

TURNAROUND MINISTRY

by

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CHAPTER ONE – THE SUBJECT AND RATIONALE

Research Question

What changes will a struggling church have to make in order to become productive in ministry?

Hypothesis

The key turnaround principles from George Barna's Turnaround Churches are among the best helps for churches trying to regain their status. To a large extent the turnaround process is dependent on having the right leader in the right place at the right time with the right support system.

The Definition of the Turnaround Church

Turnaround churches are those that once again experience renewal and marked growth in fruitful ministry after a lengthy period of decline and/or stagnation. Often these churches have been in existence for several decades and are looking back on a period of fruitful ministry that has faded into fond memories. In most cases a turnaround church has passed through one or more severe crisis points before it is willing to refocus its vision, rebuild its congregation, and once again become productive in ministry.

Concerning the turnaround church, Barna says,

The good news is that some churches experience a rapid decline but are able to end that hemorrhaging and make a full comeback to healthy Christian ministry. These are referred to as turnaround churches, and they are the exception to the rule.¹

The Reasons for This Investigation

In his book, Turn-Around Churches, written in 1993, George Barna describes the phenomenon of churches that turned around after plateauing or declining in attendance. These churches returned to a new level of health as well as numerical growth. He states that several turnaround churches were appearing all across the United States. Barna's book presents a study of thirty such churches and reports on the findings. Now, several years later, there are even more turnaround churches in existence and more knowledge has been gained about how this happens. There now exists a need for Barna's findings to be verified and updated. Barna recognized the need for a follow-up to his work.

Eventually we based this book on 30 turnaround churches in 16 states. Church sizes ranged from 135 to 3,300... A sample of this size is certainly not large enough to claim that the resulting findings provide a comprehensive insight into the turnaround process.²

Barna identifies the key reasons for church failures, the way to renewal, and the kinds of leaders capable of bringing about a turnaround.

Barna says,

This book is a modest attempt to provide a systematic study of why churches fail and how some of these dying ministries were revived and brought back to a glorious state of health.³

In our research, we discovered some factors pertaining to the type of person who can turn a church around and have concluded that those pastors are rare... We learned some information about the most critical first steps for a pastor to take in turning a church around, and some of the most important steps are unrelated to growth techniques or strategic planning... The study unfolded insights into what types of congregations have the potential to be turned around. In many cases, trying to revitalize a declining church is probably a wasted effort... The death of a church is usually avoidable, but it may take a different type of ministry mind-set than many of today's church leaders possess.⁴

Following is a list of ten characteristics of the turnaround church and ten more characteristics of the turnaround pastor. These serve as a summary of Barna's findings.

The Turnaround Church

1. While the church in need of a turnaround may have good intentions, the wisdom to study past failures and successes does not exist. (p 14)
2. Churches in need of turning lack passion for ministry. People simply go through the motions of ministry. (p 38)
3. Churches that need turning must be willing to change. Often there is such a sense of desperation that the feeling is if there is no change there will be death. (p 40)
4. Churches that need turning are often churches that have ineffective organization and operational management. (p 35)
5. There is a sense of something wrong in churches needing a turnaround. The problem cannot often be identified quickly. Often there is more than one problem. (pp 31-32)
6. Some of the most important steps for turning a church are unrelated to growth techniques or strategic planning. (p 15)
7. In most cases when a church takes a nosedive in attendance or membership it rarely makes a comeback. The normal result is either death or stabilization to a smaller size. (p 17)
8. There is a real parallel between the life cycle of a church and the life cycle of a business. (pp 19-20)
9. As the church turns, there will be a new sense of hope. The people of the church will often be awestruck at the work God has done in their midst. (p 28)
10. In the turnaround process, the church will downsize its ministries in order to do things well. The choice of the

activities and programs undertaken will be vision focused. (p 78)

The Turnaround Pastor

1. Turnaround pastors are rare, therefore it may be difficult to find one. (pp 15, 109)
2. The turnaround leader must instill a change in the ministry mindset of the church people. Otherwise trying to revive the dying church is a wasted effort. (p 15)
3. The turnaround pastor must be a strong, visionary leader. Almost always he is under the age of 45 when he becomes the senior pastor. (pp 34, 67)
4. The turnaround pastor rarely can turn more than one church around in his life because the work is usually too demanding. (p 68)
5. Almost always, a new leader has to be brought in to lead the turnaround process. (pp 47-48)
6. The turnaround leader is a future-thinking pastor who understands the history of the church but focuses on the future. (pp 47-48)
7. The turnaround leader usually constructs a simple plan for reaching out. (p 49)
8. The turnaround leader needs a committed core of at least a half dozen leaders who will stick with him no matter what. (pp 56, 96-97)
9. The turnaround pastor must be a change agent. (p 89)
10. The leader must intentionally turn the church away from its inward focus and focus the church outwardly. (pp 85, 98)

There are five reasons why the church of Jesus Christ would benefit from a further study of turnaround churches and leaders. First, a contemporary study of this church dynamic is needed to advance the work of the kingdom in struggling church ministries. Lyle Schaller says 65% to 85% of churches in America are either plateaued or in decline.⁵ Another writer says that of the 350,000 churches in America, 100,000 of them will not survive the decade.⁶ Such realities call for an updated study in turnaround ministry.

