



**Changing the Church
Without Blowing it Up:
Motivation, Process,
Focus, and Vision**

By

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Chapter 1

Good Idea—Bad Strategy

Dr. John has served First Baptist Church for over 12 years. As a church of attraction, it has become the largest congregation in the county. Nestled near the city center of a medium-sized southern community, it reaches people throughout the area. With 2,500 members in Sunday school and worship, First Baptist attracts leaders from throughout the community. Its influence is felt at every level of the social structure in the area.

John is a strong leader. He is a gifted teacher and visionary. He is an intelligent pastor who effectively leads a staff of 20 and guides the Deacon Board of 40.

About a year ago, John launched a fact-finding committee, with the assignment of conducting an analysis. This team was to study the future of the church. Behind this effort was the assumption, in John's mind, that the congregation could experience more growth through outreach. John had concluded that the church was in a poor location that hindered the potential to reach lost people for Jesus Christ. With this in mind, he carefully chose those who would be on the analysis team. He included those who were active in community development and real estate. After several months of solid demographic study, the analysis team brought John a report. It was their conclusion that the church ought to relocate. In retrospect, and with the objective perception of an outside consultant, it was confirmed that they had come to the right conclusion.

The church is three blocks from the downtown area, in a neighborhood setting. However, for a congregation that had become a church of attraction with regional impact, it was not visible or accessible. In the last 40 of First Baptist's over 100 years in this location, the culture of America had changed. There were no longer neighborhood grocery stores. The small theater downtown was abandoned. The *neighborhood mentality* of American culture had given way to a *destination mentality*. People shopped at the new mall, built on a major highway. That mall is both visible and accessible. Across from the mall is a multiplex theater, with 18 screens, providing multiple choices and ample parking. First Baptist fit the paradigm of a regional church of attraction, but it was handcuffed because of its location.



While the analysis team came to the right conclusion, and Dr. John's insight and visionary thinking was on track, what happened next turned out to be an excruciating but helpful lesson in motivation, development, and change. With the enthusiasm of an excellent leader, John brought the conclusion of the analysis team to the Deacon Board. Speaking from the context of his goal-oriented leadership style (which was not always sensitive and relational), John spoke to the deacons with excitement and visionary challenge. Unfortunately, not all of the 40 deacons were prepared for what they heard. Some, who were visionaries, found excitement in John's suggestion to relocate. Others struggled to process such an enormous paradigm shift in their worldviews. Some immediately focused on real estate and wondered who would purchase their present \$5–6 million property. A few focused on their lifelong vision that their own funeral would someday take place in the very building where they worshipped most of their lives.

While the deacons were asked by Dr. John to keep this relocation information within their group, several found the concept stressful beyond their imagination. Perhaps, therapeutically, they felt they had to talk to someone. Some talked to their wives, their wives talked to others, and within days, most of the people in this large church were either excited, threatened, or depressed—depending on their understanding of the issues, their view of the church's mission, and their level of trust in Dr. John.

First Baptist is much like the story of the chameleon who wandered through a fabric store. As it walked across a green swatch of cloth, it turned green. When it walked across red, it turned red. But when it stepped onto a piece of plaid, it blew up!¹ This is what happened at First Baptist. The church, at least temporarily, emotionally blew apart. What happened? Ultimately, Dr. John learned a great lesson in the discipline of motivation, development, and change.

Customs and Buildings

Two areas seem to challenge Christians more than any others. Anyone who has worked with congregations as an outside consultant knows these areas well. They are the most challenging. They occur when you introduce change to customs and habits (particularly worship), and when you broach the subject of leaving or changing buildings. This challenge is not restricted to First Baptist Church, or the 21st Century. In fact, in the early church,



Stephen was stoned to death, as recorded in Acts 7. While many see his martyrdom as a result of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the root cause was connected to some Jews who stirred up the crowds. They heard Stephen say that Jesus of Nazareth would tear down the temple and change all the customs (building and customs, which includes, most visibly, worship!).² Dr. John was experiencing a reality of church life that has existed from the beginning. Initiate change and you will find yourself challenged. Initiate change brutally, without proper motivation and development, and you could get stoned to death. This doesn't mean change is evil. In fact, change in the Christian Church is one of its foundational principles. However, change brings criticism. As David Hocking said, "The only way I know to avoid criticism is to say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing."³



Chapter 2

Initiate Change, Avoid Being Stoned

Dr. John learned that being a change agent begins as an inside job. All leadership development is an inside job. John was right. The growth of this church required change. However, a prerequisite for that change was a growth that had to occur within him and his style of leadership. A leader's success is largely determined by the ability to motivate others. Prerequisite to that is the issue of self-motivation.

How are you motivated? What is it that gets you up in the morning, keeps you on task in ministry, and gets you through the challenges? How do you manage your own motivation? The management of self-motivation begins with your call to ministry. It is that divine ingredient, that spiritual spark, that occurs when God lays His hand upon you and gives the high calling of a public servant and leader of a church. Motivation is important. Before his conversion, Paul was arrogant, aggressive, and deviously creative in the persecution of Christians. How did that change after he was converted and called to ministry? He was still quite arrogant, aggressive, and deviously creative—for the cause of Christ. In other words, what changed the most when he got the call? His skills, style, and temperament didn't change. His motivation changed. That motivation came from his call to the cause of Christ.⁴

Motivation is key. It is the source of motivating others. As leadership teacher John Maxwell says, "Motivated people motivate people." Tied closely to your calling is the vision God has given you for ministry. That vision is the fuel for your motivation. As Maxwell explains further, "...valuable visions give energy. Only he who sees the invisible can do the impossible. Basically, we go where our dreams will take us."⁵ That works, when God gives the dream.

