

Neutralizing Ministry Fear

**by
Doug Murren**

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INTRODUCTION

Great answers evolve from great questions. This book is based on one great question, "Can fear in ministry be defeated? If yes, how?"

I have been helping churches for 20 years. And I have sought help myself in leading churches for thirty years. Now looking back I can see whether giving or receiving advice, I am surprised how often fear was the reason for ineffectiveness.

It was during one of my calls to a large church in the Midwest in the early 90's that I asked a million dollar question while in the quiet of a hotel room, "Why do I feel like what's going on isn't really what's going on?" I thought, "What is it that lurks behind most church problems?" I wrestled for a couple days with these questions while trying to help this church which was about ready to fly apart. And in one of those moments of clarity I saw the light: "The enemy was fear!"

Our church culture today is assaulted from within by fear more than assaulted from without by enemies. We feed fear. We reward fear. We feel at home with fear more than faith. We lead our ministry development by using fear. Our books are often written to capitalize on our fears about the end times, our families and whatever other concerns we may have. Yes, fear has become a dear friend of the cultures of church and ministry today.

Most church leaders today are far above average in intelligence. But fear has a dumbing down effect upon those imprisoned by it. I have seen many bright people go into tirades that almost resist explanation over utter nonsense. Evening after evening, I have wasted time with groups discussing with great passion issues that were about as important as which color of towels to use in the kitchen. But now I know that what appears to be going on isn't really what's going on.

During one of my consultations, I struggled to help a group decide whether to hire a company to do a feasibility study for a new building. I was contemplating the evening's volley of anger, even accusations that the pastor just wanted to be "big time." I was enjoying my last bite of carrot cake from room service with an NBA game on in the background when I had thought: "I have to identify and neutralize the fear that is taking over this process or I will fail as a consultant." But first I wanted to identify what the main fear was and try and stop it at its source.

I saw that if I could neutralize the fear in the leaders we might get to some unity and design an effective strategic plan for their future that was driven by faith. For the rest of the night, I tried to diagnose all the fears that were possibly resident in the group. The next morning, I directed the meeting away from the issues and led a Bible study on the number of times the Bible warned against being driven by fear. I further presented a list of fears I thought the group could have been susceptible to. We prayed and discussed the difference between wisdom and fear, and eyes began to open to new possibilities. And to my astonishment, this group made progress for the first time in ten years.

I have spent years since trying to understand how fear affects the human spirit, as well as how it can paralyze a business, church or other organizations. Fears are not always that obvious. Yet still I'm amazed at how covert fears can be in ministries, including my own.

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As an evangelist, I know my primary job is to move aside fears people have that distort their vision of Christ. The fear of looking foolish, for example, has to be removed. I usually kill this fear by a little self-deprecating humor. The fear of rejection can block faith as well. So, I tell stories of how I was accepted in my foibles and how good it felt to be accepted rather than rejected. In an outreach meeting, four major fears can be neutralized in a good evening. Life has fed these fears in people's lives for decades sometimes. It astounds me when the attitudes that feed fear are cut off like an umbilical cord, fear easily leaves.

How is it we become fearful as ministries? Simply put, we reward fear. "How?" you ask. We aid and abet fear by what we reward. If you note how boards operate and make decisions, usually the person with the greatest fear gets to set the agenda of a church. The one with the greatest objection is viewed to be the "most conservative" or "careful." But oftentimes the person has some unsettled fear in their lives about the church and maybe even Christ.

We feed fear by majoring on removing sins or mistakes of commission rather than pausing to realize that sins of omission are just as offensive to God as acting poorly. We reward inaction. We call leaders who don't push us or put us in the realm of faith "safe" and "cautious."

We buy into the myth that the future can be controlled. Faith always requires walking into the face of the unknown. But fear seeks to give the sensation of control; and hence we see little faith because we feed this fear by craving control. Ministry growth always requires risk.

Sometimes we build our volunteer workforce and income base using guilt, probably because we know the ranks of church volunteers are the most susceptible to guilt. We talk about how the children will be left unattended and eventually dislike church. We have long left the sense of calling in our requirements to serve. We have forgotten that without a calling most things are better left undone in our churches.

Churches freeze again when in meetings past failings and pain of congregations are allowed to dominate discussions of the future. Where are the voices of the future and heroes of "the good that good be"? Too often they are left muted by the rush to never make those mistakes again. We feed the negative past and we call it a "check." Yet we reward these fears by seeing troublesome faith-oriented leaders as dangerous. And in the end, God is not really a factor in most ministry decisions.

Organizations can't maintain health or effectiveness without treating the "fear quotient" in the group. Fear intangibly burns up tangible resources. Organizations have three basic resources: man hours, money, and morale. Fear can burn up many "man hours" facing problems that will never arise. Fear requires needless studies, needless checking and double-checking, pointless meetings, and hours frozen with anxiety usually over minor issues. At times, fear can command over half an organization's time resources.

Income is affected by fear, too. Funds dry up when fears begin to be bantered about without question. No matter what an organization does, they all will have downturns and make bad decisions that affect the group for periods of time. But wrong turns

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often lead to new discoveries and at least reinforce the true direction Christ requires for a ministries. Failure is good with faith. It isn't the wrong turn that kills a church – it's the reaction to it. If fear is the only "learning" from a wrong turn, the group IQ will fall. A great leader anticipates the fears that will come from bad news and seeks to neutralize it with true wisdom and truth. Biblically monetary blessings follow faith and passion, not perfection.

Morale is a group's internal "can do" factor. The faithful grow weary and move on when the fearful are allowed to dominate the church's directions. I wonder if Jesus wouldn't label most decisions made in groups today as outright sin due to the fear that drives the group. Morale is a delicate facet of church life. It is difficult to raise high and very easy plummet it. High morale is fed by a bright anticipation of the future. When the group can state what it will do rather than what I won't or can't do, morale rises.

Bill had followed a pastor who had been accused of embezzling or "milking the church of its finances." I hadn't been there to see the state of things immediately after the first pastor was removed, but I was sure the stories were true. The first pastor had gradually taken autocratic leadership and marginalized all the other leaders, even though his style was in direct opposition to the church's policy. He had pushed through a salary for himself that was triple what most churches that size paid. The pastor ended his ministry with a severe heart attack. He died three weeks after his health broke down.

The church felt duped and abused, and it was clear they had been. Groups react to feeling taken advantage stronger than any other abuse. If a group feel embarrassed by being taken advantage of, it can take years before they will trust a leader again without some healing.

Bill had been their pastor for two years when he called me to help him personally. He said, "I have been here two years and things just seem to be getting worse."

"What is happening that most concerns you?" I asked.

"I am getting worn out just trying to practice basic leadership; it's a fight at every turn. I took a 25 percent pay cut coming here and it has been a real sacrifice. I have led us through paying off every past due account, the church has grown 185 people the last year, and yet I am questioned with regard to my dress, how many cars I have, how many days off I take. It's exhausting to me," he exclaimed.

I paused to answer and then said, "If you were a church and a leader fleeced you and embarrassed you in front of your children, what would you determine for your future?"

"I guess that I would never let it happen again," he quickly answered.

"This group has had fear counterfeit itself as security, wisdom, discernment, and even the Holy Spirit's voice. You likely shouldn't have come to this church so soon. They could have been better off floundering without a leader for awhile until they had discovered the end of their own sagacity in taking the church out of its tail spin."

"So what should I do now?" he asked.

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“I suggest we take the leaders first through a course on fear. We can teach them the difference between fear and wisdom. And we can show them how fears take over if they are not neutralized by love and faith. Then we will identify these fears that are driving them and we will neutralize them,” I offered.

Over a period of several months, the church began to end its friendship with fear. The group’s self-esteem rose and they began moving on in healthy directions. Fear is the most embedded chief enemy to ministry everywhere. And this church began to see the real enemy of their future wasn’t being abused; it was being fearful.

In most of his interactions with people, Jesus aimed at neutralizing fears. He offered Himself as the antidote for anger and fear. He presented Himself as the final proof that fear was without power.

The speeches and demeanor of some of the world’s greatest leaders like Churchill, FDR, John Kennedy, and Ronald Regan – were loaded with verbal power that diminished fear. We could take a lesson from them and empower our own speaking with words that neutralize crippling fears as well. Neutralizing fear is a skill that we all can learn. I think the following pages will be a great starter course for any leader of a Christian or other organization who wish to stop the negative impact of fear.

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Chapter One

Identifying a Culture of Fear

A culture of fear is an environment where fear is the energy source for the operation of the organization. An organization frozen by fear cannot get anything done without conflict or threat. In contrast to a culture of fear, a culture of faith operates off of positive energy, receiving its energy from the “power of a better dream.” A culture of fear fatigues creativity. A culture of hope energizes everyone.

Although a culture of fear can accomplish a great deal, it does so at great cost. Albeit there is little doubt that companies have thrived and excelled on the basis of paranoia. The downside is usually not worth the gains. This isn’t hard to conceive since competitiveness run awry in the business world is driven by a camouflaged fear of being beaten.

In this chapter, we will look at a few traits of a culture of fear. See if you can recognize any of these traits in any organization in which you are involved. The good news is that when the positive corollary of each of these traits is embraced a culture of fear can turn into a culture of faith. As you go through this list, you will think cure rather than criticism.

Crisis Mode Junkies

In cultures of fear, most decisions aren’t made without a crisis. I’m thinking of Third Church in Little Stick, Texas. (Name of church changed to protect me and the innocent.) For years, this church anticipated some major staff shifts. They called me in to help them with some ideas for finding personnel, specifically a music department leader. The entire church was in crisis because it appeared to the church that the former music leader made a snap decision and moved to another church. All of us who have ever led a church or organization know the instability a sudden move by a staff leader can cause. I asked the personnel task force why they waited until a crisis point to find a new music pastor.

One of the board members laughed and said, “Well, we’ve talked about it for two and a half years now. Jim told us he thought of heading back to the secular music world, but we never imagined he would take a position at another church 15 miles away. It has caused problems in the perception of how our pastor is running things.”

I asked him again, “But why did you not begin the process of looking for a new leader until now?”

The pastor chimed in, “This church has developed a habit of not making any decision until a crisis arises. It appears to me that we need the energy of either conflict or crisis to get anything done. And consequently we are fearful of being strategic. We need some help.”

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My pastor friend was absolutely right. Cultures of fear fail to plan strategically. Again and again, I find more inspirational leaders are reluctant to deal with positive strategic planning because they have grown accustomed of waiting to move forward until the fear factor has triggered so much adrenaline in the organization that frenetic actions and solutions are possible.

The board in Third Church was paralyzed by many needed decisions, not just this one. I suggested they immediately get into a five-year strategic plan. They set up a team with the pastor to learn the fine art of anticipating changes that arise and get over the habit of needing frenetic energy to accomplish anything.

Fear doesn't just paralyze some organizations – it can become addictive. This kind of process functions a great deal like drug addiction. Organizations like this require an outside “chemical” to thrust them into action. Neither is it hard to imagine that most organizations that operate this way make poor personnel decisions, come up with shabby short-term solutions for their issues, and have a high level of personnel turnover. Cultures driven by the need for adrenaline are caught in the grip of the “fight or flight” mode in all-encompassing way.

No Movement is Good Movement

Dr. Marson in his DISC personality studies notes that the personality characterized as supportive, careful, and strategic also fears change. This profile doesn't work overall in leadership. One of the traits of the culture of fear is that most of its energy is spent toward maintaining programs and projects that are already in place. A culture of fear is not developing – it is locked in the past because the future is seen as an enemy. Like fearful leaders the organization is paralyzed.

Most churches I'm asked to consult in the area of outreach are caught in traits of culture of fear. You can tell it immediately. This kind of “no movement is good movement” organization has no real strategic plan for the future. If there are any plans about the future, they are simply a limited number of stated goals. There are no details dealing with the future because the future is frightening. At times, I've suspected these types of groups would rather the future go away.

A culture that fears movement usually has revised history and conjured either many enemies in the past or heroes that will never again be matched. Denominations have done this quite well. I've found while consulting denominations on outreach and the need to adjust to our post 9/11 world hold to some idyllic past. They will reference a few strong people along the way, but usually denominations have no plan to create dynamic leaders in the future.

If the gaze of an organization is upon a past hero, there is no need to take on the future as a responsibility or as an opportunity for investment. There is nothing wrong with celebrating great men and women of the past in our organizations, but it is pitiful when there is no plan to develop future heroes or even recognize the present. It's worse if it is organizational fear that is in the way.

“No movement is good movement” organizations are universally in decline. As long as no new things arrive, these organizations subsist while everything decays

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around them. These churches become survivalist organizations rather than faithful and obedient ones. Scorecards change from valued achievement to protected status quo.

Today's culture requires that we see the future as a friend and we become action-oriented people. To be effective in our changing culture, we must be nimble. The fearful culture has become a contagion in the church world, hurting us severely. The opportunity has never been greater to reach out to unchurched people and we must shed organizational fear to seize it.

Recently, I was talking with my parents about grief and how it can affect a person. My dad related this story about a family friend whose father died over ten years ago. The man kept the telephone connected, keeping the number active. He had moved nothing in the house, including his father's shoes and clothes. Periodically, he would go to the house and simply sit and absorb the environment. I don't find this too hard to understand. Deep love brings great grief, and sometimes it appears irrational to others. At some point, we must look forward. But to organizations who worship a golden past or hero, fear of the future and the outside world seem to consume them. Much of the energies of such organizations are spent on celebrating the past, seeing how the present measures up to the past, and expressing fear in regard to changing anything already established.

One organization I know well experienced a great deal of fear from the older leaders when the leadership changed hands to the next generation. The subsequent generation, comprised mostly of war babies, dealt with this by making assurances such as

those from the book of Proverbs: "Do not remove the ancient boundaries." They used this verse as a way to maintain the status quo and procedures of the past and to bring comfort. But this statement is actually based on fear, since the verse means nothing close to the organization's application of it. This group feared a negative reaction from past leaders. Though there was a degree of desire to honor the previous generation, the new leaders were fearful of the elders' reaction and change and this made them cowards.

From my observation, this organization was frozen for at least six to eight years in trying to transition without hurting anyone. In the end, the work of a whole segment of leadership was lost. Dramatic departure from the past was required to move forward healthily. As an outside observer, I've concluded that this group has moved into a great deal of health eventually because they were motivated to use the strengths of their tradition, by making plans for the future. By being fearless about applying new perspectives and methods, they moved into their future boldly. Consequently, they are thriving.

Lack of Delegation

Delegation for Power

Delegation is the lifeblood of all true leadership. Cultures driven by fear are characterized by excessive hands-on leadership. Leaders in fearful organizations receive their security from what they do, expressing a high degree of need to keep their importance before everyone's eyes. Subsequently, these leaders also are reluctant to share the credit, incarcerated by the fear that their own position may be in jeopardy.

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It is well established that organizations experience a great bottleneck when there is fear about handing out authority. The tone set in these cultures of fear says, "If I give them authority, they will mess it up and I will have to straighten it out anyway." It isn't just a fear of losing control, but the fear that things will fall apart if they aren't done right.

Organizations with cultures of fear which experience this bottleneck have difficulty retaining qualified and competent leaders. Again, perfect love has been dominated by paralyzing fear in these organizations. The first step for organizations moving from dysfunction to health is usually a reorganization of structure and a new dispersion of authority.

Addiction to Sameness

Fear is based on imagination more than reality. It tends to reinterpret history and myths. The tormenting reality of the church's ineffectiveness today is our addiction to sameness. In North American Christianity, our addiction to sameness followed us from Europe. Denominations today were founded by ethnic groups who have well-established traditions, which sometimes date back hundreds of years. Today's world moves at a much faster pace than a culture of sameness can ever endure and hence nearly all traditions are in trouble in North America.

A few years ago, I was called to consult the leaders of a denomination in Pennsylvania. The group was built around the notion of separation, building a separate fortress culture so the kingdom of God could be exhibited in their midst and the whole world would be drawn to their message. After several centuries, it became clear to the leaders that evangelism needed to return to their repertoire as an organization. The simple truth was that their commitment to "sameness" had not actually created safety and predictability, but had left their children for two generations to being influenced rather than being influencers of society.

The leaders of this denomination wanted to learn all they could from me about aggressive seeker-focused evangelism. We had a great week designing strategies together, moving this organization from sameness to diversity. This particular organization has had already begun to flourish because they were willing to face their addiction to sameness. They wanted to find new ways to match their values and doctrines to reach lost people. Unafraid to face the consequences of their actions if they remained the same, they moved forward. Their commitment to a tradition half a millennia old was jeopardizing their existence and they found enough fearlessness to face it.

Isolationists

Organizations gripped by fear have great difficulty interacting with similar organizations. Often organizations and churches gripped by fear has phrases like, "We only hire within to maintain the spirit of the organization." This statement at first blush comes off with an air of wisdom, but actually it is riddled with fear. The fear of strangers has long been a malady in human community. Many believe it's better to avoid the people over the hill or they may just jar your perception of reality.

Isolated fearful groups often have a great difficulty celebrating the successes of other organizations. Instead of viewing themselves as a co-worker in the cause of

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Christ, they view their purpose more as a competitive stage. They go through great efforts to discourage their constituency from gathering in city-wide meetings or working with cooperative organizations.

We usually think of cults as demonstrating this type of isolation. But it is a fact that many groups we wouldn't qualify as cults have become ineffective because they are so homogenous. I am not talking about ecumenicalism here either. There is a definite place for a unique call and expression of each group in the body of Christ. As we know, there were 12 tribes in Israel with a distinct purpose and call. But even the Bible, they weren't called to be isolated from one another.

Paul the Apostle in the book of Galatians, confronts this issue of isolation. The Gentiles from the church were suspicious of the Jewish church. And only with great difficulty did the Jewish church acknowledge the faith of the Gentile church. In this brief letter, Paul demonstrated that isolation was an affront to the Gospel. Life in Christ is found in community and in cooperation.

The notion that hiring from without could jeopardize an organization is wise sometimes. But I've observed organizations and churches for 30 years, as a consultant for at least 15 of those years. I've found that people "raised up" in an organization can cause just as many problems as those brought in from without. The issue isn't the origin of the personnel but their attitudes. Do they share the values of the organization? Do they resonate with the goals and vision of the organization are questions of greater concern.

Paranoia

Fearful organizations are terrorized by disagreement. It is easy to spot an organization caught in the grips of fear within a few meetings. Handled properly, disagreement is the lifeblood of any organization. Assessment from within and without keeps an organization on the cutting edge. But in dysfunctional fearful organizations, any disagreement or conflict is viewed as a threat to its existence.

Organizations seem to be most prone to the fear of disagreement. We use the term "unity," but it becomes meaningless when bantered around the leaders fearful of ideas contrary to their own. Any disagreement or conflict is immediately viewed as an enemy. But the truth is, disagreement and conflict when handled correctly are a pathway to greater effectiveness. It is an opportunity to show respect and demonstrate the heterogeneous strength of an organization.

Fearful organizations don't develop healthy conflict. The belief that conflict is always a bad thing is part of culture's fear. Unity is confused with sameness and unauthentic agreement. Unity actually means that we are all going in the same direction, seeking the same goal. Unity also means that once the group has decided on the approach, they will all be devoted to that direction. And unity should also adhere to the belief that everyone has a part to play in the cause and everyone in the game needs to be heard from time to time.

Cultures of fear are highly unrealistic. They expect that there should be no conflict or disagreement and become surprised when this occurs. Healthy organizations expect conflict and know how to channel energies into effectiveness. When an organiz-

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ation if fearful, their team or staff are not likely to disagree with the leader or challenge ideas that may have arisen. These organizations usually are characterized by past events of reprisal for those who have brought disagreement. If a group has observed severe reprisals for a critic in the past, it will find great difficulty for a long period of time before walking back through the door of disagreement and the cause of the organization will suffer greatly.

Culture of Intolerance

One of the healthiest paradigms for the Christian life is the concept of journey. Healthy organizations understand people to be on a journey. The notion that someone will mature to the point that they no longer behave unseemly or deal with inner temptations is plain false. Yet, the process of being fully committed to Christ is riddled with steps off the road and must be followed by openness to the Holy Spirit to allow Him to get us back on track following repentance. Recovery is a fact in all Christian lives. But in fearful organizations, there is no recovery.

I recently worked with an organization where the pastor's wife upon the death of her mother fell back into addiction to alcohol. The period of her lapse was for a month, but the leaders in the congregation were not prepared for this type of fall. Certainly, this kind of behavior exhibited a lack of the Holy Spirit's words and a need for greater faith. But in this instance where there had been much abuse and many unresolved emotion issues, it was amazing the impact was limited to this small amount of time.

This group asked me to lend some advice. I suggested to this group that this was a perfect time to embrace the fact that we are all human and all on a great journey, all with the capacity to fall far off the course with our own behavior. The call of God at that moment wasn't just to look at the person caught in the grip of sin but to look at ourselves and our own tendencies, accepting human feelings as normal and offering pathways to Christian success again.

Now, does this mean that healthy organizations are tolerant of sin or misbehavior? No, absolutely not. But unlike cultures of fear, they expect humans to behave humanly and have set patterns to restore people to the path when they have fallen off.

Today, we are finding the impact of a number of mental and emotional illnesses. It is becoming quite apparent to many observers that those in key leadership positions in Christian communities such as the business world can be prone to certain depressive illnesses. Sometimes, these illnesses lead to irrational or injurious behavior. We never talk about the possibilities of these kinds of diseases in our leaders. Hence, we fumble along surprised when they are acted out. A culture of fear is unable to develop anticipatory and protective steps to preempt these types of ill-fated behavior.

Scapegoating is the natural outcome of an organization that cannot tolerate human failure. These types of organizations always look for who is wrong and not what is wrong. And since there are ample opportunities for human failing in any organization, it isn't hard to find the human cause for just about everything that goes wrong. As a consultant, I've found that one of my major tasks in annihilating fear in an organization is to turn all problems into a "what" and a "how to" recover, rather than a "who is wrong around here" approach.

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Jumping to Conclusions

One of the most immature styles of communication is jumping to conclusions. By this, I mean deciding what is wrong with another prior to hearing all the facts. Cultures of fear have certain profiles of persons in situations they file away. If they see behavior similar to what they have seen in the past, they are quick to diagnose the problem and cure.

Jumping to conclusions is driven by the false belief that you know what another is thinking before they have actually spoken. I have seen the leaders of Christian organizations silenced in times of crisis because various authorities and entitles in the organization think they already know what is going on. There can't be any of us who haven't fallen prey to this weakened style of communication. After all, communication is hard work, and the listening portion of it is the most difficult. We unfortunately all jump to conclusions.

I doubt there isn't a parent who hasn't jumped to conclusions with their children. Jumping to conclusions is normal. However, when an organization lacks the patience to hear out issues and problems, they get in trouble. I've found that organizations which have task forces and boards with the single purpose of reviewing the facts in the face of conflict function well in our present world.

Organizations that place a great deal of authority in tough times on single figures in leadership soon fall to jumping to conclusions. Somehow there is a belief that these leaders are empowered with shaman-like vision and can discern quickly each situation.

I faced this type of conflict in an organization I belonged to. There were issues of financial strain on our budget. A supervisory individual was informed of some of the difficulties we were facing. I had made an errant decision to move slowly in adjusting the budget. I did this simply because it would have meant laying off 20 to 30 people. The economy had turned down and our income suffered. But I was hopeful that we could find a way to work through this. Five months after my decision with which the board agreed, the facts were clear that my plan wasn't working.

I counted that there were eight meetings we held agonizing over this. We came up with the wildest array of problems we were facing.

The deficit was small enough that we recovered within three months. But my trust and confidence never recovered. As I predicted, the real issue turned out to be that there had been poor judgment by myself and the board by not making cuts that were necessary. It was as simple as that.

It taught me a great lesson that instead of pointing fingers with my co-workers, I sought to remember occasions where maybe I had jumped to conclusions with my staff or leaders in other organizations. To my chagrin, I found that I had done at least as poor of a job as those who were overseeing me. We can't be judgmental in assessment of Christian leadership. But fearful organizations develop impatience with systems that assess all the data before making conclusions. They like to streamline the decision-making when crises arise. Patience and love-based organizations have developed systems that collect all the facts and then make the decisive move forward.

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Chapter Two

How a Ministry's Fear Begins

My wife Lori and I recently watched a documentary on the History Channel about the Nazi regime's takeover of Germany in the late 1930s. We both were astounded with how easily Hitler and his party could overcome the minds of the German people. Afterward, we discussed how this could happen and our conversation brought us to two conclusions. First, we concluded fear clearly set these people up for the false security evil can bring. And secondly, we decided that fearful emotions are contagious.

The whole German nation, which was depressed on every level, had grown fearful of starving and impoverishment due to the horrendous effect of reparations from the allies after World War I. The nation was fearful and resentful of its loss of respect and they were fearful due to extreme inflation. Hitler annulled this fear by the promises of his socialist party that they could insure prosperity. Fear and anger can set people up to feel comfortable with evil — and it can spread like wildfire. You could see in the very movements of the crowd and the expressions on their faces that the conglomerate affects of their fears were nearly superhuman. The superhuman ability for Hitler to annihilate these fears and assuage them was reason for pause.

If a Christian organization, whether it be a church or a ministry, takes some serious blows to their confidence, fear will fill the void lost courage leaves. And this fear will be contagious. Fear has its own way of spreading through a group. Leading churches effectively out of inner conflict caused by fear requires knowing how fear spreads.

It shouldn't be any surprise that leaders attract people who interface with their own weaknesses. Fearful leaders attract fearful followers. Most organizations without deliberate strategic anticipation will devolve to the fear levels of the weakest person in the group.

As a consultant, I've noted that most boards will devolve to the faith level of the weakest link on a board in crisis. It's fascinating to me that it's rarely the faith-oriented lay leaders who speak the most in meetings. Neither is it surprising that the most vocal are usually the most fearful. This is one of the reasons why I recommended churches and board meeting to do what I did on occasion in leading a large congregation. Set a time limit for each member of the board to ask questions regarding an issue presented to them. Then address the questions that were raised. I've advised churches to run a circle with limited time of comments followed by prayer. This strategy will keep the weakest link from taking the whole group down to the level of their fear. And then the whole group begins to fall downward into the spiral of discouragement.

Leaders who fear rejection can tend to attract to themselves people who are reluctant to offer sincere evaluation. These are usually known as "yes" people. Leaders who are consensus builders are usually the most susceptible to the fear of rejection. Often, consensus builders end up with undiscerning people in leadership to whom keeping the peace and making everyone feel good is the most important task.

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Many leaders have dominant characteristics — and fear of losing control is a large issue for them. If not planning deliberately against their weaknesses, these leaders attract a broad spectrum of leaders. On the one hand, they attract leaders who are dominant. I don't know if they love the sparring aspects of it or they tend to mirror themselves in others. Or they choose those who are easily controlled. This sort of leadership based on the fear of losing control has trouble delegating decision-making through an organization. And the inability to recruit those who are strong enough to delegate weakens the entire fiber of the organization.

Highly supportive leaders tend to fear loss more than anything else. So, they will be tenacious in hanging on to every gain they make. These leaders tend to be mildly paranoid toward anyone who appears to be a threat to them keeping what they've earned.

They also tend to take the organization down to the weakest point of their personality and will paralyze its growth by over conservative leadership to make sure gains aren't lost.

As we've seen, leaders can be susceptible to many varieties of fear. Those who are observers of churches have no doubt that choosing personnel is vital to the equilibrium of an organization. Leaders on staff should be chosen for their strength and what they do right. On the other hand, great attention should be given to discovering their chief fear. If their fear level and their past record have led them to personnel conflicts and underachieving, you can be assured the weakest link on your staff will drop you to the level of their fear unless there are deliberate plans taken to take these fears head on and neutralize them.

I suppose it can be a comforting point out that all of us have significant points of fear. And looking for the perfect staff person, or board member or leader who has no fear is more than a futile effort. Scapegoating will not work in an organization or the organization's ability to deal with fear. There must be a deliberate plan to discover and neutralize the fears that will inhibit the performance of all staff people. And the way decisions are made and board meetings are run must be designed in such a way to prevent the fear-ridden to dominate. It should be anticipated that fear levels will bring the entire organization down to its level without a deliberate plan to expose it, to face it, and protect the organization against it. Some leaders and staff members should not be included in every staff meeting.

There's a profile that I call the attorney profile. Attorneys are trained to think of every negative scenario possible. This trained skill they receive in law school is necessary to protect their clients. But this approach is deadly in vision-casting meetings. Usually in preliminary personnel decision, trying to work toward the worst-case scenario will freeze decision-making regarding personnel. This is why it's a good idea for all Christian organizations to have on their board a personnel expert. Personnel experts take people as being both good and bad, anticipating the problems and benefits of each person. This is objective leadership.

You Get What You Reward

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Neutralizing fear in an organization requires developing teams that don't feed one another's fears. It is true that many staff members should never be included in vision casting or planning meetings. The fear of change is present in many support-style staffs—and it shouldn't be expected to be any other way. The person who is fearful of change will fall apart at just the anticipation of change. I've learned that if a group of leaders, vision casters, and strategic planners come up with a decision for an organization, the support staff that fears change most often will step in line with a "certain sound."

You Get What You Reward

One of the key lessons I like to teach churches I consult is that they get what they reward. It is a sad fact that in far too many churches, the most negative and disobedient people get most of the staff's attention and worry the pastor the most. Many of us in leadership in churches got into the ministry to love people. We never imagined that conflict was part of the job. So, we agonize over those who disagree with us or maybe even fight us when we should accept these processes in an organization as standard and normal.

