - "I remembered what (Leonard) Sweet said, he said we are in a tri-fecta, a perfect storm of change as the following melt down: post modern; post Christian; post Constantinian (structured church forms introduced by Constantine)." April 11, 2010

Researcher - "This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Vern - Yes. It formatted me in my unique calling.

Researcher - Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant? "I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader." Agree or disagree? If so, Explain. Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Vern - Yes. It was personal transformation heading in the direction of insignificance more than significance. It was the melting down of structures, melting down of propositional leadership, melting down of planning your way forward. We became intentionally less organized, a mile wide and an inch deep by design and by choice rather than that being a detrimental state of someone who is underdeveloped or whatever.

Researcher - Follow-up question: So what transformed you was an organizational structure that didn't work?

Vern - Yes! Very much! There was so much failure happening around so much decline and there was not an organizational answer to fix this. In fact it seems exactly the opposite was true. Walking away from organizational structures offered more promise than trying to "Well let's get the right staff guy in here. Well let's get the right program. Well let's change the service format." We turned around and went the opposite of all that and drift in the way of the organic and drift in the way of the simple church becoming a very mono-focused group that revolved around redemption period! You don't have to organize redemption; it's all the other stuff when you are trying to keep up with the natural church development stuff, the supply chain...dadada...that's when you organize yourself totally out of your brain. Trying to make all the prosthesis in place to make the church work when we are actually stretching the sociology of the people right out of their normal zone. They tell us stuff when they don't show up, why can't we listen, they are trying to reveal needs in ways, but we structurally try to make the machine work and we have to do it with prosthesis.

Small groups is the most ridiculous thing in the world because it is a prosthesis for a social structuring of folks to try to meet a need so we can grow a church bigger and beyond certain things. There are organic, simple church ways, to be found here. I just found in my reading there were a lot of guys who were really finding organic ways of meeting needs that were not prosthetic in orientation and there was a simple sociology to be understood. (His examples of putting sidewalks, then put up a fence to make them walk on the sidewalks, instead of letting the people walk for a year and then put the sidewalks where they walk.) I am afraid that the majority of the things we were doing in the name of organization was actually curbing people rather than observing natural sociological patterns and natural theological development patterns. We had phase one, phase two and this is how we are going to disciple them. Unfortunately people were not walking on those tracks. But yet we are organizing the holy heck out it and insist they do. It was a really big melt down on what spiritual development was. I began to work with stuff instead of trying to create stuff. So we started on a pretty long journey that way and we are just comfortably navigating and observing every month similar to that now.

Researcher - "My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Vern - Totally!

Interview #2 – Wednesday, Tuesday February 10, 2010
Pastor Don Olson

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a

discipline, or realization, etc.) How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church? What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Don - First off I think my experience with God was so unique in this sense of wanting to hear from God but not hearing from God. I had certain expectation how I wanted God to work in my life and I found out how loud the silence of God can be. God speaks in the midst of that silence. “No matter how mature I get in Jesus, I always am a child who depends upon the Father.”

Researcher - Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Don - Continues to change. Friends never change, but as the church changes I need different mentors. I needed mentors who took churches through the next stage I was facing.

Researcher - Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? **Researcher** - Who or what were these models? **Researcher** - How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Don - The more comfortable I am with myself the less I model after a person. Adapt models rather than adopt models... “I think one of the keys to transformational leadership is to be uniquely you and a church needs to be uniquely itself.” So when we adopt a ministry (i.e. Beth Moore...etc.) that primal voice comes from outside of the organization and that primal voice doesn't care about your worship or your children's ministry, so it needs to be adapted not adopted.

Researcher - Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Don - Not one event, not one ministry experience...to me what has been transformative has been my ten years at (Church)...I don't know about goals, but vision does matter. Having an idea and an objective of where you are going and giving people a sense of that vision. The way it has changed me is that I know for sure the power of decisive leadership. When you are a decisive leader you will take people who are leaders in your church and they will follow you. If you are an indecisive leader you will get people who aren't even leaders that won't follow you. The way it has changed me is it has given me perspective and that will lead obviously to the next step of kingdom assignment...This is organic. We targeted people who were not part of churches. When we started to get them we had to adapt, adjust. When you have a bunch of people sitting in front of you who have no idea of some of the basic Bible stories, you are going to adapt to that, you

have to adjust. When you become predictably excellent and consistent with teaching, then people feel confident in inviting their friends. That changes your philosophy on how you preach, instead of preaching only to people who agree with to people you have to persuade. You are going to change on how you lead, how you preach and how you teach.

Researcher - Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Don - Up until this master's program it has been mastering the art of a good question. Learner mentality, reading books, being a self-learner, motivated and disciplined to read books that you wouldn't normally read maybe, books that wouldn't apply to your situation but you read them anyway and you find ways to apply that. That has been transformative. I learned that from my pastor when I was in high school.

Researcher - "This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Don - Early on I would mimic but it has to have passion, but if you are going mimic someone it has to be you.

Researcher - "This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Researcher - Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Don - No. The thing that is important there is to understand that good structure doesn't create church growth, but poor structure can hinder church growth.

Researcher - "I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader." Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Don - My ability to be a change agent was enhanced by being apart of dynamic leadership. (He mentions two well-known leaders in the Assemblies of God)

Researcher - Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Don - Looking back yes! But it wasn't deliberate on the way. I see now that one of the reasons we did change and grow was that I was willing to change and grow.

Researcher - "My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Don - Definitely, definitely! Thank you Jesus. Great question. We need to get that.

Interview #3 – Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Pastor Rick West

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.) How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church? What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Rick - At sixteen years of age I went on my first Ambassadors in Missions trip and it was there God gave me a burden for lost people...realization that I lived in a lost world. Another moment was when my college football coach spoke into my life prophetically and told me I was running from the call of God in my life. I needed to stop and turn-around and answer the call of God.

Rick –You cannot pour out from an empty cup. Leaders pour out of the abundance that is happening in their own lives...If my tank is empty, I cannot expect to draw on those resources to give to other people.

Researcher - Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Rick – Original mentor God gave me, my earthly father. He was an early riser, and I would get up early and I was his Sunday School class for that particular morning as he prepared for his Sunday School class...youth pastor (spiritual formation) ...football coach (apostolic)...father-in-law (friend and teacher).

Researcher - Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? Who or what were these models? How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Rick – Most models will give you something positive to take away. District youth director, I was exposed to different models of leadership. But those models that seemed to use creativity and an aggressive expression of worship, drama, what we call the fine arts, video...those are the ones who really influenced me...there are many methods to preach the gospel, and people are different learners. There are visual learners, there are sensory learners, there are people who have to put their hands on it and pull it apart in order to learn. I really felt like we needed to use a lot of creativity instead of the old model of three hymns and a message. A lot of that process has entered into our church. Also we looked at the culture in which we are. We have a very young age group three to five mile radius of our church. They are used to Blue Ray, DVD, they are used to HDTV, they are used to a lot of sensory change and quick change. They are used to

seeing things live and in real time. Those have all been tools that have been helpful in transforming our church from an older model of church to a more progressive and aggressive model of younger church. Positive effect...we had to teach people that they are different methods but the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't change. We have tried to use those different filters to impact people and help people walk through it and understand. That with time change occurs.