Each plateauing or declining church could be considered a potential turnaround church. But more insight must be gained in order to realign these churches with their God-given calling.

Where there are churches there will be people. Where there are people there will be problems. Where there are problems there will be a tendency to focus inwardly rather than on vision for ministry. Therefore we can expect nearly every established church to experience loss of vision and effectiveness in ministry at some point in its history. Some churches will not be able to be saved. They will simply proceed through the natural life cycle, die, and go out of existence. Others can be saved by undergoing a turnaround experience.

Perhaps the worst scenario is for some churches to actually die but not realize it. They continue to fight on for their existence. With their vision gone they merely use their resources to exist. Souls will rarely, if at all, come to Christ. Christians will not be built up in their faith and laborers will not be sent forth to the harvest. Some attenders will assume this is the way church is supposed to be. Unbelievers may look on and write Christianity off as lacking relevance. Both of these assumptions are wrong.

The typical experience seems to be that, once a church loses its momentum, the most probable outcome is either death or stabilization at a much smaller size.⁷

This current, updated study offers hope to struggling church leaders. It exposes church leaders to the principles of turning around stagnant and declining ministries. Perhaps a larger percentage of churches can be turned

around if appropriate turnaround education is provided. Then resources that are presently being expended for mere existence can be redirected to building the kingdom.

A second reason for this study is the general lack of knowledge concerning turnaround ministries. Pastors move from church to church. New leadership is being trained in Bible colleges and seminaries. Many of these pastors, as well as the students in pastoral training, have no idea what the turnaround church leadership concepts are. Most seminaries and Bible colleges are not teaching these principles. If up to 85% of our churches are in need of the turnaround experience, most of these pastors and future pastors will receive a call from or will be placed into a plateaued or declining church. With such a high percentage of potential turnaround churches in our land it is a shame that these leaders are not aware of turnaround principles. They do not realize what they face. They will not understand the problems or the potentials of the church they are called to serve.

Therefore Bible college and seminary students as well as pastors need to learn about the principles of turnaround leadership. These individuals need to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for turnaround ministry. If they do not, many of these leaders will at best spin their wheels. Many will become the casualties of pastoral ministries. Churches will be left without adequately trained leaders. Where leadership is lacking there will be a loss of vision and there will be power struggles that lead to further division. Therefore this study

is necessary so leaders may be equipped with the information and skills necessary for turning these churches around.

It should also be recognized that God has not gifted some pastors to be turnaround leaders. Pastors must learn what God has gifted them to do and then minister within these boundaries. To try to be a turnaround pastor when God has not called and gifted you to be one will only result in frustration for both the pastor and the church. At best, such attempts at ministry will result in fleshly productions of ministry that are not Spirit controlled. Therefore pastors must be trained to spot potential turnaround ministries. If they do not fit, they should steer clear of involvement.

A third reason for this study is that there are hungry church lay people who need to experience hope that comes from the potential of turnaround ministry. All across this land there are church people who are tired of simply surviving in their church ministry. Most churches seem dead or irrelevant to them. They know their churches are no longer reaching people in their community and they are not making disciples of the attenders they have. The feeling is that these churches are at best marking time. It is common knowledge to many that these churches no longer fulfill their purpose. Their vision has become survival.

Some lay people long for involvement in church ministry where people are coming into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Many feel a need for change and are willing to pay the price. Paradoxically they often watch their churches slowly die because very little trained turnaround leadership is

available. It is estimated that about ten churches close every day across America.⁶

There is hope for these lay people and their churches. Some of their churches can turn around and become increasingly productive in ministry. They can once again reach the lost in their community and make disciples. This study shows that the right leader in the right place at the right time with the right support team can be used of God to make a real difference. Can church lay people find a turnaround leader to lead them to renewal? Must they let their church shrivel and die?

Interestingly, some people within the congregations of the churches in America already know some of the turnaround principles. They have learned these principles in the business world. Some of these people can be placed into leadership positions within the traditional church structures to support the turnaround pastor in turning the church. Such people will often be quick to jump on the bandwagon knowing that there is a real future for the church if change can be brought about. In our pragmatic society many of these people will not commit themselves to what they view as a dying work. However, nearly everyone wants to be on a winning team. When these individuals see the potential of turning a church, many of them will easily see the potential for a harvest of souls. That is a challenge they can own.

A fourth reason for this study is to help our more established churches turn around so that they can be fruitful in planting new churches. Established churches are just that – established. Even though many are declining or

plateaued, if they are turned around, they will be able to use their resources not only for the sake of producing fruit inwardly, but also for planting new churches. One of the best ways to evangelize a community is through church plants. One of the best ways to plant a church is to spin off a group from a strong, healthy, established mother church.⁸ This study can help refocus the plateaued or declining church so that it can reach its community through the planting of additional churches.