I suggest Christian organizations have a system where they reward the high-performing staff member and, in churches, to reward those who are obedient in "doing the stuff" and are giving of their lives to the cause of the church. I determined that I would call regularly those who were great servants and volunteers in the church and send "thank you" notes to those who were chief contributors. I found that I neutralized my fear of rejection. And I found that I was more affirmed. Subsequently, I also noted that the people who were obeying and had little fear began to excel and prosper, feeling they were valued and an important part of the organization. You increase the influence of those you reward. Fear spreads when the negative people are rewarded with time and attention that would be better spent on positive contributors.

Leaders who attract those who match their fears usually reward those who fulfill their deepest fears. It's not uncommon in churches for someone to fear rejection as a leader to attract people who reject them. Psychologists call this "self-fulfilling prophecies." I've noted it is uncanny how true the process is.

If a leader fears the loss of control in a church, I've also noticed how uncanny it is that they will attract people who fear the heavy control that they have. Yes, you get what you reward. Every leader of a Christian organization should analyze who is getting your time. If the fearful are getting your time, your fear is spreading. If you spend your time with the fearless, fear will be diminished. People in any organization follow models that are rewarded with attention.

If you spend a great deal of time talking about what is wrong as opposed to what is right in your board meeting, fear is being spread in the organization. If your staff meetings are riddled with exhausting discussions about people who are dangerous, you are increasing fear. If you stop and take time to thank God for those who are adding to the cause, fear will be diminished.

Spreading Fear through Poor Personnel Decisions

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Few churches apply due process in seeking personnel. There's been a welcomed trend toward using outside organizations to qualify and place staff leaders and pastors. As a leader of a large church, I know these were the biggest mistakes I made. They entailed hiring people without clear expectations and without tested qualifications to do the job. I underestimated for years how vulnerable staff members felt toward decision making.

People who fear for their position or who fear decisions that will affect their work can spread fear like wildfire. There are very few people who will accept personal responsibility for the incompetence. Most people will blame the consequences of their incompetence on the organization, a manager, or head of the organization. Making wise decisions in selecting personnel will stop the spread of a great deal of fear. Yet, when care isn't taken in adding personnel, often unqualified people have a great deal of insecurity about their position and this kind of fear spreads.

Besides not taking care in the hiring of people to make sure they are competent in the position, improper processes of termination when needed can accelerate fear. Anytime an organization appears arbitrary when it comes to the critiquing the quality of work or the ending of employment will create a great deal of "corporate mental illness." Every employee must not only have a job description, but a clear process whereby performance can be assessed for them. Prior to termination, there should be at least two opportunities to improve performance. And I have found it helpful to advise churches to once again get personnel experts involved if an employee is not handling the workload well. If there is not due process, fear will spread through an organization regarding terminations. However, if a staff and team know that everyone goes through the same due process, fear is abated.

Likewise, if a ministry does not state as an expectation that employees contribute to the faith-filled attitude of the organization, you can't expect anything but fear. It should be an expectation that every employee seeks to neutralize their own fears. I believe it is essential that we see our Christian organizations become adult-like. If there are no clear expectations of the kind of attitude we expect, fear is the natural course that rises to the surface.

Spreading Fear through Financial Reporting

I've become amazed as a church consultant the variety of ways that church finances are reported to a congregation or a constituency. For the most part, every one I have seen has been legitimate and handled properly given their context. Nonetheless, I regularly see some common errors that breed fear into an organization.

One is reporting shortfalls month after month without adjusting the budget. There are congregations where many CEOs or small business owners attend church, and they understand the need to present shortfalls given the ultimate budget the church had in mind. They have the business prowess to not just look at shortfalls in terms of the budget but the AP levels and the expense income levels in a church.

Several congregations I've helped reported month after month as much as 20 percent deficits in their income matched against their plans. This is a very discouraging practice. I've also run into many churches who have reported shortfalls every single

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week of the month. Of course, every church leader has their preference, but mine is to report income expenses only once a month. I also think a full bi-yearly report of the financial performance to the congregation is advisable as well.

Shortfalls financially cause fear in a church more than any other aspect of congregational life. The fear of not having enough is a strong factor in most human hearts. There isn't one of us who doesn't think quite often of the pain that would come with a shortfall of income.

The fear of not having enough can paralyze a group's vision, and it can cause strategic plans to stall. Clear and honest reporting is absolutely necessary. But budget adjustments, cuts, or increased income plans must be part of adjusted reporting. Once an organization begins to fear not having enough, it is hard work to turn it around. We are called biblically to trust in a God who promises to give to us overflowing provisions. We are to be faith organizations who believe God will always give us more than enough.

I've also believed that when there are shortfalls in a budget that maybe the budget or the vision is off. I think congregation responds well when they see leaders acknowledge this fact. Congregations who go through years of negative financial news become fatigued and, at some point give up.

Spreading Fear through Indirect Communication

The communication styles of organizations in the Christian community can be either humorous or sad. I'm a direct communicator myself—and I like direct communication given to me. One common error Christian organizations make is indirect communication. This, along with triangular communication, can leave a lot of guess work on the part of workers and leaders as to what is being said. Indirect communication is communication that tries to say something without saying it.

Many people raised in a home where parents are abusive with their language or who have lowered self-esteem by being criticized and put down “float the words like a hot air balloon” before they state the fact directly. The fear of abuse and the fear of looking stupid rattle the communication style of many staff people. Fear spreads when indirect communication becomes the habit of an organization.

I found in one organization there was a board member who was very upset with a decision to purchase five acres that the church badly needed to expand parking. The stretch for this board member was that \$200,000 had to be borrowed to achieve this aim. This particular board member was not an antagonistic person at the least, but he gathered three or four board members and other leaders after the vote had been given to move ahead to express his disagreement.

The leader of this organization asked me to sit in on a conversation with two of the individuals being I was already advising them on the make up of their worship services. I found the group delightful. These were not mean people. I detected right off that they didn't know how to really articulate their true feelings. They were clearly fearful that the church had made a bad decision that would jeopardize the church. It is not surprising that these were supportive-type individuals who were prone to fear loss.

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I asked this particular board member, "Well, how did you vote when the decision was made?" "I was one of the two who voted against it," he replied.

"Did you articulate your concerns about this issue?" I asked. "Well, I was asked at the meeting how I felt about it and I said I would vote for it if the majority were for it," he said.

"If you cast your vote, then why attempt to get people to reconsider the vote and cause people to fear the decision?" I inquired.

"Well, I didn't feel I was listened to," he answered.

Now I was curious. "So you feel you didn't have an opportunity to speak up your mind?" I asked.

The man replied, "No, I spoke my mind."

At this point, the pastor asked to say something. We all agreed it was time for him to speak up. He said, "Now when we went around our circle and asked for input from the team, we asked you directly how you feel about the decision. And I recall you saying when asked if you were for the decision, 'I guess so, if everyone else is.'"

The room was quite for a minute. Then the gentleman said, "I was trying to let you know by that comment that I didn't feel fully comfortable."

We had a wonderful conversation thereafter of what constituted indirect communication. It was clear this gentleman was fearful he would be rejected. So rather discuss the decision, we discussed how board meetings could be run and how he could change his thinking so he would feel free to express his thoughts. It was clear in this group that fear had gotten a foothold by a faulty communication style. The pastor and the two leaders of the board decided that what could best happen in the future is that the board members would be given time to write out their questions or disagreement with decisions about to be made. Our friend on the board was not someone who possessed strong verbal skills; however, he cared greatly for the church.

Indirect communication is based solely on fear. And that is why it must be terminated. In its place, direct, honest solicitation of variant ideas must be taken to smash fear in an organization.

Spreading Fear through Negative Communication

One of my favorite presentations I give to pastors is how to design a two-year plan of messages and service themes. This entails identifying anywhere from four to ten different kinds of service styles that a church could experience. One of the exercises I like to give is developing a column that would deal with positive concepts and those that would deal with what could be perceived as negative topics.

Communicators who fail to thank the people in their congregation who are doing well will create fear. People will wonder if they are actually doing what is required of them as Christians. Leaders who constantly dwell on negative things such as attacks against liberal politics, how poor the schools are, or the plague of abortion will cause fear in a congregation. Now, I'm not saying hard things should not be addressed. But if

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they are made the staple of the group, the group will become progressively more fearful.

If an organization constantly appeals for volunteers because they don't have leaders in particular areas, create fear. Good news demolishes fear. Constant bad news will cause fear to spread widely in a church.

Whenever negative topics occupy more than 25 percent of the presentation to an organization, fear begins to take over. My mother used to say, "Save your mouth for uplifting comments." I think she's right. There are plenty of people who use their mouth for negative comments.

Granted it is far easier to get responses from people based on negative messages and topics. Anyone who has preached to people know that people will respond far more quickly by a call to avoid hell as compared to a call to experience the love of God. I know as an evangelist and as a consultant that is just the way it is. But I also have this conviction that people who come to Christ out of fear alone usually don't last as long in their faith as those who are drawn to the love of God and His positive concern and love for them.

Our natural tendency is to do more negative talking than positive. This is why keeping a record of the kinds of communication you are bringing to your organization is vital. I've helped dozens, if not hundreds of congregations by now as a consultant. I can attend a worship service and within minutes tell the balance of the church with regards to negative and positive input. Churches that have been fed fear-killing messages just have a cheery tone to them. They have an optimistic, can-do feel to them. Congregations and organizations that have been fed negative material have a subdued feel about their congregation, and there seems to be a sense of anxiety in the group.

Fear is spread most often from the platform of any congregation. And this is a reminder that we all ought to heed often. Our communication should be encouraging, filled with life, more often than it is corrective.

Spreading Fear through Contagious Depression

A great deal more is being found out about a hidden culprit in the demise of many organizations. This enemy is depression. The stigma and misunderstanding related to depression keeps this facet of an organizational leader's emotional life from being addressed. Depression used to be associated with some sort of weakness or incompetence. Now we know that depression is one of the most contagious aspects of relationships in an office. Depression can move from one person to the next faster than a wildfire. Or the depressed person can negatively affect the entire group.

The symptoms of a depressed leader or even non-pivotal staff members promote fear due to sheer irrationality of the malady. Depression doesn't necessarily just include the blues. Depression can include hostility and paranoia. Research recently identified that CEOs can be particularly prone to the kinds of depression that affect focus, judgment, and cause mild to severe paranoia.

A great deal more discussion needs to be carried out, even in Christian organizations, about the symptoms and impact of depression. Other symptoms of depression are insomnia, loss of libido, isolation, poor judgment, quick weight gain or weight loss,

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eating disorders, relational conflict, inability to focus complete tasks, or loss of interest in things that were one important to the person.

There are, of course, many causes of depression. It's becoming more and more evident that one of the primary causes of clinical depression is likely to be genetic predisposition to depression. We know that grief, loss, long-term stress and frustration, and even burn out in a work place can cause depression of a situational type of arise.

As a consultant, I have on many occasions had to encourage leaders to network with adequate psychiatric and psychological help for help to treat depression that was paralyzing their organization. Very often, aggressive, clearly-called driven leaders are under the affects of a depressive disorder. Again and again, I've found by networking with therapeutic help hostility or anger from depression that's negatively affecting an organization become positive influences again on their organization.

Left unchecked depression will destroy. Depression creates suspicion. And the discomfort and unpredictability the person causes an organization can breed instability and, in effect, even cause depressive symptoms to arise within the whole organization.

A great deal more thought needs to be given toward the emotional health of leaders and team members in Christian organizations. The malady has to move out of the realm of suspicion or being considered a weakness. And it must become an enemy that can be easily dealt with.

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Chapter Three

Signs Fear Has Control of Your Organization

We often don't know when we are fearful, for fear has many disguises. Fear can sound like wisdom, for example, a sneaky little facet of life we all face. When I have been in the grip of fear, I usually only notice it after the fact because it can sound so plausible. Anxiety sounds like wisdom initially. However, the irrational responses we experience under fear's grip prove to be toxic.

The "flight or fight" syndrome is a pattern that can get away from all of us. Even ministries can go into adrenaline overdrive in the face of perceived danger. I have seen churches begin building programs and then have codes change or permits rescinded—and sadly nearly every decision the group makes from that point on is often bad. Fear is like a drug that skews judgment.

It can take ministries years to recover from decisions made while under the influence of fear. I cringe when I see church face challenging times, knowing the pressure of fear and how it sounds like wisdom when you're under fire. Fear always causes vision to lose ground. Fear can cause a ministry to release staff the ministry will not likely be able to replace, and also push away a church's peripheral group of interested people they have taken years to develop.

Amazingly, leaders often don't realize they are under fear's diabolic hold. Fear is like a virus that takes over nearly every other emotion. But good leadership requires learning skills to identify and end the effects of fear.

A number of years ago, the church I led in a small building experienced an amazing growth burst. We had a real estate balloon payment that we learned of a couple weeks after our supervisor let us get situated there. We managed to get the payment delayed a year, but as a fledgling church, this was hanging over our emotions the entire time.

Fear started to play on us. I found myself trying to see which staff member we could cut who wasn't carrying their load. This mode of operation froze our creativity. Only clear criteria should determine personnel decisions. Fear caused us to look for scapegoats that could cause us problems.

I decided four months in advance that we had to reduce our staff by one full-time salary and one part-time salary. We also needed to cut service overhead as much as possible. When I sat down with one of our council members, he said to me, "Make certain you don't make decisions out of fear. Make decisions strategically. You are in a growth curve and it will probably continue. Let's take some time and think long term. Let's ask ourselves if there are any options without making any change in personnel to solve this challenge."

His advice was a great help. I had already cut a three-fourths time employee, which was a huge mistake. Her absence made us all work harder, taking us from our other work and causing fear in the church. With my friend's help for the next few steps, I rejected fear. We sought to first find ways to increase income, setting out on a plan to

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rent out some property we owned. Then we set up a mild funding event to raise \$50,000. Then we found a way to add another youth worker with financial pledges and support from individuals for the first six months. We also set up two prayer sessions for our facility needs. Soon, fear vanished. Our vision of the future was bright, and out of that correction, we started working off a very good strategic plan.

If my friend hadn't spoke up, I never would have thought I was acting fearfully but would have let fear rule. I thought I was being wise. And I really wanted to be a good manager, trying to keep us from harm or financial collapse in our first three years of existence. But I wasn't functioning with wisdom at all without the input I received.

Wisdom or Fear

I pasted a sheet of thought in the front of my study Bible a few years back I want to present here. It was a listing of the traits of wisdom and those that fear exhibits so I could discern the difference in the heat of battle. Here they are on the following page:

Wisdom...

- ◆ Starts with God's vantage point
- ◆ Sees long term and works back
- ◆ Accepts failure as part of the journey
- ◆ Has an optimistic mindset
- ◆ See God's work in everything good or bad
- ◆ Takes small steps to victory
- ◆ Sees God in the small things
- ◆ Anticipates the great gifts ahead
- ◆ Sees the big picture
- ◆ Sees the war
- ◆ Accepts a setback
- ◆ Is sensitive to people
- ◆ Seeks the information before acting
- ◆ Seeks a deal
- ◆ Understands challenges never go away
- ◆ Seeks solutions
- ◆ Seeks alliances
- ◆ Seeks honestly

Fear...

- ◆ Starts from your insecurities
- ◆ Sees three weeks ahead
- ◆ Sees failure as destruction
- ◆ Sees only potential disaster
- ◆ Only sees God when it's easy
- ◆ Tries to take care of it quickly
- ◆ Only sees God in the big stuff
- ◆ Recalls all the bad of the past
- ◆ Sees the small picture
- ◆ Sees the battle
- ◆ Seeks perfection
- ◆ Turns people to objects
- ◆ Jumps to conclusions
- ◆ Pays retail
- ◆ Looks for the perfect day
- ◆ Seeks escape
- ◆ Isolates
- ◆ Hides

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- ◆ Pauses to pray
- ◆ Sleeps on it
- ◆ Believes
- ◆ Smiles
- ◆ Sings
- ◆ Lives from the end backward
- ◆ Looks for scapegoats
- ◆ Gets Insomnia
- ◆ Doubts
- ◆ Frowns
- ◆ Shouts
- ◆ Lives past to present

Fear requires no real facts to be engaged. It can attack enemies that aren't there. Wisdom edits out the non-enemies from a challenge. Ministries can end up with ghosts over a few years. And sometimes a ministry just has to stop and get delivered from the memory of past failures.

A friend and I grew up together camping and enjoying the mountains near our small town in eastern Washington. One hot summer day in July, we decided to go camping in an old Boy Scout camp. I remembered some stories I had heard about the camp while a scout. But I wasn't convinced they were true.

When evening came and the stars sat down on us, we needed something to do. First, we turned our radio into the local minor league baseball team's game. The game was over at 9:00 o'clock and there was still a lot of awake time left. I don't know why, but I started retelling the story of the prop man.

All scouts in our area had heard the story of the prop man. The take was that during World War II, a plane crashed in the mountains. The pilot was never found—nor half the prop. Since 1944, the whole county knew there was a man with a prop in his stomach running around waiting to get even with the world.

It took about 10 minutes to tell the story. And then we sat in silence for about ten minutes more. For two 10 year olds, that is a difficult feat, proving to us that the prop man had been released again. Finally, we fell asleep as the deep darkness fell down upon us. We were asleep about 20 minutes when the night was disturbed. Had he come? His feet were pounding like a herd of cattle. We could hear him circle close to the tent twice. I could see my friend's eyes glowing in the night. I suppose mine did too.

After another five minutes, we felt safe again, much to our relief. The prop man must have decided to leave two young boys alone. His feet pounded off loudly in the distance. And we laid eyes open the rest of the night.

Our parents picked us up the next morning. We had time to walk around and check the grounds around us before the station wagon caravan arrived. We didn't see any footprints or prop shavings. But we did see some horse hoof prints, and they were very close to our tent like the prop man had been.

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My mother stepped out of the car and headed toward us, asking how things went. Neither of us wanted to mention the prop man attack so we just said, "Great." She said, "Well, you boys look like you didn't sleep all night." We just kept silent.

My friend's mother called out, "Did you boys talk to Ranger George when he rode up to see if you were OK last night?" We just looked at each other and got in the cars. We saw our protector as our enemy. This is what fear does to a ministry, it turns events into enemies when they are likely friends. It also erases the image of God from our life canvas, leaving the dark background and that fills us with fear.

Signs Your Organization Is in Fear's Hold

The following are signs your ministry may be in the grip of fear:

- Energy is spent talking about those who have left rather than those who have joined recently.
- There is talk about those who have "hurt" the ministry.
- New ideas are rejected quickly. Comments like, "We are doing too much already," take the platform of any meeting.
- There is very little discussion about the future and the vision of the group.
- A great deal of time is spent on defining who is in charge of each detail rather than what needs to be accomplished.
- There is a great deal of talk about financial shortages.
- Decisions are tabled or delayed.
- There is no cash-flow plan, just week-by-week struggle to survive.
- Boards and directors begin to see themselves as limiters and reality givers rather than visionaries.
- Hiring new people becomes an agonizing effort of suspicion and intense re-search.
- Old ideas become the basis of all efforts. New ideas are viewed with scorn.
- New people are not let into the decision-making processes. Outside consultations is seen as intrusive. Denominational or other leaders are said to not understand what the ministry is really facing.
- Most decision-making drifts toward trying to determine who could be hurt, stirring up much discussion about those who have been hurt in the past.

This scenario fatigues a ministry. If the fear isn't destroyed, a ministry will wear out generations of vital leaders. Volunteers will flee because the environment just won't be fun. Fun is the key factor in ministry development. Fun is more powerful than fear, and by-products of wisdom are fun, hope, and peace.

Take a moment here and assess the state of your ministry. If even half of these symptoms are present in your ministry, you are in need of some neutralizing of fear in order to lead with power into your future.

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Every generation faces its own battle with fear. And every generation of church organizations face their own battles with fear. I was born in the boom generation. The influx of existentialism changed my world forever and rattled my parents' world from that point as well. The kind of spiritual experience Baby Boomers sought was vastly different than the more traditional methods of church my parents' generation enjoyed.

Pentecostal/charismatic groups have always had the appeal of experience, tending to develop less formality. Structure is far less important than experience or community to these groups. It is no surprise that these groups have flourished since the 1960s.

By the time my spiritual quest began in 1969, the experimentation with drugs, sex, and variant religions reached a fever pitch. As a young follower of Christ, I remember struggling to find a church that would accept me. The Jesus People movement had just begun rising in California. On the beaches around Costa Mesa, thousands upon thousands of young Baby Boomers called "Jesus People" were being baptized in water mostly by those associated with Chuck Smith of the Calvary Chapel movement. Entire new church movements had to be developed for this generation. Why? Because the existing, established church was fearful of these new believers.

The fear of the new dress, hair length, and quest for experience on the part of these Baby Boomer Christians has continued to reverberate to this day. Entire generations have been lost along the side waters of Church history. And groups who have responded without fear to the experience-based approach to faith have thrived. It is astounding how many of the largest churches in this country are affiliated with the Calvary Chapel movement. It is also just as amazing that the Pentecostal/Charismatic experience continues to make advances through mainline churches.

The reformist group that was affiliated with Calvin, were fearful of the Anabaptists. In those days, if someone was fearful of your spiritual leadership, they often-times killed you. But if they kept the person in prison long enough and tortured them long enough, they would recant. In today's world, when a movement such as the "Jesus Movement" arises, few people are killed if any. But ministry careers are ruined and sometimes lives are defamed.

Wesley preached on horseback to myriad coalminers and the poor of England. Because there were no churches open or accessible to these people, he had to preach this way. The Anglican church rejected his ministry on this level. Their view of Gospel preaching confined the proclamation of the Word to buildings. According to their tradition, these holy places were the only realm where the Gospel could be preached. Their intense fear of what could happen if the Gospel were presented outside these controlled environments caused them to miss an intense revival that would have brought new life into their declining spiritual world.

Whitefield preached to tens of thousands in the open air in the United States, and Wesley continued to preach to thousands in England and the British Isles. They were fearless. Their fearlessness helped them to avoid sameness and to place love for lost people above the fear of being condemned.

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Fear has been around since the ancestors of the human race walked in the Garden of Eden. I've often wondered if it wasn't fear that caused Adam and Eve to fall prey to disobedience. Let's review the scene of temptation in the Garden for a moment. We are introduced to Adam and Eve walking in an idyllic world, where they are naming animals and trees as well as speaking with God during the cool of the day. Intimacy with God and co-partnership with creation characterized their world. There was no fear. There was no illness. There was no defiance toward God.

Then enters the serpent, the great tempter. And he finds Eve in the garden and he asks her, "Can we eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" She responds, "No, God has said that we can eat of any fruit tree in the garden except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Now, here is where the serpent began scheming.

The serpent said, "Do you know why God has forbidden you to eat of this fruit?"

"No," the woman answers.

The serpent replied, "It's because He knows when you eat of this fruit, you too will be gods and be like Him."

Trust was replaced by fear. I believe Eve's primary fear here was the **fear of insignificance**. The serpent had caused her to fear that she would not be all she could be. As soon as this fear was planted in her mind by the enemy, she began to distrust God's intentions toward her and her husband. And the rest is history. Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, were banished from the garden, and were found in the next scene living in intense fear.

How do we see this fear? When God came searching for them, they were hiding in the foliage clothed in fig leaves. Their nakedness had become fearful to them and they used fig leaves to hide. Fear always causes us to hide. Guilt, fear's twin sister, pushes us into the deepest expressions of the shadow of life. I think part of the redemption of mankind is our return to the real conviction and knowledge that God wills that we achieve the highest of significance in Him. This view of love casts out our fear of not being all we can be. This is a fear that riddles us all at some point in our lives

Probably one of the clearest expressions of fear set in a Biblical context is found in Numbers 14. In this scene, we see the return of 12 spies from the Promised Land. All the tribes of Israel are gathered together with Moses and the other leaders to hear their report.

As is the course for all organizations, the majority vote was asked to speak first. Ten of the 12 spies reported, "We are but ants in the eyes of these people." I've always wondered how they knew what they looked like in the eyes of these people. But, they believed they could tell. They reported that they were all tall and had long necks. And even though the milk flowed and the grapes had to be carried by groups of servants, the land was far too dangerous. The fear of the battle spread through the ranks of Israel. They all feared the cost of gaining the Promised Land and this fear overwhelmed their faith. This is an amazing chapter because unlike most of our cultures today, fear is condemned here as a mortal enemy to all of God's life.

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The final two spies, Joshua and Caleb, were next allowed to give their report. Caleb, the Bible says, was of a “different spirit” than the other ten. He refused to look through the tainted lenses of fear. Yes, he saw life through rose-colored glasses. He was convinced there was a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow. And he saw they could defeat these large enemies and receive the blessings so much larger than anything they ever imagined. The young leader, Joshua, who had become Moses’ right-hand man, chimed in the same song as Caleb.

As the scene ends, fear won out in Israel as it often does in many Christian organizations. Moses was incensed. And the Bible shows us God who was incensed. To be fearful isn’t perceived as a simple human weakness. Being fearful was reported in this Biblical record as not only an affront to God, but also a deadly defiance to His work and person in their lives.

An entire generation was consigned to wandering in the desert for 40 years because of these fears. Now, fear was nothing to be winked at. It wasn’t just a shy little experience on the journey of these people. Fear stopped them dead in their tracks. However, the Bible demonstrates that those who are fearless and based their lives on the loving guidance of Christ will receive the highest of commendations. Joshua and Caleb were allowed to name their portion of the land when Israel triumphed over their enemies and took the Promised Land 40 years later. This account displays for us the intense battle between trust and fear, love and fear, and the awareness of God’s presence and victory versus the awareness of the power of darkness and those who defy God. This Biblical record teaches us that fear is not a small thing at all. Fear is an enemy to all that God would do.

I have preached the passage of the incarnation from Isaiah 7 like most preachers, often throughout my many years of public speaking. It wasn’t long ago that I was revisiting this text. You may remember the prophecy that arose from this text: “A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son.” Isaiah 7 is actually about God’s response to human fear. Ahaz was reluctant to believe that God would deliver his nation from the onslaught by the Assyrian nation. The city was surrounded and the situation looked grim. Isaiah was sent by God to offer the assurance of God’s victory over the Assyrians through Israel. Ahaz didn’t want to hear it. He and his “cabinet” were working designs of compromise. They were hoping that negotiations would bring an end to the grave threat before them.

According to the prophet Isaiah, God was angered with their lack of trust in Him. Their trust in their own diplomacy versus the overpowering presence of God in their nation was, from the prophet’s perspective, assuring their downfall. God asked Isaiah to go back to King Ahaz and offer to him any sign he wanted to give him courage to face the Assyrians as God’s king. Ahaz refused to even ask for a sign. His fear was so deep that even if God gave a sign, he was afraid to obey Him.

Isaiah influenced by the Holy Spirit responded quickly and strongly to Ahaz’s fear: “If you won’t cooperate with God’s miraculous power, then God will do it Himself. In fact, He will bring forth a Son, born of a virgin. And this Son will set up the rule and power of God’s government. As for now, since your diplomatic skills are so strong

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in your eyes, see if you can get yourselves out of this one. But maybe, just maybe, I may have mercy and you will stand again another day.”

Chapter Four

Organizational Betrayal

Betrayal comes in many forms. Like a pastor who has committed to staying for six years but leaves the church when he gets a better offer. Or, a youth pastor may behave inappropriately with a student and lead to the disappointment of families crushing the faith of some. Or a bookkeeper that diverted the funds to their favorite project. All these incidents and more amount to betrayal. Betrayal leads to deep seeded fears that last long in an organization.

I had a friend in high school that was highly intelligent but very rebellious. He trusted no adults. I have thought of him often and wondered what happened to Bill. His mother abandoned he and his three siblings the week after his youngest sister was born. They never heard from her again. His dad became a severe alcoholic and bar-room country western singer. Bill grew up with no adult to love. The pain showed on his face and he had an inability to feel at ease in most situations. The betrayal of his mother nearly paralyzed the entire family and especially Bill.

This betrayal not only caused pain but also shaped his attitude toward life. He spent his entire life energy making certain that he never found himself in a situation where he was vulnerable again. He had a girlfriend in the eleventh grade that dumped him for another boy. For six months, he went into a severe depression and could hardly make it to school. This normal adolescent rejection was just one more disappointment that was too hard for him to handle emotionally. The force of betrayal and rejection build up in a person like a cancer until healing love begins to heal the wounds.

I was asked to help a church where I had previously been a staff member in the early eighties. The pastor had abused the church for years by demanding unreasonable expenditures, which were followed by inappropriate fund raising. Finally after seven years, things imploded within the church. The administrator was also found to have been soliciting investments from church members in his business that folded; in fact, the investments were illegal. The local papers were filled with stories of the two leaders once they were exposed.

I have tracked the history of this church for over twenty years now. It has shocked me that many hundreds of people over twenty years later have difficulties participating in organized church life. Many lost their faith due to the break down of the leaders' integrity. Yet, a significant number have continued on in organized church and many have populated and helped other churches in town. The difference between the two radically different responses has interested me. Members of the first group have brought contagious negative attitudes to new churches.