Researcher - Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Rick – Going through the lawsuit here that I had on a personal level. For years I grew up in the church thinking that people who were older people, that equated to spiritual maturity. What I found out was that it does not equate to spiritual maturity...One of the things that lawsuit taught me is that we get so caught up in our own desires and wants in the church that we forget about the people we pass everyday that are far from God. We were not keeping the main thing the main thing. ... I thought critical thinking was to criticize or be critical...But I learned that critical thinking was to evaluate my situations.

Researcher - Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change? “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not? “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Rick – Christian College, District and National level of the Assemblies of God youth department, on the job training.

Researcher - Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Rick – LDR cohorts was influential on a personal level...we were doing church on a paradigm that was thirty to fifty years old...Change is positive, we need to embrace change...It showed us how truly lost our culture is. It has made us really go back and ask a lot of difficult, hard and personal questions of how we explain redemption and how we use the term the “blood of Christ.” We have to realize that we live in culture that does not understand our terminology...I think there are people who really have the ability to teach other people how to reach into a non-Christ follower and communicate in a way that is very palatable and acceptable it does not degrade, does not stiff-them but it more than anything else it embraces them...The training I had certainly help me because I think my strength and the things I am very passionate about they rely in the whole relational foundation...

Researcher - "I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader." Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Rick – I would agree. (Assembly of God leader), at the time our church was running four thousand or more people. One of the things I noticed about him, even though the church was that size, he never took no more or less time with individuals as the church grew. He really built that church on relationship...He was really valued the moment he had with that individual. We can't afford as leaders to caught up in the next moment until that moment is over. People deserve your very best.

Researcher - Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Rick – I have felt that the one thing that God used after the destruction of this church to turn-around the church is relationships. Learning to trust, value that individual, whether or not I agree with them...

Researcher - "My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be." Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Rick – I agree with that. Absolutely. The reason I believe that is by nature I am a servant, my bucket is filled when I am serving...I have spent the last ten years coaching, one because I had children on the team, but it put me in an environment of lost people. It was in those environments that I was able to serve without people knowing what I did. I was able to authentically serve people as Jesus would. It has only solidified my heart and further clarifies how lost people really are and the depths they would go...it also positioned me to be a voice to families, young students...to lay a spiritual foundation in their life...

Interview #4 – Thursday, February 25, 2010 Pastor Duncan Bright

Introductory comments by Duncan: "I don't believe in pastoring the church, I pastor the town...there have been some unbelievable spiritual things that have transpired, people have come in and said 'we don't agree with this and this, and were out of here.' I said 'fine, God Bless you, and I'll buy your gas.' And there were men that came in. This church is unchurched people. Thirty-five percent have a solid foundation, the rest are less than eight years in the Lord. That scared the wadding out of me because whatever they know in the Lord is because of me...I got a great book 'They Call Me Pastor.' That whole town calls me Pastor, and when they do it rings through my head and my heart. It is an unbelievable reminder that God has placed me in that spot, not man, not chance, not a fishing hole..."...God has built an awesome thing and we don't want to get in the way of it. Not a whole lot of structure...if we just run our churches like a youth group we would be a lot more successful. ... God has given me the assurance that the men of the town

will know the Lord. I can't say if it will be in my lifetime but I know the men of that town have been called into the kingdom. I walk around that town and pray for them.

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.) How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church? What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Duncan – That was the big transformation. In the midst of River (renewal) movement seeing a lot of the prophetic was just fantastic...all those things are great. It did strike me very much that from my worship leading perspective, seeing everybody playing and having a great time having their own experience with God. At the same time in your spirit you know that there is more. And it all comes from seeking the “face of God” not “His hands, but His face.” His hand represents His power, might and strength, so we seek what we can get from God's hand... “Seeking God's face” refers to intimacy with God, so the intimacy with God and the disciplines comes with the intimacy with God that's where the transformation takes place. Not just looking for hand-outs.

Duncan – Spiritual discipline: Turning off the noise, turning off the TV, outside...go out in the woods and listen “the heavens declare the glory of the Lord.” If we look at what's around us and just stop... I was not big on meditation until I moved up here...a lot of meditation...Part of it was experiential. I know there is something more because I have tasted something more. The old paradigm “I can lead where I have not been.” It has helped me to see this model and that model...this is not what God has called me to, (Intimacy with God eliminates the unnecessary things of ministry and reveals the essential.) Personal transformation is that God is not trying to put Tommy Barnett's model in my town, but that I can have a story of my own just like Tommy Barnett but of my own. I can have the same relationship with God that Judson Cornwall had and all of his buddies...it is a process and I'm not there yet.

Researcher - Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Duncan – That person took time to help my wife and me...they spoke into our lives about things that I couldn't turn to dad, I couldn't turn to someone else, but (my mentor) was just interested in being a buddy. That's all he wanted. He had no agenda, no motive. (Philosophy, be a genuine friend to your mentor, and in that you will learn) People like that have really helped me with people in my community, because I'm realizing that those people have taken time for me that have nothing to gain by it. So that helps me with some of the guys in my town that have been labeled the outcast, town drunk, trouble maker, their my buddies. I just go spend time with them, because of what has been done to me in the mentoring process, because I think that is what Jesus would have done....A counseling relationship is clinical but a mentoring relationship must be grace filled.

Researcher - Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? Who or what were these models? How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Duncan – My Dad’s model helps me. When confronted with a situation I ask myself “what would Dad do” and then go the other way. ...I love structure but it has to be flexibility...In my former church I had people, they would do anything in the world for me, but I did not have relationship, until I moved to my current church. I had people, lots of people, but I didn’t know what it meant to love people...I now know what it means for my heart to break for that issue. That was a paradigm shift that happened because of all those models, I’ve seen those models. People have measured success by those models, but here I can’t measure success until I have sat down and had coffee with somebody and talked with them. A model just shows me pictures, but without relationship a model is just going to be a model...If I have come to the place where all of my friends are inside the church then I have blown it. I cannot fulfill the call of Christ and the call of ministry. If all my relationships are in the church, I have done a disservice to the sanctuary. Everything we do is relational it has to be relational. That’s the model we want to be a relational model. We are very low in structure, we are very low in Robert’s Rule of Order, when we have our business meeting, we will do follow everything we are supposed to do, but will do it across a table with a piece pie...then what is God going to do with us the rest of the year. ... “When did you stop loving God’s people? Bottom line.” The more relationship you have the less of those problems you are going to have. ... A sign in the sanctuary “Trust the heart, forgive the hands!”