Managing Yourself

Perhaps one of the most profound insights for motivation comes from Dee Hock in his book *Birth of the Chaordic Age*. Hock, founder and CEO Emeritus of Visa Corporation, has two ultimate conclusions about management. Management is not about making other people better. It is about making a better person of yourself. His second conclusion is that management is not the key. It is leadership. Hock concludes that 50% of your efforts should be toward leadership of yourself. Literally half your efforts should be on



self-motivation, ongoing education, honing of skills, and personal growth. Hock says that the next 25% should be toward leading those who have authority over you. In Dr. John's case, that would be the deacons. Does that make sense? It does, now, to John! Hock claims you should spend 20% of your time influencing (leading) your peers. Those are people over whom you have no authority and who have no authority over you. Those are your associates: those in your area, or staff that works with you on a team level. That leaves 5% of your time spent on influencing those over whom you have authority. As for those who have authority over you, you must know and understand them. You teach, influence, and persuade them. You motivate them. You challenge them, influence them, and forgive them. You set an example for them. However, in doing so, it must be balanced with half your time (50%) in self-leadership and development. This is the core of self-motivation.⁶

Your self-motivation originates in Christ. The Scripture says, "We are ruled (re-motivated) by the love of Christ, now that we recognize that one man died for everyone, which means that they all share in His death. He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for Him who died and was raised to life for their sake."⁷ With his focus on motivation, Oswald Chambers once wrote, "The great wonder of Jesus Christ's salvation is that He changes our heredity. He does not change human nature—He changes its source, and thereby its motives as well."⁸

Personal motivation is nurtured by a consistent prayer life. Your prayer life is essential to motivation for ministry. It is a disciplined holy habit. The effort to develop a disciplined prayer life is driven by the presence of Christ on the one hand, and the challenges of ministry on the other. Jim Cymbala reflects, "Prayer cannot truly be taught by principles and seminars and symposiums. It has to be born of a whole environment of felt need. If I say, 'I *ought* to pray,' I will soon run out of motivation and quit; the flesh is too strong. I have to be *driven* to pray."⁹

When it comes to the fine art of motivating others, there are different styles. Ken Heer, coordinator of the Leadership Development Journey of the Wesleyan Church, suggests that church leaders should have the freedom to develop a style that is unique to their context and to who they are. He says, "Church leaders have to be astute at reading their own situation and working within it....Too many pastors listen to others and imitate them rather than being in-



spired by others and then allowing God to work new principles and practices through them within their setting and situation. How you motivate, develop, and initiate change needs to be appropriate to you and your church. Transformational leadership must work toward its goals with the present local situation in clear focus.”¹⁰

Law and Gospel

Motivating others, in a general sense, includes two basic points of origin. They are opposite motivation starting points. One is the law, and the other is the Gospel. Motivation from the law focuses on fear and retribution: “If you don’t share Christ with your neighbor, your neighbor’s going to go to hell, and some day, God will look you in the eye and ask you why you didn’t share the message of salvation.” Though this type of motivation may inspire or scare people into activity for the short-term, it is not a biblically-based directive for creating a healthy atmosphere for motivation and change. Dwight L. Moody said, “People have a way of becoming what you encourage them to be, not what you nag them to be.” The Gospel, on the other hand, motivates people by God’s love and through His grace: “Isn’t it wonderful to know Jesus Christ as your Savior? Isn’t it amazing that God would call us to be ambassadors for Christ? What a privilege and what an honor we have! And what an opportunity it is to share this Good News with someone like your neighbor. All heaven rejoices when a person repents of their sins and receives Christ. We get to experience that joy, and ultimate fulfillment at the highest level, when we share that Good News with our neighbor.” This is the art of positive leadership. It was the great leader Napoleon who once said, “Leaders are dealers in hope.” It is that positive, hopeful presentation that motivates people and is a key to managing your leadership style of motivation.

In an excellent article on motivation, church growth advocate Dr. Win Arn provided outstanding insights. The article is based on research he conducted asking pastors to identify their greatest growth-restricting obstacles. The greatest challenge was to motivate people in the church to want to grow and be part of the change process. To diagram a motivation continuum, Arn developed a scale from low motivation to high motivation.

Duress/ Force	Coercion	Duty	Obligation	Expectation	Desire	Personal Fulfillment	Love
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LOW MOTIVATION -----HIGH MOTIVATION



Arn provides great insight when he asks the question, “Can people move from a sense of duty, for example, to one of self-fulfillment or love?” He answers that question, saying that people surely can. How? Arn reports a key part of the answer...is, “by enlarging their frame of reference.”¹¹

A New Experience

Arn goes on to explain that a person’s frame of reference is enlarged when new information is assimilated. It often includes a new perspective. This is called “thinking out of the box.” It creates an “ah-ha!” experience. There are many ways to enhance a person’s frame of reference. One of the best is to visit growing churches. I continually encourage church leaders to visit other churches. A pastor should have four or five Sundays off per year, simply to see what God is doing elsewhere. Choose innovative, growing churches that have caught the attention of others. In this information age, a “buzz” occurs when a church is innovative and God blesses it with vitality and growth. In addition, there are numerous parachurch organizations that serve as sources of information. These ministries have people who spend their lives traveling to churches and gathering examples. While most of this information eventually makes its way into published materials, there is no substitute for experiencing the “ah-ha!” phenomenon firsthand. Pastors should encourage key influencers in the congregation to visit growing congregations as well.