A fifth reason for this study is to help leaders and congregations use their resources in more productive ways. Some churches cannot be turned around because they are unwilling or unable to make the necessary changes. In such cases the pastor and the people should save themselves the grief of trying to carry on that ministry. If something is dying, perhaps it should be allowed to die with dignity. Then the effort and resources can be focused toward other ministries or toward planting a new church. Barna says that turnaround churches are the exception, not the rule.⁹ Therefore we can expect that some unhealthy churches will die.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 makes it clear there is a time for everything including birth and death. Death is just as much a part of the life cycle as birth. Spirit-filled servants of God do not keep trying to revive something that God is bringing to the point of death. If a turnaround is impossible, death is probably unavoidable. Some church leaders need to be instructed to “let the dead bury the dead.”

God never promised that each and every local church would continue until He returns. For example, the churches referenced in Revelation chapters two and three no longer exist. God promised that His church (universal church) would not be hindered. Even the very gates of Hell could not overcome it (Matthew 16:18). God's church is the worldwide, sum total of believers from all ages. The local church is simply one representation of that universal church. There is no scriptural warranty for stating that a particular local church will always or should always survive.

For these five reasons this investigation is necessary. This study will update Barna's work and result in a clear, contemporary statement of the characteristics of the turnaround church and the turnaround church leader. The question to be answered by this study is: What changes will a struggling church have to make in order to become productive in ministry?

The Method of Research

The research method selected for this study is surveys. Two surveys were developed based upon the key principles of turnaround ministry. These principles were mainly derived from Barna's book. Surveys were sent to turnaround churches and turnaround leaders derived from three sources. The first source was Barna's book. The thirty churches he studied were surveyed in this study. The second source was the Conservative Baptist movement in America. These churches were selected by speaking with various leaders in the Conservative Baptist movement. Third, churches and leaders from other

denominations were also included. These churches were selected when I became aware of them through speaking with other church leaders and friends. The total number of churches and leaders surveyed was sixty-two. All churches and leaders surveyed were committed to Biblical inerrancy.

The first survey was sent to sixty-two pastors who have worked in a turnaround ministry. They were asked to answer questions about turnaround leadership based on the principles of Barna's original work. The second survey was sent to the sixty-two turnaround churches that were pastored by the pastors who received the first survey. This survey asked the present pastor of the church (whether he was the turnaround pastor or not) questions concerning their turnaround church based on Barna's original principles.

The results of the surveys were compiled and conclusions drawn. Profiles of the turnaround church and the leader were constructed. The results are shared in the chapters that follow.

Dissertation Preview

In this first chapter, I have provided the research question, the hypothesis, and a rationale for a contemporary study on the turnaround church and its leader.

Chapter two reviews much of the Christian turnaround literature written during the past fifteen years. In addition, key turnaround literature from the secular, corporate world is also surveyed. Barna took the business term

“turnaround” from corporate America and applied it to the church. The secular and Christian models are compared for similarities and differences.

Chapter three contains a review of biblical success. It is necessary to establish a common ground concerning what real biblical success is. This review is based on Kent and Barbara Hughes’ book, Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome.

Chapter three also concludes with the results of a biblical study to establish a foundation for the turnaround church and leader. Several principles from the pastoral epistles are listed, and a few key scriptural passages are explored for insight into the turnaround process.

Chapter four provides more details on the project itself. A detailed report of how and with whom the project was conducted is provided.

Chapter five records the results of the study. The data gathered was used to test and update Barna’s conclusions. The results of this study of sixty-two churches and sixty-two church pastors agrees with many of Barna’s conclusions. A few differences are noted.

Chapter six states the conclusions and implications of this study. Recent years’ experiences and the broader scope of this study provide a complement and an enrichment of Barna’s original study. Characteristics of the turnaround church and the turnaround pastor are listed in detail with explanation.

The Appendix contains a copy of the two surveys used for collecting the data. The surveys and cover letter included are actual copies of those

sent to the churches and pastors. In addition a copy of each survey with totals on survey feedback are included. A brief testimony of my turnaround experience and a bibliography complete the Appendix.

Endnotes

¹ George Barna, Turnaround Churches (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 23.

² Ibid., 17.

³ Ibid., 14.

⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁵ Lyle Schaller, 44 Steps Up Off the Plateau (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 23.

⁶ Stephen Grunlan, "Church Planting: A Bold New Approach to Evangelism in the 90's," Ministry (Summer 1991), 2.

⁷ Barna, p 17.

⁸ Wagner, C. Peter, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.

⁹ Barna, 9.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Research and Literature Review

An Overview of Key Christian Literature

In the past several years an increasing amount of material has been produced on the topic of turnaround ministry. The seminal work in this area was George Barna's Turnaround Churches. While some books in the church growth field refer to the subject of turnaround, none were as direct in dealing with it as this book. The purpose of this section is to overview several other books that have made helpful contributions to turnaround ministry.