Researcher - Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Duncan – None

Researcher - Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change? “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not? “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Duncan – “They call me pastor.” – Biblical Archeology – Refreshing and a love for the Word of God...as far as education, I don’t have one.

Researcher - Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant? “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain. Is there a relationship between

how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Duncan – “Relationship is what does it...we love each other, we help each other...out of that relationship God will build His church...God has built the church out of those relationships that I have established around the town (school board, fire department etc.)...that puts me in contact with whole group of guys. Every time I spend time with those guys I put money into that bank account, and when it comes time to make a withdrawal, like this Easter, I will make it. It gives me someone to speak into their lives. Football games, basketball games, it gives me a spot to speak into their lives. I have three guys on the city council. It’s all because of relationship not structure. You couldn’t put that on a flow chart...It happens, but when it happens you have to be ready to step into it. Every time I step into it God says “I can trust Duncan Bright!”

Researcher - “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Duncan – Oh yes, because it took me out of the equation. It took models out of the equation. It took paradigms out of the equation. When I simply realized that all I have to do today was what God has set in front of me. There is no gap. Just follow what He wants me to do. I encourage my guys to do the same thing. It’s all about relationship, and we are all doing it together. I couldn’t organize all that. The only thing I organize is the fishing trips. I do think that gap has been has really been taken out of that equation simply because I recognize who I am in Christ and what He has called me to be! I don’t have to measure up to this model or paradigm or anything else. I don’t know if it helps you or not, but it really helps me. Because a lot of times we look at models and things, and all it shows to me is my inadequacies...I see models all over the place. Those models confirm to me the relationship with God and the direction I am heading. At the same time they show me the disparity between where I am and they are. But God hasn’t called me to that. God has called me to establish my own paradigm in my relationship with Him.

Appendix D: Email Transcriptions of Interviews

Interview #5 – Thursday, February 18, 2010

Pastor Randy Clark

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)

Randy – I would not say that I've had a road to Damascus experience, but I would say that there is an ongoing commitment to grow in Christ. It is a certain realization that “unless the Lord builds the house those who labor labor in vain” and that “if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.” Phil 2, Gal 2:20 are crucial life passages that remind us that we are instruments in His hands. This is a God thing. As our church has grown to 500 and then 1000 and then 1500 it has been a constant understanding that this is God's Work. Our desire is that God be glorified (John 12:28 and that He be lifted up and when He is He will draw people to Himself (12:32).

Researcher – How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?

Randy – Maturity in Christ is vital to leadership. We must be on a constant growth path. That doesn't mean we don't stagnate, fall back, and blow it at times. But we need to be moving forward in Christ. Our people depend on us and our church requires it of us. We need to lead and that means spiritually.

Researcher – What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Randy – Solitude, silence, fasting, secrecy, sacrifice, study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, submission.

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?

Randy – I have been mentored from afar through books and conferences. I have been mentored up close by pastors and parishioners alike.

Researcher – Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?

Randy – Many pastors have influenced me. But I have also been influenced by the Christlike, caring servant leaders in our church. They have shown me Christlike character and what it means to live out the Christian life.

Researcher – What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Randy – I mentor staff and young leaders in our church and reverse mentoring happens through this. I work with and around seasoned leaders both inside and outside the church who have impacted my life in ministry and leadership. We have studied church models, business, leadership, and the Bible together.

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?

Randy – It is always motivating to catch the passion of leaders who lead strong. Whether it be Bill Hybels and Rick Warren or some of the younger leaders today, the fact is that God is raising up and using passionate leaders that encourage us all to keep charging forward in faith, family, and church growth.

Researcher – Who or what were these models? *Willow and Saddleback have certainly been two churches and leadership teams that have captured my imagination and stimulated by faith.*

Researcher – How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Randy – They have encouraged me to believe God for the impossible and to have a Holy Spirit inspired passion to see His church grow and reach people for Christ.

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Randy – I would say that for me transformation has been a process more than an event. For our church, we have zeroed in on 5 purposes and have thrown everything in that direction. We have anchored in a biblical mission and directive that has helped us know what we are about and what we are not about.

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Randy – My master’s program at Fuller Seminary and Doctoral program at AGTS allowed me the time and focus to further develop my philosophy of ministry and flesh out how we do church. In particular, he helped lay the foundation for building community through small groups which is crucial to our DNA.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not? “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Randy – I’ll sum up both questions with the following. Training is helpful in leading you down a road of discovery. However, you need to do something with what you discover. In our case, my training was a springboard that helped us craft a philosophy of ministry and commitment to building community that we never had before. It has led to significant growth and health in our church.

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Randy – The senior leader is the crucial change agent. He must find God’s vision, set priorities, establish objectives, be passionate...in short be a Nehemiah leader. Even though it is God’s work, he must have a sense about him that it is all on his shoulders and live with that passion and deep commitment and dependency on God.

Researcher – “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Randy – Mostly, I became a change agent by studying other change agents and equally by having a passion to win for God. Generally, the Church is in decline. We must believe God for growth and wins like never before.

Researcher – Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Randy – It has been a process birthed in prayer, bathed in passion, and based on a conviction that God wants to grow His church and that His church is the hope for the world.

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Randy – I believe this is ongoing and will continue until Jesus comes back or I die. But there is no mistaking the fact that God is interested in who we are more than what we do. Both are important, but character and conviction are crucial.

Interview #6 – Monday, March 1, 2010
Pastor Doug Christiansen

Researcher – Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)

Doug – Combination of events, experiences, and exposures. Though I was raised in a Christian home much of the transformation took place in the learning environment of

college at Vanguard U (then SCC). Being exposed to the wealth of academic rigor and depth of Biblical understanding, I began to develop a discipline of reading, asking questions and researching endless possibilities. There were experiences in worship services, missions' involvement and ministry experiences that brought about other spiritual growth. I remember the first day on the job as a youth pastor in a small town on the Oregon Coast and realized, "Wow, I don't want to simply fill a role of expected spiritual leadership and/or maturity, I want to be transformed and renewed on an ongoing basis.

Researcher – How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?

Doug – I think more than anything else a willingness to learn. We can easily get stuck in habits, even good ones. For example, I really enjoy studying the OT, archaeology, and ethics. These are worthwhile for sure—but also well within my comfort zone. Being stretched and flexible for the sake of my own journey as well those who serve with me has caused me to be grow and learn. I remember reading a simple article by Mark Driscoll roughly 5 years ago. It had to with making Jesus the hero of every teaching opportunity. It was so simple, yet so insightful and helpful. It fought against the tendency to make me, someone else, or a discovery the focus—and brought the attention to our Lord.