The “ah-ha!” phenomenon also occurs when people participate in a mission trip to a different culture. It happens, also, when church members move out of their comfort zones through a servant activity among those who are less fortunate. Another way to enlarge the frame of reference is to ask an “outside expert,” like a consultant, to visit your church and dialogue with people, sharing concepts from other churches that stretch their horizons. This provides a catalytic effect as people are opened up to new paradigms.

Win Arn tells the story about Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community in North Barrington, Illinois, who wanted to learn more about unchurched people. He wanted to know if his sermon would speak to the needs of a person who was not involved in a church. Hybels took his sermon notes to a tavern and picked out a person, watched his behavior, and asked, “Does this message speak to that man’s needs?” There is another important exercise for all Christians to enlarge their frame of reference: Meet and spend time with



unchurched people. Listen and learn from them. By expanding your frame of reference, you move up the scale of motivation toward the high end.¹²

Another dimension of motivation can be observed through one of the discourses Jesus had with the disciple Peter. Jesus spoke with Peter about feeding the sheep. This is a key motivational issue, because every church leader, if honest, would privately admit that there are many hard-to-love sheep in the local flock. Motivation is more difficult when you serve cantankerous church members. Jesus puts this into perspective by directing Peter to the motivational source. He does not ask Peter to feed the sheep based on his love toward the sheep. Repeatedly, Jesus asks, “Do you love *Me*?”¹³ That is the motivation, especially when it comes to difficult people. When life blew up at First Baptist Church, Dr. John discovered that the behavior of a few became ugly. It was hard to find the motivation to love them, except by the love for Christ, that “controls us.”¹⁴



Chapter 3

Change: Always an Imposition

Dr. John learned the hard lesson that change is difficult for people. Change takes you out of your comfort zone. It was Mark Twain who said that the only person who really likes change is a baby with a wet diaper. Your view toward change is directly related to the discomfort felt at the moment. Dr. John should have prepared the environment at First Baptist Church. While it might have taken a year or two, by asking questions he could have raised the level of discomfort within the congregation by raising questions about why the church was stalled in its growth.

Change is hard. The most common response to challenges in the church (and all organizations) is to work harder. Why? Because change is so hard. Speaking to the business sector about organizations in general, Donald Sull shares business sense that is applicable to the local church. He says, "Most leaders today recognize that the future will differ profoundly from the past, and that competitive formulas that led to earlier success can lead to future disaster. History, however, exerts a strong gravitational pull on organizations, particularly successful ones. Faced with dramatic changes in their competitive environment, most...respond not by doing things differently, but by doing more of what worked before. When these tried-and-true actions fail to achieve the desired results, most...redouble their efforts, and in their haste to dig themselves out of a hole, only dig themselves deeper."¹⁵ The re-duplication of old efforts, rather than the development of new initiatives, is evidence that there is a natural, predictable, and expected resistance to change.

While change is difficult, leading change is harder. John Maxwell has recently shared an astounding insight. John admits that throughout his years of studying leadership, he always had the bias that leaders resisted change less than followers. However, through continued research, he has come to the conclusion that leaders often resist change *to a greater degree* than followers. So the first hurdle in leading change is to process the change and accept it yourself. The good news is that, if Maxwell is right, the more difficult stage of the process is finished once you, personally, make the change. As Maxwell reports, this is more than motivation. He calls it "drive." "Drive is more than motivation. It is self-motivation. Success requires that we push ourselves beyond our comfort zone."¹⁶ Ken Heer concurs. Heer makes a great point in noting that people



really do not resist change, they resist being changed. There are exceptions. Some people thrive on change. However, they aren't the majority of people in your church. Leading people through substantial change is hard on the leader. "Church leaders must understand the cost and pitfalls of being a change agent. Often, leaders are in too great a hurry to get from point A to point Z (let alone point A to point B). They read a book or attend a conference and come up with a whole new idea about what their church and its ministry should look like. On the very next Sunday, they announce their new idea to their congregation, then wonder why they experience conflict during the next weeks of trying to implement their idea. It is still *their* idea."¹⁷ Does this sound like Dr. John at First Baptist Church?

Think Process

Change is a process. It is not an event, a program, pronouncement, or simply a re-write of a mission statement. As a process, change takes time. Change is hard. It generates conflict. Change needs leadership. But it requires a leader with patience and courage.

George Barna, through his research, has focused on pastors who are visionary leaders. He has also studied pastors of churches who experienced a turnaround in vitality and growth. These pastors were change agents. Barna notes that, "these leaders generally had not given prior evidence of being visionary. Although they had exhibited some leadership qualities and had displayed some visionary tendencies, they generally had not distinguished themselves through previous service as visionary leaders."¹⁸ Through his research, Barna discovered that it takes a special kind of person to be a change agent. Barna found that the pastor of a turnaround church is typically a leader who has slowly refined an innate visionary skill. In other words, becoming a skilled change agent is not simply part of one's inherited DNA. It includes a process of learning and growth.¹⁹

Another key insight is that the leader cannot get too far out in front of the people. Dr. John is a brilliant pastor and a strong leader. The deacons are a group of highly intelligent men, who are successful in various aspects of business. But when John dropped the bombshell of relocation, he was so far ahead of at least some of them, the situation blew up in his face. Someone has asked the question, "What is the difference between a leader and a martyr?"