First, the works of Leith Anderson should be considered. Anderson is a premier turnaround pastor. His written works entitled Dying for Change and A Church for the 21st Century reveal many of the significant aspects of his personal journey through turnaround ministry. Cultural details and strategic explanations abound to illustrate the need for changing our churches to increase effectiveness at reaching our communities. Both of his books are inspirational and instructive. He understands the demands and difficulties involved in turning a church around.

Anderson was directly involved in the turnaround of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. As he tells his turnaround story a wealth of vision, passion, determination, sensitivity, and godliness comes through loud and clear. With twenty years of turnaround experience, Dr. Anderson is a key model for those interested in this ministry.

Dr. Aubrey Malphurs of Dallas Seminary has recently written three books helpful in understanding turnaround principles. They are Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins, Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millennium, and Developing a Vision for Ministry.

Pouring New Wine in Old Wineskins refers to the need for the existing church to change. Malphurs contends that our churches must change (become new wineskins) in order to hold the new wine (methods) needed to reach our neighborhoods. The megachanges of our society do demand changes in our approach to ministry. Ministries have to be assessed and barriers to change have to be analyzed. Malphurs believes a process for needed change must be constructed to complement a God-given vision.

Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millennium focuses on developing a vision for discipleship in our existing churches. A strategy must be prepared and carried out. A leader with conviction is essential. The emphasis is not on a program but on integrating discipleship into the fabric of the church. Practical discussions on models for discipleship and even a sample budget are included.

Developing a Vision for Ministry discusses the six steps involved in building a vision for the existing church. Obstacles that impede change are discussed. There are practical “how to’s” for vision casting. Worksheets are provided so the book can be used in training church leaders. These sheets can actually be used to help church leadership come to grips with the vision God has for their local church.

A recent book by Stephen A. Macchia, Becoming a Healthy Church, provides ten qualities of a healthy church. These qualities have been derived from research done with two thousand Christians in New England. In his research, Macchia sought to discover the ten most common characteristics of healthy churches. This work contains many stories of these positive qualities operating in healthy churches, yet the focus is not on any one model or program.

You will discover that the focus of this book is on principles and stories, not on the models. The timeless truths of God's Word inform and instruct every one of the ten principles, and each of the characteristics are presented in story form. We are convinced that when we set up models for churches to follow, they are doomed to fail or at best be successful for a short time. It's time we move away from trying to be carbon copies of our superheroes (and their respective churches). Instead, let's begin to tirelessly pursue God's defined mission and ministry, based on the principles that work as they are fashioned and lived out in our unique settings and 'for such a time as this.' We need the resources, ideas, suggestions, and approaches that our 'models' provide without trying to 'do church' exactly like they are.¹

Macchia's ten characteristics include:

1. God's empowering presence
2. God-exalting worship
3. Spiritual disciplines
4. Learning and growing in community
5. A commitment to loving and caring relationships
6. Servant-Leadership development
7. An outward focus
8. Wise administration and accountability
9. Networking with the body of Christ
10. Stewardship and generosity

Another book that can be helpful in analyzing the condition of an existing church is Natural Church Development by Christian A. Schwarz. Schwarz sees eight essential qualities of healthy churches. His study found

that these qualities are true of all healthy churches regardless of size or cultural differences. A diagnostic tool is available to measure an existing church against these eight qualities. While the book is not directly about the turnaround process, the healthy church characteristics identified are essential to the turnaround church.

Schwarz's eight essential qualities include:

1. Empowering leadership
2. Gift oriented ministry
3. Passionate spirituality
4. Functional structures
5. Inspiring worship service
6. Holistic small groups
7. Need-oriented evangelism
8. Loving relationships

Note the parallels between Schwarz's eight characteristics and Macchia's ten. If we look beyond the difference in number we see that the concepts are almost identical. It should also be noted that neither attempts to follow a prescribed path for turning a church. The application of their principles in a contextualized way is what is really important.

A specialized book, Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church, was written by Ron Crandall. This book begins with the assumption that the small church is different from the mid-size or large church. Many of the well-known turnaround principles are discussed in this work. Limited new material is offered. This book can be especially helpful to the small church because the turnaround principles are specifically applied to small church dynamics.

Since the turnaround process involves a return to evangelism and discipleship, it is worth mentioning Growing A Healthy Church by Dann

Spader and Gary Mayes. Here is another diagnostic book that can help people see areas where their church is not what God would have it be. Spader and Mayes define a clear path in returning to a strong base of winning, building, and sending servants in the kingdom of God. Specific turnaround principles are not directly discussed but the key focus of returning to evangelism and discipleship is at the heart of this book.

Renewing Your Church Through Vision and Planning, edited by Marshall Shelley, is a book containing the key writings from a number of different authors. While the turnaround ministry is not the central focus of the book, church renewal is. Therefore many of the turnaround principles are presented and reinforced. Key focus points include vision, dynamics of change, leadership, management, goal setting, and decision-making.