Researcher – What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Doug – In no particular order: prayer, study, giving, service, and fellowship.

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?

Doug – Having direct access to my pastor during my formative years was a huge asset. I would say that it didn't seem to always make an impression at the time, but I can easily look back through the lens of leadership and see how he led and how he made decisions. We stay in contact to this day so he is ongoing source of influence. Network leaders such as Don Detrick, Darrel Johnson, Mel Ming, and Mike Rima have also been very helpful. I have gained confidence, understanding, and clarity through some of the coaching I have received.

Researcher – Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?

Doug – Bill Mathews, James Bradford (current General Secretary of the A/G), Murray Dempster, Mel Ming, Don and Jodi Detrick.

Researcher – What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Doug – Primarily mentors.

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?

Doug – Helped me evaluate my own thoughts, ideas, vision, attitudes, and approach to ministry.

Researcher – Who or what were these models?

Doug – Saddleback, Willow Creek, Rock Harbor, and others.

Researcher – How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Doug – Confirmed certain things that I felt I had a decent handle on, but more importantly helped provide other venues and methods that were worth considering—and other concepts that were specific to their culture.

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development?

Doug – Not sure exactly (distant past, recent past?) Going through the Cohort process with the NWMN under the direction of Mel Ming was very helpful, not just for church ministry, but for personal growth and understanding. The Leadership Journey with the presbyters from our network was also a very helpful tool that helped to transform and shape me as well. I shared earlier about the influence I had during college.

Researcher – How did it change you?

Doug – Caused me to look in my heart and soul and see what was there, what was lacking, and how God would want to shape me.

Researcher – Did this experience altar (alter) any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Doug – Sure, at least to some degree. Philosophies probably were challenged and I became more open to other ideas and models. Values were perhaps better identified and refined. Attitudes and behaviors were informed as well.

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Doug – Cohort with Mel Ming (NWMN). Small groups training at Willow Creek. Youth and Small Group leadership opportunities with the NWMN. Ongoing education (completed masters in biblical studies).

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Doug – A little of both. Good ideas are those that work in your own ministry context. Typically, it is the experience of learning and discerning how to discover what my own ministry needs were so it really can’t be “one size fits all.” Probably having the courage to lead has been one of the ongoing emphasis in these training opportunities.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Doug – Agree. A great sense of empowerment comes with learning and team building.

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Doug – Definitely. In the process I became even deeper burdened for lost and hurting souls. This really became something that went beyond what I could or should do, but what our church needed to become passionate about.

Researcher – “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Doug – Disagree

Researcher – Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Doug – Not too sure, other than the intentional process of being committed to the mission of God and the vision that becomes planted in the heart of a leader.

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Doug – Yes. Clarity and Alignment in purpose was critical for myself and my church—and this is centered on the work God does through his Spirit.

Interview #7 – Tuesday, March 23, 2010
Pastor Gary Caplow

Researcher – Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)

Gary – More of a realization that it was not fun to be status quo. God created us to lead with courage and boldness, always asking for His wisdom to do the right thing.

Researcher – How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?

Gary – When Jesus said He would “build His Church”, I had a realization that He would use humans to do that. I believe that knowledge has caused me to grow into a partnership in leadership that makes a difference.

Researcher – What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Gary – Constant study and preparation, studying new techniques (and usually going back to the old ones), prayer and maintaining a humble spirit.

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?

Gary – My pastors when growing up in the church in a great way. After that, teachers in Bible College that invested in me.

Researcher – Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?

Gary – Dwight McLaughlin, William Kirschke, Robert Schuller, Otis Keener

Researcher – What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Gary – Pastors – Friends – Leadership mentors

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?

Gary – It framed in me what I was feeling and believing in my own spirit, but had not seen in reality.

Researcher – Who or what were these models?

Gary – William Kirschke – A preaching model; Dwight McLaughlin – A pastoral model
Robert Schuller – A church builder model; Otis Keener – A missionary model.

Researcher – How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Gary – All of them in the area of integrity, humility, the ability to move things forward even under adverse circumstances, plus the value of seeing it accomplished.

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development?

Gary – Attending the Schuller Institute on Church Leadership in 1971. It put into a model the possibility of moving a church from death to community impact.

Researcher – How did it change you?

Gary – It made me realize I was on the right track and that changes needed to be made in the philosophy of ministry and growing a church.

Researcher – Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Gary – The philosophy of making a church into something for the whole man ... spiritual, educational, social, and physical. Build with all of these in mind. It took us from a corner church to a regional force.

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Gary – The Institute named formerly, plus keeping up on the “how’s” of church growth and development.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Gary – Agree ... because if they could do it, so could I (with God’s help).

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Gary – Agree....Encouraged to expand your personality and abilities, rather than curtail them. Believed in the opportunity to be a “world changer.”

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Gary – Yes, particularly in the area of seeing myself as a leader with the ability to make a difference in people’s lives. That what I was and what I possessed was something people desperately needed.

Researcher – “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Gary – Disagree...I saw what I didn't want to be and do, rather than what to be and do. That can have a very positive effect on a leader.

Researcher – Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Gary – They do go together. You must be willing to make adjustments so that you can lead others to do the same. People love to follow someone going someplace significant.

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Gary – Agree. My background was not conducive to being a leader. When I discovered gifts that God had given me that only needed to be watered and nourished, change took place.

Interview #8 – Wednesday, March 31, 2010
Pastor Mike Smith

Researcher - Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.) How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church? What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Mike – I place a high emphasis on spiritual growth. My first senior pastorate in Parker AZ, my focus was on church growth. We grew from 40 people to 400 people in 3 years. 95% of our growth was through conversion. 2 1/2 years into my pastorate there, I went to a Rick Warren conference. There I learned about church health. His thought is that anything healthy will grow...I now focus on growth from the outside in and from the inside out. Growth and health. As a leader, I must model growth. I must model a heart for the future of our community, church, and people.

The moment we think we have things figured out and no longer need to grow and learn...is the moment we lose touch with heaven and produce what we on our own can produce...which is severely limited compared to continued growth and dependence on God.

My personal spiritual disciplines are never forgetting where I came from. That there is a God would pulled me out of the drug culture and raised my daughter from the dead! There is nothing that He cannot do. I focus on trying to create a climate from the Lord to move in. I live it. Preach it.

I do my best to make prioritize my personal walk with Jesus. Fasting has brought a new

dimension in my personal walk. It is a priority to not minister on fumes, but out of an overflow that comes only through time spent with Jesus. I love Jesus! I love people!

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Mike – We desperately need Paul's and Timothy's in our lives. Timothy's are very easy to find...Paul's are not. This is an area that if I could I would hit the rewind button & make more of an effort as a young pastor. While I cannot do that, I prioritize doing my best to find pastors with potential and pour into them. I have found Paul's through reading good books, attending conferences.