The grief caused by betrayal in a church ministry always wounds the organization deeply and sets the state for a negative culture to arise. The following list may seem familiar to some who deal with family grief. I hope you will take a minute and see if your organization might have some unresolved grief that is stimulating fear every time the organization seeks to advance:

DENIAL

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ANGER

LOSS OF SELF-ESTEEM

SCAPEGOATING

DISTRUST

FEAR OF COMMITMENT

NORMALIZING

PERFORMING AGAIN

Insuring Steps to Health

If the grief process is interrupted at any point the ministry will often be paralyzed for long periods or even permanently. The abused church I mentioned above was never completely told the whole truth. Healing recovery in a betrayed organization requires complete honesty. Once a betrayed group is allowed to process the whole truth, it can move on to high performance again.

Ministries like people experience loss as one of the most traumatic aspects of their life. The fear of loss can be debilitating in a group just like a family or person. A group that has not been allowed to go through the healing process after betrayal will be very afraid to make new bonds with a leader.

Wounded groups also tend to reject authority. They are like my friend Bill who lost both parents. He just could not give himself to trust people who made promises because his "life tapes" sent him red alert messages that he could be putting himself into danger's path. His belief system shouted, "No one nor their promises can be trusted."

The fear of looking bad can be a bump in the road for a ministry. I have helped a number of churches through tough times. I had one leader say, "I think our testimony is ruined in the community." The truth is surveys that have been done on major churches have found that few people outside the church even pay any attention to the group. The research showed that only two to three percent of the neighborhood even knew large churches were nearby. But lowered self-esteem can captivate a group that is embarrassed.

One church I advised faced bankruptcy due to a lawsuit against them when a child was injured in their nursery. My advice was their esteem would rise before God, the neighborhood and themselves if they set out on a plan to pay every bill off. They sold their building to cover all the expenses and then met in a Gym for a number of years. But the esteem in that group grew as they advanced. The membership turned over some but God brought in more than ever.

Fear will destroy any betrayed church that doesn't move beyond seeing itself as a victim. Self-esteem is as important for a church as it is a person. I think if leaders find ways to build the God viewed esteem in a group they will grow consistently. No one brings friends to a church filled with victims. Churches like people get lazy though. It takes some forceful leadership to help ministries to move again to a path to productivity once they have been hurt.

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Paranoia fills a group when they slide into the “lets find out who is wrong here” kind of thinking. A church I spoke at often had an abusive leader never made it beyond this step. The church that was once 1,400 people now languishes at 200 range in number. And the group is constantly in-fighting. Groups that look for scapegoats spend most of their energy trying to spot the bad people that are a threat rather than finding God’s powerful path into further fruitfulness.

How do groups who are betrayed move behind dysfunction to health? The process never happens accidentally. And time doesn’t heal all wounds here. Betrayal has a way of burrowing itself into a group like a toxic worm. The process of healing has to be a very deliberate one. And it requires patience. I advise all pastors going into a church where there has been betrayal to seek a time of healing and to skillfully take their church through each stage of the grief process.

How is this done? By facing each phase of the process directly.

1. Denial - This is a short period usually. Initially a hurt group will make statements like, “they didn’t mean to,” “lets restore them,” it really wasn’t that bad.” But eventually it strikes a group that they have been duped and they move on to anger.
2. Anger - Anger rises next in the grief process. Anger, which is under control and connected with reason is very important. Expressing anger in healthy ways takes a group beyond victimization. Teaching group anger is justified and that is can be helpful, can empower people. A group can be taught to use the energy for positive steps that lie ahead.
3. Esteem Loss - Once a group gets beyond the first steps of facing betrayal, it will begin to doubt all it has stood for. This is where a strategic plan comes into play. Betrayed churches should be taken on to a higher call than their pain. Helping a group get perspective is vital to returning to their ministry. I addressed a board recently that had two pastors in a row misbehave. My statement after an hour of listening was, “you know leaders have misbehaved for centuries and things still move on. What makes you think you are so special you should be able to avoid all pain groups face? Come on. Let’s not allow a destructive person determine your future. Let’s let Christ’s rulership shape you again.”
4. Scapegoat - Eventually the lie that knowing who was truly wrong will solve things rears its head. If a group begins to believe knowing the bad people will insure a fruitful future, the future is dim for them. The devil can even become a scapegoat. If you believe just getting rid of the devil things will be fine a group will never move on beyond the fears of betrayal.

Recently, I encouraged a group that had been very let down by a denominational leader to rather than make someone a scapegoat to ask themselves this question, “What about us made us susceptible to this injury?” This approach insures a ministry will learn from its pain rather than muddle in it and trying to avoid it in the future. All life is a school. Tuition must be paid for and tests must be taken.

A ministry that realizes most everyone is wrong part of the time is ready to move on to solutions. Solutions and learning’s are the necessary experiences of a group that moves from victimized fears back to productivity.

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5. Distrust - Trust is one of the human relationship's most illusive experiences. Receiving trust is the highest of honors a human can have. How can a wounded group ever trust again? Can it be done?

Ministries can get over distrust. Rebuilding trust requires three new perspectives:

a. Learning people are always far more than what they do wrong.

b. No one nor any ministry is ever fully trustworthy. A healthy group can see that trustworthiness is always a matter of degree. So systems of verification and accountability that affirm trustworthy behavior are vital for getting a group beyond fear of betrayal.

6. Fear of commitment - It is interesting that the best thing a group can do that has been stung by wrong is to set out on a new advance for Christ but it is the last thing they can find the energy to do.

There is very real fatigue to fear and abuse. I think often groups are just too tired from the emotional drain of things to move ahead in any direction. Fear is abolished by leading a group in a series of small but enjoyable victories. Maybe set a moderate offering goal to help the poor; set it so you will exceed expectations and then go from there.

I advise new leaders in wounded churches to avoid having a group express commitment to them as a leader but to help the group reinforce commitment to helping others, maybe loyal staff members etc. And more importantly a healing leader gives commitment to the group before they expect it in return.

7. Normalizing – Eventually the grief cycle takes a group to a new level of maturity. Normalizing is the phase where a group accepts its imperfections, expects its leader to be less than perfect but more healthy than not. This ministry will experience peace because it lets it move from the focus of its existence and realizes God really is in charge.

8. Performing - Eventually a group led properly will assimilate all its learning's and be ready to reach new vistas with a new improved image. Goals become a friend once again. And joy and peace replace the agonizing drain of fear.

Everyone Gives Fear A Place

I led one congregation for 19 years. I am often surprised now about how long my ministry lasted with that church. But when it came to resign or retire, I had a great difficulty making certain the church would not feel betrayed. The combination of things beyond my control, my health and allowing myself to get exhausted to the point I just could not take the church as deeply as I had. But out of fear, I waited too long until I was ineffective. I took six months taking the church through my departure.

For years I encountered a few angry people. One recently said, "The seven years we were with you as our pastor were the best of our lives from the church. And then you had to let others move you on without being concerned for us at all." I was really hurt more at myself than by their comments. I knew this family felt let down.

I had betrayed the group not by wrong behavior but by fatigue. I was not in a position to lead without a break. I could only ask forgiveness. And then explained

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what I had faced. It was a great meeting of hearts after so many years and I think it was healing.

All leaders hurt churches especially in times of transition. And most often unintentionally. This is why we need to make certain we understand how to heal a church and neutralize their fear. If we don't, fear builds up through each transition.

I was fortunate to have a very capable successor. He took the church through the sense of loss of my leadership with great skill. He has taken the group to high performance again and I am grateful. I am sure it was not easy for him, but I have watched and admired how well he walked this great church of thousands of people through the process and maintained respect for me. And his skill at his role neutralized most of the fear through a difficult transition. Neutralizing perceived or real betrayal is a necessary skill for all leaders.

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Chapter Five

Self Understanding and Neutralizing Fear

“Tell me your fears and I will predict your temptations.” The words caught my attention and still have it today. Roy Hicks, Jr., one of the great church builders I have seen, shared these words with passion at a training session prior to his death. He had it right.

A leader who hasn't taken the time to know his fears is in trouble. All of us in leadership have issues in our nature that affect our ministry styles. The truth usually left unsaid is that no accountability group can protect you from what you don't know about yourself.

Today we are plagued with moral failing in leaders. The epidemic is tragic, and more effort is put into recovering fallen leaders rather than prevention. Even destructive pathologies don't exempt church leaders. I have had to come to the rescue as a church healer in congregations decimated by a leader whose fear of rejection resulted in trouble.

I have found that most fallen leaders were first burned out. Those who have experienced being burned out know it is a complex process. On occasion, I have been burned out to the point of being forced to take time off for extended periods. I sought professional help to find why I kept hitting a wall. Like all good descendants of Adam, I wanted to blame everyone around me. The church, life, circumstances, for my state. But the truth was I was driven by a fear. I am happy to report with new understanding of myself I am not a candidate for burnout in the near term anyway. My cholesterol level has dropped significantly as I have lost weight while working work at a modicum pace most of the time. I continue, like a 12-step devotee, to face my tendency to fear rejection seen in my inability to say “no.”

Eventually, burnout always leads to poor judgment. If a leader is working too hard, it is easy to get bitter at others who don't desire to work as hard. **Delegation is an absent art for burnout victims.** The fear of rejection cause its victims to fear not being essential.

I learned I had an inner drive to prove I was worth something by overworking. Not only do leaders fall prey to the fear of trusting others, but we have a deep need to be noticed and prove ourselves.

Resting in Christ's approval is a great antidote. But annihilating the fear or not being approved is just as important. I will never forget hearing a fallen leader say, “But I worked harder than anyone I know.” It saddened me because too often our church culture rewards imbalance and this leader fell prey to the fear that he had to prove himself or die.

Knowing your Wounds

Sexual abuse in childhood can drive pathology in some leaders. A friend, who is an expert in sexual addictions and taught me to spot predators in the church ranks, told

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me, “Many leaders who have serial affairs or fall into the addiction to sex have been abused as children.”

This insight has not only brought understanding to me but compassion and a desire to help confront these dynamics before they rest in my comrades. Knowing your wounds and finding the bravery to seek help can help turn your wounds into outlets of power and grace.

Leaders who are adult children of alcoholics (or have been second or third generation even after an alcoholic’s damage) have a grave need to learn about themselves. Here are some traits of ACOA leaders when left unhealed:

1.	Fear conflict
2.	Hide faults and sins; fear discovery
3.	Overachieve for recognition
4.	Often genetically predisposed to substance addiction
5.	Always feel different from other people - fall to fear of not being apart.
6.	Must be liked; fear of rejection
7.	Usually feel half full; the fear of being alone often hits hard leaving the danger of errant connections with others.
8.	Perfectionist; fear things being wrong. They believe if their world is run correctly all will be well.
9.	Paralyzed in making decisions; fear of being wrong
10.	Suffers from free floating guilt and shame; fear of not being good enough.

If you are a leader and come from a family of alcoholics there is no shame in that. But your ministry would benefit greatly if you sought out some reading and even professional help to see how your life wounds could be affecting your leadership. Fears from unresolved and unhealed pain could be driving your ministry.

Frustration

Everyone has a point wherein frustration turns into self-sabotage. It is a good idea to know your limits. Knowing yourself entails knowing what the limits are you can handle. Psychologists call this “setting boundaries.”

Frustration can actually be a gift. But too often frustration is allowed to go on and on and on. Knowing when to close down shop is as much a part of ministry as getting started. I have had to shut down a ministry or two, and it usually took far too long to accept the inevitable. When I have let my life boundaries be invaded, my family’s finances have suffered and I always end up disappointing more people than I would have just closing things down and finding where God really wanted me to go.

Those of us who go beyond our own limits usually are in the grip of some deadly fears. The fear of failure, the fear of hurting others, fear of being wrong, and even the fear of the unknown are at work in these occasions. The first step toward breaking from ungodly frustration is to tackle the fears that are keeping you there.

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There are times when saying “no” to everything is required. Usually, frustration issues form because (illegible) I’m upset that others wouldn’t do what I wanted or what I felt God wanted them to do. Jesus calls leaders to examine their desire to be small lords. He also tells his disciples (paraphrased), “Hey, guys, when you go out and run into frustrating rebellious people who don’t want to obey me, get out of Dodge. You should shake the dust off your feet and find more open hearts.” In other words, know when to stop. Unresolved frustration can be a time bomb waiting to go off in leaders.

Past Failings

There isn’t one leader leading who hasn’t made some pretty bad mistakes in their lives and ministry. And there aren’t any of us who haven’t sinned in our past to such a degree that we can hardly find our way to think or talk about it. Because of all this, we thank God for His grace and a living Christian community in which we live.

Hazel Goddard, a counselor in Colorado who has spent a lifetime healing pastors and leader, told me, “Unresolved adolescent promiscuity is one of the feeding points that lead to immoral behavior.” She said, “There is nothing more important to mental and emotional health than facing and coming to grips with the sins of your past, and truly learning the impact they have on you today.”

I was phoned by a leader who was a wonderful friend of mine several years ago. He had become a friend of internet pornography. My friend was probably one of the most godly and effective men I know. After he had been discovered by his assistant, he asked me what to do. I told him to admit it and get some help from someone who could help him turn his fall into a positive in his life. He was terminated, which saddened me. I felt that he had become stronger by knowing his vulnerability. An accountable healing path into his future should have been the path taken, at least on his first failure.

I met with a pastor who had returned to the alcoholism he had left behind in his college days. Of course, he was discovered and came wanting to know how he should proceed. I told him to go to a rehab and find out what made his addiction tick. He needed to learn skills to neutralize the action.

Facing our past sins has to come square with facing the fears that lie behind them. Shame is the source of the fear of discovery and the only way it is neutralized is by healthy disclosure. Every pastor and leader doesn’t need a confessor who is uninvolved in their ministry setting. We need to confess our sins and discover how we’re vulnerable to them.

While studying churches, I have learned that often many either overstate their statistics or grossly under report. Our credibility is at stake in our reporting. This pattern is revealed when a leader infects a whole organization with his fear or insignificance. There are errors that cripple groups which are not as dramatic as some mentioned. And they too are driven by and create their own fears. There is no need for a ministry to try and be bigger than it really is. A ministry can only grow as fast as about five factors will allow it. They are the following: timing, locating, mood of the culture, God’s will, and the strategic plan.

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We invariably talk only about sins of commission when facing our past failings. But I find sins of omission are worse, though hidden. Recently, I was in a denominational meeting and the board of a larger church confessed they hadn't given any money toward missions for seven years. This was a clear violation of their commitment to the church denomination and their stated objectives. Why did they fail? I will give you your own guess. They feared not having enough, or they feared being controlled. Or possibly, they were overcommitted trying to prove their significance.

Many leaders have sinned against many guests because they haven't trained their churches how to include new people. It isn't that hard of a task but it is one that rarely comes automatically. The fear of failure and rejection stops congregations from being inclusive.

How have past continuous sins of omission affected your organization today? It is well worth the time to stop and analyze your ministry for omitted obedience to Christ. And then find the fears that have set you up for these failings.

Know Your Personality

One of the West Coast's leading psychiatrists, Dr. Ray Vath, handed me a sheet reviewing the material by William Marston first published in the 1920s under the title, "Emotions of Normal People." The material is familiarly known as the DISC Personality Profile.

Dr. Vath said, "Here, this will help you understand why some working relationships drive you up a wall. The most important part is to understand you – and this will help you."

The outline I was given was based on a very expensive version of the test. There are several less expensive forms of the test available, which are often used. You can find more information at the following website: www.discinterconsult.com

The anachronism describes the following personality types:

D = Dominate Determined

I = Influencer Inspirational

S = Supportive Encouraging

C = Competent Calculating

This isn't the context to expound on the material. But we shall cover just a few items. Dr. Marston's research showed that each of the personality types has an essential desire that drove their make-up.

D = Win accomplish

I = Acceptance – being popular

S = Comfort – security

C = Accuracy

No one is purely just one of these typecasts. We are all working in primary and secondary personality types. But it is worth some thought at this point to try and de-

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termine in a cursory manner who you are in a simplistic form. Knowing what makes you tick is vital to your organization's growth.

The material not only pinpoints the drive of each type but it also contains a predictor of the fear each type will be most vulnerable to.

D = Fear of losing or failing

I = Fear of rejection

S = Fear of Change

C = Fear of being incorrect

The using of a little common sense can show you some fascinating discoveries about fear in your organization. One can see how different personality types in a group draw out and feed on another's fears.

Adventurous "I" type leaders scare "C" types. Why? Because "C" people are "bottom line" people with little concern for the process or details. And "S" personalities run in fear from "I" types because they change things by their sheer flow of ideas and influence.

"D" type personalities can drive "I" personality types to frustration because they have little fear of rejection. And to "D" types, winning is the bottom line. "I" personalities want everyone to be aware of how good they are and want to keep everyone inspired along the way. "D" types just plow on toward the goal.

We need all types of people, but it is very helpful to be aware of the fears you may engender in people as a leader just by who you are. There is no environment free from the presence of fear. But when fear is anticipated, exposed, and neutralized by the love of Christ, everyone excels to their God given abilities.

There are a growing number of "D" types in the church. I pastored a rapidly growing and challenging church which saw 1,000-plus conversions a year. Survival mode was all too often where we found ourselves. I never realized the fears I caused others because of my tendencies toward dominance. There is nothing inherently evil about this approach. High "D" personality types tend to get more accomplished than others, often running over others on their way to success. However, that doesn't have to be the case.

I wished I had known the impact my personality had on others a number of years ago. I could have been much more careful in making certain we kept our fears out in the open and let Christ's love annihilate them.

After nearly 20 years of leading this wonderful church, I resigned and took the first year just to rest. I spent some time bike riding and reviewed the last 20 years. I discovered I was never really comfortable with a high "D" personality type. I had learned the style I am sure out of necessity or modeling or both. My strong suit is "I" today. I learned I have far fewer inner conflicts in this style. I also have "D" as a comfortable backup style. The discovery of who I truly am has brought great peace in my life. I

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have found that the participative side of the “I” personality type works better for consultation work.

There are many other great tools for learning about yourself. Taking time to analyze yourself and mediate on you gives you great help in life. Other helpful tools for self-discovery are MMPI studies, PDP testing (www.goehnergrouper.com) and a few others are very helpful. It is most helpful to take time after the testing period to talk about the fear levels that are the result of the mix of types in your ministry. Prevention is worth far more than recovery. The studies can be expensive but are well worth the investment.

Application

1. Are there wounds from your past that you can identify as causes for frustration with your ministry? If so take a moment and prayerfully counsel yourself toward a plan for preventative healing.
2. Do you have traumatic wounds from your childhood that you have left hidden? I suggest you seek professional help and particularly defeat the shame and self-hate that comes with such experiences.
3. Were you raised in an alcoholic addicted home? You may benefit greatly from something like an Alanon experience to discovery from others with the same pierce. I know you will benefit from learning how to defeat the fears inherent.
4. Can you identify your personality style? Why don't you try and take a shot at those you work with. It could be board members, staff or even family that you want to assess. Can you spot ways you cause fear in them? How will you deal with this in the future?

Hebrews Chapter Four

“Now that we know what we have-Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God-let's not let it slip through our fingers; we don't have a Priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experience it all-all but the sin. So let's walk right up to Him and get what He is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.” (The Message, Nav Press, 1995)

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Chapter Six

How Fear Accelerates

I have loved two games in my life. I don't play either of them anymore. My first favorite game was racquetball. I loved the game, playing it nearly every day. Even a non-athletic, clumsy guy can learn to play well if one plays often and I almost became a good player. A retired Air Force doctor in our church whom I played with nearly every day ran me around the court like a squirrel with its tail on fire.

One day the doc said to me, "You know, it's great. I am finally getting to play up to my level. Buddy, you were bringing my game down for a long time."

I knew what he meant. A bad player can ruin a good player's game. I got the point where I hated playing with an inferior player as well. I picked up their bad habits and soon my game would drop.

The second game I loved to play but travel has made it difficult for me to keep the game up is golf. I never mastered the game. While I didn't mind playing poorly, my friends minded. One of my friends would hardly play a whole game with me, claimed I took ten strokes off of his game.

My son is a great golfer. I taught him to play golf, and within six months he was far better than me. He gradually didn't enjoy playing with me either. He said I took strokes off of his game, too.

Ministry work is the same. There are few exceptions in ministry where the ministry at some point doesn't slide to the level of weakest influences. Part of the reason things slide to the lowest common denominator is because we tend to give more attention to the weakest, laziest, and most disobedient to Christ than to the top performers. Five times the energy should be spent on discussing those doing well and performing at the top of their game.

Fearful people easily take over an organization if the ministry doesn't operate with deliberate optimism. It is amazing to me how quickly fearful people left unchecked can leaven the whole loaf. Jesus warned us how a loaf is spoiled and to be aware of how the smallest toxin can affect everything.

I worked for months with a church to help them design a plan to meet in three locations. The effort would have prevented the need for construction and ended up with two new large gathering places. I watched one fearful leader turn the whole group away from this reasonable path. During this process, the margin of error was as wide as the universe. But you would have thought we were suggesting brain surgery.

It has been three years now as I write since the plan was tabled. And the group has regrets, but time has moved on and the opportunity was lost. Several of the board members of this church have contacted me wanting to try this again. Almost to the person, they are puzzled how they were caught up in the fear.

The nation of Israel was contaminated by fear. As usual, ten fearful leaders destroyed a great opportunity. The whole nation frozen in time for a generation by the fear

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of ten spies, while two positive spies waited for a generation for the recovery of courage. Joshua and Caleb were overcome by the voice of ten fearful people. Even before they left Egypt, fear had been a lifestyle of the nation. The whole nation had fallen to the level of the lowest common denominator of the ten terrorized spies.

How A Ministry Begins to be shaped by the Weak Members

Ministries have the bad habit of giving the greater attention to the members that drain the group. We call it compassion and sensitivity. But our approach to the weak is closer to dysfunction. Hopeful people are like an energy sources for a group. Faithful and generous people feed a group. But too many resources are spent with the unwilling people.

I believe ministries often have traits similar to dysfunctional families of ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics.) How everyone “feels” about things is paramount. The goals of dysfunctional ministries are to make certain that everyone is “happy.”

Is there anything wrong with wanting everyone to be happy? Yes. The goal of Christ is that everyone would be faithful, not happy. I have gone for periods of time where happiness wasn't something church work offered me, but I remained faithful. If the goal of a ministry is to have peace at all cost, important decisions are avoided. And opportunities are missed while the ministry seeks to find out whose feelings will be hurt.

Ministries that are polite, considerate and don't lose sight of the cause are happier organizations. But if the fearful set the pace of a ministry, the cause is lost. Negative energy can take center stage and hold its position easier than positive energy. I suppose it has something to do with the principle of entropy that works at the sociological level as well.

The Weak Vision

The weak will take over a ministry if the cause isn't clear to everyone. Fear will take over a ministry if the vision isn't made clear. The clearer the vision and purpose of the ministry, the easier fear is to manage. Emotions rule when strategy isn't in place.

Does this mean faithful ministries are ruthless with people? No, but healthy ministries do not keep unhealthy people in places that are not good for them or the cause. The strategic plan should be the measurement of success for each member of a ministry team, not “feeling good” about the plans.

I believe one of the criteria for personnel evaluation is how much positivism a person is bringing to their group. If an organization rewards or enforces a faithful attitude, it will get the behavior it expects.

Fear weakens a cause when the fearful are accepted as the wise. Again, I am astonished by the damage the fearful few can bring to a great ministry, while many believe they are wise. We do not take seriously enough some of these “little foxes” in our ministries. Unless we decide to live deliberately as ministries, we will continue to be victims of our own neglect.

Vested Interests

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I took a course on industrial psychology years ago. I learned enough to be annoying to my friends who are professional psychologists. One of my favorite aspects of the class was a two-week discussion on negotiations. The professor taught us how to organize the seating arrangement of a meeting for the easiest flow of the topic involved. He also taught us how to read a room by the seats the people in a group would take if there weren't nameplates for seating.

I remember he taught us about the "mafia" seat. According to the professor this seat was the farthest corner seat facing the doorway. He quipped, "It's called the mafia seat because a mobster wants to watch the door and control the table."

Often times, I have used what I learned from this man. We can usually spot the dominant person who feels they have the most interest invested in the ministry by where they seat themselves. There are many indicators but the makeup of choices of seat can betray the makeup of a group.

Individuals who feel they have a lot to lose seek to control things. The fear of losing control is a very strong fear. Those who feel they have the most vested interest in a group will seek to guide the group from the weakness of fear.

The newest people in an organization usually have a truer perspective of what is happening in the group than the long-term members. **This is why I encourage churches to require that the board have at least two board members who have been in the church under two years.** The new perspective causes the leaders to consider new direction to achieve aims.

Strong organizations resist this control of the weak links. I worked with a church in Texas where the church was evolving towards a strong contemporary outreach ministry. There had been a men's Sunday school class that had been going for 25 years in this church. The study was archane but this group of 25 men held the fearsome grip on this church of 1,800 people.

I was attempting to help bring some peace to the church by adding a contemporary service. The pastoral team and board told me if we didn't win over this group of men, the vision couldn't make it.

This group of men had determined the direction of this church for 25 years from the time they were all young men. All these men were wonderful people yet fearful of losing their place in the church. They feared the church would go off course as it had while being led by corrupt pastors 16 years earlier.

I was shocked how the board, church and pastors let this group strangle the work of God in the church. This group didn't represent a big portion of the churches budget. Nor did they have any more than one person on the board that exhibited any fear and he was only moderately involved in this class. But they wielded power and engendered fear in the ministry that suffocated the positive vision the rest of the church had.

The weak fear of this Sunday school group had spread like a contagion. The pastor begged me to find a solution for them. I spent several weekends with the church, wandering around the site and sitting in on many classes. When I am helping a group, I

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like to just listen. It became clear to me that fear unchecked had stalled the vision of the church in two groups who were determined to keep on track.

The Three Essential Elements of Church Life

- ◆ CAUSE
- ◆ CORPORATION
- ◆ COMMUNITY

I learned this insight from my friend, Jim Dethmer while we were leading seminars on how churches grow healthily. And it has helped me marvelously in trying to isolate faith killers in a church.

“Cause” is the vision or reason a church exists in an area. This cause is God’s ultimate aim for the church. Cause should be the driving force over personalities, polity or even passion. Cause happens when there is a strategic plan that is outlined to reach the high purposes of a church. I have found you discover little initial fear in the people who work in this area of the church. Strategic thinking engenders faith in a group. Of course, there can be fear that creeps into the visionary group for the most part this aspect of church life drives the optimistic spirit of a group. There are two fears that can creep in here to watch for: fear of boredom and fear of insignificance.

“Corporation” is the aspect of a church that deals with money, facilities and practical details of church life. Fear finds its foothold here. Corporation is a vital part of the church’s life. Money has a forceful personality. If the corporation aspects of a church aren’t led by a group of courageous people, fear will come in like a storm. I see churches paralyzed by well-intentioned people frozen by fear of not having enough.

“Community” is the care component of a church. Community is the glue that holds a group together. Community is fed by the cause and is the part of church life that gives the heart and face to the two other components. Fear of change is a big danger here. Cause people tend to understand change. Community leaders are very sensitive to how the group could be hurt by a decision. A church can become very inhuman without this part of its life being taken seriously. But the fear of hurt, fear of reactions, and fear of loss can seep through this component of church life and impede the entire venture. Now would be a good time to pause and ask yourself which part of church life do your talents find a home? Take a moment and evaluate your fears, can you see them going unchecked by love or faith? I think it is valuable to know which fears you are most vulnerable to and how you could negatively affect the work of God.

Cause people tend to be very oriented to the future. They fear failure sometimes and that can be very heartless. If community and cause don’t balance the cause, the church grows inhuman and spins out of control without administrative input.

I have found that if one of these areas of church life grows weak, the entire group is lowered to its level. If the corporation leaders are beginning to fear and seize all the problem solving, cause and community suffer. If community is weak, the whole group

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becomes harsh and unfriendly jeopardizing the vision. And if the cause is weak, a church can sit stalled for years.

Fear is the big enemy to every facet of church life. Great care should be taken in choosing faith filled positive people in all aspects of the church's leadership. And there must be attention given to make certain each area is lead by strong leaders who are able to face their fears and not weaken the church.

Let's look again at the fears each of the areas of church life can be susceptible to so we can prepare ourselves to win the battle in the area of our strengths:

CAUSE PEOPLE AND THEIR FEARS:

- 1. Fear of failure**
- 2. Fear of rejection**
- 3. Fear of missing out**
- 4. Fear of being limited**
- 5. Fear of being disrespected**

CORPORATION PEOPLE FACE THE FOLLOWING TEMPTATIONS TO FEAR:

- 1. Fear of not having enough**
- 2. Fear of the unknown**
- 3. Fear of being left behind**
- 4. Fear of mammon/money**
- 5. Fear of men**

COMMUNITY AND ITS FEARS:

- 1. Fear of change**
- 2. Fear of hurting others**
- 3. Fear of pain**
- 4. Fear of loss**
- 5. Fear of neglect**

Great leaders learn to strengthen the weak links before they corrupt the whole. Again as Jesus said a "little leaven leavens the whole loaf." One of the best friends I have ever had was the writer named Jamie Buckingham. One of the things I admired about Jamie was his utter trust in God and fearless attitude toward life. He was the kind of man that could turn a whole room of fearful people into optimists with visions of great exploits. He had a way of brining out the potential of just about anyone. It wasn't any surprise that he gathered other faithful people around himself.

I have had another acquaintance that I would consider a friend. He has a way of bringing down any group he is around. He is a marvelous speaker. But he roams from church to church because he is a man riddled with fear. I have seen him take a very positive board and have them frozen within a year. One of the essential factors is he is

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the weak link when it comes to fear wherever he goes. He fears rejections and causes his expectation of rejection to be met.