Finally, Effective Pastors for a New Century, by James E. Means, describes the kind of pastor it will take to be effective in the years ahead. The book helps a pastor strategize a plan for the future. Means' cross-cultural ministry training experience helps to keep the book's perspective broader than American church culture. His thrust of integrity, authenticity, and sound doctrine are particularly refreshing in our market-driven age.

The most compelling requisite in pastoral ministry is not new programs, bigger budgets, superior technology, state-of-the-art buildings, more talent, or better marketing, but leadership authenticity and competence. Churches often throw money at problems, add bureaucracy, utilize technology, maneuver politically, and employ a vast variety of techniques. However, our great need is for leaders, particularly clergy, anointed with the Spirit of God, equipped for every good work, consumed with holy vision and passion, and who say with

integrity, 'Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ' (1 Corinthians 11:1) ²

In this reading material several key principles surfaced time after time.

These include:

1. A return to a God-exalting corporate worship.
2. A focus on vision for the future.
3. Relevant change where measured risk is taken.
4. Personal integrity of the leadership.
5. Development of a team-centered leadership.
6. Caring relationships.
7. Service according to calling, gifts and passion.
8. Reduction of the amount of ministry to increase quality.
9. Effective administration.

Table 1 illustrates the frequency each of these nine overarching principles is mentioned by the various authors.

Table 1. – Comparison of Turnaround Church Literature

| | #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8 | #9 |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Barna | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Anderson | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Malphurs | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Macchia | + | + | | + | + | + | + | | + |
| Schwarz | + | | | | + | + | + | + | + |
| Crandall | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Spader | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | | |
| Means | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | | |

An Overview of Key Business Turnaround Literature

For the Christian interested in church and business turnarounds, Barna can serve as the connecting factor. His short, easy-to-read work, Turnaround

Churches, is built on the sociological premise of turnarounds observed in the business world.

Four decades ago, business analysts recognized a discernable pattern to the life of most organizations. The pattern, generally described as a life cycle, is defined by four stages: birth, development, maturity and decline...But one of the realities the traditional life cycle does not take into account is the experience of those organizations that have reached maturity (i.e. success) followed by rapid, free-fall decline, succeeded by a near-miraculous full recovery to balanced maturity. This capacity to turn around a severely ailing organization is quite rare; bankruptcy or closing the doors forever are the more typical outcomes.³

As is true in the business world, when a church experiences a period of intense hemorrhaging, death is the usual outcome. Of course, because churches are nonprofit entities whose existence requires only a name and a person or two to maintain the legacy, a dead church is not necessarily an ex-church.⁴

Barna's connection of turnaround church and turnaround business is intriguing. A comparison of the two will prove helpful not only in understanding the similarities but also the differences.

Another interesting connection between the business and church worlds is made by Laurie Beth Jones in Jesus CEO – Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership. She shows the relevance of business principles as lived out in the daily life of Jesus Christ. One of her presuppositions is that Jesus was a true leader building His kingdom on eternal principles of leadership that cross all cultures and time periods.

While I do not agree with many of Jones' interpretations of the life of Jesus, she has made a good point. The point is that the business world did not dream up many of the turnaround principles. They are God's truths lived out centuries ago in the life of Jesus. Those in the business world could not

help but discover some of these leadership principles simply by trying to figure out what works.

We should not jump to conclusions and think that everything done in business can be brought into the church. Jones is applying what she has learned from the business world to the Bible. Her process involved searching for a proof-text. In contrast, we choose to start with the Bible and find truth there. We examine business principles in light of scriptural truth. In the process of examining business principles we may see things we would have otherwise overlooked in the Bible. Since our starting point and foundation is the Bible, we are far less likely to adjust our understanding of the Bible to what seems to work in the business world.

Jones has observed how many biblical truths work in the business world. All truth is God's truth whether it is business, science, psychology, or church doctrine. Therefore we do not have to fear studying successful business turnarounds since many may be biblically rooted. Our challenge is to make sure each principle we adopt does in fact have a biblical basis.

It is not surprising that Jones even has a chapter entitled He was a Turnaround Specialist. She speaks of Jesus turning around the people and the systems of His day. She even views His miracles as turnarounds. She claims Jesus constantly operated outside the standard mindset. When He heals the blind man by putting mud made with saliva on his eyes, He was operating outside the commonly accepted mold. Her conclusion is that if Jesus is our model we, too, will be turnaround specialists at some level.

Business literature contains multiple examples of turnaround leaders. Perhaps one of the best known is Lee Iacocca. Iacocca is known for bringing Chrysler back from the brink of disaster, an American legend that talked tough and shot straight. In Iacocca: An Autobiography, he tells of his struggles at the Ford Motor Company. He and Mr. Ford never got along. Eventually Iacocca was fired. This firing took place in spite of his great contributions at Ford. His focus on the Mustang cornered the market for Ford. However, the strong leader drive within Iacocca was a threat to Mr. Ford. Therefore Ford fired him without reason. Iacocca went on to become Ford's great competitor by working for Chrysler. The successful turnaround of Chrysler speaks for itself.