The greatest mentor in my life was the Giordano family. They are my spiritual parents and discipled me the first 9 months after I accepted Jesus. I grew 10 years in 9 months. I also had a great man in my life who I considered a mentor...although he may not have looked at himself in that light...he is with Jesus now. I have someone in my life now that I absolutely look to as a mentor, Pastor D.B. I feel loved by God through my relationship with P.B. and through his love for me and belief in me.

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? Who or what were these models? How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Mike – I have been exposed to several great pastors who have impacted my life as far as models...From my spiritual daddy Pastor Smith at Oroville First A/G in Northern California who taught me to always give a salvation altar call, to Pastor Leroy Cloud at Valley Christian A/G in Phoenix AZ who taught or modeled a heart for the lost and the power of Almighty God, to Pastor James Eastin at Tempe First A/G in Tempe AZ who modeled a heart of prayer and ministered & lived with the priority of being prepared when you step behind the pulpit.

These great pastors have taught me to believe that people will receive Jesus following every sermon I preach. And that we need to be prepared and give the Holy Spirit liberty to convict, comfort, change lives. I feel that I have a tremendous responsibility to pass down the spiritual DNA that has been passed down to me.

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Mike – I go back to my salvation experience. I have pastored 3 churches in 15 years. All of them grew through broken people being made whole, people getting born again. Early in my ministry I felt the Lord speak to me to reach the people the other churches were not reaching, and if I did that God would always honor me and bless me and my

ministry. I have tried to stay true to that. My churches have growth due to creating and modeling a climate of acceptance...God loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way.

I LOVE THE LOST. I MUST REACH THE LOST.

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change? “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Mike – I try to attend a conference every year. I choose according to where I feel I need to grow. I love to be inspired and challenged. While I would never attempt to fully adopt what I learn, there are certain principles or priorities that can successfully be implemented. Example: There is only one Tommy Barnet. I will never become exactly like him, but am very desirous to have his heart for the lost and his faith. I try to make sure that the original Monty that God created not die a copy. I am unique, original, created by the very hand of God. I want to always stay true to who I am and make sure that continue to grow as a Christian and as a pastor.

I on various levels agree with both questions...Paul writes Imitate me as I imitate Christ...Although I never ever lose sight of myself in the process. I am very driven to become who God created me to be. Exposure to education/training I believe waters the seeds of greatness that God has deposited within each of us.

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant? “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain. Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Mike – The main thing that comes to mind here is that I have prioritized a climate from acceptance and change. It starts with me...and every executive leader must get there too. Making the tough decisions regarding aligning every staff member is always challenging but necessary; we must all speak the same language and have the same heart.

We have different gifts and talents but the same heart. Our hearts must beat as one. When the totality of your executive leadership has complete buy in to your heart and vision...the people will follow.

Another thing that has helped me to be a part of turning churches around in fruit. People accept Jesus every Sunday. People cannot argue with fruit...changed lives. Changed lives have enabled me to bring needed change.

I would agree somewhat on the question concerning sitting under a dynamic leader...although not every pastor will be dynamic. Usually the dynamics that can be

learned or caught are a heart for God and people. I do not consider myself to be a “10” behind the pulpit...but my people know that I love them and believe in them.

The greatest change that I’ve brought is my heart for the lost. I model that through turning my passions into opportunities to fish for people. For many years I raced motocross and was involved in leadership in motocross clubs...which I used as a side door to my church. I have heard over and over how people found out about Jesus and my church on the starting line of a race. My goal is to mobilize a church with a heart for God & lost, broken, hurting people. I think there is a buy in due to our growth coming predominately through people accepting Jesus.

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Mike – Absolutely agree. No one starts at the finish line. I feel that I should be further down the road in almost every aspect of my life and ministry but rest in the fact that I’ve come a long way!!! I desire to become more like my Savior Jesus. I may look alright compared to someone in desperate need and lost...but as I a growing older...I am learning the only difference between someone homeless & me is Jesus.

- There are a couple quotes that drive me too:
- Never let the best you’ve done be the standard for the rest of your life.
- Never let your memories be greater than your dreams.
- Every person is one heartbeat away from eternity.

Interview #9 – Friday, February 26, 2010

Pastor Larry Harris

Researcher – Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)

Larry – I have experienced most of my personal transformation through spiritual growth. I would attribute my spiritual growth to times of seeking God through His Word, prayer and fasting, and times of interaction with other Christians in one on one relationships or small groups. I would also attribute it to times of trial and hardship. Perhaps my most profound transformational times have been during such times of hardship and pain. It is during such times that I have been tempted to give up or at least stop trying. I have found that it is during those times that I most need to press in and lean upon the Holy Spirit. His power is made perfect in my weakness, “for when I am weak, then I am strong.” Looking back, I can say that those times of “weakness” were times of incredible pain but also incredible personal transformation in me, and consequently, in my leadership and ministry.

Researcher – How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?

Larry – Spiritual growth has been the key ingredient in enabling me to become a more capable leader. God spoke to me several years ago during a time when I was having difficulty balancing my personal spiritual growth and the demands of my ministerial life. (At the time I worked a secular job as well). God told me that if I would make my relationship with him the priority, he would use the “overflow” of my personal spiritual growth to fuel my pastoral ministry. He was (and has remained) faithful to do that. Spiritual growth has made me a more capable leader by teaching me more about myself. I have found that the closer I get to God, the more I realize my need of him in my leadership (or any/every area for that matter!) I have discovered over the course of the last ten years as lead pastor at (church) Life that leadership is not about exercising authority, but about dying to myself and my needs, in order to live unto God by serving and loving His people at the church He has called me to.

Researcher – What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Larry – I consistently spend time in God’s Word, in prayer, worship, and in relationships of mutual encouragement, support and accountability with other Christians. I also intentionally spend time with people who are not followers of Jesus Christ, as well as people of other faith traditions (i.e. Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Foursquare). I practice the discipline of constant learning. I attend leadership seminars through Willowcreek (Leadership Summit) among others, and I am currently pursuing my MAML degree through George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, OR. I also seek out learning opportunities from more experienced ministers (see below).

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability? Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership? What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Larry – Mark Schaufler – Youth Pastor; Les Moody – Youth Leader; Terry Kaiser – Mentor; Greg Daulton – Mentor; Mel Ming Kaiser – Cohort Mentor; Jack Rozell and Jim Conn – Counselors (MRAP)

Larry – Each of these men impacted my life during critical junctures. The first three (Mark, Les, Terry) poured into me during a pivotal time of my life at nineteen years of age during the illness and death of my father. It was during that time of turmoil and soul-searching that my faith solidified and I answered God’s call to the ministry – in large part due to these men. Greg Daulton was my senior pastor in my first ministry post. It was through his humble example that I learned what true pastoral (shepherding) ministry looked like. Mel Ming served as a great teacher in motivating me to cast vision for my church and ministry. Jack Rozell and Jim Conn walked with me through a time of burn-out and potential depression.