The answer is: “A leader is one step ahead of his people. A martyr is 10 steps ahead of his people.” For several months, Dr. John was feeling like a martyr. As John Maxwell has pointed out, “He who thinks he is leading but has no followers is only taking a walk!”²⁰ If the goal is to have others follow your vision, you must do the work that is necessary to keep those with you. “Fresh vision usually comes from the leader of the church. With fresh vision comes passion, energy, and enthusiasm.”²¹ The task of the leader is to not only share the vision, but to do it in such a way that followers catch it. Then followers share in the passion, energy, and enthusiasm as well. Dr. John made the critical mistake of moving out in pursuit of the vision before others had come to fully adopt the vision or the passion for it. While John has some excellent leadership skills, he wasn’t leading if they weren’t following. John needed to cultivate the environment and prepare the ground for the seeds of new ideas that would eventually relocate the church and change history. While John is an excellent senior pastor of a great church with wonderful people, it was important for him to learn the important lessons of how a pastor manages development and change.

Chapter 4

Strategic Management of Development and Change

One of the key concepts for managing change has become a focus in the last two decades. It is the value of articulating what it means to be purpose driven. In the development of a climate for change, this element is powerful. When Dr. John dropped the bomb of relocation, he discovered that some did not see the church from a purpose-driven perspective. Through his lack of cultivation, he was surprised by many whose focus on the church was building-centered. There were others who were program-centered and less tied to the buildings. There were still others who were people-centered, identifying the church primarily as people. Those people would subordinate programs to serve the needs of people, and the building to serve the needs of the program. But only as people are purpose-driven can they subordinate people (even themselves—and their own comfort) to the purpose of the church. This means that programs are subordinated even further, and buildings are significantly subordinated to the purpose of the church. This is what it means to be purpose-driven. It is essential when significant change takes place, because if you cannot subordinate (even) people to the purpose of the church, then those who disrupt can set the agenda. Dr. John learned this dramatically when the mayor of the city, who is a deacon, was quoted in an article on the front page of the local newspaper saying that, "...people should not worry. There is no way First Baptist Church is going to move locations."

How do people *primarily* see the church?

Purpose



People



Programs



Property

Purpose Driven

The concept of the purpose-driven church was made most popular through an excellent book by Rick Warren.²² "Purpose driven" has become standard terminology describing a congregation that is more tolerant to meaningful change. Ron Crandall, in his book *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church*, has expanded on this concept: "A purpose-driven church: (1) builds morale by reducing the tension of competing claims; (2) reduces frustration because it helps prioritize and clarify what needs to be done; (3) builds cooperation among those inside the church and attracts the interest and



cooperation of persons and groups outside the church; and (4) assists in regular evaluation of congregational faithfulness and effectiveness.”²³

The purpose-driven concept goes beyond the development of a vision statement. While vision statements are important, they do not guarantee you will have a visionary church. A visionary statement is a good first step, but only that. The purpose-driven mindset is essential because it helps translate a biblical paradigm, which becomes part of the personality of the congregation. It is fused into the goals, strategies, and the cultural climate of everything the church does. This environment provides the opportunity for a pastor to strategically lead development and change in the constant renewal process that is essential for a vital and healthy church.²⁴

Values

This process represents a level of integrity and dedication to values. These biblical values, which should drive the church, provide a healthy context for development and change. Integrity is not just a part of the church world, but is true of every enterprise. Warren Bennis, addressing all organizations, gives his understanding of integrity. He says, “By integrity, I mean standards of moral and intellectual honesty on which our conduct is based. Without integrity, we betray ourselves and others and cheapen every endeavor. It is the single quality whose absence we feel most sharply on every level of our national life.” It is at this point that Bennis speaks directly to the leader. He says, “But the nation’s integrity will be restored only when each of us asserts his or her own integrity. By their very existence, people of integrity lend hope to our innate conviction that we, as a people, can rise above the current moral cynicism and squalor.”²⁵ Integrity is essential for trust, which provides a platform for development and change.

A Climate for Change

Developing a climate for change is also important. There are 12 characteristics of a church with a positive climate for change. As you read through the list, score your church, from your perspective, in each of these areas, on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being “weak” and 10 being “strong”). Then, ask your leaders do the same. Instead of focusing on who is right or wrong, use the results of the evaluation as a constructive context for discussion, prioritizing, and problem-



solving. Here are the 12 characteristics of a climate for change in a congregation:

1. Institutional survival goals are a low priority.
2. People are very open to new ideas and innovation.
3. There is a high tolerance and even affirmation for those people who have “maverick personalities.”
4. The congregation generally responds enthusiastically to big challenges.
5. Most of the people actually enjoy surprises.
6. The church is oriented primarily to the future, not the past.
7. Leaders who think outside the box are supported and encouraged.
8. People are comfortable with the fact that “we don’t do things the way we always did them.”
9. Members in the congregation are generally sensitive to the needs of people who are outside the church.
10. People are at least as comfortable with new innovations as they are with traditional activities.
11. When a new proposal is made, people are able to give serious consideration to it without being threatened or feeling challenged about what they have done in the past.
12. The church is able to attract and keep staff who are above average in professional competence.²⁶