He pastors and develops fearful people with great skill. He can mismanage hope more than anyone I know. Leading his last church, he tried to convince me it stalled because the leaders just wanted to stop the work of God. I asked a few questions and told him it sounded to me like his fears were being imposed on some very good people. All groups face challenging issues, and my friend is fearful they will hurt him. I have tried to get him to face his fears and build faith in areas he is weak.

Those who live accidentally will be overrun regularly by fears and we will likely never notice it. One of my fears that often blindsides me is the fear of failure. I have to deliberately confront this fear when I start anything. I am curious by nature and I like to try new things. I look fearless to people around me, but I have to work through my fear that my ideas just might not work before I progress onward.

Have you ever assessed your susceptibility to fear? What is your weak link? Can you look back and see that your weak link as polluted your work.

Entropy and Church Life

Physicists have introduced us to the process of breakdown in creation. It is called entropy. This theorem describes the breaking down of the universe. Everything is breaking down to its worst state. All matter is breaking down right now as we speak. The environment is breaking down chunk by chunk. Energy dissipates; it doesn't increase.

The natural force in church life is to break down as well without a good deal of attention. Great churches that shall never stay static; rather, they always get worse. Faith never stays intact long, for it either grows or diminishes. The weak will always have more natural impact in a group.

It takes real work to keep a group's faith growing. It takes wisdom to know how to go about it. Leaders should build into their training program regular efforts to diminish fear and the increase the influence of the positive people in their church.

How do you do this? Basically a church gets what it **celebrates** and what it **enforces**. I pastored a church that had 1,800 volunteers. I made it a habit once a quarter to introduce and thank the most positive coworkers in our lay ministry teams. No doubter was ever rewarded in our service or meetings. Those who exhibited faithfulness and excellence were rewarded.

We also enforced what we wanted. I recently was called into help a negative group of leaders. I have seen strong negativism in a group before, but this group was an award-winning fearful group. I suggested two things to the pastor and core leaders. One, that the board meetings be run according to a tight time schedule. I suggested first that the pastor or chairman present the agenda. I suggested the meeting material go out two weeks ahead and that members have votes decided before the meeting.

I suggested that the first round of conversation be rehearsing **everything that was going right**, introducing the idea of a kitchen timer being set at two minutes. The second round was set for **asking questions** about the agenda. The timer was set at this

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point for three minutes. No one could comment, and questions were cut off at the three minutes. I did this because the verbose fearful always dominated, as in most cases. The final round of the session was in four-minute increments of **comments**. Each topic was handled this way and then it ended without reckless wrap up.

This group excelled in faith overnight. The weak fearful links in a group cannot be allowed to taint the vision of the group.

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Chapter Seven

Building Fear Resistant Organizations

My eyes caught the snake slithering right toward me. It had the skin pattern of a rattlesnake. It was dashing with its head up high. This sight hit my brain center for fear, hard and my “primitive” fear instincts jumped into action. I had to “react” because danger was approaching.

I knew the snake would bite me in seconds, so I jumped high onto a tree branch looking for the shovel I had left next to the tree where I was digging ditches for irrigation. I threw apples at the symbol of Satan, one apple after another. But the snake just hissed and kept moving toward me under the limb clearly getting angrier with each on target apple. My heart was pounding. I contemplated calling for help from the immigrant workers in the orchards with me. This snake was obviously created to kill skinny redheads like me. I soon discovered this snake had no rattlers. It was a “bull snake.” Bull snakes do bite, but not often. They look like rattlesnakes until you view them up close. After my vision was clear and my fear had become subdued by reason, I jumped from the tree and stomped at the large snake then it slithered off in the tall grass.

Fear takes over a group quickly. If we live accidentally, we will forever be climbing trees to evade enemies that can't really harm us. Fear can take over an entire group's temperament. And it can cause us to waste time and energy on unimportant issues.

I spoke at one meeting where a man began shouting obscenities at me in front of the entire congregation. Everyone was frightened, and justifiably so. I was unhappy the ushers weren't too frightened to constrain the man. Later the policeman on sight found a dagger on the man. Our fears were justified. And the adrenaline-driven effort to end the profanity had saved us from further injury. But usually our fears are operating at an unjustified level.

Learning to live deliberately can help us avoid being the slaves of fear. I have suggested several practices to church leaders that will give preventative power against the tyranny of fear. I have come to see if you do not give the vaccine to fear when it comes it is hard to undo what it does to a ministry.

Let's look at some practices that will help insulate a group from unjustified fear. As you read, think of the word “deliberate” and then try and see how accidental living can leave our ministries open to our corporate out of control limbic systems.

Catch People Doing What's Right

Len Blanchard wrote a book in the 80's titled: “The One Minute Manager.” One of the management ideas he had for effective management was to give one-minute affirmations to workers when they were seen doing what was right. The method works. Most people know what they are doing wrong and have trouble believing they can do what's right.

Churches rarely congratulate their members for much of anything. Most messages I have heard lean toward “you better do more” tone. I consult many leaders to

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practice giving five times the recognition to members for what they are doing right as opposed to what's wrong.

I had a pastor call me to see if I could help as a consultant with their church. It had grown quickly to 100 people, but faltered and dropped to 50 then back up. The cycle was wearing everyone out. I realized one of the problems on the way from the airport to the church. The pastor began giving me a litany of the problems with the church people. "Too many of our men are struggling with pornography, our worship leader has marital problems, the church never brings their friends, our children's department has messy rooms and I can not get anyone to work in it," and many more problems he offered up during our first few minutes together.

Finally, he had to stop to catch his breath, and I said, "Okay, but tell me what's right! There has to be something right going on."

"We hadn't thought about that for a long time. We just have to get things lined up," he raised his voice at me.

"I bet your have your church filled with fear about what might be wrong next. Do you ever just preach a message on what is right about things? What's right in the world? Or do you go on as though we are falling apart because we are not perfect?"

He was quiet for a moment.

"I can go home now. You have the help you needed. You cannot preach one sermon the next year about any 'oughts' or what's wrong' material. You need to go around and catch your church doing what's right and talk about it for one year."

"I get it," he said.

Fear will leave any group that seeks to become positive and majors on what is right! Yes, there is a lot wrong in the world and in our ministries. But it is really amazing in a broken and fallen world that anything goes right. We should be impressed when anything goes right and point it out.

A positive and affirmative culture will stop fear from taking hold. A group that is affirmed has power to do offensive and aggressive work. If a person focuses on what they are doing right usually they stop doing what's wrong.

Collecting Feedback

I have given out feedback sheets for years in ministries I lead. I find that when there is a healthy outlet for concerns people become much more confident in what is going on. Many groups who try this fail initially. It takes time to have a group believe you are serious about feedback. And I find that if the group sees evidence that they have at least been heard, they open up with great ideas.

It is true that the less mentally stable can initially make you feel like you should resign and join the Pakistani Army. But feedback will reduce fear and grumbling eventually. There must be some kind of broad acknowledgement of feedback.

Focus groups can help collect input. I have taken a sample of people to collect feedback from and reviewed results with leaders with positive results. The best process is to choose a new Christian, a long-time member, a balance of men and women, a teen-

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ager, an elderly person, etc. If you ask a group like this is what they see going right and what they see as issues of concern, you will collect some wonderful data to present in some form to your church.

Groups feel isolated and are open to fear if they are not part of making major decisions. On the other hand, every major decision in a ministry should not be made just with a large open forum. Many smaller meetings collecting feedback should precede it. These meetings also allow the ideas to reach through the church before a major discussion. Fear cannot thrive where respect for the members is shown.

I have found that churches that reach a strong level of participation in funding have above average systems for gaining feedback and input from the membership before ideas are even presented. Decisions are not necessarily better with long periods of data collection, but there is a great deal more fearless buy in.

Five Right's For Every Wrong

I used to have board meetings as a pastor. There were always so many things to work on it was hard to prioritize our time. As our church grew to thousands, we had staff immorality to face, staff leaving and its impact, we had lawsuits, and all the other trappings that work behind the scenes of successful ministries.

I found that often we had to begin our meetings with a discipline of rehearsing five things are going right before we started in on the other items. The discipline we soon realized brought peace. And the problems seemed to be less important. But it did have great benefits whenever we practice this form.

I started our ministry at Square One too soon, leaving me wishing I had taken off another year after my pastoral retirement and move to a mobile ministry. Though I thought it would be like leading a church, leading a mobile ministry has very few similarities. Many times, I felt so alone. Because we had never done what we were to do before, our board struggled at times to find ways to help, and outsiders couldn't quite grasp what I was about now.

I learned that the five to one principle worked in my personal devotional times. Each small step we took had several things that went right. I found myself encouraged in the face of all the fearful moments I faced in starting a new organization when I thanked God for what was going right.

One of our first events lost nearly \$20,000. It nearly cleaned out our start-up capital. I was frozen in fear for weeks. Then it struck me that I didn't have anything else to do so I had better make this thing work. So, I said down and made a list of the positive things we had learned. I actually came up with a list of 33 things we learned and benefits we received from this event. We have used the lessons we learned on our first run to this day.

I do not enjoy praying in groups. While it may sound bad for a church leader to admit that, I am being honest. One of the reasons I struggle in group prayer is so much of it seems to be praying for the benefit of one another rather than conversation with the God we all know through Christ. The second struggle I have is I am convinced a lot of our praying amounts to trying to get God to be as frightened as we are.

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I have in my private life with God taken to never asking for one thing until I have thanked God for five items. I once asked one of my denomination supervisors how he kept so enthusiastic about leading ministries. He said, "I get up every morning and I thank God one hundred times for all he has done the day before and then I paused to envision the great day ahead."

I have never forgotten this. I wish I could say I did the same each day but I don't. But when I do restore the practice my faith soars and my fear shrinks. It is amazing how many times the Bible calls us to give thanks. It is no accident that one of the central sacraments of the church is the Eucharist, "the giving of thanks."

Close Ministries When They Die

The fear of failure is strongly present in people who do ministry, but we just don't know what to do when we are failing. I help several church planters start fresh every year. One of my aims is to teach them to know when to quit. I also teach how to fail and how to make a failure a victory. Knowing when to stop is as important as knowing when to begin.

As I said, I led my last pastorate for 19 years – that's a long time to lead a church. Most pastors stay around two years these days. I had a difficult time knowing when to quit. I had never been taught how to end my role. I am an evangelist and led the congregation into seeing 17,000 people surrender their lives to Christ. The truth is if I had been honest I was wearing the church out. There are nearly no groups that can maintain that pace. I became a detriment to the church's health. The church needed to consolidate, but it never would with me there.

I was afraid that I could not be replaced, and I really didn't know what a ministry without a home church would look like. I was fearful for two years before I found the courage to stop.

There are many ministry expressions in churches that soar for years and then come to a screeching halt. Usually the ministries wane because the leader with the passion for the group's work moves on. When any ministry doesn't have a passionate leader, churches shut down the ministry.

I noted in our church that there was a growing cynicism about ministries. Many felt they had been let down by church leaders or the church because their group was failing. It dawned on me, one, that we assume as though everything God does should last forever. There are churches all over our country that continue, but they are just dead cadavers of once vital churches. We do not know how to end them so they go on burning up resources, discouraging the people and wearing out pastors.

We need to have funeral services as well as birthing services for ministries. So I had a service every quarter wherein we announced the end to various ministries. We remembered the great things different ministries had done. We thanked God for the miracles in lives that had occurred, and then prayed a prayer of burial and cheered its end after thanking God for their ending as well as their beginning.

I have encouraged churches everywhere I go as a consultant to have such burial services. This way, the fear of failure is neutralized. And the courage to try new things arises within a church. Death is as much a part of church life as birth.

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Make Leaving a Church As Much A Work of the Spirit as Coming

Ministries need people to leave periodically. Many times as a ministry grows, they become a hard environment for those who came on board when things were small.

People often sense they are not only needed but in the wrong slot.

I have found that it is good to acknowledge sincerely that people can be directed by one Holy Spirit to do so. People fear less when others leave if they can see God does such things. It is amazing how free people feel as they join another group if they didn't have to fearfully sneak out the back door.

I felt led to become part of another denomination a few years ago, and it was really tough since I loved my former family of churches. My main reason for changing was that I felt I was beginning to fit somewhere else. It was difficult for many of my friends to not fear they were rejected. Usually denominations vilify those who find their way to another group. What would happen if we saw how broad the church was and that God makes assignments as He chooses and we should celebrate His guidance in others rather than fear it?

It is aggravating when churches say, "We lost forty members last year." You can't lose the redeemed. Either we should say, "We offended forty people and they fled us," or be thankful and say, "God reassigned forty of us last year." These are much more reality perspectives in a group. Fear is dissipated if there isn't any environment where people are held tightly.

Pace The Ministry

Ministries get overwhelmed just like individual members. Ministries that change constantly breed fear in their members. And organizations that go too fast create fearful cultures as well. Creative leaders can without realizing it cause fear. Ideas should be controlled just like the driver must manage a car's speed. If you run an engine at too high RPMs for too long, the engine will blow up, so it is with ministries.

A good leader learns to see if his charge is reeling under the pace or not. Most really strong visionary people I know have a bad habit of not finding joy in the past or in the moment. Only pacing allows you to savor each week of a ministries growth.

I learned that my congregation (and most others) could not handle a sermon four weeks of every month. So we committed one service a month to just reading the Bible, communion, baptisms, receiving new members and baby dedications in a cycle. These services lasted about 50 minutes. They were well attended and the "rest" was refreshing to the church.

Today, the frequency of attendance in our churches is dropping yearly. I am persuaded that one of the reasons is contemporary churches are singing and saying too much. Spiritual fatigue breeds disillusionment and we are developing a church life with far too much going on.

There are some signs the pacing needs to be alerted in a church. Check this list out and evaluate your own ministry:

- ◆ Dropping frequency of attendance into the ministry.

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- ◆ High turnover in volunteers
- ◆ Rising complaints about the change factor
- ◆ A growing number of projects that are left incomplete
- ◆ Regular staff turnover
- ◆ The fear of ambiguity and confusion rises
- ◆ The major cause is left forgotten
- ◆ The ministry begins to copy other ministries and ceases to find its own identity
- ◆ Sermons begin to constantly talk about the new directions because participation is lagging
- ◆ A growing measure of energy put into dealing with complaints

The Fun Factor

Fun kills fear and joy is the twin of fun. We don't need to say a whole lot about this. But a ministry that laughs together isn't usually fearful. BBQ's and church celebrations are huge ways to reduce the fear factor.

Strategic Plans

Most people cannot live with ambiguity. The majority of people in ministries require plain old black and white plans. They require simple instructions. Bred by complexity breeds confusion and creates fear in a group.

A published strategic plan allows a group to measure its progress. And measuring projects builds courage and faith as well as hope for the future. If a group knows the expectations and scorecard of success, they will do it. If this is not clear, fear of the future will cripple a group.

This plan should be presented and reviewed at least once a quarter. Leaders should memorize the plan. And the plan should be made available in written form at least once a month. Meetings and board meetings should use the plan as its reference point not what's wrong or the state of things.

What are the elements of a good strategic plan? The answers to these questions will create a perfect plan for any ministry.

- ◆ **Why do you exist?**
- ◆ **What are you to be that no other ministry can do in your city?**
- ◆ **What are you to do to meet this purpose?**
- ◆ **How will you go about it?**
- ◆ **Who is needed to do this task?**
- ◆ **Where will your work take place?**

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- ◆ **How much time will it take?**
- ◆ **When will things happen?**
- ◆ **Why will you do what you do?**
- ◆ **How will you know when you are successful?**

The more effective you're planning the less fear your ministry will have about the future. And this is good leadership practice to neutralize fear of failure, fear of futility, fear of purposelessness and many others.

Fear is Serious Business

As we have seen, fear with impunity has eroded numerous seasons in God's relationship with His people. God took their fears very seriously. Should we be any less on guard? How can an organization learn from the fears of past groups?

Caleb and Joshua made it to the homeland, but the fear of the nation kept them outside fulfillment of the promise. Fear was a very serious matter in this case as well, igniting God's anger, not just frustration, with an entire generation of His People. We can learn that fear is something with which we must aggressively deal. Fear is dangerous, robbing an entire organization of its birthright.

How do we learn to neutralize fear? Discipline in an organization is required to manage the institutional emotional life, but all efforts must start with a clear understanding that fear is serious business. A strategy for anticipating fears that an organization could face and how to neutralize them is the most important work a leader can do. Fear will come to your organization. If you lack a good plan to derail it, fear will derail you.

Respecting Fear's Power

I grew up riding a quarter horse named Lucky, who was a real frisky ride. He was a large animal who constantly tried to scrape me off his back against fences or knock me off under a tree branch. I asked my dad how to handle him. His reply was short: "A horse has to know who is in charge. You have to find a way to let him know who the boss is." Fear – and most of our human nature – is in need of management or it will get away from us.

Cain was told by God that sin was crouching at the door ready to pounce upon him and he would be the loser. Ignoring the warning, Cain found himself under the control of his fear of rejection by God. In the end, Cain's murder of his brother Abel was all about fear.

Dealing with fear in an organization is like dealing with fire in a dry forest. If an organization underestimates the history of how fear has affected its predecessors in ministry, it will face some rough waters that could be avoided.

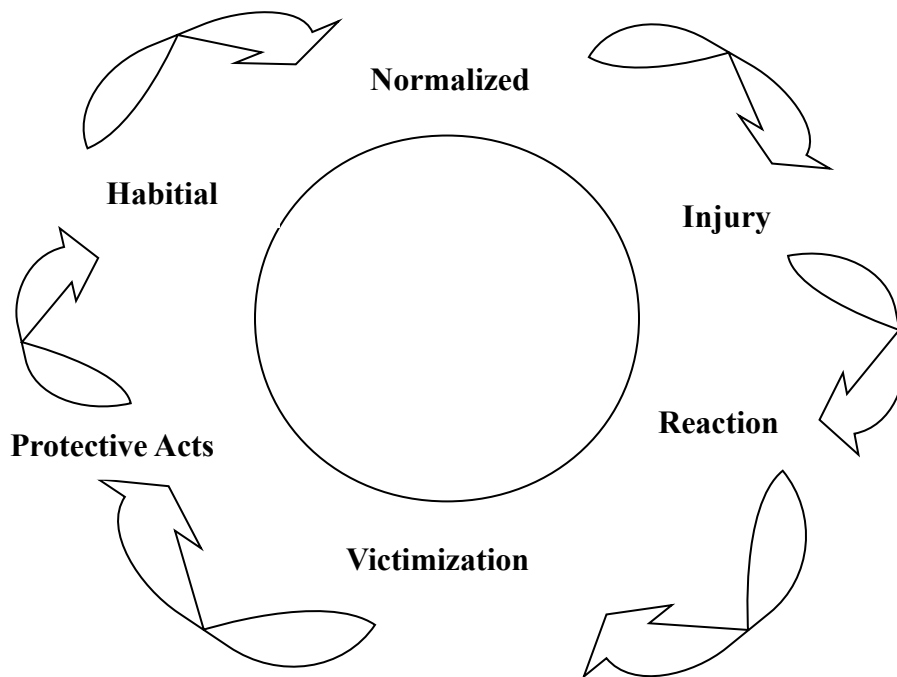
What can an organization do to take fear seriously?

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1. **Talk about it and its effects on your organization.** Don't think that just because your team is adults that something as simple as watching for fear isn't needed.
2. **Provide formal opportunities to have each member of the team inventory their own vulnerabilities.**
3. **Develop protocol that stops the impact of fear before it happens.**
4. **Develop training that develops courage and confidence.**
5. **Throw many parties.**

The Cycle of Fear

There is a cycle of fear and its work. First, fear begins with an injury of some kind. Second, it becomes a life or institutional reaction. Third, there sets in an attitude of victimization. Fourth, an attitude turns into preemptive action in an attempt to protect from past injury. And finally fear becomes habitual. And then it is normalized into a culture.



One leader of a large church I interviewed lost his leadership due to the introduction of a borderline personality in his management team. This individual knew how to push everyone's fear levels high. He caused fear between friends to develop through accusations that were untrue. I asked the former leader what he learned from the experience that would help others. He said, "I would instill systems that allow for forcing proper conduct towards others and that would also insulate us from fear as a team. The

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man wrecked the place in nine months, and when we all looked back we realized his essential tool was all our insecurities and fears.”

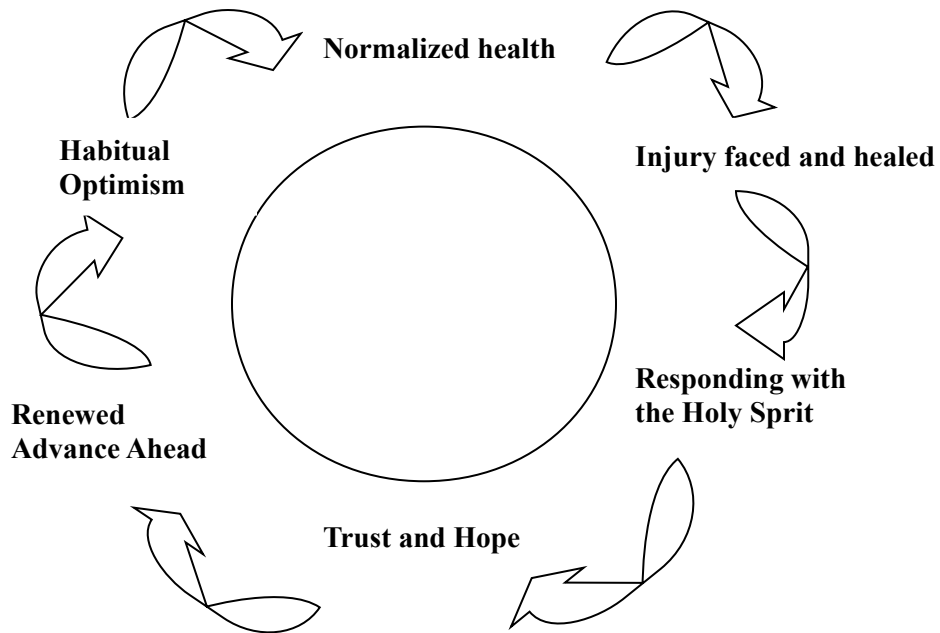
The strongest antidote for corporate fear is honesty. But the greatest ingredient to replace fear with faith is hope. This missing ingredient is the reason for fearful reactions to life in our brief historical survey. If an organization loses hope in its future, there will be a void which will be filled with fear.

Breaking the Cycle

How did Israel break the cycle of fear in one generation? They waited out the negative influence of the doubters, following the proven and confirmed leadership of the only two faithful from their generation Joshua and Caleb. And they grew to accept who they were and what God was doing in them. However, all those who neutralize fear have first faced “repentance.” By repentance, I mean the discipline of changing thinking that leads to a new way of living and operating.

The cycle of organizational fear can be broken. Neutralizing paralysis can happen with deliberate attention to the serious effects of fear. First, injury that is inevitable must be accepted and all that can be learned must be seen by the organization. Second, there has to be a determination to respond under the Holy Spirit’s guidance not knee jerk reactions. Third, all temptations to become victimized institutionally be replaced with deliberate offensive measures. Fourth, trust and hope must replace self-defense mechanisms. Fifth, optimistic hopeful thinking must replace habitual negative patterns. And finally, fearlessness must be a lifestyle that works with ease, yet deliberate attention.

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Don't Delay

As you read this book you will gain skills at reducing fear in your organization. But little will be done in your organization unless the real damage fear can cause is understood. Fear is our enemy's number one tool. Fear will destroy if not addressed within and without the organizational structure.

Chapter Eight

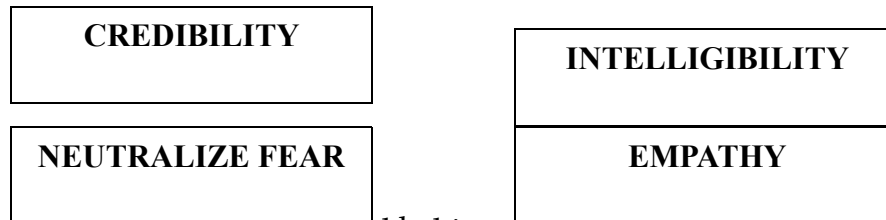
Understanding Fearless Organizations

One of my friends in the Midwest led a congregation from 0 to 8,000 people. I have had the privilege of advising and learning from the church numerous times. They are known literally around the world for developing what is called “Servant Evangelism.” But to me they should be noted as one of the most courageous congregations in the world.

If you meet with this group their conversation is always about enjoying the moment and the people that are yet to be met in their future. They have no fewer challenges than other groups but they seem to be oblivious to them. Their whole operation has this “can do” feel to it. And it is fun.

Fear is a foreigner to this group. They are experts at reaching inquirers with the message of Christ because of so much fun, clarity in presenting the message. They neutralize fear uninitiated guests might have. They are fear annihilators.

As an evangelist and consultant on congregational evangelism I have been able to observe that any effective outreach church possess four traits. These traits drive them to see conversations not any particular method. The four traits effective outreach church possess are:



Ministries develop habits, and habits produce outcomes in organizations. There are good habits like empathy that empowers a group. **Empathy** is a habit that produces a great deal of effectiveness. Empathy of course is the skill to understand others, to act in a way that anticipates your effect on another, and the compassion to feel another’s pain.

Most ministries today just don’t make sense to the unchurched or non-Christian observers. I attend many worship services during a year and speak at least three times a month in churches as a speaking guest. One Sunday a month I get to be part of a congregation as a listener. I have learned so much as an observer. One of my major observations is we really don’t make much sense to the inexperienced church goer. We lack the empathy to impact most people.

Credibility means the ability to be listened to with respect. No one is credible 100 percent of the time and neither are churches. But when we resemble our words we usually get the right to be heard. Recent research reveals that inexperienced church goers would like to see more money and time given to compassion gifts around the world. Our evangelism ministry has done benefit outreach events with offerings going to the care and support of abused women around the world. This brings credibility.

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Most importantly, effective ministries know how to neutralize fear in others. I wasn't raised in the church and I have never really gotten comfortable with the lingo and some of the habits of the church world. I remember well attending church my first few times. The first church I tried after my conversion was a Catholic Church. We were welcomed OK but I just couldn't understand all the moving parts to their service. Then we attended a mainline denomination that made it clear I wasn't welcomed because I wore jeans and my hair was long.

Even the church that I eventually settled in just didn't make sense to me. I will never forget my first offering experience. I was filled with fear when the offering bags came around. I didn't have any money and I felt like the whole church was watching me as the offering bag passed. And I didn't enjoy being greeted by greeters at the door either. I just wanted to watch. But with the help of friends, I began to get acclimated to church life.

I brought a friend to a church service where the preacher announced, "Today, I am going to explain sanctification." My friend had never been to a church, and he glanced at me very perplexed. Finally, ten minutes into the message, my friend said, "I am getting afraid. I don't think I can live that well. And what in the (expletive deleted) is sanctification?"

I felt terrible for him. As his personal guide through his first church experience, I was failing badly. Then I leaned back and said, "Sanctification means being good when you didn't mean to because Jesus is living through you. And don't worry, most everyone here is struggling with this, too." He relaxed.

Fear reigns when people are not empathetic, credible or intelligible. Annihilating fear in your ministry will see faith maintain its ground. If a ministry takes time to take inventory of what may cause fear in newcomers and then develops plans to neutralize these fears, they begin to grow at a pace they never imagined.

Most growing churches today grow by transfer growth. This growth that comes from just shuffling Christians from church to church. This kind of growth doesn't have a high level of fear factor in their guests. Experienced Christians have learned to make their way around our muddled church world. But unchurched and conversion growth requires being a good neutralizer of fear as a ministry.

Signs of Fearlessness

The following are sure signs that faith is alive in your ministry. You can rejoice when you see the symptoms of ministry free of fear. I suggest you take a slow look at these signs and see if you might not be filled with more taint as a ministry than you previously thought.

- Fearless ministries love new ideas. New ideas are welcomed and taken seriously.
- Faith-filled ministries seek feedback. They want to know how to improve.
- Ministries with a low fear quotient love to laugh at past failures.
- Strong ministries never use the word failure. They learn, pay tuition, have setbacks, take a wrong turn but never fail.

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- They are comfortable reinventing themselves when necessary.
- Are neither surprised nor guilty when people are “hurt” by decisions but make steps to give information and encouragement at transitional times.
- Love the truth.
- Fearless ministries are always focused outward wanting to share what they have.
- Fear neutralized ministries give more money away.
- Who is in charge isn’t as important as the cause.
- Everyone gets credit for victories on the team.
- Boards give most of their time feeding what is right not trying to correct what is wrong.
- Fearless groups love change.
- These groups are future friendly.
- These ministries will not allow criticism to take place behind anyone’s back. The protocol Jesus held as the standard when it came to criticism is fanatically held to. This is all criticism is given face to face.
- They see sins are to be learned from, not punished.
- They are inclusive and have weak boundaries between who is in and out. They don’t fear harm from the new. They do fear the dangers that lurk when a group turns inward.

I have believed for some time that all churches should offer multiple services. And maybe even up to three different styles of services. Options are considered good manners in America. I love shopping at a grocery store that is open 24 hours a day. I don’t shop ever past nine but the thought of being able to go at 2 a.m. is a real plus to me.

One church I suggested adding a service because their sanctuary was full took almost nine months deciding whether to make the change or not. I was pulling my hair out in the process. The longer they debated, the more fearful the people reacted toward change. I decided the reason was the leader was afraid he would lose people if they made the change.