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you? Who or what were these models? How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Larry – To be quite frank, I think some of the models I grew up with or were exposed to were more helpful in showing me what NOT to do. One model that I saw was that the senior pastor should remain “aloof” from the people. According to this model, if the pastor allowed himself to get close to the people it was a recipe for disaster. I observed this model at several churches and found it unhelpful, if not downright damaging. Instead, I have embraced transparency and vulnerability at my church since I arrived in September of 1999. That doesn’t mean I share everything, but I also don’t hold myself up on a pedestal. People understand I am as human as they are, and that we’re all on this journey of transformation together – and that we need each other to get there.

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development? How did it change you? Did this experience alter any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Larry – I have had many experiences that have proved pivotal in my development. Again, I would have to point to the ones that have been the most painful as also the most profoundly transformational. I’m not sure if I can point to one in particular, except to say that the ones that have been most pivotal have been the ones that brought me face to face with my own insecurities and needs for approval. It is in these times when I have been brought to the end of myself, stripped of all my masks and facades, hurt by those who I had trusted – that I find God, gently yet reprovably asking me to once again surrender all of myself to him – all of my insecurities, all of my fears, all of me. This is a place that I continue to come to, time after time, as God peels back the layers of my heart. I echo what John said, “He must become greater, I must become less.”

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Larry – As mentioned earlier, I have had several wonderful mentors who have helped me with “hands-on” training. I also benefited immensely under Mel Ming when our church leadership team went through the “cohorts” process for two years. I attend and/or listen to many leadership trainings/seminars as well as read many books on leadership and read biographies of leaders that I admire. Some of these have included:

- Jack Hayford School of Pastoral Nurture
- Willowcreek Leadership Summit (Bill Hybels)
- John Maxwell (Maximum Impact Leadership Club)
- George Fox Evangelical Seminary (MAML Program)
- Sabbatical Summer 2009: Mentored with Bob Stone (Shoreline AG), Dale Oquist, (Evergreen Christian Community), and Bill Bowers (Mountain View Nazarene).
- Jack Rozell and Jim Conn of Missionary Renewal Asia Pacific (MRAP)

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Larry – I agree. Some of these men I have learned from afar (Hayford, Hybels, Maxwell) while others I have had the privilege to spend one on one time with (Ming, Stone, Oquist, Bowers, Rozell/Conn). The most powerful effect that this had on me was not the techniques or practices that I observed, but the confidence they instilled in me by simply spending with me.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Larry – Yes, I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, I don’t think it would work otherwise. In the past I have attempted to duplicate what I have observed in others or watched them do. I have found that unless it is genuinely part of my own natural gifting and talents, it feels fabricated both to me and everyone else. I gave up a long time ago trying to be anybody other than myself in ministry. I think this is why I so admire men like Hayford, Hybels and Maxwell even though I’ve never met them. They “ooze” a passion for God and the ministry that is genuine. This has proven contagious for me.

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Larry – As mentioned earlier, it caused me to confront my own “demons” of insecurity and fears of failure. My leadership is now dependent upon God’s approval above all else. It’s a constant struggle to keep that as my guiding north star, but that’s my goal at all times.

Researcher – “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Larry – In my case – no. I never had the opportunity to spend much time under the leadership of a dynamic leader. That is not to say that I didn’t work under any dynamic leaders (Greg Daulton comes to mind). But I never was afforded the opportunity to work for him (or any other leader) for an extended period of time. I became a change agent simply because the circumstances demanded it. I had no other choice. The church was in a state of chaos and turmoil, and I led the people in rising to the occasion and persevering. I once heard a quote along the lines of, “Lord, don’t give me tasks equal to my ability, but give me ability equal to my tasks.” This is what God did.

Researcher – Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Larry – Simply stated: Less dependence upon myself/more dependence upon God in my own personal life = less need to “succeed” in the eyes of others. Once that mindset shifted I was free to be myself and leave the results to God. I also was then able to live an authentic and transparent life before God and others – which in turn, has freed others to do the same. It has made for a very healthy church family. We are certainly not perfect, but we are the journey of transformation together. That never could have happened if I hadn’t been willing to take the risk and go first.

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Larry – Wholeheartedly agree. Our church vision statement is “helping others discover and become all God desires them to be.” Personally, that has happened over the course of the last ten+ years as lead pastor of (church). I firmly believe that it is through my experiences and relationships as a pastor that a large part of my personal transformation has taken place. As that has taken place, I have become more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit’s work in me. One of the most profound “Ah-ha” moments in my life and ministry occurred for me a few years ago when God revealed to me his purpose in placing me as pastor at (church). At the time I was in the midst of another “pity party,” telling God how badly I had been (once again) mistreated by someone and how underappreciated I was. His response, in essence, was: “The reason I have you there as pastor is not because you have any special thing to offer. I could use anyone to pastor the church. The reason I have YOU specifically there is because it is the best way/place for me to shape and form you to become more like Me.” (Church) is God’s tool to shrink the gap between who I am and who I am becoming.

Interview #10 – Monday, April 12, 2010
Pastor Bob Ruiz

Researcher – Spiritual growth: Have you had a personal transformation that was a direct cause of spiritual growth? If so, tell us how it happened? (Could be an experience, a discipline, or realization, etc.)

Bob – Certainly, though more of a process-oriented transformation than any single event. I took an 18-month Sabbatical between my last two pastoral positions, during which I sought counsel and studied concerning new paradigms in pastoral ministry and spiritual health of leaders.

Researcher – How important has spiritual growth enabled your leadership and how has that made you a more capable leader in turning around a church?

Bob – A “turn-around” *church* doesn’t exist – but there is such a thing as a collection of turn-around individuals that gather together for like-minded growth, outreach, and fellowship. I truly do believe that a local church is not distinct from the individuals that comprise it - if they are experiencing spiritual growth, then (by definition) the “church” is experiencing spiritual growth. With that established, it follows (or leads?) that the leader

cannot lead the people into something he/she has not personally experienced or is experiencing alongside with them.

Researcher – What spiritual disciplines do you consistently practice?

Bob – Prayer, study of God's Word, reflection/meditation (as distinct from study), personal worship and celebration.

Researcher – Mentoring: What one-to-one relationships have been transformative in your life and how has that impacted your leadership ability?

Bob – I was fortunate to have a paid, full-time internship at a local church while attending Northwest College. There were seven full-time pastors at that church with whom I had regular scheduled time for mentorship. The impact upon me personally was inestimable as it formed the very core of my early pastoral ministry and has served as a framework for my growth since.

Researcher – Can you name the individuals that have been formative in your life and leadership?

