

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Turnaround Leaders

Fifty years of research reveals that most pastors serve plateaued or declining churches. Yet, some pastors are able to lead a church to revitalize its ministry. What types of pastors are able to lead turnarounds?

Ken Priddy, a church redevelopment specialist, points out that there is a difference between a "revitalization pastor" and a "revitalization leader."

According to Dr. Priddy,

"If you are succeeding without suffering, someone has suffered before you.

If you are suffering without succeeding, someone will succeed after you."

revitalization pastors tend to see the church as their client. Thus, whatever they do must serve the interests and needs of people already in the church. This means that such pastors view themselves as an employee of the church. And, since they work for the church, the process of revitalization is seen as gaining consensus to take the church where it wants to go. Lastly, a revitalization pastor desires to lead the church with affirmation and joy. Such pastors do not handle criticism well, and they definitely do not want people to leave the church.

In contrast **revitalization leaders** believe God is their client. Thus, whatever they do must serve the interests and desires of God rather than church members. They view themselves as leaders who take the church where it does not want to go but needs to go. This most often means they lead without affirmation and often with pain.

Revitalization of a local church causes pain. As a wise person once told me, "If you are succeeding without suffering,

someone has suffered before you. If you are suffering without succeeding, someone will succeed after you." It is clear that turning around a church will take a leader rather than a revitalization pastor. Leaders are willing to suffer the pain needed to revitalize a church, while pastors often are not willing to do so.

So, what are some other aspects of revitalization leaders?

1. Outgoing personality.

Studies have shown that revitalization leaders have an outgoing personality. Using the familiar DiSC personality categories, turnaround leaders are normally either a D or I personality type, but rarely a C or S personality type.

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

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Courageous, godly leadership is paramount!

Revitalization leaders take action.

2. Stay long enough.

Revitalization leaders are committed to stay in the church for an extended period of time. Since it normally takes five to seven years to revitalize a church in a city, or ten to fifteen years in a rural community, pastors must be willing to stay in order to see a church turned around.

3. Takes the initiative.

Revitalization leaders are proactive rather than reactive (D's and I's are proactive, while S's and C's are reactive). Revitalization leaders do not wait for a consensus, but take control and set direction.

4. Cares for the people.

While revitalization leaders build a new church, they must also keep the old church in place. They must work from the top-down and the bottom-up, while rallying the people publicly and privately.

5. Moves fast, slowly..

Revitalization leaders take advantage of every opportunity realizing there is no time to wait in a crisis.

6. Communicates.

Secrecy breeds fear. It also signals to people that a leader does not trust them or think they are competent. Revitalization leaders communicate openly and regularly to all, while looking for others who can help.

7. Lives the mission.

Leaders set an example by living out the mission and focusing on what CAN be done rather than what CANNOT be done.

8. Prays.

To a great extent, a fruitful ministry hinges on the heart of the pastor. Remember: If a church is to capture the heart of its community, Christ must first capture the heart of the pastor. Leading a church through a period of revitalization takes a great toll on a pastor's emotional well-being. Remaining whole emotionally, spiritually, and physically is a fundamental necessity for those leading churches in fresh directions. Spiritual disciplines of prayer, rest, quietness are prerequisites for lasting spiritual health. Pastors leading turnaround churches will find their emotional lives taxed to the limit.

9. Lives a godly life.

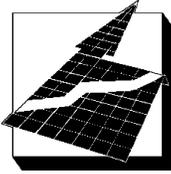
Terry Walling, an expert in assisting pastors in revitalization, reminds us that, "For churches to transition into a new era of ministry, courageous, godly leadership is paramount."

So are you a revitalization pastor or a revitalization leader?



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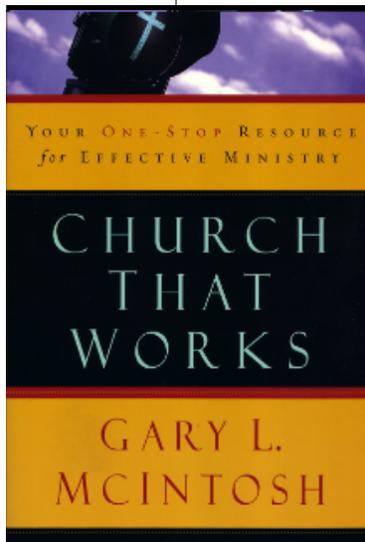
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