Finally, I found what the problem was with the church. They had had a staff member start a second service five years earlier and he had walked off with the whole group that was gathering with him in the second service. The group was fearful such things would happen again.

The day was saved when one of the board members stood up in a meeting and said, “Here are our options: One, we stop growing. Two, we build a million dollar parking lot and add on some to our sanctuary. Three, we start another church in another location to handle the people who can’t get in here. Or four, we add another service. In my opinion, the fourth option makes the most sense.”

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I waited in anticipation as to what would happen next. The vote was taken and there was only one vote against the new service. Why they had to do several votes over nine months was more than I could understand but they had made it to safe ground. The turn around in this case was the power of a faithful leader. I could actually feel fear being sucked out of the group and replaced with faith as he spoke.

There was a church I worked with in the southeast that was struggling to maintain its attendance. I visited and saw that their sanctuary was overflowing. They were doing an evening service to reach the people unable to get it, but it wasn't working. My first suggestion was to cancel Sunday PM as a service and replace it with a training and small group time. Then I suggested they start two new services.

The groups board to my amazement discussed my suggestion and they asked me several questions. Then they said, "Let's vote." One of the board members said, "Well, if it doesn't work, what have we lost? We will have learned another set of skills, I suspect."

The vote was unanimous to move forward with the extra service. I was in the service when they made the announcement. It was a lesson as well. The pastor said, "Our pastor has decided we need to add two more services, each with a different style. While we don't expect to fully succeed for some time, it won't kill us if it doesn't work. But let's give it our all just the same." The group responded with applause.

These ministries are thriving today. Both these ministries surged forward with growth. I know it was because they stared fear down and prevailed. **Faithfulness is as contagious as fear.**

Our ministry has learned we do not work with ministries anymore that seem fearful about our fees. I think of the fees as reinvestments in our ministry as we invest in them. We have found our input is never headed where fear reigns. The willingness to invest money and be generous is a key indicator of the level of fear. We tried for years to keep our fees down for smaller and troubled churches. We no longer take this posture. We have decided to willingness to invest generously as a ministry will determine how effective the group is. The fear of not having enough kills growth.

I have learned that in 100 percent of the cases, generous churches are the growing ones. They are not looking for deals. They understand that giving leads to receiving. They have little fear of not having enough. They are convinced that God provides and that generosity is always the channel of new ideas that cause growth.

The absence of generosity is a sign of fear in a ministry. The fear of being taken advantage of is a killer in a ministry. And poverty thinking is sure to cap churches. Most churches in the US are under 75 people. And I am persuaded the reason is they have too much fear to pay the cost of ministry. It takes little to host and prepare for a ministry. But fear will create all kinds of self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. But there are many fearless organizations coming on track all the time.

Faithful ministries also pay their staff well. One of the first pieces of data I seek when advising a ministry is the budget, the salary levels, and then giving per capita. The church in America should be ashamed of what I pay its leaders more often than not. If we are too fearful to pay leaders as though they were gifts from God then we may as

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well stop and accept defeat. This stingy fearful approach to personnel causes their families to suffer, too much turn over, bitterness in their families, and burn out, dissatisfaction with the ministry. None of these effects promotes the cause of Christ.

Training for Fearlessness

I am trying to get my partners to let me try a method of training that changed my life. In 1973, I was involved in a Youth With A Mission (YWAM) training program. We had one day of teaching about how to pray for lost people, how to do evangelism effectively and how to hear God speak.

The final three days of the training were a real shocker to all who attended. We were divided up into ten groups. Each group was made up of six people each. Each group had a speaker, musician, artists, et cetera. Then we were asked to turn all but ten dollars each into the leaders to be kept for us when we returned from a mission they were sending us on.

We were to drive to a nearby small town and do evangelism. We could only use our ten dollars for three days to eat and to buy gas. And we were not allowed to come home until we had done an evangelism event and seen conversions.

Our group was fearful of a number of things. We had to stop and pray twice when we entered the town. We decided we would start going door to door (in 1973 that wasn't that bad an idea) and share our faith and our mission. So we dropped four of the team off to go door to door through a neighborhood.

The rest of us went into town to find a hall. The city officials gave us a meeting hall in the center of town because we told them we would reach out to kids taking drugs. Then we visited the local radio station. I happen to have had the owner as my junior high bus driver. He gave us a radio show for three nights and paid for our printing fliers to hand out for two nights of our meeting.

The group going door to door had actually prayed with two people to receive Christ as their savior. One of the converts was a well to do woman who offered their home for us to stay in and offered us our meals. She also set up a meeting for us at her Catholic church to present the Gospel as she had heard it. The priest was very open and several of the group also confessed their need for a personal relationship with Christ.

The first night of meetings we had six people present. The priest came; two kids from a park, the radio station owner, and the woman we were staying with. Her husband passed on the opportunity.

The second night after the station owner ran ads all day, we saw 80 people come to the meeting and five more people received Christ. The next morning after the meeting, we contacted an evangelical church in town and encouraged the priest of the Catholic Church to both lead bible studies for the converts.

We returned to the training center with gas to spare. And we found that every group had had similar experiences. Our faith soared as we shared accounts of God's provision and breakthrough.

I learned and wanted to see others learn that if you are bold and assertive in your reliance upon God fear disappears, it doesn't increase. And one of the sure signs a

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group is not fearful but faithful are they enjoy being in a position that if God doesn't come through things don't work.

Chapter Nine

Fearless Leaders

Fearless leaders are not born fearless. Courage comes from avoiding fears but by walking right through them. Organizations that have fearless leaders possess an environment of confidence and belief in the efficacy of God's work with them. Fearless organizations require fearless leaders to maintain a creative environment.

What does a fearless leader look like? And can one learn to be a fearless leader? Or are only those who are innately blessed with fearlessness able to lead without fear? The Bible demonstrates the high premium God places on fearless leaders. In Numbers 14, Joshua and Caleb were earmarked as future leaders of the nation of Israel because they say opportunity in the face of heart-bending challenges.

Leadership of this kind is a unique way of seeing and thinking, not just reacting. The actions of a fearless leader are built upon habits of strong-thinking and discipline. Laziness is not a trait you find in leaders of strong, advancing organizations. It takes effort to be a "can-do" leader. Fear requires little effort, coming quite naturally to pessimistic humans. Fearlessness is a deliberate and conscious effort to seize hold of the organization's future and strongly move ahead. It takes conscious effort.

Fearless organizations attract leaders who have cultivated less sensitivity to danger and risk. Fearless leaders are human. They have no fewer fears than others. But they are not afraid of their fears. Fear to such a leader is nothing more than the edge of a new frontier. Fearless leaders are those who come with not only optimism but with the sense of confidence that the world is filled with solutions. First and foremost, fearless leaders see a good solution to every problem.

The Spectrum of Courage

As we saw above, Joshua and Caleb were identified as the kind of leaders God sought. They saw opportunities in obstacles, and they weren't afraid of the facts. All their thinking included the "God factor," one of the main traits of fearless leaders. The "God factor" was unchallenged in the hearts of Joshua and Caleb. Though they saw the Promised Land with all its difficulties, they also saw it as a territory rife with the blessing of God. The ten negative fearful spies were lazy spies, expecting a Promised Land that would require little effort and no challenge. Mistakenly, these spies believed the evidence of God in their midst would be that there were no problems, devoid of any risk.

I've always been interested in the fact that the first chapter of Joshua shows God repeatedly encouraging Joshua to not be dissuaded or discouraged. At least six times, Joshua is encouraged to not despair or be discouraged but to be filled with courage. He was one of the two bravest men in the life of his nation, yet God warns him against fearlessness. This proves the point that fearless leaders have fears but subject them to thinking through their decisions with the "God factor" involved.

Why the warning against fear? God warned Joshua because fearless leaders move up and down a spectrum of faith. Dynamic leadership does get pushed back by

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circumstances. All leaders do. But substantive courageous leaders push back. Most of us can think of courageous leaders we've had contact with on some level or another who have demonstrated courage. These leaders can fill many slots like vital administrators in an organization or dynamic spokespersons. But I'm sure we've all been impressed by some. And conversely, I think if we've had the opportunity to see such heroes up close, we've seen their humanness. No fearless leader is fearless 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Fearless leaders are those who deliberately find their way back to the powerful center in their life, even after lapses in their optimistic outlook. They find their way back to the way of feeling, thinking and acting that necessitates the "God factor." They have a core center of courage to return to.

The apostle Peter was a leader who was clearly impulsive. Yet, we can't write him off and push his acts simply into the category of impulsiveness. He, too, was a courageous leader. At times, his decisions were made beyond his ability to make good on his promise; nonetheless, he had the boldness to try.

We only need to think of the miracle of the calming of the seas to see this in Peter. The storm was raging and the disciples were frightened when they saw Christ walking upon the troubled waters. Peter cried out, wanting to have the opportunity to walk on the water to his Lord. Jesus invited Peter to Join Him. True, Peter only made it a few steps before beginning to sink. But where were the other eleven? At least Peter knew what it was like to take a few steps on the water. The others would never know.

A Leader's Dismay

We see Peter boldly accepting a new era in the church in Acts 10. He had been called by vision and then by people to visit the family of Cornelius, a centurion who had done so many good works and obtained God's attention. Peter began presenting the Gospel boldly to this group of Gentiles. You can see here another indication of Peter's courage and boldness. There was no model or example for Gentiles receiving Christ and becoming part of the Christ-following Jewish community. The entire household responded to Christ. Then, they were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter was stunned by the whole event, yet he had no doubt that God was at work. Dismay is not necessarily a fear. Fearless leaders are dismayed but return to their core.

Fearless Reporter

Peter reported the event at Cornelius' house to the other apostles. Could this be one of the vital traits of those who lead fearless organizations? It very well could be that courage we see in vibrant, successful leaders comes from developing an eye to see what God is doing and reporting this to their followers. Fearless leaders are "reporters" of the great progress that history made.

In the 1970s and 80s, the CEO model of leadership began to infiltrate the definition of leadership in the church. This isn't a bad model for managers in the church, but a CEO model for leaders and pastors of churches is probably not a completely good one. CEOs manage assets of the organization and deal with goals and precise planning. Many of the seminars in our time have dealt exclusively with this type of management.

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The issue of growing market share and growth dynamics are all part of the CEO model, but not the domain of “spiritual” leaders.

Is this the best model for fearless leaders in the church? I think it is definitely a model, and in many instances a good one. But is it the best one? I think the case could be made that it isn't.

Fearless Obedience

Fearless, God-driven leadership doesn't necessarily always lead to success. Leaders of the courageous variety operate more off of obedience and faithfulness than achieving goals and aims. Goals or aims are Scriptural; after all, the aim of Christ's incarnation and ascension was to bring all nations to God. According to the book of Revelations, every single convert is numbered and has a specific place before the throne of God in the new age. However, fearless leaders are worried about things other than CEO management. They are devoted totally to the “God factor” in the midst of the organization. They've replaced goals of achievement with goals of obedience. Interest and gifting are quite secondary to a call to be faithful. Leaders who are fearless operate from the truth that they will mostly be evaluated by their obedience.

Acts 13 exhibits for us another model of courageous leadership. The church gathered in Antioch to determine the restructuring of leadership in their midst. Antioch was a church that was truly Jewish and Gentile, and the believers joined in one community. The apostle Paul had aligned himself with this group for a number of years. Now, he and his friend Barnabas were sent out on a mission to develop Gentile only churches in regions unknown to the young fledgling church. They were heading not only into the unknown but into a missions activity that would be sure to bring prosecution in front as well as persecution and hatred from the Jews to their back. Yet, these leaders responded to a higher mission than their own comfort. Obedience was the fuel that launched them.

Destiny & Fearless Leaders

Courageous leaders all have a sense of vision and destiny. They align with a vision and destiny far bigger than themselves. It is this focal point that becomes the source of their drive to achieve the cost.

Fearful leaders get their negative energy from three factors:

- Discouragement over their lack of achievement
- Pessimistic thinking that denies the “God factor”
- Excessive need for human affirmation

Courageous leaders develop vibrant organizations by receiving their energy from the following three factors:

- Obedience
- Faithfulness
- Mission

Fearlessness and its tensions

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Dynamic leaders who guide organizations to greatness have found a way to live between several tensions their ministries face. The following are tension points these kinds of leaders have learned to commandeer. They often don't have the perfect balance, and even for long periods of time, their slant may be near the negative. But if one were to average their overall ministry approach, they have done a better job than most in living with these kinds of tensions:

Success - Obedience

Fulfillment - Faithfulness

Goals - Mission

Shortage - Abundance

Works - Worship

Effort - Grace

Service - Miraculous

Short-term - Long-term

Affirmation - Persecution

Confirmation - Conflict

God's servant - God's

friend

Developing Fearless Leadership

Leadership again is a learned skill. Naturally, there are many who have a stronger predilection for being a fearless leader than others. Our gene pool definitely affects our predisposition to many aspects of life. Environment can also be a predictor of inclinations that people will have to be leaders.

Can people learn to lead? Yes, they can. One's aptitude or lack thereof could increase or limit the ability and kind of leadership one exhibits, but everyone can develop their leadership skills with the aid of personal transformation. In my 30 years of ministry, I've seen people who had not leadership ability in one context able to arise in a new context to high levels of fearless leadership. In the large church I led, I repeatedly saw staff members fail to exhibit leadership aptitudes in the least. Yet, when they began to move into their own arenas of ministry, they weren't only highly successful but they found themselves able to meet the demands of the new environment.

Recently I met with a pastor whose ministry skills leaned greatly toward those of a counselor. He had found in numerous pastorates that he had slid into the habit of this familiar ground of being a counselor to the people. He opened up to me. "I've gone to all the seminars about what makes effective leaders, and I've decided I'll never be one." He went on, "I just don't have the make up to be a leader. I'm not a highly dominant person and I'm only moderately inspirational. Do you think there is any place for me, any kind of leadership for church work?"

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I responded to my friend by saying he was definitely a leader. One's personality profile is not always a predictor of how effectively one can lead. However, personality profiles predict the style you adapt in order to lead an organization. I've concluded that there are other character traits rather than personality preferences that dictate the power of leadership.

One of the largest churches on the west coast was led by a late friend of mine. He was neither a dominant nor dynamic leader. However, he was extremely inspirational. His inclinations leaned toward being supportive and counseling while speaking. Even his messages, which were far above average, emoted a heart-driven compassion of the wounds people experienced. His church flourished above 8,000 people. If he had taken the profiles for leadership, he would have been told he would never succeed at leading an organization. But he was a fearless leader.

Fearless Leaders & Transformation

Quality of character and development of skills sets determine how fearless a leader you will be more than the parental disciplines or your gene pool. Let's look at the biblical picture of a man named Gideon. In Judges 6, we find him hiding. Preachers make fun of Midianite oppression. Yet, he is a terrific model of someone who was transformed into being a leader he never could have been on his own. Gideon clearly expressed several character traits that made a good leader. He was one who faced the facts, as well as one who began to obey with hesitation. His key successful trait was his ability to follow instructions in detail. And he was also able to illicit the support and talents of those around him. He was able to inspire many to sacrifice and face risks. He remained a reluctant leader, likely carrying the life-long demeanor that he would have chosen a different path for his life than the deliverer God called him to be.

Traits to Develop

Let's look at some character traits and skills that all of us can develop to become courageous leaders.

Fearless leaders practice direct communication. The ability to say succinctly and direct what you feel will build courage in your organization. Weak leaders use indirect communication. Or worse yet, they use triangulated communication where they express their true feelings about an employee or leader to a third party while reporting all things are well in the face of the violator. This is more than hypocrisy. This is an indication of fearfulness.

If you were to develop courageous leadership, it would be worthwhile investing some time in learning about direct communication. Taking the time to assess your own communication style and choosing to develop one that is honest and factual will increase your confidence.

Fearless leadership is failure friendly. All of us have a natural predisposition to have visual images of what we will do when we fail. Of course, this is a natural function of wisdom as well as fear. Having backup scenarios are wise, even for courageous leaders. But fearful leaders never move on to develop plans of what they will do when they succeed. You can develop traits of a courageous leader by stopping and developing plans for what you will do with your failures rather than ignoring them.

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Fearless leaders share equity in the organization with others. Fearful leaders are afraid their position may be in jeopardy at all times. Dynamic leaders understand that when there is another good leader in the organization, the base of their role as the primary leader is expanded. Yes, in many church organizations this is dangerous. But we often forget that the limitation and success of the cause may be a worse problem than losing our leadership role.

Allowing new people to enter into the decision-making process can be one effort you can make to increase confidence in your leadership role. Sharing equitably the organization may even go to the area of remuneration. I find in organizations where the leader is paid significantly more than the rest of the staff that the ownership is lessened by many of the key leaders. The pay schedule itself often states that leadership and credit are not going to be shared equitably in this organization.

Fearless leaders are facts-based. There is no leader who doesn't use emotion to accomplish his task, neither are any of us completely free of misinformation. But courageous leaders take time to make sure that they have all the facts before they speak or decide. I've often heard it said as a leader "just stick to the facts." Detective Friday's favorite saying was, "Just the facts ma'am, just the fact."

Courageous leaders gain the skill of muting the emotions of others and at appropriate times, to mute theirs as well. You can enhance the courage you have in your leadership by asking those during crisis or concerns write down what they feel the central problem is. Have them take the time to report clearly what the facts are.

Let's say there has been a shortfall in income and your administrator is jumping up and down, predicting insolvency. Ask this leader to do two things: first, develop a graph of contributions over the last three years; then, ask him to list two or three possible explanations for the drop followed by 10 to 12 solutions.

I have learned that other's emotions in crisis can throw me way off track. And they cause a great deal of fearfulness in my own life. These kinds of fears, even when generated from other's emotions, cripple faith and actually harm the organization.

Fearless leaders encourage diversity in leadership. Fearful people are intensely afraid of people who believe differently or act differently than themselves. Naturally, there is a comfort zone we develop by being around those who agree with us. But dynamic leaders understand the value of having many different personality types and gifts around them. I've noted that many times while consulting churches that fearful leaders gather people just like themselves. I wonder at times if this is an expression of emotional laziness, as it takes effort to learn how another person thinks and speaks. Listening skills are essential to maintaining a heterogeneous environment.

If you choose to be a fearless leader, take a moment to assess the kind of people around you. Then strategically set out a plan to make friends with those who are entirely different than you. If you are extremely conservative, consider befriending someone who is moderately liberal. Or if you are a more spontaneous, creative type, make friends with someone whose style requires more structure and rigidity. The issue isn't just to tolerate these individuals but to appreciate what they would offer to your

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life. This kind of deliberate work will build courage in working with many leaders with dissimilar giftings than your own.

Fearless leaders trust intensely but carefully. Most quality leaders I have interviewed and known trust slowly. They don't tend to think black and white. Fear has a way of making one think, good-bad, black-white, and in-or-our. But courageous leadership requires learning the skill of trusting others to the measure they have proven themselves worthy.

Is this judging? No, not at all. But one of the difficulties that I and many others have faced in the leadership of Christian organizations is both black-and-white thinking about others and excessive trust. Excessive self-confidence can create a feeling of near invincibility when it comes to trusting others or giving them platforms in our organizations. As many leaders have, I learned the hard way, to develop a cadre of wise people around me to assess personnel decisions I would make.

This kind of willingness and ambiguity accepts that all people are, at best, a mixture of good and bad, courage and fear. Take a moment to ask yourself if you relate to people as if they are either 100 percent right or 100 percent wrong. If so, you may be driven by fear. The fear of being betrayed or rejected may be overcoming your ability to be objective.

Fearless leaders are never in a hurry. Patience is a learned skill. Patience is completely different than procrastination. Procrastination entails sitting in inactivity, hoping an issue will go away. Patience is aggressive involvement in an issue, understanding that situations sometimes take time to evolve. Fear drives impatience and procrastination. Courageous leaders are willing to aggressively watch and wait for opportunities to arise to bring closure to issues and problems. This is a learned skill.

Developing this aspect of your leadership is part of being open to the "God factor" in your leader. Do you find yourself wanting to push people faster than they can understand what you are asking them to do? If so, you may be fearful of things going wrong. Understand the necessity of sound pacing in your ministry as a vital part of courageous leadership. The courageous know what the outcome will be, embracing the process as a friend.

Fearless leaders are thankful. Thankfulness is a powerful expression of worship. I once had a retired ministry friend answer my questions as to how he lasted so long in the ministry this way. He said, "I've learned that if I thank God for a hundred things every morning, the rest of the day was filled with my awareness of God's presence."

Thankfulness is a powerful force in a leader's life. It actually causes optimism, feeding the "God factor" in what we do. Thankfulness is a primary discipline of bold individuals who change the world.

Fearless leaders practice learning from their pain. Warren Bennis, a great researcher on leadership, stated in his book "Leaders" that he found while analyzing 70 top leaders in our country, vital leaders only pay tuition, got off track awhile, went to school, discovered what they weren't, et cetera, but none of them had ever actually

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failed. One friend of mine says mistakes are better learned from than punished. And this is one of the precise differences between fearless leaders and fearful leaders. Fearless leaders see their mistakes as something to learn from, rarely paralyzed by the thought of failing again. Fearless leaders also have a lower than average need to avoid pain.

I've observed that fearless leaders often face more tragedy than most people. The pain in these leaders' lives becomes an avenue of greater healing to those they would lead. Ask yourself while developing your own leadership style, "What can I offer those that I lead from my own pain and mistakes?" Discovering the answer to this question could determine the level of courage you find within your leadership.

Fearless leaders enjoy change and strangers. Most highly effective leaders are more highly susceptible to boredom than the average person, and they've learned to embrace change as a necessary part of growth. It isn't that they are open to spontaneous and haphazard living, but they have faced the winds of life enough to know that the currents often take you in directions you've never intended to go. Effective leaders also embrace strangers. They like new people. Developing the joy of hospitality can increase courage in one's ministry.

Fearless leaders share credit. I recently attended the 25th celebration of a large, famous church. The pastor was hailed as the source of this church's remarkable growth. He was a very humble man, giving God the credit and thanking the people for allowing him to grow with them over these 25 years. As he came to the end of his speech, he did a remarkable thing I had never seen done before that exhibited why this leader's faith had allowed him to see such extraordinary growth for several decades.

He invited former vital leaders of the church over the past 25 years to the platform, recognizing a total of 22 people. He asked three of his initial board members to stand, recalling for the congregation moments of faith these leaders exhibited to overcome his lack of faith. He then celebrated two vital staff leaders who helped him from five to seven years. Both these leaders were now leading large churches. He rehearsed decisions they had made which made the ministry excel as it had.

As I was watching this meeting, I knew I was watching a leader who wasn't just a great leader but a remarkable leader. He had little fear of his position and status. The reason he had little fear was evident in his discipline of passing around the credit.

Naturally, this also allows for the passing around of the debit. In this kind of environment, one rarely stands alone because people are happy to take a risk where they too may receive some of the credit.

Fearless leaders settle failures of their past. Fearless leaders sin like the rest of us. I've had the honor of helping numerous leaders walk through errors that nearly eclipsed God's work in their life. Effective fearless leaders are human like the rest of us, they also have the capacity to repent strong and receive grace to move on boldly.

Learning to accept grace and the boldness to confess when one is sinful builds faith. Leaders who put on airs that they never commit wrong are not believable, neither

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are those who continue to speak as though they are victims of their own sin. Effective leaders have settled the issues of their past and moved forward.

Fearless leaders are decisive. Fearless leaders do not excessively agonize over decisions. One of the main reasons they are able to do this is that they see life as recovery rather than a mishmash of set plays. All great fearless leaders realized that they are probably 20 recovery moves for every decision made; therefore, after gaining confidence in their ability to work through a problem with a series of decisions, they are ready to work more effectively.

Can you think of opportunities where you delayed decision-making where the risk and issues were slight? This is definitely a sign of being gripped by fear. Maybe in your near future you will have the opportunity to make a decision quickly. And smile if you make the wrong decision, knowing the whole while that success comes from the ability to see all of life's challenges as a series of decisions rather than one. Fearless leaders have developed skills at assessing the true risks of a situation and how to move on appropriately.

Fearless leaders work toward strategic aims. Aimless living creates fear; decisive, purposeful living creates courage. Do you know of strategic aims you have for your life? Have you set goals for this year for your organization and ministry? Have you set detailed strategies to achieve these aims?

If not, the ambiguity of your experience will cause you to be fearful. Fearless leaders know exactly what they are shooting for and an above average idea of how they are going to get there. Take a moment and sketch out where you would like to be in one, two, and three years as an organizational leader. Then sketch out four or five ways to achieve each of the aims you set. By having strategic aims, you can measure your progress which builds more courage. Aimless, pointless leadership has no way to measure progress. And progress is the stuff of growing faith.

Effective leaders are willing to ask more of themselves than others. Fearful leaders try to find the minimal sacrifice they can make to lead an organization. Truly strong leaders make strong requests of their organization. Fearless leaders can make strong demands on their followers because they themselves are willing to pay more.

I once had a friend tell me he gave 12 percent of his income to the church. When I asked him why, he said, "I will never ask people to give 10 percent if I'm not willing to give even more." I found a great deal of wisdom in this kind of thinking. It was not an accident that this man led a vital and growing ministry.

When I was in my 20s touring Denmark with a musical group, I had the opportunity to meet Brother Andrew, a missionary behind the Iron Curtain and a well-known Christian at that time. As I stepped off the bus, I noted a very friendly gardener. This man also offered to carry our bags to our room. And being an in-demand musical group from the U.S., we were happy to allow him to do so. Then to our chagrin that evening, Brother Andrew stepped to the platform to speak. I was astonished to realize that the gardener and valet I met earlier in that day was Brother Andrew himself.

Leaders who call for a yard cleanup day at the church and don't show up themselves will have a weak following. Leaders who call for sacrifice and make none them-

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selves are bound by fear. Leaders who are not sacrificing more than their followers make for weak appeals. I've found pastors who call the church to evangelism but have no personal evangelism in their own life rarely call their church to true action.

Do you as a leader find yourself asking others to do things such as bring friends when you yourself don't? If so, discovering places you can sacrifice and perform more highly than the group you lead will build fearless leadership in your life.

I hope I've shown in the list above that fearless leading can be a learned experience. If these steps outlined above are applied seriously, you will find yourself growing into the courageous leader of the likes of Joshua, Caleb, Paul, and Peter. This kind of courage is available to all. But it does require living rather than accidental living.

Chapter Ten

The Infectious Can-Do Culture

The fearless organization is one wherein faith and hope dominate fear and anxiety. It shouldn't be a surprise to learn that organizations take on an emotional life, much like that of individual people. Musicians talk about a "vibe" or a "feel" that hits a group when they are playing. Others might say something like, "We were in the groove tonight." The idea being communicated here is that there is an unspoken level of unity and caliber of playing that is hard to describe, but you know it when you experience it. A faith-filled organization has this sense of "being in the groove." It is a positive culture that creates a can-do environment.

Organizations that have neutralized fear develop a creative environment in their culture. New ideas flow with ease in this kind of organization. Dissimilar groups pull together and share their unique talents. They accomplish tasks that would be very daunting to a fearful organization.

There are numerous efforts leaders can make in the development and maintenance of a fearless organization. It is amazing how this works. Specific efforts create a fearless organization, and these same efforts become traits of a fearless organization. And when these traits and efforts are sustained in an organization, there is greater fearlessness.

Let's take a look at some of these traits of a fearless organization.

"Can-do" Culture

Fearless organizations have very little fear of failure. "Can-do" attitudes permeate the leadership of these types of organizations. "Can-do" isn't usually the easiest for manager types, so these types of organizations are dominated by leaders with the gift of faith. The influence of these leaders influence managers to become "can-do."

The dialect of a fearless organization is always upbeat. It isn't the total absence of fear that characterizes this ability to be upbeat; rather, this upbeat tone is the organization's reaction to tough times and unwillingness to be subjugated to negative scenarios.

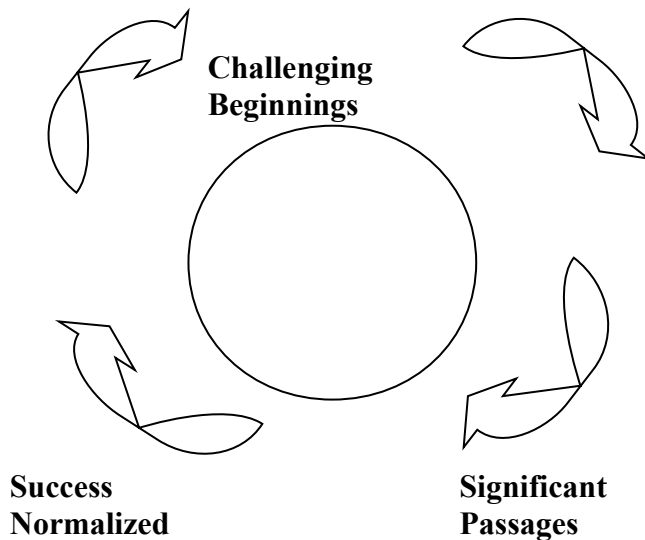
This "can-do" attitude was demonstrated by NASA during the pursuit of the moon. President John F. Kennedy announced that we would land on the moon within a decade. Because of President Kennedy's "can-do" leadership, a whole nation believed this could happen – and NASA was characterized by a whole culture of "can-do" people. Their setbacks were merely learning opportunities, and no one ever gave up because everyone knew it was their destiny to achieve this goal. NASA was the epitome of a "can-do" culture at that time.