Bob – Personally: John Gregg; Warren Carlson; Mark Schaufler; John Morse; Mel Ming; several others to lesser extents or in more specific areas. Vicariously: Eugene Peterson; A.W. Tozer; C.S. Lewis; Richard Foster; Sir Winston Churchill. I have also had numerous opportunities to grow through what I would consider negative-mentorship - which I believe to have just as significant an impact as positive mentorship if handled and processed appropriately. I will refrain from naming names in this regard.

Researcher – What was the nature of the one-to-one relationship? A mentor, coach or counselor?

Bob – Several were through one-to-one mentorships, a few have been through a coaching-type relationship, none through counseling that I can recall or would identify as such.

Researcher – Modeling: How has exposure to models (churches/organization, groups, individuals) created personal transformation in you?

Bob – I'm not certain I would use the term "personal transformation" as much as recognizing these organizations have had an impact upon me and my leadership principles or styles. Personal transformation seems a bit too dramatic - I have always believed that since our methodology is a dynamic element we can (and should, perhaps even, *must*) look to other organizations for potential inspiration as to our models and systems.

Researcher – Who or what were these models?

Bob – Disney; IDEO; Various ministries that I believe have significant impact upon their communities in differing ways.

Researcher – How did these models affect your values, attitudes and behaviors?

Bob – I have no problem "proactively sharing" (euphemism for *stealing*) ideas and systems from other organizations and adapting them to fit my particular context. Much more than simply copying - it is a culling of principles from others and allowing the Holy Spirit to modify the implementation as required by our community context. For example: Disney has systematically structured creativity into their organization - it is not an after-thought application, it is fundamental. IDEO routinely takes everyday tasks and rethinks them without considering the items we have come to associate with those tasks - leading them to innovative solutions, often by employing items or objects from completely unrelated tasks. For example, the concept of nestling grocery carts influenced their design of office chairs that can nestle in similar fashion. As a Lead Pastor I have led our staff and church to consider our approach from the perspective of desired outcome rather than solutions to systematic concerns (i.e. asking, "*How do we facilitate growth in Christ-likeness in our people?*" rather than asking, "*How do we get enough Sunday School teachers/classes?*" The first question assumes only the outcome, not the methodology, while the latter presumes a specific methodology).

Researcher – Experiences: Can you name an experience that proved to be pivotal or transformational in your development?

Bob – I have been privileged to serve in various churches marked by some very distinct cultures and experiences. Two in particular were marked contrasts to each other: one involved a congregation that had experienced a traumatic moral failure of previous leadership and was currently being led by a Sr. Pastor that personified *resolute* humility through the healing stages. The next was a well-established congregation being led by a Sr. Pastor whose personal insecurities had led him down a slippery-slope of ethical compromise, culminating in spiritual abuse of the congregation.

Researcher – How did it change you?

Bob – I had the opportunity to serve under two very distinct experiences that stood in sharp contrast to one another, affording the Holy Spirit ample opportunities to help me learn differing approaches to pastoral leadership with exposure to both the immediate and longer term consequences.

Researcher – Did this experience altar any of the following: philosophies, values, attitudes, and behaviors? If so, how?

Bob – Very much so. I was able to experience the direct results of spiritual abuse by leadership from the victim's perspective. Though I (and my family) did not receive too much of the abuse personally, my role as Senior Associate Pastor "devolved" into one of helping piece back together the lives that the Sr. Pastor and his wife had torn to shreds

through their insecurities and manipulations. The Holy Spirit used these opportunities to highlight within my own heart those areas where I could be prone to similar tendencies. Though I wasn't appreciative during this period, I have since come to see the value of learning these lessons without having to look backward over my pastoral career and seeing a trail of broken people behind me. As a result of these experiences, we were willing to take on a church that had a similar history of spiritual abuse from pastoral leadership with a level of competency to lead it through the healing process.

Researcher – Training and Education: Since entering into the ministry, what training or education has been transformative and has made you a better agent of change?

Bob – I have participated in various learning opportunities during my career in vocational ministry. The single most significant, though, would likely be the Church Leadership Cohorts led by Dr. Mel Ming (Leadership Development Resources, LLC) provided by the Network. I have participated in two Cohorts, the first while serving as an Associate Pastor and the second as Lead Pastor of the church I currently serve at.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I imitated successful men and practices.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Bob – I wouldn't go so far as to say "imitate." Emulate perhaps to some degree, though as I answered earlier, I find no difficulty in learning from others' styles or experiences and adapting to my own personality, gifting, and circumstances.

Researcher – “This training/education was effective because I was invited to become uniquely the person God created me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Bob – I would say this has been more of the case than direct duplication or imitation. The training I received in my initial ministry internship (which lasted for three years concurrent with my attendance at Northwest College) was very much tailored to my individual personality and needs, while I have felt that the education I received at Northwest was of a minimum value overall. This internship, however, was created by the church leadership independent of any school or course ties. With some significant exceptions, the majority of my formal education was not about discovering my unique leadership style or philosophy. If I had to summarize my Northwest College experience in one statement I would assert that it was an extremely expensive, extended catechism into Assemblies of God culture and polity, during which I established impacting relationships with a small number of professors who connected with their students despite the prevailing trend.

Researcher – Organizational Development: In turning-around a declining church, or developing the organizational structure of the church, did it cause any personal transformation in you that was significant?

Bob – I'd be tempted to say that, yes, I have been transformed through this process, though I wouldn't necessarily point at "developing the organizational structure" as the

primary change-agent. I tend to view the Church of Christ (and a local congregation as a local expression of the larger Body) more as an *organism* than an *organization*; and thus it is the functional *realities* of the church more than the functional *structures* of the church that tend to produce transformational change in individuals. I would never assert that a local church can function *well* (or in a sustained fashion) devoid of organizational structures, yet I would contend that transformation is not dependent upon functioning structures.

Researcher – “I became a change agent because I worked for a dynamic leader.” Agree or disagree? If so, Explain.

Bob – Are you using the term *dynamic* in its literal sense or its cultural sense? If the former, then absolutely I would say that serving under leaders who were willing to embrace change in themselves has led me to seek out and welcome change in myself, and thus be reflected in my own leadership as well. If instead you intend the cultural combination of personal charisma, ambition and professionalism that has captured the use of the term *dynamic*, then I would answer that it has had some impact (one of the pastors I have served under would definitely fit this description) but not necessarily as the reasoning behind my becoming a change agent.

Researcher – Is there a relationship between how you brought about change in your church and how you brought about change in your personal life? Can you explain what that would be?