Coaching

Coaching is one of the keys for a pastor who wants to strategically encourage development and change. Tom Bandy has provided an excellent resource, *Coaching Change*, which speaks to this issue. Bandy also supports this concept of developing a positive climate for change. He says, “Great coaches never underestimate the importance of morale—*esprit de corps*—or team spirit. Team spirit is a fluid that fills the gaps between plays, innings, quarters, halves, substitutions, and line changes to create a great game. It is the bond that joins a string of tragic or glorious individual efforts into a shared experience. Team spirit inspires self-sacrifice and injects hope in the midst of despair....This context or environment of team spirit is the foundation for leveraging change in the church.”²⁷

Environment

As you build a climate for change, it is also important to honor the context. This is the greater environment in which you conduct ministry. It includes many elements over which you have little control.



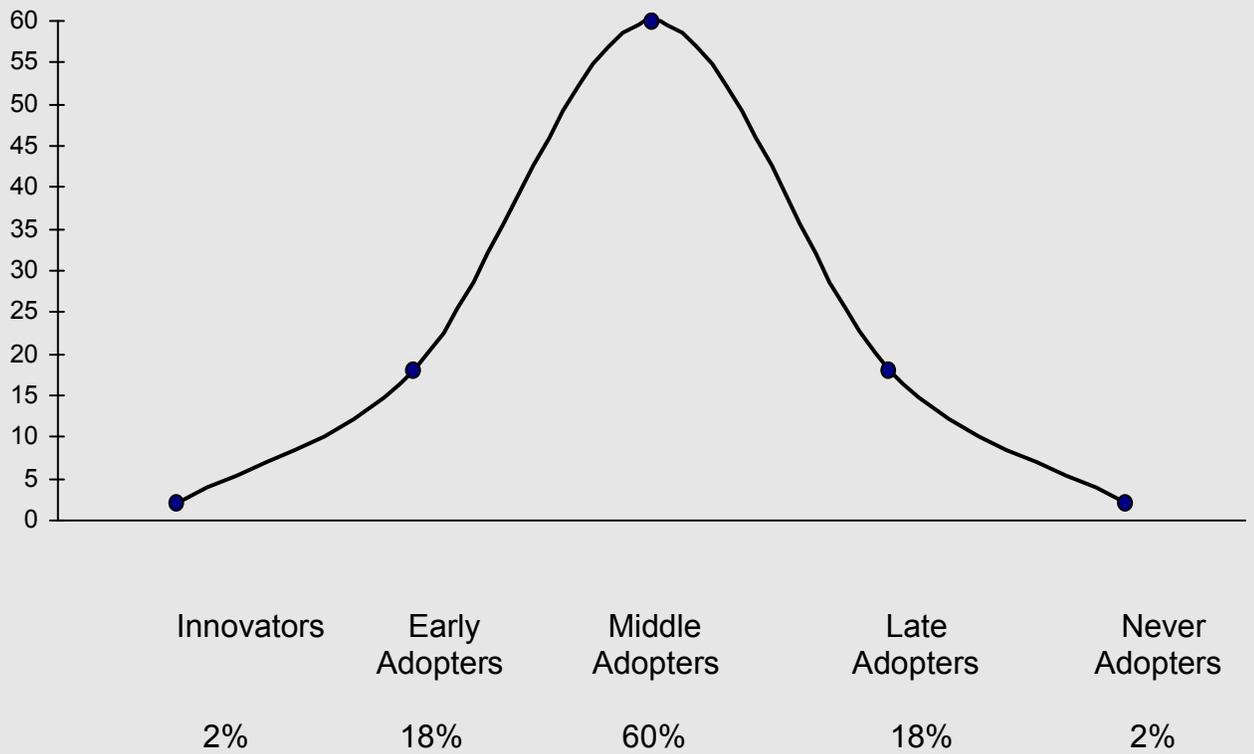
To honor that context, you have to understand it. Many pastors come into a church and initiate change immediately, without understanding their place in history. The historical context of the congregation must be honored as much as the environmental context. It is important to learn this strategic lesson: you can't change history until you join history. This was a mistake Dr. John made with First Baptist Church. He had not done his homework to identify how dramatically many at First Baptist were deeply rooted in the physical buildings and geographic location.

William Boast supports this in what he calls contextual thinking. He says, "In a rapidly changing world, there is no way you can collect enough pertinent data to arrive at a meaningful conclusion in the time necessary to reach the solution. The details are simply not there to give us the answers we need, when we need them. To deal effectively and intelligently with the dynamic world, the individual must carefully assess the context of the problem without fixing on the incomplete set of semi-related details. The 'big picture,' 'holistic,' and the 'macro-scene,' are all synonyms that describe the context. They describe, if not define, what we mean and what we have to deal with....Management...must come to see the context of our world more clearly than we have ever seen it. Our suffering comes from too much attachment to details, lack of vision, and poor context perspective."²⁸

This concept of initiating change and honoring the context is biblical. It is the dynamic of the Incarnation. C.W. Perry says it simply, "Leadership is accepting people where they are, then taking them somewhere."²⁹ This is what Jesus did. It is what Christmas is all about. God comes to human beings, as a human being, to meet people where they are and to take them somewhere. This is the ultimate, divine expression of honoring the context. It is a dramatic model for ministry in the Christian Church and a strategic guideline for initiating change.