As one reads his autobiography several lessons about turnaround leadership stand out. Many of these can apply in the church setting. Iacocca was willing to take risks and did not put up with nonsense. He chose his team for the turnaround with great care. He had vision. He never stopped pushing for excellence and achievement. His drive was almost beyond belief. One almost gets the idea the company had to succeed with him leading it. Through all the difficulties and long hours he still maintained a great love for his family.

Mean Business by Al Dunlap and Bob Andelman is the story of Al Dunlap, the great turnaround specialist of Scott Paper. Al, better known as "Chainsaw Al" or "Rambo in Pinstripes," is a hardworking, brutal, take-no-guff, kind of guy. The cover on his book quotes a review from Newsweek where

Dunlap is hailed as “America’s premier turnaround artist.” He set out to turnaround Scott Paper. He was determined to get the job done and to do it quickly. He did not care if he made friends as long as he got the job done. He was known to say that you are not in business to make friends. He held up well under criticism.

Dunlap had a personal four-step strategy for turning around a business: 1) get the right management, 2) pinch pennies, 3) improve the balance sheet by focusing the business, and 4) get a real strategy for success. There is a chapter on each of these steps. Some interesting insights can be drawn from the chapters that both complement and conflict with what is expected of a turnaround pastor.

A point of clarification should be made concerning the dynamic tension between strong leadership and effective team building. One cannot be compromised for the other. Turnarounds have to be led by a strong leader yet that strong leader cannot do everything alone. The leader must delegate significant responsibilities to other key leaders whom he gathers as part of his team. These individuals need to perform with excellence in their respective areas of responsibility. However, there can be no doubt about who is in charge. Each team member needs to be loyal to the turnaround leader, and the turnaround leader must be willing to totally support and respect his team members.

One difference that should be noted is that each turnaround business leader looks at the bottom line as money, not people. At this point the

turnaround pastor departs from the turnaround business process. In the church, the bottom line is not money but the glory of God and ministry to people.

Interestingly, Al Dunlap has recently fallen on some hard times. He had always been thought of as a man with integrity, however some issues have surfaced that call his integrity into question. It is interesting to note how important the issue of integrity can be in the corporate turnaround world. Integrity is not just something for the turnaround church leader. This demonstrates that biblical ethics for the turnaround process is also significant for the business world.

Another famous turnaround leader is Jack Welch of General Electric. In his biography by Robert Slater, Get Better or Get Beaten, the theme of the cutthroat business world comes into focus. Through restructuring and downsizing Welch was able to make General Electric competitive once again. For Welch the object of the game was to beat the other guy so that he did not beat you. Welch has much to teach the turnaround leader even if his objective is off target for us.

Welch has much to say about learning to fix things that are not yet broken. He could see problems coming for General Electric so he downsized before the problems arrived. He also referred to breaking down bureaucracies that resulted in sluggish performance, making hard decisions, and being guided by a few simple goals. In his mind nothing was untouchable. He keyed in on placing the best people in the best opportunities with the best resources.

He empowered people. This leader was more into inspiration than intimidation. Much of what he has to say would be helpful to the turnaround pastor.

Several other works function more as “how to” manuals. Reengineering the Corporation by Michael Hammer and James Champy, Built to Last by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, Driving Change by Jerry Yoram Wind and Jeremy Main, Corporate Turnaround by Pedro Nueno, and A Passion for Excellence by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin contain helpful insights into the turnaround process. A book of particular interest is John Beckett's, Loving Mondays: Succeeding in Business Without Selling Your Soul, the story of a Christian CEO who shares his principles of success and roots them in Christian ethics. He speaks of the way Christian business people can succeed by applying biblical principles and is known for his compassion. This is somewhat unique in the cutthroat world of business. He speaks of accountability, going the extra mile, and having profound respect for the individual. Values are of great importance to him.

In this corporate turnaround material several key principles surfaced, including:

1. The bottom line is money. Structure the business to make it.
2. A focus on vision for the future.
3. Relevant change where measured risk is taken.
4. Personal integrity of leadership.
5. Development of team-centered leadership.
6. Reduction of output in order to increase quality.
7. Effective administration.

Table 2 illustrates the frequency with which these nine overarching principles are mentioned by the various authors.

Table 2. -- Comparison of Turnaround Business Literature

| | #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Jones | | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Iacocca | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Dunlap | + | + | + | | + | + | + |
| Welch | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Beckett | | + | + | + | + | + | + |

Much can be learned from the business models of turnaround. The turnaround pastor would be wise to observe and learn from them and realize there may be some business people in his church congregation that are familiar with some of the turnaround principles in the business world. Perhaps such people will prove to be among the pastor's best supporters.

In conclusion, Table 3 illustrates principles from the literature concerning the turnaround church and the turnaround business. While there are some differences, there is much similarity. The ten principles compared are:

1. A return to a God-exalting corporate worship.
2. A focus on vision for the future.
3. Relevant change where measured risk is taken.
4. Personal integrity of the leadership.
5. Development of a team-centered leadership.
6. Caring relationships.
7. Service according to calling, gifts and passion.
8. Reduction of the amount of ministry (or output) to increase quality.
9. Effective administration.
10. The bottom line is money. Structure the business to make it.