Bob – I believe it is impossible for an effective leader to not have who they are influence the organization they lead - especially in the realm of vocational pastoral ministry. Were I to disallow the possibility of change in myself (through any self-righteous sense of having "arrived" in my own discipleship) it would be unlikely that I could lead with a sense of seeking change in the lives of the congregation I serve. I know that John Maxwell contends that a leader cannot lead an organization where he/she themselves have not been (and there are certainly arenas where this may be the case) I would add (something to the effect of) *with the exception that the leader be a "learning leader" willing to co-learn right alongside their people.*

Researcher – “My personal transformation(s) enabled me to shrink the gap between who I am and whom God desires for me to be.” Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Bob – Isn't that the very definition of discipleship and sanctification? What does becoming Christlike consist of if it were not a series of personal transformations from who we are to who God would have us be? Am I not understanding the question you are implying here?

APPENDIX 5: Follow-up Phone Interview Questions

Follow-up phone interview - April 22, 2010

Researcher: This is a study in personal transformations and the agents of transformation (*spiritual, mentoring, modeling, experiences, educational and organizational*) that have enabled Pastors to turn-around a declining or plateaued church. The following four questions deal with the nature of that transformation. In other words, where was the movement and in what areas did they become “less” have and move to become “more” of?

Researcher–Question One: The transformation you experienced has enabled you to move from being less *insecure* in your leadership to becoming more *decisive* in your leadership (*i.e. confident, showing an ability to make decisions quickly, firmly, and clearly*)?

- Yes or No?

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moving from insecure to decisive					9 out of 10 said yes				
Moving from insecure to courageous					10 out of 10 said yes				

- And why do you say that?

Pastors’ answers to Question One:

Vern Fisher: I like courage better (ambiguity to very courageous)

Don Olson: In some areas it has made me less secure of myself – more courageous – but I know where the answers are (it is interesting that Don Olson said no on this, because he said in the interview that being decisive was a mantra of his. But being in transition does funny things to you. You may not become as decisive as you think you should be. Finding the right answers seems to be important)

Rick West: Yes, we walked into a very hurting and destabilized church – had to make some very courageous decisions to give people hope – and spiritually courageous. We had to believe it by faith that God had a plan.

Duncan Bright: Has to do with my identity in Christ...I trust my motive because they are Christ centered and Christ driven...I can act on my decision.

Randy Clark: Courageous

Doug Christiansen: The book the *Unity Factor* by Larry Osborne helps me become more decisive.

Gary Caplow: Courageous and decisive go together more side by side, God is decisive, so we should be also.

Mike Smith: I strongly believe in being decisive. More wrong decisions are made by being indecisive than being decisive.

Larry Harris: I'm not afraid to make mistakes.

Bob Ruiz: Never had trouble being decisive – not risk adverse. I tend to be too risky or daring. I need to tone it down.

Researcher–Question Two: Could you say that this transformation has enabled you to move from being less *independent* to more *interdependent* (*relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation, or interaction*) with God and seeing oneself as God's partner in building His church?

- Yes or No?

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
From independent to interdependent					10 out of 10 agreed				

- And why do you say that?

Pastors' answers to Question Two:

Vern Fisher: I whole-heartedly agree.

Don Olson: I became more interdependent upon people and God. I felt the MA cohort accomplished that.

Rick West: Yes. It is really helpful to turn over leadership, areas of ministry to leaders. The church will never really rise above our ability to lead. It is all about equipping and releasing people.

Duncan Bright: My weakest area in ministry is finance, becoming more interdependent has help me in that area...interdependence on each other and on God. When I know who I am in Christ I can act in a Christ like way to others...

Randy Clark: More dependence on God, do not put it on autopilot – you can carryout some things but the reality is our need for God.

Doug Christiansen: Because of LDR cohorts – it has increased the interdependence in the church. That raised the banner for mission in the church.

Gary Caplow: It has led me to see how God is decisive – how connected we are to Him.

Mike Smith: My secret is to really focus on others on God and team.

Larry Harris: The only way things have a lasting value, is the Holy Spirit has to make it happen.

Bob Ruiz: Rely on the people God has placed around me.

Researcher–Question Three: Has your personal transformation moved you from less *indifference* (lack of interest, care, or concern) to becoming more *relational* inside and outside of the church and also with God?

- Yes or No?

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Moved from indifference to Relational	8 out of 10 said yes
More strategic in relationships	10 out of 10 agreed

- And why do you say that?

Pastors' answers to Question Three:

Vern Fisher: Outside of the church – outside yes. But I started to draw a line with consumer Christians. I became less relational with consumer Christians. Self-serving views tend to die on their own.

Don Olson: That was already in place – I have become more strategic in my relationships.

Rick West: Yes. But I confess my DNA is relationship – if I don't have that connection I shrivel up and die.

Duncan Bright: It's all relationship...deepening in my own relationship with God and then that translate to everyone else.

Randy Clark: It has given me a greater desire not to be a respecter of person (rating people as down and out, or up and coming, etc) – seeing them in a light as (having same value to God as others).

Doug Christiansen: I was already in a relational mode, and was able to bring about being more relational by taking over the reins of the church. The people in the church have reflected that.

Gary Caplow: More relational in all those areas. They help you from being alienated – people follow those who they trust that come out of relationship.

Mike Smith: I am very relational and that’s how we have seen growth in the churches we have pastored.

Larry Harris: Yes, I am already wired that way; but it has given me a more of burden for those in my community that are lost.

Bob Ruiz: I had to learn to be more relational, mostly consistent on how to be more relational. I’ve I had to learn to be more “touchy, feely.” Create systems to care for people, but had to become more hands-on.

Researcher–Question Four: Would you say that your transformation has moved you from a position of *similarity* with other pastors, models, and ministries to *uniqueness* in your calling and ministry?

- Yes or No?

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moved from similarity to uniqueness					9 out of 10 agreed				
Similarity and uniqueness					1 our of 10				

- And why do you say that?

Pastors’ answers to Question Four:

Vern Fisher: I am comfortable with that.

Don Olson: My tenure at my previous church helps me move to uniqueness in ministry.

Rick West: Yes, God created us all to be individuals; you were created unique and start to lean into that uniqueness.

Duncan Bright: Uniqueness is dependent upon where God has placed us, and out of that environment God develops a unique relationship. Different relationship – driven by my Relationship in Christ.

Randy Clark: The more comfortable I am with myself – the more unique we become in doing – our gift mix, congregational reality, you become your own version.

Doug Christiansen: Transformation first then pick-up the tools and models and see the philosophy behind it – we know who we are, we have found the most effective resource to help us get to where we want to go

Gary Caplow: It works both ways – it also draws people your way – that is why we started a Pastor’s School years ago, people wanted to discover our uniqueness – brought some – Similarity brought people my way but uniqueness brought people our way also.

Mike Smith: I do feel like I am a little bit unique.

Larry Harris: Maverick-ish, oddballness, (laugh), yes I see myself as more unique.

Bob Ruiz: More about maturity over transformation. Finding your own voice.

Thank you for participating in my research project.

Nick Buhler