Who is the Audience?

Who is your audience as you initiate change? This is a key question Dr. John should have asked as he diagnosed the context at First Baptist Church. For many years, students of change in social organizations have followed a template that is widely used to understand the distribution of people who will respond in different ways to the initiation of change.³⁰ The model follows a traditional bell curve:



The Innovators are those who may be initiating right along with you. They are what have been called “paradigm pioneers.” They are the inventors. They not only accept your ideas, they have thought about it already themselves, or find your ideas invigorating and exciting. Unfortunately, Dr. John at First Baptist only chose innovators for the analysis team. This is why John, who is also an innovator, as well as the analysis team, were blindsided when some so vehemently opposed their honest report concerning the demographics of their community—and the future of their church in its present location. Innovators represent approximately 2% of your congregation.

Early Adopters make up about 18% of the people. They process quickly and are able to receive the concepts of change objectively, without emotional “noise.” They rapidly come to conclusions that this makes sense. They are “on board” early on.

Middle Adopters take more time to process. They also need more information. They ask questions. They help refine the process through their questions. Dr. John should have had some Middle Adopters on his analysis team. Middle Adopters represent approximately 60% of the active members of your church. While they take longer than the Early Adopters, in time, they come on board with the project, usually before it is launched.



However, 18% are Late Adopters. They usually do not change until they are forced to do so. They do not acquiesce to change until after it has happened and they literally have no other choice. They are the people against the new time of worship service (moved to a half-hour-later time slot), and remain unconvinced even several weeks into the change. However, after a couple of months, they come to realize the value of the change and ultimately adopt it. This 18% are somewhat like the disciple Thomas—they have to see it to believe it.³¹

The last category are those who are Never Adopters. Representing 2% of your church, they will never grasp the change. They will either internally resist it; or, externally, they will leave. If you move locations, change leadership style, build new buildings, reinvent the way you make decisions, change a worship service from traditional to contemporary, or cancel the annual church picnic, the Never Adopters will either leave the church or internally resist the change forever. Remember, the way in which you strategically manage development and change can dramatically impact the percentage of Never Adopters.

As you look at this bell curve, who do you think are the leaders of great movements? Chances are, you are only half right. The leaders of movements include the Innovators *and* the Never Adopters. Their movements are dramatically different, but they are the leaders. Innovators in the church are those pioneers who move the church into the next century. Never Adopters are what might be called hard-core traditionalists. They lead resistance movements in churches and in denominations. Some Never Adopters start “cults” or “sects.”



Chapter 5

Introducing Change

How you introduce change is extremely important. In 1985, the *Coca-Cola* Company introduced a new formulated brand of their flagship soda, called *New Coke*. Large-scale taste tests demonstrated that the *New Coke* formula overwhelmingly beat old *Coke* 63% to 37%. Only 10%-12% of people seemed upset by the new brand.

Unexpectedly, as *New Coke* was introduced, a vocal minority condemned the move. The media amplified the story. *New Coke* began to lose ground and the company responded by renaming the old product *Classic Coke*. That did not work, and by 1990, *New Coke* was all but gone. Why did *New Coke* fail when its taste was actually preferred by 63% of the test market? *Coke* failed to realize the power that a small group of discontented consumers had on the opinions of others.

There is a lesson in the *New Coke* episode. When introducing new ideas into a church, it is wise to take seriously the influence that a small subset of members can have on others.³² Guess what? When pastors are forced out of a church, it is usually by less than 10% of the members. This is exactly what happened to cause a near blowup at First Baptist Church. The real key agitators who spread the news that “Dr. John was going to relocate the church” actually amounted to a very small, very upset group. How you introduce change is very important!

Charles Arn, President of Church Growth Incorporated, explains: “People, by nature, resist change. Consequently, *how* you introduce the new idea will greatly effect *whether* it is eventually adopted. Do *not* assume that the idea will be naturally accepted on its obvious merits. It will not. In fact, you are much safer (and more likely to be correct) in assuming that the idea will be resisted. People are allergic to change.”³³ If the church has agreed upon a goal, like a mission statement, and the change introduced can be shown to support that already-agreed-upon goal, it is much easier for people to accept it. Douglas Alan Walrath, in his classic book *Leading Churches Through Change*,³⁴ says the beginning of the process of change is more important than any other stage. Walrath indicates that it is important to begin well. This is when the tone is set and the direction is made. Unfortunately, for Dr. John at First Baptist, their beginning turned out to be so disruptive it set the process back



for years—maybe forever. Now the church will have to re-define and re-establish ground that was rapidly lost in the near blowup. Dr. John's status? He is no longer on staff at First Baptist!

Change by Addition

Always change by addition, never subtraction. For example, the women's group has been declining for several years. It doesn't take a church consultant or rocket scientist to see that as the older women die one by one, the group will default within the next few years. One strategy would be to close down the women's group. Too few women attend and it isn't worth the time and effort. Most younger women work and can't meet during the day, so you propose a new group of women, who will meet in homes and small groups, rather than the evening social event the older women enjoy. These young women want to study the Bible and improve their lives in practical ways. Therefore, you suggest the end of the older women's group and the start of a younger group. This is change by subtraction and, in many churches, could be a sure strategy for disruption. You may need to look for a new ministry in another church! The key concept is this: Let the women's group die a natural death. Don't shoot it. The same is true of worship services. If you are innovating by adding a contemporary worship service, do not replace the traditional worship. Add a new one. Change by addition (when possible), not by subtraction. If the traditional worship service eventually dies for lack of people, so be it. Don't shoot it.