Table 3. -- Comparison of Turnaround Church and Business Literature

| | #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8 | #9 | #10 |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Christian | | | | | | | | | | |
| Barna | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Anderson | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | | |
| Malphurs | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Macchia | + | + | | + | + | + | + | | + | |
| Schwartz | + | | | | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Crandall | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Spader | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | | | |
| Means | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | | | |
| Secular | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jones | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Iacocca | | + | + | + | + | | | + | + | + |
| Dunlap | | + | + | | + | | | + | + | + |
| Welch | | + | + | + | + | | | + | + | + |
| Both | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beckett | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | |

Endnotes

¹ Stephen Macchia, Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics to Pursue in the Process (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 15.

² James E. Means, Effective Pastors for a New Century (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 18.

³ George Barna, Turn-Around Churches (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

CHAPTER THREE – A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Before moving further into the study of the turnaround pastor and church it is necessary to look at the biblical foundations for this study. First, consideration will be given to the subject of true biblical success. Second, consideration will be given to the purpose of the church. Finally, key passages will be studied.

An Overview of Biblical Success

Accomplishing a turnaround is not simply a matter of building attendance, staff, programs, and budgets. The process is not based simply on the skills and abilities of the turnaround pastor. Kent and Barbara Hughes, in Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome, tell the story of their search for true biblical success. They experienced deep failure in a church plant that caused them to ask some difficult questions regarding success. They found their answers in the Bible that should be the basis for establishing all Christian success.

They discovered that human expectations often lead to disappointment. When goals are not accomplished we may tend to feel failure. If our churches do not grow numerically we often feel failure. If we are not extraordinary in our ability we may feel we are not worth much and cannot

accomplish much. Too often pragmatism becomes the measuring stick of success. The Hughes recognize these as the success standards of the world.

Dr. and Mrs. Hughes were forced to study the Bible to define true success and discovered it was based on faithfulness. "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). We are called by God to be faithful. The Old Testament prophets were faithful before God, but often not successful in the eyes of the world. Yet God counted them successful. The great leader Moses was faithful to God even though his people rebelled on more than one occasion. The world may view this as failure to lead. God simply says, "Well done, faithful one."

Hughes points out that faithfulness has seven components. The first is obedience. Obedience is directly tied to the Scriptures. What has God commanded that we are to carry out? Obedience often means hard work. It may even mean hard work with little fruit. However, obedience is a critical ingredient of true success.

A second component of biblical success is serving. In Mark 10:43-44 Jesus states, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." In God's kingdom, the way up is preceded by the way down. This means servanthood. In God's kingdom success and leadership mean service.

The third component is love for God. In John 21 Peter, who previously denied and even cursed Jesus, is asked by Jesus if he really loves Him. After three such requests, Peter responded that he did indeed love Jesus. Peter

stated that since Jesus knows all, He knew that Peter loved Him. Loving Him becomes the ground for all true success (Matthew 22:37-38).

Another component involved in success is that of believing, because "...without faith it is impossible to please Him, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). To believe what He says is success.

Then there is prayer. A servant who fails to pray cannot be a biblical success. The Scriptures tell us to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Nothing of lasting value can be accomplished apart from prayer. Prayer also demonstrates that we are surrendered to, and aligned with, the will of the Father. To truly be successful we must be surrendered to the will of God. That is the only way we can experience true success.

Another component of success is holiness. God calls His people to be holy (Leviticus 19:2). To be holy is to live in God's will. Clearly we are not successful if we live apart from His will. Samson was thought to be successful by the standards of the world because he was so great on the battlefield. Since he was not holy in his personal life, he was not successful as God counts success.

The final component is a positive attitude. Since there are so many negative attitudes in our world, a positive attitude is key to demonstrating that we understand our sovereign Lord is in control. Since He is in control there is no reason to be negative. We are told to have the same attitude as Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5). Any attitude short of His attitude lacks success.

When these components are present in the believer's life, there is real freedom to enjoy true God-given success. Living out His plan will allow us to hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant" at the end of life, freeing us from the traps of worldly "success."

Therefore success in turnaround ministry is locked into faithfulness as demonstrated in obedience, service, love, belief, prayer, holiness, and positive attitudes. As we live out this calling we are successful whether or not the statistics support a success image. As we move further into the study of turnaround church ministry and turnaround leadership we will understand the bottom line in the turnaround process is to give God glory through turning a struggling church into what it was called to be.

The two top components in fulfilling God's call for any church are evangelism and discipleship. These are the vital marks of faithfulness for a church because these are God's requirements. As a church remains faithful in obedience, service, love, belief, prayer, holiness, and positive attitudes, its people will be well on their way to hearing, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The Biblical Purpose of the Church

There is a three-fold purpose for the local church clearly seen in the upward, outward, and inward perspectives of ministry. Since so much has been written on this subject in recent years, we will cover only the basic concepts of the church's three-fold purpose here.