It has been written prolifically throughout the last two decades how NASA has become a management-dominated organization. The intense control and scrutiny from Congress has replaced a "can-do" culture with a "make-no-mistakes" culture. As a res-

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ult, it appears the great task ahead of NASA leadership in our time is to return to a JFK “can-do” mentality.

Christian organizations face the same possibilities. Fast growing churches that begin from a small startup are usually populated by “can-do” people. I have yet to find a growing, vibrant church plant that didn’t have three or four “can-do” people who were willing to give the maximum of their money and time to see the church succeed. The fascinating discovery I’ve made is that there is usually a critical shift threatened in the larger churches and successful plants—and that is when leadership realizes things must be managed with the future in mind. Fear seems to be able to find a place whenever the temptation shifts from “we can do it and do it big” to “let’s make certain we don’t mess it up now.” Fearless organizations never lose this “can-do” mentality; however, they find ways to advance their cause through their “can-do” attitude that maintain the health of the home base.



Successful Breakthroughs

Most organizations go through repeated cycles of development. In these cycles, the paradigms of what the organization is and what it stands for shift continually. Usually, ministry organizations begin with a call to solve a problem. We typically call these ministries. But successful organizations also apply this in their early start up stages (“They find a need and fill it”).

Successful organizations face shifts that less successful organizations never realize. Along each of these shifts, there are susceptibilities of fear in the organization. This ought to be no surprise since individuals and families face the same cycles. Fears change as the family develops from concern over infants to that of an adolescent leaving home.

Once an organization achieves meeting the need it set out to remedy—its reason for existing has to make some adjustments. Many successful organizations lose sight of

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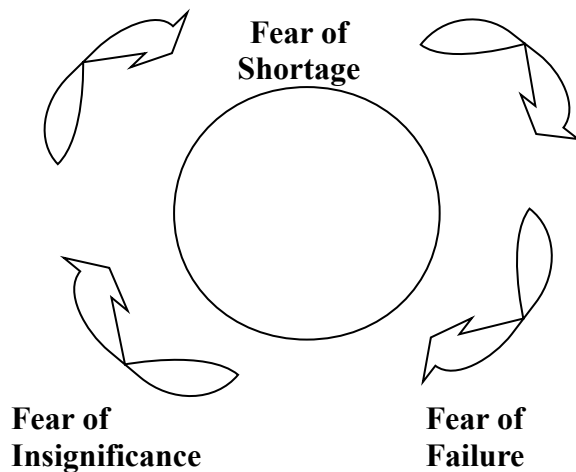
their focus to fill needs that must be met and shift toward self-preservation. Organizations that exist for self-perpetuation, even though the need they sought to address has long since been dealt with, they become riddled with fear. Not only is it the threat to the organization but the loss of focus and energy that drive the organization, usually meaning there is a change in the perspective of the leadership that guides the organization.

Analyzing the state of your organization on the cycle of the development can help you anticipate the fears that your organization may face. Fearless organizations give themselves to continual redefinition once success has been achieved. And fearless organizations reassess and refocus why they exist.

Analyzing the state of your organization on the cycle of development can help you anticipate the fears that your organization may face. Fearless organizations give themselves to continual redefinition once success has been achieved. And fearless organizations reassess and refocus why they exist.

Let's take a look at the cycle of fears courageous organization face successfully.

Cycle of Fears



Fear of Diminishing Resources

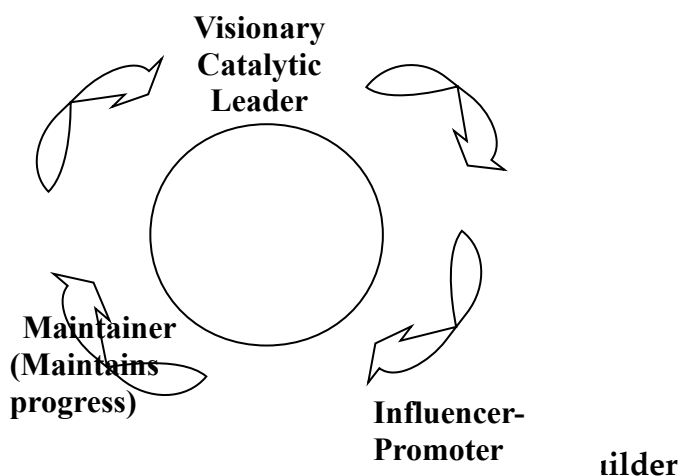
Courageous organizations confront their fears. Sometimes this is done intuitively. However, living deliberately is required in our times when Christian organizations face such severe challenges in their operations. The most successful and fearless churches are those that know exactly what they are trying to accomplish. They know well when their objectives have been achieved. When this season of the church life

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comes upon them, they have learned to do several things. First, they have learned to celebrate their success. Second, they have also been willing to reinvent not only themselves but the target of their ministry. Third, they have given themselves to the “birthing” of new ministries and new churches.

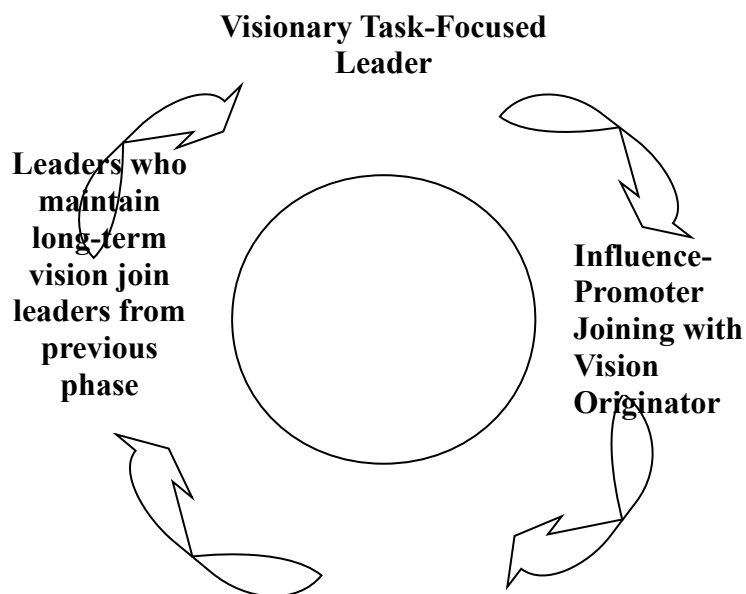
It is fascinating to me as a consultant that taking on new challenges has for years has been germane to building the faith of the congregation. Thirty to fifty years ago, one method of maintaining the faith level of a congregation interested in the cause of the church was to build a new facility.

The Cycle of Leadership



The above diagram could describe the natural structure of your own organization. This cycle is usually the pattern that organizations follow over their lifetime. However, faith-based advancing organizations maintain a growing depth of the style of leadership in their organization. Organizations that seek to self-sustain change the style of leadership while maintaining a very narrow leadership expression. Continuously effective organizations develop into maturity while maintaining leadership that will command success and forward movement into the future.

Visionary Leadership



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Accompanied by Influencers and Structural and Infrastructural Leaders

Organizations that lose track and become susceptible to the fears related to simply maintaining their development fail in several areas. First, they confuse the task-orientation and empowerment of the visionary leader with a threat to the on-going development of an organization. Organizations abate this fear when the original leader opens the platform of leadership to the ever-changing needs of the organizations while not leaving his primary calls. I have often noticed organizations that move through these phases of growth can seek to “retire” or lessen the influence of the visionary leader who sold the vision to others. There comes the temptation to basically neutralize these leaders simply out of fear. Organizations don’t realize these leaders actually rekindle the purpose of the organizations—and they also make the future a friend rather than an enemy.

Fearless organizations have planned strategically to face their growth pattern in the breadth of their ministry. One such church I observed grew very rapidly in the early 80’s. In a day where there weren’t large churches, this church grew to 5,000 members. The church also started 50 to 60 churches in the state where it resided. In this organization, the founding leader continued to have influence, but as the church grew, promoters of the vision began to step in and then infrastructure and long-term managers were added. There was a trained respect for each kind of leader needed for each phase of this church. It’s also not surprising that of the many churches I have observed, this church had a much lower than average struggle with fear or panic even with the threat of economic downturn in their vicinity. This congregation was very wise in maintaining the founding leader’s presence, even when he moved beyond weekly training and teaching in the church as the church developed.

This leader infused new life and ideas into the group for years. The leadership of this church was wise to listen to these new visions, plan for them, and manage them into success. This organization also had a keen ability to drop things that ceased “working.”

If I could have anything to do again in leading some of the pastoral groups I have led, it would be to improve my choice of personnel. I thank God for the opportunity I had to work with every person in my past (or most), but I often hired only to face the immediate needs. Usually by hiring with the short-term in mind, we end up with people who fit perfectly with skill sets for our current stage but are challenged to the point of fear for the next phase of growth. The outcome in some of the faster growing organizations I have led was a tremendous amount of fear of failure and discomfort with the incompetence that were discovered in the choices we made. Faith-rich organizations pay attention to the cycle of growth and anticipate leaders whose competences will fit the season the organization is in, and processing into a growing competence that increases the range of leadership in the organization.

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It is also true that leaders of vibrant organizations are forever learners. There's no reason why a strong visionary leader can't add skill sets to his own life as the organization develops. I have seen this happen often. In one organization, the church began growing in a lower income setting, but as it succeeded, the educational level and socioeconomic level of the group increased. The leader had the wisdom to increase his own academic status and seek out consultant help to increase their skill at leading many different types of people. This church also added a teaching gift ministry, which developed several styles of training for this group. Gradually, the fear of change left this group. Competency exuded from every step the organization took. And it's no surprise that one can feel the courage and dynamic faith in the church as soon as you step in the lobby on a Sunday morning.

All ministry expressions of the church have four quadrants of leaders: In vibrant organizations, deliberate planning ahead of the personnel and leadership needs of the organization diminish the impact of fear in the church of ministry.

In the summer of 2003, I met with the executive leader of a fast-growing church on all counts. This church has a below average turnover in personnel and seems to never have a lack of personnel or monetary resources to achieve their dreams. I asked this ministry executive what he felt were the keys to their alive, "can-do" environment in their church. He said the following: "No. 1, we pay way above average. We make certain that our families feel cared for. We want our personnel to be able to afford breaks away from their tasks and not feel strained in their budget. And we want them to feel like they can afford to place their children in any school they want. Our team has little fear about resources in their life.

Secondly, we take our time adding personnel because we seek to pay above average, we seek above average leaders. We've found that higher level of competency in our work force brings a greater level of courage. And we find that highly competent people tend to be able to train our up-and-comers more effectively. We find that competent people are far less threatened by newcomers, have far lower levels of fear of losing their place or position as well. Thirdly, we work off clearly designed expectations that we desire to be met. The leaders and managers work in coordination with the directors of ministries in coming up with these expectations. But everyone knows the exact target they are shooting for. We've found this rids our environment of the insecurity of not knowing what are the real aims they are to achieve."

Along with this, **administrative prowess** must enter many organizations. As a leader, a great deal of fear entered the ranks of the churches I led because of my inability to spot good administrative personnel. Our congregation grew 1,500 people in one year. Anyone who has led a church knows that kind of growth is one of the ingredients for a catastrophe. One of the greatest challenges we faced was finding administrative people to manage the growth we were experiencing. Usually, we had extreme difficulty doing so; hence, the organization was late on deadlines, overcommitted in many areas, and simply drained of energy. We all felt like we were sinking and fear that we may not survive began to fill our ranks.

New influences are necessary to keep an organization expanding. Every organization needs new blood to remain healthy. It is fascinating to me how many churches

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and organizations at the grass roots level know intuitively that a healthy organization has new blood coming in. Many churches I have advised on how to evangelize have experienced a growth in new converts and the level of faith in the church has soared. Organizations require new blood to succeed and when new blood joins into an organization in the form of new donors, new staff, new members, and new interest, faith rises above the fears that maybe we aren't all we say we are. Outreach drives the future of healthy churches.

Isaiah 41:10 says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Love-based Organizations

The apostle John informed us that God's "perfect love" would cast out all fear. Fear is fed by religion. Religion is the attempt to please our angry God. Religion is an approach to spirituality that is from the outside in. Fearless organizations exhibit a love-based approach to their ministry.

Faith is a by-product and cousin to love. Faith is noted in an organization by an optimistic view of the future, an acute awareness of God's presence in the organization on the part of those who serve, and courage to face challenges with positive responses versus reactions. Love drives this aspect of ministry.

Here are some of the traits of a love-based organization:

1. Love-based organizations deal with subjects, persons, as opposed to clients, donors, or targets.
2. Love-based organizations make decisions based on the needs of those who are not within the group yet. Their call to service and love pre-empts their call to self-preservation.
3. Love-based organizations exhibit a high degree of empathy. These organizations are able to research and put out effort to feel the pain, emotional state, and even anger of those they seek to serve. Love-based organizations are constantly being educated by those without, and they also put faces to those they serve.
4. Love-based organizations are forever learning organizations. They do not fear the unknown because they have come to know the unknown and to face the facts of what lies before them.
5. Love-based organizations measure success by improving the state of those they serve, not simply the cost of what they've put out to serve. The improved well-being of those they've served is better than measurements of their own progress such as donor bases they've developed.
6. Love-based organizations have a higher level of contentment. "Love doesn't want what it doesn't have."
7. Love-based organizations do not compare themselves with other organizations. These organizations are challenged by achieving their own goals and aims.
8. Love-based organizations seek to see if they are needed and wanted. They never force themselves upon others.

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9. Love-based organizations can be counted on in the long term of those they serve.
10. Love-based organizations are confident in the truth in all aspects of their ministry and like to be known. They are truth tellers.
11. Love-based organizations face challenges and conflict without scapegoats.
12. Love-based organizations never look back, but keep going to the end.

1 Corinthians 13:1-08 says: "If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit." (The Message).

Traits of faith-based organization

Faith is a powerful enemy of fear. There are three challenges that confront faith in the individual and organization's life. The first is doubt. The second is unbelief. And the third is fear.

Joshua, a young protégé of Moses and co-visionary with Caleb, exhibited fearlessness. Yet, as the children of Israel began their trek into the Promised Land, God repeatedly warned Joshua to be neither dismayed nor fearful. He was not to doubt the call of God.

Joshua illustrates the transition from second-hand faith to first-hand conflict through faith. I experienced this as a leader myself. I spent a number of years as a staff member at a fast-growing church. I had a dominant role in the organization and enjoyed serving there. I exhibited a great deal of faith toward all we accomplished. It came with some ease, but when I began to lead in my first ministry assignment in serving as the leader, I quickly found out the difference between theoretical faith and faith in practice.

Anyone who leads an organization and desires to take it to a faith-based "can-do" style will confront conflict and war that is waged in the arena of faith. The first of the three words faith will confront is doubt. Doubt means "to be double-minded." Organizations that doubt buckle under pressure and challenges and often end up with a double agenda, a safe one and a challenging one. Faith-based organizations stay focused and on target, immovable toward their aim. Leaders in these organizations as well as followers have to remember that under pressure, the purpose of their organization doesn't change.

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The second word that challenges us in the battle of faith is unbelief. Unbelief is the willful decision not to have faith. This kind of “non-faith” was indicted by Jesus. Christ in His teachings warned those who were friends with unbelief that they would find no place before God or be considered a friend of God.

Many churches I have encountered have ended up with boards that exhibit unbelief. Unbelief is the unwillingness to make room for God to act. Unbelief fights faith in that unbelief turns myopic and fears challenges and seeks safe ground. Faith is always risking, always moving forward, and always optimistic. Unbelief hates faith and tries to shut it down. Organizations that take up the trait of deliberate unwillingness to believe new things and experience new challenges are soon to experience death or utter meaninglessness.

The final challenge to fear that we all faced is dismay or fear itself. Fear stops faith because faith calls for an optimistic outlook for what lies ahead. And fear is a self-fulfilling prophecy that what lies ahead is, in fact, a grave danger. A number of years ago, I was involved in the development of a Christian-based educational institution. One of the leaders had done a great deal of research in the declining numbers of young college-aged students in the United States. The conclusion was that we ought not plan for growth and take very conservative steps ahead. I had some difficulty with this approach because we were just beginning this new ministry at this reported decline. Everyone was frozen. Some of those who had committed to funding drew back and asked for more consistency before we moved ahead. I felt there were many ways to address this issue. Fear said “stop.” Faith said “let’s investigate and find a pathway to achieve our aim.”

The project faltered for a period of time, but eventually faith-based people literally talked the fear out of the organization. We found in our analysis that even though the number of college-aged students was declining in our country, there was a significant number in this age group that weren’t planning to go to college. We realized that even though the number of college students were declining, there still remained a large segment of that population that marketers would call “market share.” Faith saw in the statistics of fear a great opportunity in this case. We could convince potentially disinterested students to change their minds about us.

We also began to see that the challenge could be faced by making strategic alliances. We aligned with several graduate-level institutions to help plan this journey into educating for ministry. It made a great deal of sense to all concerned. All the organizations who desire to be a part of this venture offered a different emphasis and corner on training for ministry. Again, faith-based thinking helped us overcome the statistics of fear. Our venture moved ahead.

Faith-based organizations have the following traits:

1. Faith-based organizations are comfortable with risks that are wise.
2. Faith-based organizations find the opportunities in statistics.
3. Faith-based organizations find alternative ways to locate resources, such as alliances and developing new opportunities.

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4. Faith-based organizations love the challenge of downturns.
5. Faith-based organizations prepare for challenges that lie ahead.
6. Faith-based organizations recruit problem-solvers rather than bureaucrats.
7. Faith-based organizations celebrate victories of the past regularly.
8. Faith-based organizations celebrate ahead of time their future that lies ahead.
9. Faith-based organizations encourage and seek out new ideas.
10. Faith-based organizations make friends with many organizations.

Replacing Hierarchy and Bureaucracy

Fear is often caused by the kind of structure of an organization. One of the traits I have noticed in courageous organizations is that they are very thin on the side of bureaucracy. As stated earlier, how meetings are used can be a sign of the organization's health. I'm convinced that unhealthy or fearful organizations spend great portions of personnel time in meetings. Meetings reflect several things. An excessive number of staff meetings can reflect a hierarchy in leadership. The message that is sent to a staff that is continually in meetings is that "you cannot be entrusted to stay on target." And the more encounters you have with your bosses, the better you will work.

Hierarchy approaches such as these stifle staff. They become fearful in making decisions on their own and they shift from achieving expectations to seeking the approval and smile of the overseer. This freezes an organization. This is also one of the most subtle types of fear an organization can feed.

I experimented for periods of time with the help of consultants on how to lead an organization away from hierarchical leadership. Anarchy was not a choice. Anarchy means everyone doing their own thing in the name of Jesus and is earmarked by comments such as these: "I'm here to do my ministry." Anarchy never works because fearless organizations work toward a common aim and common goal with everyone fulfilling their role.

However, I felt that in the organization I'm now leading and in the church I formerly led with an excessive reliance upon oversight was not affordable and made the task of ministry more gruesome for everybody. One of the suggestions I made was to change our staff to two shifts instead of one. If our aim was to have a strong children's church ministry, how could we possibly have our children's ministry personnel working from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.? Most calls could not be made during the day to contact those volunteers who cared for our children. This meant two things: first, contact was poor; and second, our youth workers were working 13 and 14 hour days. This affected our morale significantly. It's no surprise to me as a consultant that when I go into a church, the most disgruntled department is the children's ministry.

I experienced a significant amount of resistance from our board, questioning how we would know if these people are working. I received some suspicious looks when I said, "If they can get the work done in two hours, I'm happy to pay them for eight in the first place. And if they have to be watched that closely, then we hired the wrong people." We set clear expectations and sought to empower them to meet them. Then

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how and when they wanted to work was up to them because we needed to trust those who serve us or we would ruin all that we were trying to accomplish.

Fearless organizations have replaced hierarchy with a great deal of trust. Fearless organizations have replaced a work force driven by oversight with a work force seeking to fulfill expectations that are part of a great dream. Fearless organizations have ceased fearing their staff and have given themselves to empowering them. This develops a can-do culture.

Hierarchy must be reorganized to create a fearless organization. We've already stated that hierarchy when applied to its extreme is aimed to protect the organization from the incompetence of its workers. This approach fails in the post-modern era. Workers are no longer satisfied with carrying out mindless roles. They want to participate in the operation of an organization. So, what are some suggested options?

The top-down development of an organization wherein the role of each person in the organization is dictated and arranged by an oligarchy will never create a courageous force. An organization must move instead toward a cause-based format. The old analogy of the worker observed loading brick and mortar to build the walls of a cathedral was asked, "What are you doing here?" Today's organization would savor those who answered this question as he did, "I'm building a cathedral." Cathedral builders drive an organization into success and they are courageous.

As I have said, Christian organizations operate in three distinct categories of operation. I first heard these represented by a teacher named Jim Dethmer in Rochester, N.Y. We were both teaching at a training seminar for pastors on contemporary ministry. Jim presented this simple format on church life that has affected me since I heard it. I've yet to find a flaw in its approach.

The problem with bureaucracy

As a church I was leading began to exceed 4,000 people on Sunday morning, I was finding we had five or six layers of staff leaders and major lay leaders between my office and the congregation. I had not been developed or trained to handle this sort of delegation. Many of my friends were far more successful at this aspect of the ministry and did far better at leading large churches. However, I don't think it's just large churches or organizations that have to look at the bane of bureaucracy. Even churches of 100 can bury themselves in bureaucracy.

What causes excessive bureaucracy? Excessive bureaucracy is caused by fear. We're afraid we'll be misrepresented as a church. Or we are afraid of liabilities so we add bureaucracy to prove we had done due process. Often past injury to an organization will cause a flurry of bureaucracy to appear to protect God's work.

Let's define bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is the attempt to make sure things are done right. It always majors on a paper trail. When applied properly, this paper trail becomes a help in organizational communication. But more often than not, there is de-evolution to applying bureaucracy negatively. And in this case, the paper trail is developed to discover who "was wrong."

All organizations need paper trails that establish protocol and clear communication. However, the better organizations have far less bureaucracy than healthy fearless

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ones. I found in our organization through consultation that we needed to disperse our budgeted income into the hands of a group no larger than six to ten people. I had never experienced this as a church leader. However, to be a fearless organization, bureaucracy must be streamlined to match the needs of the cause.

Decentralization is one way to diminish overall bureaucracy. Placing significant decision-making power in the hands of well-trained and can-do leaders is also essential. Fearless organizations have decentralized their use of money, the dispersion of their personnel, and the responsibilities for achieving their aims. The more centralized a ministry, the more bureaucracy will arise. The more decentralized a ministry, the greater need to invest the major decision-making centers with the authority to make decisions without a paper trail.

Organizations that place confidence and disperse center of authority will have far less fear. There is a great deal more fun to being closer to the decisions that are being made. People who are in the trenches usually know best how to spend the resources as well as save the resources. One ministry I know gives bonuses to segments of the ministry that handle their budget the best—and this doesn't necessarily mean saving part of their budget, but achieving the most with the money given to them.

Excessive bureaucracy is a sign of fear as much as it causes fear. When constituents in an organization see personnel entrusted with significant amounts of authority without having to have their T's crossed and I's dotted again and again, they have greater confidence and less fear in following staff members and lay leaders.

It is impossible to empower lay people with layers and layers of bureaucracy and record keeping. Lay leaders just don't have time to wait for our processes. Volunteers in many organizations I've consulted often become frustrated and often move on to other satisfying experiences in the secular charitable community. As one man put it to me, "I make 10 million dollar decisions on the job each month, but in the church, I'm only allowed to make 10 dollar decisions."

Risk Assessment

Fearless organizations discover their limits of risk in both delegation and decision-making. There are unacceptable and acceptable risk levels. When an organization makes excessive commitments related to its resources and maturity, it breeds fear in the personnel.

I've found several areas of risk assessment that have helped me as a consultant and to develop my past experience as a leader. I caution churches and ministry that become fast-growing to not grow any more than 20 percent and possibly more than 30 percent per year. Now, I realize that not many churches reach this threshold, but some do.

One test for the level of risk taking is what are the increase and expenses that will add to any aspect of your church? If you are making steps that will add more than 20 percent to your overhead or department overhead, you will need to ask yourself, "is this risk worthwhile?" Adding more than 20 percent to a staff budget or to a team can also strain organizational systems. The degree of risk related to adding this many new

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people can clutter administration and constrict the ministry with the fears that arise from not being able to assimilate this new work force.

There are several areas of church life that could even require outside consultation to help assess the risk factor. It is nearly impossible to compare one church and ministry to another to determine what allowable risk could be. I'm thinking of two churches as I write. One has decided to put on four services with a different pastor for each service. The main pastor who started this church will in many ways become the coordinator of church life. The reason this church has chosen this ministry is their church has grown successfully at a measure of 10 to 15 percent each year and they've decided to resist building a new facility as long as possible. This congregation will find this is a conservative move. The two other pastors are well-known to the church and happen to be good communicators.

However, in the other church where the congregation is so vitally different, they were advised in our consultation that they would have a higher risk factor of developing a "team" of pastors at this time. Instead, we suggested lowering the risk by bringing in two developing leaders and allowing several years to be tested and tried by the organization. In the meantime, building a facility was a conservative move for this church.

In the early stages of assessing risk, I find the proverbial pros and cons list is very helpful. Fearless organizations have quiet confidence in their decision making because the process is thorough and confirmed. Organizations must take risks to grow, but if risks are excessive an organization can freeze with the level of threat it is facing.

I have seen several churches take on excessive debt for building their facility. Their comfort was build upon false data. These churches assumed they would continue to grow as fast as they had in the first and second years of moving into a new building. Many churches thrive and grow quickly when they move into their new buildings. However, not all experience growth once entering a new facility. Some of the advice I give to churches that begin to build is to count on a payment that is 20 percent lower than they can afford and to either set their church budget at a plateau or at 20 percent lower than it was before moving into the new facility. If a church follows these types of risk management patterns, the organization will be fearless in moving ahead.

Again and again, I've found that churches who build without debt or churches progress to the point of debt are not always those who are experiencing less fear. However, these churches have a better chance of being freed to take advances in their ministry.

I think risk assessment should face the following:

1. Is the decision going to increase any category of our budget more than 20 percent?
2. Is this decision going to require adding more than 20 to 30 percent new personnel in a church department?
3. Is the payment on the facility we will be making going to demand more than 20 percent more income in the first two years?

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4. What will be the possibilities of backing out of this decision?
5. Are their alternate decisions we can find to address the issue we are facing we can turn to in case our path is blocked?
6. What will happen to us if we decide not to do anything?
7. What other decision in the history of our organization most like this one? How did we approach that one? And what can we learn from the outcomes?
8. What has outside input presented to us in the way of critique or confirmation of our planning?
9. Are we excessively vulnerable to a personality? A few major donors? The local economy?

These are all questions that will help you assess the risk that you may be mowing toward in your ministry. Quality assessment should add to the can-do spirit of an organization. Of course, faith demands that we step into the unseen. And faith calls us to trust the input of the Bible, the community, inner direction, and our cause and mission to reach the lost.

Chapter Eleven

Fearless Organizational Habits

Courage is contagious. The martyrdom of Stephen in Acts Chapter Six influenced the Apostle Paul's early conversion, and the whole church was inspired by Stephen's fearless apology to the mob that had been stirred up by the religious leaders. He was flawless in his message, looking toward heaven, forgiving his attackers instead of cursing them. Stephen's attitude was the story that powered the courage of the church for many decades.

Every fearless organization I have seen mirrors the attitude of their leader. Abraham Lincoln visited a civil war battlefield to show the troops he wasn't fearful and to see first-hand their sacrifice – and his presence caused their courage to raise. King David leapt into action against the giant Goliath, and the whole army surged into battle. Every generation must have leaders like these to face the challenges of their time.

I have a friend who has led a small company into becoming a powerhouse in the business world. I asked him one day how he developed his company. He said, "I did it with great difficulty. I never really planned to start the company, but I worked for a man who owned it and he offered it to me for such a price that I thought it was worth the price."

Were there bumps on the road? And how did you face them?" I asked. "Our company is tied to Boeing. If Boeing builds lots of planes, we make a lot of money. In the early 70s and again in the 80s the economy slid, and Boeing cut back. We were nearly bankrupt two or three times. I knew our key to surviving was to not cut our personnel but to keep them intact so we could rise quickly when things turned up." "So, how did you do that?" I asked.

"I knew I had to come in every day ready for work. I had to be smiling and we had to have a lot of fun. I also had to become a salesman again. I had to believe we could put out products for many companies. I became a symbol of courage more than anything. And our sales force sprung into action. We ended up producing products for camping equipment companies and then we found our way into making computer cases and that became our niche. We would have never made it if I hadn't modeled hope for my key guys." He smiled as he answered.

"You were a symbol?"

"Yeah, I realized that my main work was to pretend I was courageous until I was. And when I did that, the managers also began to believe we were going to come back big. I even got the crew to take pay cuts in exchange for pieces of the company. I prayed every night I wouldn't let these men down. I will forever be amazed how these men then began to encourage my faith and gave me courage to design and sale new products. If it hadn't been for the crisis we wouldn't be one-third of the company we are. And I learned my primary role was to be the symbol of success for our future."

I think we often overlook this fact my friend shared with me that effective leaders are symbols of hope and trust. Each time a leader responds to anything, it is a mod-

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el and pattern for the ministry. Fearless leaders have come alive to this truth, knowing their smile means joy to the organization. They know that their scarified contributions will generate the same in their followers. As leaders, we are primarily templates for others to emulate.