Middle-Stepping

Process change through the art of middle-stepping. Someone once said, "If you want to change the ocean, start with the rivers." This approach to change is least disruptive. By breaking it into smaller bites, it is easier for people to swallow. It's like eating ice cream. If you eat it all at once, you get a headache. It doesn't taste good. You choke on it. Take a bite at a time and it's good! This is what middle-stepping is all about. Change should be broken down into small bites.

Another ingredient to positive change is to identify it as short-term. "We're going to try this for awhile and see if it works. Three months from now, we will re-evaluate." The related dynamic is the concept of experiment. If people know that the change is experimental, and it will be evaluated, the resistance to change dissipates greatly.



Most people are willing to accept change that is short-term and experimental.

Transparency

Another dynamic for introducing change is to overemphasize your transparency. Go to great lengths to communicate that you don't know whether this will work. In this way, you model your own discomfort of the unknown. As you do so, people subconsciously say, "If she can put up with it for awhile and doesn't know if it's going to work, I guess I can, too." At this point you might wonder, how could Dr. John at First Baptist have experimented with relocating the church? John might have employed the services of an outside consultant to help, early in the process. Good consultants bring creative ideas. As an experiment, First Baptist could have rented space in an empty store at the mall. They wanted to initiate a contemporary worship service anyway. To reduce the "shock" to those who have historically gathered in the auditorium for traditional worship (with an orchestra), they could have formed the contemporary service at a satellite location. This approach utilizes the concept of change by addition, not substitution, and, at the same time, positions it as an experiment. In this way, the congregation would "test" a different location without relocating.

Information is important for change. Provide abundant, full, repeated, and varied information. All information should be complete. It should be abundant—you cannot overload information. It should be repeated in different formats, in different ways, at different times. John Kotter, in his book *Leading Change*, concurs: "Vision is usually communicated most effectively when many different vehicles are used: Large group meetings, memos, newspapers, posters, informal one-on-one talks. When the same message comes at people from six different directions, it stands a better chance of being heard and remembered, on both intellectual and emotional levels."³⁵

When introducing change, begin with a reality check. Recognize that some will be unhappy. Some will leave. However, some people leave even if you don't change, or because you don't change. Change is hard. Expect challenges along the way.



Chapter 6

Constant Renewal

A healthy and vital church is in constant renewal. Tom Bandy, in his challenging book *Christian Chaos*, addresses the issue of leadership and organizational change. He talks about church as a permission-giving organization. This is the posture of a thriving church and is vastly different from the traditional organizational model. Many churches are organized with boards and committees that function as permission denying, rather than permission giving. Continual congregational renewal provides opportunities for old structures to change so innovation can take place.³⁶ Church Doctor[®] Ministries has recognized unbiblical forms of church government as a key roadblock for churches.³⁷

Essentials and Non-Essentials

One of the key principles for constant renewal and openness to change is teaching members to differentiate between essentials and non-essentials. Christianity has several essentials. They are the truths of Scripture. They are the teachings for which Christians will “go to the wall” and die, if necessary, to uphold. These essentials include biblical worldviews about the nature and purpose of the church. Without these core values, the church becomes anemic.

In order to deliver the essentials, the church—in every age—develops non-essential vehicles. They are useful, but not essential. They include delivery systems like Bach’s music, a particular liturgy, drums, pews, language patterns (“thees” and “thous”), PowerPoints, architectural forms, and Web sites. At different times in history, all these non-essential vehicles have been useful for carrying the essentials of the faith. Yet, they are all temporary. Culture changes. They are not part of the core essence of what might be called “raw Christianity.” Unfortunately, many Christians cannot distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. They define Christianity through a mixture of essentials and non-essentials. When that happens, customs, habits, and traditions are perpetuated beyond their usefulness. Many would-be change agents spend enormous energy trying to hammer away at changing people on the level of their vehicles. Of greater importance would be to help them change their worldview about essentials and non-essentials. This is an important prerequisite for renewal. This is a common challenge for churches. That is surprising since this challenge was addressed by the New Testament Church. In Acts chap-



ter 15, you can read about one of the first and most heated church-wide meetings in history. It was a debate about whether Gentiles could become Christians without being circumcised and maintaining a kosher kitchen. Could they be real Christians without following all the customs and traditions of Jewish culture? In a landmark decision, the early church leaders provided an understanding of the essentials and non-essentials of the Christian faith, allowing Gentile Christians access to the Gospel with disregard to cultural baggage, as long as it didn't conflict with essential truth. At that moment in history, the Christian Movement changed from a Jewish sect to a worldwide religion with enormous potential. It will have the same impact on your church.