Fearless leaders create faith, and fearless leaders lead organizations that are insulated from the many fears that bring down many other ministries. Let's look at a few other components of leaders that lead ministries with a low fear quotient.

Humility is the Chief Sign of Strength

Leaders can be proud of their accomplishments and even report them without fear of pride. But no leader can beat fear without humility. Humility is the ability to live in your own skin and accept your limitations while maximizing your strengths.

Humility is manifested when leaders pass credit around. Low self-esteem prevents leaders from honoring others. Leaders who feel threatened cannot allow others to outperform them without fear. Great leaders even of moderate capabilities who gather great performers around them do great things. Humility is the key to building strong teams.

Humility in Church Promotion

I have worked hard to understand how marketing works for churches. People inexperienced with church are really put off by our "we're the best," "the first," or "the greatest" kind of ministry in town. Actually, churches are marketed like most great products – by word of mouth. Satisfied customers drive all the best companies and churches. I find giving tickets and clever invites for church members to give out to their networks is the best dollars spent to help others know what you have to offer. Trust and commitment are contagious in a community. If I trust you I will trust your church.

Churches have shown me brochures they were going to mail out in order to help their neighbors know of their purpose and location. In many of the brochures, I noticed a "we're the best tone." I pointed out that they would be better off reporting they were only the 148th best church in town. This approach called "self-deprecation" hits the mark with people. They want to see us being willing to be the last so we can be their first stop.

Leaders who state they are only the 148th best leader in town will find great followings. Why? People are not comfortable in their own skin, but they are comforted when someone else is. People who begin to be comfortable in their skin have greatly reduced fear quotients in your life. This is simple common sense. If you think about it, you can think of people you know who have found their limits and strengths and accepted them.

Leaders who don't build buffers between followers and themselves exude trustworthiness. We like to see a person who not only knows their strengths and accomplishments but also can laugh about their real life experiences.

Cheer On Other Ministries

There were many church groups that rose in the 80s. Many of these new groups fell by the wayside and some became near cults. Churches that build high walls eventu-

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ally keep the light out. I know because for several years I had to help deprogram members of one of these isolated groups. A leader who isolates their ministry will watch paranoia arise.

In the late 80s, I attended a pastors training event that brought me into a situation to observe how a threatened leader can lock their followers into fear. There were about 50 churches represented at this meeting. The pastor of one church who had brought about 20 of his leaders kept his group huddled in a corner every time there was a break. I concluded the pastor feared one of the other pastors would “steal” away part of his group.

The church soon split into three groups, and shortly thereafter, the main church closed its doors. The internal conflict was frightening. I learned a great deal from watching this group. Any church that cannot intermingle or cheer on other groups is doomed to be torn down by its own fears of survival. Organizational fear is toxic.

Ministries fearful of others are caught in the grip of insecurities, those fears cloaked as keeping the ministry safe. If a leader cannot get over his or her fears the ministry will be riddled with illness. It is likely that in-house envy will arise with conflict characterizing the group.

Ministries with high faith are those that cheer on other ministries. At the last church I led, we made it a habit to regularly pray for other churches in our city. There was always a wholesome rise in the level of faith whenever we did. Leaders who don't need high walls around their work neutralize fears about the place the ministry has in the border world of ministry. Cheering others on makes a ministry bold.

Our leaders heard that the Lutheran church down the street was about to close its food bank due to no resources. I approached our counsel members about the idea of helping them. At the time, we were meeting our budget by the second week of each month, so we decided to give them our entire offering the next Sunday. I will never forget the faith that rose when I announced that weekend's entire offering was going to the other church's ministry. People literally cried. We gathered enough money for the church to run their food bank for a year.

I often advise churches that are filled with fear of change or are frozen before challenges they are facing to help other ministries in their area to succeed. My last team heard that a church was being planted in an area of Seattle that badly needed a church. We decided to encourage some of our musicians to help with the church plant. Most of the music team never returned to our church. But God replaced all of them four times over, as we learned we didn't have to fear a shortage in personnel. We also had the joy of helping another church like ours begin.

Making Conflict Positive

There are an amazing number of ministry leaders who run from conflict. Sometimes the leader will have a few hatchet men to handle the distasteful side of ministry – or we become passive aggressive, smiling to our challenger's face but looking for opportunities to get even or straighten them out. Sometimes leaders use anger to shut down criticism, feeling that if they can make it hard to criticize, people won't take the change.

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Great leaders embrace healthy conflict. Criticism isn't something that really causes agony to great leaders. Great leaders are upfront and honest with their organizations, even though this is difficult because of the fearlessness it takes. The ability to receive criticism on the part of a leader builds courage in an organization. An attitude of openness keeps people from hiding as isolation is a primary incubator for fear. If a leader doesn't hide, neither will the ministry.

One Sunday I forgot to go to church. I led our Saturday night service and went home. I don't know how it happened, but when I woke up Sunday, I thought it was Monday, my normal day off. So, I got up early in the morning, mounted my bicycle, and went on a four-hour bike ride. I returned home to numerous phone calls from my friends and family who wondered where I went.

I was totally humiliated. I had never met a pastor who had forgotten to go to church, as I had obviously committed an unpardonable sin. For a while, I tried to think of some excuse I could tell my staff and church. I thought of things like, "I had the flu," or "I had an emergency in the neighborhood." But I just couldn't come up with an excuse that was palpable. So, I did the only thing I could do, I told the truth.

The following Sunday I explained what happened. I apologized to my assistant who had to share a sermon without preparation, adding that God enjoyed the private time with me. Everyone laughed and then applauded my failing. I supposed they felt relieved that someone was a moron, too.

Fear dies when leaders:

Tell the truth

Listen to criticism

Embrace conflict as a good thing

Bring truth tellers around them

Stay in the open

Invite accountability

Thank their critics

Most problems I find on boards come from having never been taught how to criticize. Lay leaders often have no idea how to properly criticize. In their lack of skill, they complain, gossip, or plan attacks rather than confront honestly and openly.

I have found taking the time to explain how biblical criticism works can renew energy in the church. Fear of recrimination and rejection can be destroyed if a ministry has a deliberate plan to share unpleasant problems.

Here are the elements of healthy criticism:

Face to face

Based on fact

Ends

Is short

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Includes forgiveness

Is clear, not ambiguous

Is respectful

Listens first

Believes in a positive outcome

Contagious Joy and Its Story

I have noted that positive leaders always have a story hidden behind their success. Naomi Judd and her two children have a story influencers possess. Naomi lost her husband and found herself in poverty, forcing her to waitress for years in order to feed her children. However, she decided she and her children would be top-flight entertainers. Despite impossible odds, they made it. Today, Naomi is a highly sought out corporate speaker because she is a person who influences people by her story.

What is your story? Have you taken time to sit down and observe the patterns and events that are evident in our life, as it had unfolded? A story is what you are, not something that happened to you – and your story will build faith in your ministry. Strategic plans are essential, but a story runs fear out of a group.

One of my friends has a great story. He successfully pioneered a church, growing it to several thousand attendees. But for the first seven years, the church never grew above 60 people in attendance. Finally, he decided he had to give up. But before he did, he decided he had to give a few all nights of prayer and then resign. Three weeks later, a liberal leaning church down the street kicked their pastor and sixty families out of their church for becoming evangelical in their experience. And they all showed up at my friend's church and stayed for 20 years.

The details of his story have choked me up many times. He tells of burying two of his vital board members their second year. He tells of having to face the near death of his daughter. Yet through all this, he felt he couldn't quit. When he tells of nights he shouted out to God, I always find my faith rise. The story builds my faith – and he is the story.

The story of God's work in your life neutralizes fear. Churches thrive when they are built upon a story. Lives face many challenges without fear when they know their story.

All ministries have themes, not unlike a theme in a classical piece of music. First, the theme appears, and, then like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the theme reappears in variations.

Ministries have themes that can be expressed in a story. Think about great moments in your church's history and repeat it often. If you're a leader, then tell the story often and watch fear will melt.

Leaders Are Sea Captains Leading the Ministries

This is how a captain guides his ship. Only when the helm is turned and the rudder shifted does the boat turn in another direction. The captain can influence only

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the board into the direction he wants by a turning of one wheel. A small effort for such a large change.

Leaders are like ship captains. We have to learn to use our influence to direct our ministries away from the shore's rocky edge. Influencing is a skill that can be learned. I have found that with intense dramatic effort organizational courage is not possible. But slight movements can turn ministries away from fears that block better ground.

Influencing leaves the process up to the followers. Ministries too often treat their members like children – and any attempt to control comes from fear, which only creates more fear. I believe any leader who decides the people he leads are intelligent, mature adults and have great hearts will see great advances in his ministry. Influence is the gentle effort of leading people in the right direction.

Post-modern followers are far too individualistic to follow a leader who commands. A leader influences mainly by actions. But influencing is especially a friends of giving information long before a challenge arrives.

A friend of mine has a son who could have played professional baseball. His family pushed and pushed the kid, trying to encourage him to be the best he could be at baseball. They took him around the country to attend baseball camps. But when the son reached his first year in college, he dropped the sport. He took up painting and became quite an accomplished painter and designer. It killed his father. He just couldn't understand why his son would choose such a field. We have to accept the fact that God's influence is always greater.

The following are 10 ways to influence anyone away from fear:

- Pray for the members to have courage
- Listen to their concerns and smile
- Remember them
- Love the ones they love
- Leave change in their hands
- Realize your pain and struggles and your victory are the channels of faith
- Repeat the message
- Enjoy yourself
- Thank your followers for joining you
- Make people more important than things

Any time you force people in a direction, they will head inevitably the other way. The same is true of ministries. Great leaders help followers make their own decisions. They also help their ministry through positive influence commit themselves to a common dream. Influencing rather than pushing reduces fear. Courage rises when a group makes their own decisions.

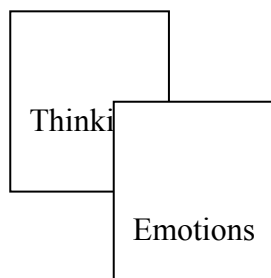
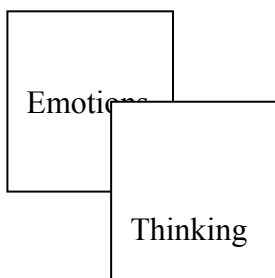
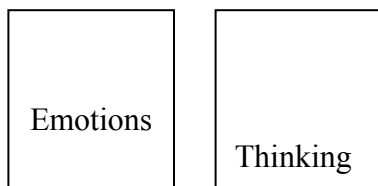
Chapter Twelve Healing Fearful Organizations

The first step to neutralizing an organization's fear is to deal with the fears in the leader. It is significant how the emotional state of a leader will affect the entire organization. Leaders like quirky Ted Turner develop distinct organizational attitudes. The same is true for many ministries that can be observed. A balanced leader automatically develops a balanced organization. But how do leaders heal their fears? A simple statement would be by facing them and taking them seriously. Any leader who refuses to take their basic vulnerability to fear is going to have trouble. Dominant leaders who use a domineering style usually suffer from the fear of losing control. This fear of losing control inhibits delegation and causes an ever increasing level of hierarchy and bureaucratic suffocation

Leaders who see themselves as primary influencers are susceptible to the fear of rejection. They will spend a great deal of energy trying to be accepted and tend to create organizations that have an air of paranoia. These kinds of leaders will demand excessive loyalty from those who are allowed to have positions of authority.

Leaders who are more supportive and caring are inclined to the fear of loss. They will tend to cling toward relationships and structures in the organization that have been built. And this clinging will cause many opportunities to be missed.

Those leaders who craved to have things right or those with an engineer's perspective can freeze an organization from trying new things. No matter the leader, there must be serious attention given to healing their emotional state. We are constructed by God in such a way that we have two major components that are always working within us. These components working in the individual leader also influence the continuum of emotion versus thinking and planning in an organization.



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A healthy leader who gains insight into himself will be aware of the degree emotional fear affects his life. The diagram above that is referred to by psychologists as a diagram of differentiation in that it describes how emotions take over thinking can be helpful for any leader who wants to analyze his own development.

The emotional life can have a great deal of fear that has been developed over the years and through many experiences. Hard-boiled thinking without emotion can develop a cold person. A well-differentiated leader will understand how his emotions work and how he can add good thinking and judgment to his planning and leading.

How does a leader become balanced? Every leader who begins to create courageous organizations must take the following steps:

1. Analyze and discover the manner in which their emotions are affecting their thinking
2. Become self-aware
3. Learn to discover the knee-jerk reactions one personally has toward crises and problems.
4. Seek to build a supportive network of honest truth-speaking leaders and helpers around you.
5. Sometimes a professional counselor can help one into self-discovery.

Strong, effective, and life-giving leaders are those who are moving ever closer to healthy differentiation and self-discovery. These kinds of leaders can heal an organization of its fears. Organizations derive courage from a leader who changes.

Recently, I read an article regarding a threat upon a college football coach in the southwest. This coach led the team to 12 straight losses. The team went to the college

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president the year before and complained about the coaching style of their leader. It was reported that he berated team members and required excessive training and exercises. At time, he was torturous toward his own players.

The coach repented publicly with tears to the entire team and the community when he was confronted by his President. He promised to change his ways and continue to give his all to the team. No one asked for his job after this. He presented himself in these terms: "I'm a forever learner and I will continue to bring health back to this team." It isn't surprising that with three losses early in the following season that his team was still backing him. The press wanted him fired. The student body wanted him fired. Maybe his own family wanted him fired. But his team had observed his growth and change with nothing but extreme respect for him.

The following reference is to a church in the northwest. The leader began to slide into deep depression and become extremely agitated at times and excessively demanding of his staff. He also had seasons of despair where he spewed forth only negativism. His board and some key leaders on his staff confronted him. They told him he was making the entire organization ill and his paranoia on several levels was becoming apparent. He was thinking of lack rather than surplus, and he was reluctant to try new things. This leader decided he wanted to bring health to the organization he helped plan. He found his way to professional counseling and determined through prayer and meditation to find his way again to be a health-giver to his organization. He did. And the entire organization's esteem for him has risen. It's obvious to all that the organization has become a "can-do" organization again. The church has flourished as it observed its leader face problems and move from a life gripped by fear back to courage.

How courageous leaders develop

Metaphors of leadership can help us put words to experiences leaders share. Leaders have to become many things in a healthy organization. And leaders as we found should be forever learners and an emotive for growth. When leaders get stuck in one mode of metaphorical leaders, organizations get stifled. And stifled organizations are easy prey to "can't-do" thinking.

Let's take a look at metaphors leaders can grow through and add to their repertoire to bring courage into their organization.

Leader-Visionary

Visionary leaders bring hope for the future to an organization. This role of the leader can also be pride of place. Visionary leaders make followers proud to be part of the vision and plan of the group. Visionary leader also increase faith in a group to allow it to ask mountains to be thrown in the sea if necessary.

Leader as Human

It is interesting how ineffective "perfect" leaders can be. People trust a leader who is able to face their humanity and are able to be honest about it. We often use words to describe this type of leadership as "transparent" leadership. When leaders or organizations are seen as dictators or hard-nosed company men, they falter at achieving their aims.

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Leader as doctor/healer

Organizations are constantly in need of repair, and leaders must be adept to either finding the proper help or finding the (illegible) help. Doctors are diagnosticians, and pastor-leaders should also be able to diagnose the state of their organization. Doctor-leaders make prescriptions for their group, making decisions that increase health.

Leader as Encourager

Today, more than ever leaders need to be able to encourage. The simple breakdown of this word "encourage" is to "put courage into." Today's followers are usually broken, have not been satisfactorily encouraged, and are often shell-shocked by the amount of change and tragedy that they've faced. They need a word of encouragement. I've found that leader encouragement has to do with simply the tone of the voice. An organization simply needs a calm, caring voice, saying, "Everything is going to work out terrifically." If leaders do not learn the art of leading as encouragers, their organizations will be infected as with a virus of fear.

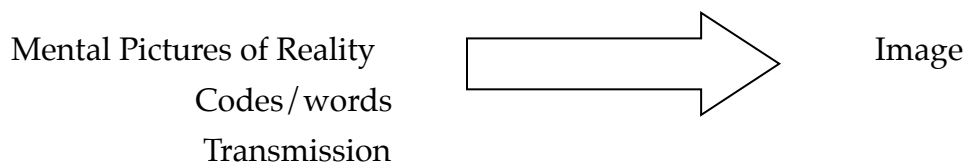
Leader as a Seer

Leaders do need to be able to see from time to time into the future. This is one of the essential goals of a leader. Leaders should be able to research or predict trends, or get help from those who can. Leaders must be confident about the future and good leaders are able to write their history today. Seers are able to see where trends are taking the organization.

Organizations experience a great deal of peace when they sense that their leader is not only visionary in looking into the future but is able to see how today will impact the future.

Leader as Communicator

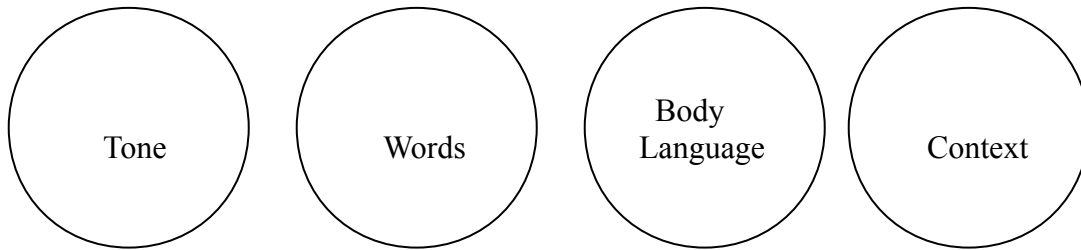
There is a myth about communication, a graduate professor once told me. I asked him what it was. He said "that it ever occurs."



The chief call of a communicator is to take pictures they view in their own minds, turn them into codes we call "words," and attempt to get the same picture in the mind of the listener. Sometimes leaders don't take time to find out what their words are engendering in the other people's minds. That is why all good communication entails 75 percent listening and 25 percent speaking.

There are numerous contemporary manners to communicate that don't work well and fail to bring courage into organizations. E-mail, for example, can cause as many problems as they can help. Communication entails these basic processes:

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Facets of communication

Good leader communicators bring peace to their organization by being aware of all the elements of communication. I believe that large gatherings of an entire organization with the chief leader as the primary communicator are the best ways to engender faith and health in an organization. Small meetings never seem to work well for this. As stated before, small meetings should be few and far between, filled with detailed communication and refocusing on the vision of the organization.

Leader as Warrior

People in an organization never feel fully safe with a passive leader. This is why to be a great leader one must exhibit the attitude at times of a warrior. If the leader isn't going to fight for the organization's well-being, neither will the followers. It is essential that leaders of Christian organizations understand several things about warfare:

1. They must understand how to fight principalities and powers in spiritual warfare, demonstrating prowess in this to the group.
2. They must be ready to strongly address any ethical attack on the organization.
3. They must be visibly seen to fight for the organization's well-being during times of downturn.

Warrior leaders can cause an entire organization to rise up in courageous faith when times most require it.

Knowing when to quit

Organizations become discouraged when ineffective segments of the group continue long past their ability to produce. The productive force in an organization becomes disillusioned when unproductive portions of the organization are allowed to consume resources of the organization.

Churches often face this phenomenon. Many churches have spent years propping up once effective ministries that have long since lost their impact. I've found that when these segments of churches are not shut down, in seeps distrust toward leaders. This distrust is really only an expression of the fear that they may be wasting their time with this organization. Churches can have ministries such as homes for unwed mothers that were at one time very effective but now that bearing a child out of wedlock is no longer such a scorned experience, is no longer needed.

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Most young women today are comfortable having a child while attending school and living with their parents. I know of one church that has spent a great deal of energy trying to keep their ministry going. They would be better off by closing the organization instead of creating an atmosphere of ineffectiveness. There is a strong sense that resources are being wasted in this organization, and there is some dismay why this group is allowed to continue pointlessly. This church would see an immediate rise in its faith level if this ministry were closed down, God were thanked, the people who were involved in this were thanked, and the ministry was celebrated then buried.

Knowing when to quit a project is essential to keeping faith in an organization. There is nothing like lost success to demoralize a group. People fear being part of a pointless organization. People also understand that ministries run their course. Organizations that are healed from some of the fear that is present can experience greater healing by looking around and discerning which portions of their organizations may best be shut down.

Keys to Healing an Organization

One fascinating aspect of healing a group of fear or any other issue, it's rarely effective to take the direct approach. Usually, it's best to not even mention the diagnosis but just go ahead with the cure. I realized at this point that fear was what needed to be healed. And to pinpoint that the group was fearful and reluctant because of their experience with their past leader, I felt, would only cause greater problems. After inquiring of several other experts, I found that I was right.

As I began a session on communication, I shared how learning the proper way to criticize was a pathway into faith and courage. I taught them how to criticize properly and how not to. I was able to speak generally because who's in the ministry for very long without facing the problem of being taken advantage of or treated unfairly.

The cure worked. The group began to communicate with confidence and concerns about the organization were able to be discussed openly. This was an exciting venture to witness. Along with learning new communication skills, I began to teach them how to allow hope for the future dominate fears of the past. The theological school that I'm a part of emphasizes a return of how things were meant to be rather than dwelling on the impact of the fall. It is certain that the fallen nature of man is an issue. Our brokenness has kept us from healing, but as the Eastern fathers taught, healing is one of the first and major steps of "sozo" or salvation.

Steps Toward Healing

One of the astonishing aspects of healing an organization of fear is how quickly a warm and friendly spirit returns to the organization. It began to happen with my friends in their suburban church. The group became more and more open to outsiders as they came in to lend advice or to share ministries. No one remained an outsider for long in this group, all because we took steps to heal the fear that had clogged up communication and frozen their gifts.

The following steps for healing are the ones that seem to work in every context (I've more elaborately outlined this in a book, entitled, "Churches that Heal" IMG Publishers International, 2002):

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One, it is essential for organizations to know how to forgive. At the root of forgiveness is to never define anyone by only what they do wrong; hence, never identify an organization by only what it has done. Forgiveness means learning from what has happened in the past rather than being incarcerated by it. As one of my friends say, "Sins are better learned from than punished."

The next step in the healing process is surrender to God. Professional ministers know this skill and art form. We may preach it but it is rare that an organization of leaders actually leave most outcomes to God and who, like Alcoholics Anonymous, state that they are powerless to lead a perfect life as an organization. Therefore, the organization requires God's presence in the midst of the organization to be healthy.

The third step is confession. King David knew well from his psalms the power of confession. An organization that admits its misuse of people or sloppy administration will be one that has a natural healing process in itself. Denial only entrenches an organization in deeper fears of discovery.

Institutional pride that doesn't allow an organization to learn from its errors and mistakes openly can become a force that overwhelms creativity. The leader usually needs to model this kind of faithful process.

The fourth step is previewing the future of success before it happens. Any organization that writes its future as history will experience the great power of hope and anticipation. Usually, this hopeful visionary look into the future will tell things or numbers that will happen. I encourage the group above to begin to imagine how properly they would run in the future.

I asked the group to answer these questions: What would they look like with full acceptance of new people and themselves? What would an organization such as theirs look like if there was an open flow of communication, both positive and negative? What would a warm and inclusive organization look like in their future? Fear begins to be diminished when an organization's plan and preparation is to be hopeful and healing.

The Healing Team

It has always amazed me how a small group of leaders set the faith tone of an organization. If an organization is gripped in fear, it will require a very deliberate journey to health on the part of the leader or team of leaders. Healed leaders tend to lead organizations that are in the process of healing. Humble leaders create humble organizations. Effective leaders attract an effective organization. As the leader goes, so goes the organization.

Today, we are learning the value of leadership teams. As for the organization, patterns of proper leadership in a group of leaders create power and health. I have found it healthy to call the organization a group of leaders. Everyone in this congregation has a vital leadership role in some facet of ministry.

Metaphors can be lifeblood of an organization. Let's look at some of the metaphors leaders can project upon their organization.

- Life is a battle

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- Life is fearful
- Life is wonderful
- Life in this organization requires great sacrifice
- Life in this organization means conformity
- Life in this organization is miserable
- Life in this organization means living under attack

All these attitudes toward life are bred by the leader and seep through the entire organization. Leaders know how to change these metaphors and definitions of life. As a leader begins to take on patterns and metaphors and inadvertent descriptions of the organizational life that are healthy, so does the organization. Leaders also take on different roles in the organization once they reach toward being healing leaders.

Usually our view of leadership is so short-sighted that we don't effectively handle seasons in our church life that require new skills. Not only do various thresholds of growth in our organization require new forms and styles of leadership, seasons of health and ill health require the leaders to adjust effectively. Let me outline some of the metaphors that I've shared with groups that leaders need to think of.

Comfortable and Confident Leaders

Individualism may be at the highest peak of celebration since the beginning of time in our post-modern era. Our propensity toward individualism has definitely had some negative ramifications sociologically. However, one cannot ignore the fact that our infatuation with individuality is one of the greatest expressions of freedom. If our society is built upon freedom, it's built upon the right of every person to be unique and profoundly themselves.

Organizations that have leaders who are comfortable with themselves neutralize many fears. I've observed this in a number of groups ranging from evangelistic groups to churches and seen that confident leaders who quietly go about being themselves develop cultures that breathe freedom to be real and genuine. People who feel free to be themselves without threat or admonishment are followers with much higher self-esteem and significantly greater comfort with taking risks.

One of the congregations I studied closely 15 years ago was a group of 5,000 led by a very authentic and unorthodox leader. I don't think I've ever seen a leader who was so comfortable "in his own skin." Most students of leadership at that time would have predicted from his public and private demeanor that his staff would have been anarchists and chaotic. It was believed then that true leaders cast an intense vision for all others to jump into and a high degree of dominance and discipline was required to be a successful organization.

What was shocking was the discovery that this church staff shared in the vision together with great ease. I don't think before or since I've seen a group of more loyal to the cause of a church or its leader. This particular leader very seldom even attended staff meetings, and when he did, he gently guided the conversation rather than dominating the agenda. There was a director on the staff who outlined the agenda, but the

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meetings I observed always eventually came around to person-centered conversations. The date was important, but it was only the beginning for achieving the ultimate person-centered leadership.

It shouldn't surprise you that this organization fostered a high level of creativity, nor should it surprise you that this group of leaders had extremely low levels of fear. They were an optimistic group, and I would say in all ways they were an emotionally mature group.

How do you be yourself? First, leaders who neutralize fear in an organization take off all stereo-typical images of their tasks. Probably most important is giving up the fear of rejection. Too many leaders determine their task and demeanor by what will give them affirmation, or worse yet, what will allow them to avoid conflict. I've come to call this type of leader an "outside in" leader. These are leaders who get their agendas and direction from pressures from without or by rewards from without. Leaders who have come to real self-discovery have annihilated fears because they not only are comfortable in their own skin but they have dropped off the fear of rejection. A leader who knows who they are before God has greatly diminished concerns about the reactions of others. A leader unmoved by reactions or outside in pressure creates new environments that attracts "inside out" people.

Organizations that are very "legalistic" or "conflict sensitive" seem to attract people who fit into such a system. These outside individuals have great fear. The way out of this is for a leader to become an inside out director.

Inside out leaders have hit moments of clarity where they discover what in their life works and what in their life doesn't work. Inside out leaders also find a way to gravitate toward assignments that allow them to stick to their strong suits. Outside-in leaders who create fear exude inner dissonance.

I'm sure you've probably observed leaders who seem to emit a low grade or severe level of discomfort in their followers. I can think of two political leaders in my lifetime who developed this contrast. The first is Ronald Reagan. He was clearly an inside out leader. I think what made Reagan powerful was that he had already achieved success in the movies and frankly didn't care if he was president or not. He was always himself. Hence, with his low levels of fear he was able to accomplish his agenda despite never having the pleasure of his own party's majority in either houses of government. In contrast, I think of Al Gore. I'm not getting into politics – I'm simply representing what appears to be psycho-sociology of how people respond to themselves. I watched a great deal of Gore's speeches while he was running for president against George W. Bush. I never got the feeling that Gore was ever comfortable with the way he was representing himself. I detected a tremendous amount of uneasiness that I don't think came from the stress and pressure of a campaign. I think he was forced into a mold from the outside in that didn't match his approach. It is very likely that if he made such a shift, his campaign would have moved not upon fear but upon a clear hope and vision for the future.

As a consultant, I run into many different types of consultants and leaders. It amazes me how many shapes and brands and varieties of leaders there really are out and about doing God's work. I remember a man who was second in command for a

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major outreach ministry in the United States and around the world. I knew the leader of this organization and he was very calm, deliberate, and comfortable without fitting the mold of a mission director. However, in the absence of this leader in the function of the office, the second in command clearly began to fall into the pressure of his board and other groups to fit the model of a mission director. This would have been fine but he wasn't an individual who fit that mold. He was rarely understood because of that. The culture had begun to be shaped by an innovator as a reaction against status quo. Now, from pressure without, this individual was trying to "legitimize" the ministry. The process never happened. A great deal of fear ensued in the organization and eventually the director was asked to step aside.