Tradition

Lyle Schaller said that in this world, there are only two constants: Christ and change. Another clear distinction that is basic for the constant renewal of the church is the separation between tradition and traditionalism. Tradition is the living faith of the dead. Perhaps the best example in Scripture is Hebrews 11. This is a list of biblical characters down through the ages who expressed faith in God. They are all dead, but their expression of faith is like a crowd of believers still cheering us on from the grandstands, as we travel the journey of faith. This is tradition at its finest. It is the living faith of the dead. It is the memory, for many of us, of our parents, grandparents, former Sunday school teachers, or pastors who have now gone on to glory. Their spiritual witness lives on in our memories. It encourages us through difficult times. This is a powerful encouragement for the constant renewal of the church.

Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. This is faith in customs, habits, cultural baggage, buildings, and vehicles. The young woman said, "We tried that new church not far from our house, but it didn't even seem like church. They didn't have pews." This is making a non-essential into an essential. It is traditionalism—the dead faith of the living. Jesus reserved His most severe words for those who were rigid, religious traditionalists. When the Pharisees asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the Elders?" Jesus replied, "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"³⁸ Fulfilling God's purpose must always take priority over preserving tradition.³⁹ Traditionalism discourages the continual renewal of the church.



Issues surrounding tradition and traditionalism are spiritual. In the words of Leonard Sweet, “The church builds on tradition; it doesn’t live on tradition. Churches that live on tradition die on tradition. There is an old Chinese saying about clinging to tradition just because it is tradition that reminds us of the reason for spiritual practice in the first place: ‘It’s like carrying a raft on your back after you have crossed the river.’ Tradition is important, but it’s not God; it is a route to God. Transition leaders need to be ‘turnaround’ (that is, *metanoia*) artists. But it is God who effects the turnarounds. Religious leadership is less about turning around or turning ahead and more about turning toward God.”⁴⁰

When you cast a vision for change, you choose who you lose. When you say, for example, “We’re going east,” there will be others who are traveling west. You will inevitably say goodbye to one another. That is a reality of change. Unfortunately, Dr. John did not develop the change process or nurture the motivation. The congregation said goodbye to him. Jesus said that new wine requires new wineskins.⁴¹ Change is a part of life in the church. Being a change agent is part of what it means to be an effective church leader.

¹ David Bryant, *The Hope at Hand* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), pg. 108.

² Acts 6:14.

³ David L. Hocking, *Be a Leader People Follow* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1979), pg. 95.

⁴ Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), pg. 315.

⁵ John C. Maxwell, “Vision: The Process of Passing it On!” (Atlanta, GA: INJOY, 1992).

⁶ Dee Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1999), pp. 69-70.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:15 (TEV).

⁸ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), July 24th devotional reading.

⁹ Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), pg. 49.

¹⁰ Ken Heer, coordinator of the Leadership Development Journey of the Wesleyan Church, Indianapolis, Indiana, in correspondence with the author.

¹¹ Win Arn, *The Win Arn Growth Report* (Monrovia, CA: Institute for American Church Growth), Number 25, pp. 1- 2.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John 21:15-19 (emphasis mine).

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:14 (RSV).

¹⁵ Donald N. Sull, “Management by Commitments,” a chapter in the book by Frances Hesselbein and Rob Johnston, editors, *Leading Change: A Leader to Leader Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

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- Bass, 2002), pg. 73.
- ¹⁶ John C. Maxwell, leadership conference materials.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, Ken Heer.
- ¹⁸ George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), pp. 71-72.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ John C. Maxwell, "How to Gain Influence" (Atlanta, GA: INJOY, *Maximum Impact* tape, Volume 1, Number 11, 1997).
- ²¹ Ibid, Ken Heer.
- ²² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).
- ²³ Ron Crandall, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), pg. 116.
- ²⁴ The focus on infusing visionary ideology into the environment is adapted from concepts described by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras in *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994), pp. 201-202.
- ²⁵ Warren Bennis, *Why Leaders Can't Lead: The Unconscious Conspiracy Continues* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), pg. 117.
- ²⁶ Adapted from Lyle E. Schaller's *Strategies for Change* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), pg. 42.
- ²⁷ Thomas G. Bandy, *Coaching Change: Breaking Down Resistance, Building Up Hope* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), pp. 127-128.
- ²⁸ William M. Boast, with Benjamin Martin, *Masters of Change: How Great Leaders in Every Age Thrived in Turbulent Times* (Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishing, 1997), pp. 101-102.
- ²⁹ C.W. Perry, quoted in *Leadership Journal* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, Inc., Spring 1997, Volume XVIII, Number II), pg. 73.
- ³⁰ I first saw this model explained by Win Arn and Charles Arn of the Institute for American Church Growth in Monrovia, California, and taught by C. Peter Wagner in a Doctor of Ministry course in Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.
- ³¹ John 20: 26-29.
- ³² Gary McIntosh, *The McIntosh Church Growth Network Newsletter* (Temecula, CA: The McIntosh Church Growth Network, September 2000, Volume 12, Number 9), pg. 2.
- ³³ Charles Arn, in correspondence with the author.
- ³⁴ Douglas Alan Walrath, *Leading Churches Through Change* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979).
- ³⁵ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), pg. 93.
- ³⁶ Thomas G. Bandy, *Christian Chaos: Revolutionizing the Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 141-142.
- ³⁷ Church Doctor[®] Ministries has developed a process-oriented Church Government Consultation to help churches develop a New Testament model of decision-making that uniquely fits their congregation.

³⁸ Matthew 15:2-3.

³⁹ Ibid, Rick Warren, pp. 237-238.

⁴⁰ Ibid, Leonard Sweet, pg. 91.

⁴¹ Matthew 9:17.

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