Robert Fulgham, one of the high school instructors of Bill Gates of Microsoft, is a renowned author from Seattle. His first book was entitled, "I Learned Everything I Needed to Know in Kindergarten." His second book was entitled, "It Was on Fire Before I Lay Down." His writings are very practical, hilarious, authentic. Many of his insights on facing life are insights you can use lifelong. He tells a very humorous story about when he left school to go to Japan to study with one of the great leaders of the Buddhist monks. He said he was never really accepted or respected by the other monks, so he spent a lot of time by himself. The experience was agonizing but it was the ridicule from the other monks and the realization that he would never be considered part of them that caused him to want to give up.

When he turned in his request to leave the monastery, the director of the monastery asked to meet with him. Fulgham was surprised because this leader lived in the rarified of a supreme mystic and now here he was spending time with a lowly American who wasn't accepted by his monks. The head master walked into his room scratching his behind rather intently. As he was sitting down to converse with Fulgham, he said, "My butt hurts. I have hemorrhoids. They're from too much stress. It takes too much to keep this place alive. My wife and kids want more from me. And then I have to be a holy man. Life was much better before I was enlightened."

Then the room was silent. Fulgham sat silently and the master sat silently. Finally, the master spoke, Fulgham thinking as the words began, that he was going to hear a voice of great enlightenment or a request for him to remain at the monastery. Instead, the master said something like "When you go back to America, have fun."

Fulgham thought of those words and realized that the monk was probably saying that he didn't have to leave his own nation to discover himself and Fulgham got the idea that his assignment wasn't to do something or be something or go somewhere, but to simply be himself. As he puts it, "I was simply called to be Fulgham. And that is the full destiny of my life." Is your team comfortable in their own skin? This could be vital in crisis when fear is more present.

Leaders who work at being themselves and leaders who are comfortable in their own skin while being themselves diminish fear and heal fear in an organization.

Chapter Thirteen

Contagious Trust

Obsessive control can not only be helped by medicines, but that changes in thinking and can change the chemistry of the brain as well. He found it possible by meditation and contemplation to make the brain less susceptible to fear. Blood flow can be detected in tests call SEPT studies. It is observable that blood flow lessens to areas where anxiety is developed and that fear centers of the brain slow up because of less blood. And it was shown that healthy, cognitive work can affect the parts of the brain positively that deal with safety and self-efficacy.

Peace and fearlessness are in great part the result of changes in thinking. Not only is thinking key, but acting is crucial as well. If a ministry or person acts out fearlessness soon they are fearless. If a ministry acts fearfully, it becomes more fearful. The emotion and self-feeding. Alcoholics Anonymous have a phrase that is used to push along a members recovery: "Fake it until you make it." And this is exactly how developing an organizational life of courage works.

Sensibly taking measured steps of courage can turn around a group's fear level. If leaders and boards operate off worst-case scenarios, on the other hand their fear creates more fear. Destroying fear requires serious work.

I have noted that taking on missionary ventures can cause churches to come to life. There is something significant about taking on tasks that supersede a church's home. Soon many areas of a church will improve. I know of a church that decided it wanted to reach out to Gen X folks. They invested in a coffee house even though their budget was strapped. The project closed after seven months, but the church had acted without fear, expecting they could do more than they had previously done. There were future projects taken on as the church acted like God was at work within them – and soon they succeeded in tow ventures of faith.

I am a big proponent of multiple services, as many church consultants are today. By adding a new service, churches open new attitudes and possibilities. The tool is particularly helpful in a culture that values options. Adding a service can also be a way of acting like a church that is aggressive about its future.

I met with a board of one church that had read a book I wrote about healing churches. The pastor had called me and said that his church had been at a plateau for seven years. There were about four hundred empty seats in their sanctuary every week,

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and he had tried everything to get the church growing again, or as he said, “on the grow.”

I suggested he start a second service by starting an early service in a more traditional format. The church people with traditional taste in the church that had predated the pastor were feeling left out in the blended service of contemporary and traditional worship. If they added a traditional service, these members would get a chance to “fish or cut bait.” They were either going to prove God was in their format or not. And I also felt that the contemporary group could become a pure bred model instead of a hybrid, becoming more effective.

I have known for awhile that most church leaders do not really see the unseen very easily. Usually things have to be done before the majority of people can say, “Hey, this has potential.

The board was split in this church over adding a new service. They presented their theories that the services would be smaller, and that the income would drop if they moved in this direction. They also said the pastor would have to give more attention to one than the other.

I asked if any shopped at a grocery store that were open around the clock. One of the leaders said he shopped for his groceries on Saturday morning at 6 a.m. at his store because the crowds were small. Another said his kids often ran to the store for them for late night snacks.

“See, we all like option, and people like option in their spiritual schedule as well,” I said.

Nearly all these leaders nodded, showing that they understood. I also began to tell them about 45% of their church at least were gone each week for a variety of reasons and if they had more slots available, they would see more frequent attendance of their members, actually growing their morning attendance with two services.

My last point to them was that their fears were signs that they weren’t really hearing God’s heart. I asked, “Do you think God can’t help things if this is a wrong step? Or do you think God can only work in one service if there are only many people in the pews?” I don’t.

The room was silent for a moment, and then I went on, “Adding a new service is a way **of acting out faith and stopping fear**. You are afraid of failure and scarcity. Why don’t you take a step that says, ‘There is no failure possible, only discovery’? And that way, we will always have more than enough. I learned an adage from AA: ‘Fake it till you make it.’ If you act like God can do anything in your midst, you will believe it and see it.”

The second service was approved and the new format was a success.

Confessions of Faith

Let me include a couple statements from the Apostle Paul to his friends in the Philippians Church:

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Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praise worthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Pastors are usually looking for new things to improve their services. There is a major industry selling sermon tapes, CDs, and other resources from successful leaders – and for the matter, from marginally successful leaders. I am no different. I have a naturally high level of curiosity as a researcher. I like to study and consider new ways of doing what we do and this means learning from others.

I had an unexpected experience at least 12 years ago in a medium-sized congregation I was visiting on a vacation. The service began with contemporary worship and was followed by the offering collected in a standard style. Then the pastor stepped to the pulpit with a sheet of paper in his hands.

He said, “OK, this is the week where we confess the foundation of our boldness as believers.”

I had of course heard myriad sermons and prayed a truckload of prayers of contrition and repentance, but I had never heard of positively confessing God’s power in our lives as a church discipline. However, I was seeing it now.

“Let’s take our sheets today and rehearse some true statements,” he said in a very liturgical manner.

Then he began with the biblical statements and the churches responded.

“It is written” (pastor)

“Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world” (congregation)

“It is written” (pastor)

“He made all that is and reigns over all that is eternally” (congregation)

“It is written” (pastor)

“He has determined to make us the head and not the tail, the lender and not the

“Borrower” (congregation)

“It is written” (pastor)

“He loved us first before we loved him” (congregation)

I had of course attended services that had used litany and confession before, but in this service I was participating in a form of sacrament that was planned specifically for that week in that church. My heart was lifted as we completed our confession. I wonder if we don’t do too much preaching in evangelical churches and could leave more room for the confession and praying the Bible.

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There was yet to come one more delightful section of this service. One of the women board members came forward after communion and had us take our bulletin and rejoice with about 15 answered prayers that had taken place the last several weeks of their church life. It was brief but very alive. But it was great to get news of battle victories from the front instead of body counts.

Seeking High Commitment From Leaders

I find it is usually leaders in churches with the smallest sacrificial level who fear the most. Most people in church leadership are at their core great and wonderful people. But we have made leadership sitting in rooms getting fearful as the full definition of our leadership tasks. Lay leaders should be chosen by their proven record but should also be taught the sacrament of sacrifice with Christ. When I have sacrificially invested myself in ministry, I build confidence in its outcome. It is the negative anticipation of having to sacrifice that builds fear. The act of sacrifice rewires a leader. Most church membership is really quite silly. Basically, you can attend a class when you are say 30 and remain a member for the next 50 years, whether you have kept your promises or not.

When there is attending to have a higher price paid for membership and leadership in churches. I cheer it on. One church I know requires members to recommit each year. Membership is not determined in a classroom setting but a one-on-one interview basis. The requirement for membership is really high compared to most. Here are the requirements this church applies to membership:

1. Pray 15 minutes a day for the ministries of the church and lost people.
2. Give 10 percent of their income to the church.
3. Volunteer one to two hours a week at the care or outreach from the church.
4. Attend services seriously.
5. Seek to bring uncharted friends to the services.
6. Be able to explain the vision and call of the congregation.
7. Promise to read 10 chapters of the Bible every day.
8. Attend a cell group meeting once a month.

The congregations I have seen with this kind of discipline required are what I would call way above average faithful churches to God. No one is required to a member and for sure the majority of attendees are not members. But as sacrifice is required, faith rises in a group.

The sacrament of sacrifice for leaders needs to be lifted in most fearful churches to combat the contagion. Leaders should be reviewed yearly. And one of the assessments on their life should be a faithful attitude versus a fearful one. We spend years training pastors and leaders and then we place lay leaders in roles of leadership with little or no understanding of how faith works, how decisions are made biblically, how to hear God as a group, or even understanding of the definition of what a good leader is in the church.

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I think the following is a terrific list for assessing leaders before deploying them:

1. Have you lead anyone to Christ in the last two years?
2. Do you give more than 10% of your income to the ministry?
3. Do you pray daily with results?
4. Do you project a spirit of joy and faith in God's work?
5. Do you deal with disagreement of criticism biblically?
6. Are you a learner at this point in your life or have you arrived?

A member's track record is one of the surest ways to find what the future will hold in the life of a prospect for leadership. I have been encouraging churches that want to build faith in their leadership team to develop a yearly curriculum for present and prospective leaders. It is just total ignorance the way we omit developing faith and sacrifice in our ministry leaders.

The following is the kind of curriculum I would recommend all leaders go through before they are allowed to lead. It isn't original. The list is a minor version of the Biblical course the great leaders of the Bible were taken through.

- ◆ How to pray for lost people
- ◆ How to study the bible accurately
- ◆ How to resolve conflict and give criticism biblically
- ◆ Review an honest appraisal of your skill or lack of bringing people to Christ and develop a strategy to improve
- ◆ The difference between faith and fear, presumption, pride, and fantasy
- ◆ The greater sacrifices a leader must make to fulfill their calling
- ◆ How to explain giving and how to give sacrificially
- ◆ How to hear God
- ◆ How to influence a ministry as a leader
- ◆ How to spot and neutralize fear in the ministry

Rewiring the chemistry of a corporate mind does work, but it has to start with rewiring the leadership. And the leader must first be given to the disciplines that neutralize fear.

One of my most devastating moments in church work was the afternoon I learned that the pastor I worked for had been hypocritical with the staff. The church had been experiencing some setbacks financially due to the economy and frankly due to trying to expand too fast. All of us on the staff had agreed to take significant cuts or even miss paychecks to allow for a season of adjustment. It was rough for all of us who were newly married. I remember we had to skip buying groceries often to sacrifice for the church we served. And we were happy to make the sacrifice.

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Then the assistant found that the senior pastor was still getting paid in full. He addressed the issue in front of the entire staff with the pastor present. "I have fearlessly sacrificed believing my pastor was too. But I am afraid now that the ship is going down."

The pastor admitted it but said it wasn't any of our business. It may not have been whether he was getting paid or not, but it was our business that we were sacrificing in pain when he wasn't.

Fear rages when a leader lives a double standard in a ministry. I have from that day determined to give twice whatever I ask a staff or leadership to do. And with God's help and His grace, I have been able to achieve my goal. The discipline of sacrifice is one of the most lethal tools we have to defeat – we should become friends of sacrifice as we lead.

The Discipline of Accountability

President Ronald Reagan told the Russians in the 1980s that the U.S. would "trust but verify" the Russians' commitment to our agreements. Outside observation of ministries does bring trust. Ministries must be trusted but leaders should offer freely accountability to those they serve and are served by. **This practice neutralizes fear in donors and teams.**

I am surprised by the number of churches and ministries that do not hire outside audits of their use of funds. I understand that many ministries such as mine in its inception are funded by a very few who usually handle the checking. But as a ministry grows, it should dissuade fear by getting outside accountability. It really doesn't cost that much for a great deal of peace in followers. I made my yearly tax returns available for years as the leader of a large church to calm the questions of a very few. The willingness to be audited personally brought a great deal of trust. Truthfully, our followers audit us continually anyway, so we might as well get the true data out there. If one accepts leadership in ministry, it should be understood there will be greater accountability.

Quarterly financial reports with a year-end outside audit keep the naysayers silenced. Today's climate requires extra diligence in reporting. It isn't just money for which we need to be held accountable, but also for the use of our time and talents.

The Habitat of Trust

Building trust is the chief sign that fear has been neutralized. The longer any person lives, the more difficult it is to trust. I'm sure you, like me, have moved far beyond youthful naivety. One doesn't have to live long at all before life's disappointments and your own failures all collapse upon your head and breed more fears to control you.

Marriage counselors have told me that as soon as trust vaporizes in a relationship, it is doomed. If a husband or wife were unfaithful to their spouse, the lack of trust that arises must be neutralized before the relationship will move far along. However, trust must be earned.

One friend of mine, a nationally known psychiatrist, explained to me that most church leaders trust too easily. He said, "No one deserves complete trust at any time,

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nor is anyone completely absent of trustworthiness either. No one should be trusted any more than what is reasonable, nor more than they have earned.”

Trust, like fear, is contagious. This balance is very delicate to maintain but a leader can feed trust as well as fear. But an organization can spread trust like a virus. The man in the trenches is the one who contaminates the organization with a sense of stability and loyalty to the organization.

But how does trust become contagious? As clear as we have seen, trust cannot rule until fear is neutralized. A significant step toward neutralizing an organization’s fear will leave room for contagious faith. But what can an organization do to allow the trust to be contagious?

Organizations that strive for security attract people who fear adventure. And adventure is the stuff of all active ministry. Security-based organizations lose the purpose they were destined to reach. The fear of losing what they’ve accomplished has to be conquered in order for an organization to be rebirthed. Contagious trust will require the organization to make bold steps.

Contagious trust usually grows out of the advances of the unusual. The business world has a term called “skunk works.” Skunk works were experiments and new ideas and products outside the normal chain of operations. The faith in an organization is often enhanced when a small group of adventurers are allowed to push the boundaries of an organization out without fear of appraisal or even the absolute need to succeed.

Small victories outside the bureaucracy encourage the rest of the organization. This kind of process causes contagious faith. And when contagious faith breaks loose, tremendous discoveries are made.

New Eyes

There is an old adage that has affected many churches that says “hire from within.” It’s obvious that corporate America has found this as an effective way to build loyal managers who know the workings of an organization. And ministry leaders have also found that this works well. However, there is a time when outside hires make a great deal of sense. I’ve noted that churches that are paralyzed by fear and unable to seize opportunities before them have benefited by bringing in can-do people from the outside. If your organization is gripped by fear of failure and missing opportunities, you might think of looking for a can-do, highly optimistic personality who can raise the trust quotient in your organization.

I firmly believe that hiring people for job descriptions might be the worst way to staff an organization. As stated throughout this book, we should have a mind first to recruit those who have lower levels of fear and great courage. I’ve enjoyed hiring leaders who had failed as senior pastors but had succeeded in another role at an organization or church.

I felt a communication style was stiffening in a group I was leading on one occasion. Everyone who spoke or dealt with leadership preparation sounded the same to me, and I was seeing habitual patterns of behavior that were clearly driven by the fear of change. I decided I was going to find what we call the “best player” to help us expand the boundaries of our vision. And I did. Let’s call this man “Harry.”

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I met Harry leading a church around the Washington, D.C., area of about 100 people. Harry had an illustrious educational background, earning his doctorate degree at a much younger age than most, and he was a very effective communicator. He had served well on a staff as an assistant youth pastor. However, he continued to fail as a senior pastor trying to establish a work.

I met with Harry several times and I knew that our organization needed some fresh new eyes, someone who was willing to be unsophisticated and entirely different than the rest of our culture. One of the difficulties Harry had was that he was a systems person and a superb communicator, but he wasn't very good at building structures or delegating to others. We talked about fears that might have prevented him from delegating. Over months we saw improvements in those areas as I was guiding him.

The day finally came when he realized that the church he was leading would be served better by being led by someone with evangelism skills. I listened carefully in our conversation. I was hesitant to make the offer but I decided that I wanted to bring him in from the outside to mix up the ranks. So, I leapt out and said, "Harry, how would you like to be a part of our communication team at our events and help us in developing some new structures?" He said, "Why would you ask me?" I said, "You are clearly unorthodox and consummately qualified and I need an outside person to come in at this moment. We experienced significant growth the first few years of our existence but we've stalled. And we're all getting a little fearful and not seeing opportunities around us. We are playing the protective game and sliding backward."

Harry's addition to our organization was a huge asset. He did see things we hadn't seen, and he was so happy to get out of his previous bottleneck that our situation seemed like a breath of fresh air. Soon his attitude was contagious in our organization and we began to inch forward.

A fearful organization can neutralize fear by hiring numerous hires by paying attention to their attitudes. A courageous attitude turns fear into trust. In fact, thoughts are real things and attitudes are the culmination of many thoughts that lead to one's perception of reality. New blood can see new things and new attitudes can create even newer attitudes. And success begets success.

Creating Desire

Desire is a word you don't often hear in ministry circles. We talk a lot about vision and goals, but I've found that there is a deeper reality behind vision and goals and its desire. When Christ said in the beatitudes, "Those who thirst and hunger for righteousness will be filled," He was teaching us to build our own appetite for life. Desire is the appetite for success.

Fear can drain the desire out of a group. We may have slogans on our letterhead that may sound like worthwhile goals and we can have sheets that outline our monetary goals and ministry goals. We can even have departmental goals and strategic plans. But if there is no desire to move the organization ahead, fear will fill that open door.

I think Christ was stating in those beatitudes that we are responsible for the appetites we create. Of course, in this context, He was talking about developing an appetite and hunger for God's righteousness. If we desire strongly to be like God, we will be.

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This is not a passive word that this is not an accidental experience. Desire has to be a deliberate effort on the part of an organization.

When I began our evangelistic organization, we began with a clear vision that we would facilitate through churches seminars that we would see one million conversions over 30 years. I'll never forget at the first meeting we had with the board when I laid forward the vision that we would move forward on. They looked at me with a stoned gaze when I said we would be able to accomplish our goal in 30 years.

I thought this vision would get us all excited, but I soon discovered that we all had to desire this goal first or we would never achieve it. I recently discovered that our aims and goals were terrific, but we need to enter into some exercises that would make us hungry to see one million conversions.

I suppose you, like me, have met many leaders who have wanted to have large churches. And you, like me, have found that they more often than not give up with a smaller, medium-sized church. I've also met people who felt called to the mission field. And as soon as the effort for raising funds for it stalled, the vision decreased as well.

I'm persuaded that the desire has not been fed properly when an organization stalls. I'm thinking of a church in Ohio that is thriving and has for decades now. The churches numbers nearly 9,000 people. The church has had two great communicators as pastors, but many churches around the country have such leaders. The most notable factor I have found over others is this burning desire to positively affect their city. When I say burning desire, I mean burning desire. You won't readily see any number goals or vision goals, but the organization is filled with stories of how they achieved their aim to transform the world around them. They put on seminars and they share their use of media and their servant evangelism with many. However, I feel their real secret is the will to please God and their intense desire to Christianize their community.

Tracking Progress

I've advised most of the churches I've consulted that instead of bringing problems to their board meetings, they should have 80 percent of their conversation measure the progress they've needed. Every organization has some progress each year; we just rarely have eyes to see it. Does your organization have a way of reporting regularly sound progress that you're making? It should. This will feed the decisions for more progress.

This kind of progress reporting doesn't just have to be with tangible recorded data. It should include stories. I was asked on a recent television program my definition of success as a pastor. They noted that I had led a congregation that had seen thousands of conversions over a 12-year period and they wanted to know how I learned to define success.

I thought for a moment and then it came to me. I've returned from pastoral ministry in my home city. Because our congregation measured thousands, and I had a popular radio show, many people know me in the city. I have to admit that being a private person, it's not always a pleasant experience to be noticed in public. I told my questioner, "Yes, there are many impressive numerical facets to my experience in ministry. But now that I'm retired and I bump into people around town, I've realized that the num-

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bers mean nothing to me at the moment. What has most gripped me with the feeling that I'm somewhat successful were stories like this: 'A young woman ran into me in the shoe store and saw me trying on shoes. She came up to me and asked if I was Pastor Doug. I told her I was and then she said, "I committed my life to Christ 12 years ago when you spoke at your church. I was just coming off alcohol addiction and my husband had just gained custody of our two children. I was only 25 at the time. That day, you invited anyone who was facing substance issues to attend a Tuesday night program where there were many groups to help support us. I attended one of those and within a year my life was totally turned around. I was allowed shared custody and I've only grown since. I never remarried but I've been a responsible adult and mother through the power of Christ in my life." She looked at me and said, "Thank you." She found the desire to experience more of life and she did.

I told the interviewer, "Now, that was my definition of success. I would hand in all the impressive numbers for this one story. This story made all the hard work and suffering worthwhile." This kind of life change is what I had an appetite for.

Contagious joy spreads through an organization when there are many different ways progress is reported to the leader. And an intelligent leader collects progress stories and delivers them in many different ways. A great leader creates the desire for its aims and mission.

Recent Heroes and Victories

Just about every denomination I've visited has heroes from centuries or decades ago that they celebrate. Though it's important to convey the spirit and heart of an organization, I've found that these celebrations can really reduce faith in an organization. There's just something about people from long ago who have done well and prevailed that make things hazy enough that we begin to think, "That was great for them, but they don't know what kind of jam I'm in today." I think it's advisable that we celebrate the heroes of last week. Now, I can relate to a hero of last week. I can relate to a guy who lost his marriage two years ago but has recovered fully. I've also found that someone who shares their deliverance from alcohol. Success feeds desire.

I'm moved by someone who a year ago had their last drink. And I think churches are empowered by victories that have recently happened. Contagious hope rises in a church when we collect the heroes in our organization and celebrate them. I made the practice for years to celebrate volunteer leaders in our organization. Once a month, we honored at least 60 volunteer leaders in our ministry. We gave them certificates and had several of them share how their ministries worked. We celebrated them as heroes. They addressed their failures, their excitement, their progress. And we also learned it was very important to close down ministries that weren't doing very well. So, we would have the leader pronounce all the good things that had happened in the group and then we would have a funeral service for the ministry and thank God that He used it so much.

High Touch Communication

I'm an e-mail nut, and I tend to be very verbose and I often don't take time to edit my material properly. It's embarrassing when I go back and read the material later.

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But I'm overcommitted. I figure if I'm sending e-mails to my friends, they will understand. I've conversely learned to have my wife edit the ones that were important.

I have, however, made the mistake of sending an e-mail of reprimand to a friend or associate. And universally, I've regretted it. E-mail is not a means of communication that works well in giving thanks, admonition or connection. The virtual realm is very helpful for conveying information but not for celebration.

I weekly receive an e-mail report from two or three congregations. Two of them are published very professionally and are very orderly to the eye. I'm sure that the engineer types enjoy looking at this material. The third e-mail I receive is very fascinating to me. The material is presented in bullets and there are many pictures. They have maps guiding us to different locations, but the invitations are to places where you can make human connections.

Leaders of ministries cannot stay in their room and have subordinates send out e-mail or written communication to the organization and neutralize fear. We have seen that words at best codes to describe a picture in the conveyors mind. These codes fly through the air and hit the eyes and ears of the recipients. And our deepest hope as communicators is that the same image grows in the recipients' minds as the one who sent it.

Distant communication raises fear. Contagious trust occurs when a leader walks through the rank and file. Any leader who collect ideas and takes seriously the challenges of people in his organization will receive a commensurate level of loyalty and confidence.

Multi-media can be helpful in church communication, but there are just occasions where I want to see a live body on stage speaking to me. There is an intricate balance that must be maintained between the technical and personal. Tom Peters, the business consultant, has said it well, "High technology requires high touch. High touch destroys fear. High touch brings contagious confidence to a ministry. Low touch leaves the door open for fear. High tech conveys information but emphasizes separation."

So, with all the flashy technology and letters that we have sent out, I've found that I want to visit personally key recipients of my ministry and those who work with me. I'm not a high people person, so I would far prefer to send an e-mail, but I've found that e-mail and any quick technological communication just cannot dissuade fears like my presence.

If leaders in your organization see the focus of your eyes, your body language and the tone of your voice directly speaking to them or how well you listen, will have fears depleted. But, of course, if you are unhealthy or fear for yourself, they will read that as well. So, if you use high tech, use it well. High tech passes information.

However, contagious trust only grows out of the true human interaction. Share your big ideas one on one or at least visibly to small groups of people. Also, when you have admonition and concerns you want to convey to the organization, never do it through short memos or technology. Do it personally.

If I was leading a ministry with several departments, I would meet with my department head and refuse to let them hand out newsletters regarding major issues of the

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organization. I would rather save budget for in-house printing and buy lunches for personnel. So, if you sense fear in your organization, try walking through your people, shaking hands, building faith in your heart before you meet them and passing it on. Try the road through high touch.

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Chapter Fourteen

Conclusion

I suppose a two hundred page book could be difficult to pull out when the battle hits. So, I wrote the book as a preventative guide. It is my hope that as we come to a conclusion now you'll take the time to review the material. I have pasted parts of this book all around my office to continue to absorb into my life. And I am still being stretched by the insights I've collected.

One of the major ingredients of courage is knowing you are in the right place. Sometimes a change in the positioning of our heart condition is the first place to start in growing organizations. I am hopeful that this book has relocated your heart. And because of that, you've found new courage.

I think one of the major tasks of a leader is to get everyone in the right place at the right time. The leader is to have the larger vantage point in a ministry. Ever so vigilantly, a leader assesses the talents of the team and leads everyone to the discovery of their slot. There are a lot of right slots for a lot more people than we often see. But the most important slot is the place of faith.

You want to be in the right time. You need to be doing the right thing. You have to be in the right place and with the right people all the while seeking the right goals using the right methods that fit the place and time. You just want to be right.

A leader brings synchronicity to a group. I have always enjoyed working with leaders that give me the room to wiggle around and find my slot. Making the right opportunities available is a great favor a leader gives a follower.

I am not sure how you teach someone to do that. A lot of it is instinct. But I think most of it comes from working with someone who is good at handing out opportunities that fit the moment. Experience isn't necessarily a good teacher. Experience can be the source of a lot of bad habits. But I have learned to treasure the experience of those more experienced than I.

I have visited this topic a lot lately. I am feeling a need to give some opportunities to a whole new group of developing leaders. I am collecting opportunities now. And I am trying to discern the right people. But more than that, I want both to be at the right time and place.

Four months ago, I was consulting a group of church leaders in Washington D.C. One of the leaders picked me up in the morning early. We had a ways to drive in the D.C. traffic so it was pretty early. I am not a morning person. I don't engage until 10:30. I put in my dues to please everyone but the truth is I am worthless until then.

Anyway, we stopped to get a cup of coffee and a roll at a Seven-Eleven. My friend used the restroom and I went ahead to make my coffee up and check out the pastries. I was all paid up and eating my sugar-coated donut for quite awhile standing at a counter provided for customers with coffee in hand. My friend was gone a long time. I will withhold his name as not to embarrass him. So I decided to go back to the car figuring he was going to be awhile getting his coffee together.

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There were two cars in the lot that were the same make and model. I looked for a second and decided the first car was the one I wanted. So I walked up and opened the door. As I slid in I put my coffee in the coffee holder and took a bite off of my donut. Then I looked and there was a guy in the driver's seat. He didn't say a word. He looked like if he had had a gun I would have been dead.

The only thing I could come up with to say was, "Oops, wrong car."

My friend walked out of the convenience store as I was climbing out of the poor unsuspecting guy's front seat. All I could say again as I lifted my hands was, "Oops, wrong car."

It's an awful feeling being at the wrong place in the wrong car at the wrong time. Everything would have been fine but in my hurry to get out of the car I left my coffee.

I had to go back and tap on his window and ask for my coffee. He was nice and unlocked the door. I thanked him and was on my way to the right place.

The story of Queen Esther is one of my favorites. She was the right person for the right time and the world has changed. She knew it was her time, too. There is no better feeling than knowing you're the one for the time. I think all humans hunger to be in the right slot with their lives. This is one of the greatest gifts a leader can offer a person.

When I was in my twenties I had several wonderful mentors. A couple of them got the timing thing off quite a bit of the time but I learned from watching them. But I had two leaders I worked with that knew leaders were mostly people who brokered opportunities for others to thrive in. And they gave me an array of opportunities to grow and stretch. I loved life. I learned to do the same thing pretty well.

It seems to me that in my thirties I was early on everything. I was the youngest to achieve many things. And there was a reward I learned for being the first one there at the youngest age. I ended up in a lot of wrong places at the wrong time. Fortunately, I ended up in a few more right places at the right time and things worked out.

Now I am into being a little more stealth in my leadership. I think the best kind of leadership allows people to find for themselves their slot. It is for the leader to pray and watch, encourage and teach. I have also learned that the more experienced I have gotten, the more humble I am about what I do. If you do this long enough you learn how little of it has to do with you starting anything and how much it has to do with seeing the opportunity for you and others and seizing it.

It is my hope that this book has found you at the right time and place. And that you are in a place to pass on its insights. One never really can get rid of fear in your life. It is a fact of life that fear of some kind will rear its head often. But you can take steps to neutralize it.

I feel I have found myself at the right point of ending now. Fear need not take us off course. It should lead us to deeper faith and greater insights to lead us more effectively into the future. But most of all its fangs must be pulled out and the roar of faith must reside.