The upward purpose of the church is worship. The church is to provide God-centered worship experiences for the whole person in a corporate setting. This is probably best nurtured by God's people growing in their individual worship experience.

Psalm 95:6-7 and Psalm 96:7-9 call on the people of God to bow down before Him and give Him the honor and glory due His name. Isaiah 6:1-8 shows us what a great God we serve. A true worship experience will result in a humbling of self before God and a deep desire to serve Him by going anywhere He wants and doing or being anything He desires.

1 Corinthians 10:31 states that everything in our lives is to be done for the glory of God. Romans 12:1-2 states that the individual life is to be a sacrifice of worship offered before God. The passage concludes by declaring this is the reasonable thing to do.

The church in need of a turnaround process usually does not have a healthy sense of worship. More often it is focused on its inherited traditions rather than on the person of a God who seeks for the worship of His people (John 4:23). If this aspect of the church's purpose is not being fulfilled, the perspective for the outward and inward purpose will be off target.

The outward purpose of the church's ministry is in outreach. The church is commissioned to make new disciples. This begins with people coming into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20 is often called the Great Commission. In this text we are commanded to make disciples. There are three phases of "making

disciples.” They are 1) going to reach the lost, 2) bringing them to the point of baptism which is our way of incorporating them into the local body of believers and 3) teaching them to obey all that Jesus has demanded of us. Outreach is the first stage of this process.

Acts 1:8 contains the final words Jesus spoke to His disciples before ascending into heaven. Here Jesus promised we would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. Our witness will not be merely a local witness but will have a worldwide impact. This is the work that the church should be pursuing. If it is not happening, the church will wither. Churches in need of a turnaround process are usually missing this aspect of their purpose. Outreach is often the most neglected aspect of a church in need of turnaround.

Finally, the inward perspective refers to equipping. The people of the church are gifted by the Holy Spirit to equip or build up the church. This is clearly the teaching of 1 Corinthians 12. The Holy Spirit is the Giver of each gift (12:4-7). Each member or part of the body needs the ministry of the other members or parts of the body as well as using his or her gifts for the purpose of strengthening the entire church. If this is not done, the church will not be built up; instead it will be seriously handicapped (12:14-26).

Ephesians 4:11-13 is the classic passage on equipping, stating that our spiritual gifts are given, “...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body may be built up.” There is a place for everyone to be involved. The pastor cannot and should not do all the equipping himself, but should work to release the giftedness of all members of the body.

Too often this responsibility of equipping the saints is left entirely to the pastor and his staff who then suffer various degrees of burnout trying to accomplish everything. Then the inward ministry purpose God has given the church dries up. Though Paul indicates this as the ministry for which the pastor is gifted, it soon becomes clear that all saints need to be enlisted to carry out this inward ministry of equipping the church.

Biblically the pastor should be the leader of this ministry for this is part of the pastoral gift. He and his staff must understand and manage this ministry with an awareness that the whole package of “equipping the saints” is far too large for them to carry alone. Part of the “equipping for ministry” must include his enlisting, training, and putting in place all those gifted for this basic inward ministry task of the local church. A few of the items included in preparing God’s people for ministry are Christian education, discipling, teaching, training, nurturing, and encouraging.

This inwardly focused aspect of the church’s purpose involves all the saints under pastoral leadership. It is absolutely essential through the inward equipping to create a force that is strong enough to fulfill the outward ministry to our community and the world.

2 Timothy 2:2 states that we are to entrust to others the things that have been entrusted to us. The church is a place where discipleship should continually be taking place with each person receiving discipling and then passing it on to others. In this way growth continues in each life. This is the

inward-focused ministry of the church. If it is not happening, the church will stagnate and decline.

A church focused on only its own needs must sense that equipping the body is for the purpose of outreach. Otherwise maintenance becomes a way of life. When there is little thought of equipping people to reach out, the church will first plateau and then decline.

Many churches in need of the turnaround process have lost perspective on the three-fold purpose for the church. There needs to be a return to what God intended for the church. Otherwise we are merely going through the motions of church. This is not the life God has for His people.

Biblical Foundations for Turnaround Leadership

There are several biblical passages in the pastoral epistles that provide general direction for biblical leaders. The commands and principles laid down in these passages must be taken seriously by leaders in the church of Jesus Christ, especially by turnaround leaders.

The two key passages for church leadership, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9, list the qualities church leaders should possess. These qualities are not just for leaders but are standards for all believers and can be found in other New Testament passages. Leaders have to be good examples of what Christianity is supposed to be. This is an integrity issue for leaders. Failure in these areas disqualifies a leader. A good study of these qualities can be found in [The Measure of a Man](#) by Gene Getz.

Other passages in the pastoral epistles have general application to all church leaders. First the leader is encouraged to stay on track with doctrine and to stay away from myths and endless genealogical discussions. Such discussions lead to controversies and meaningless talk (1Timothy 1:3-4). The leader is also encouraged to be consistent in prayer. He is told to pray for everyone including those in authority (1Timothy 2:1-2). Next, the leader is told to guard the flock from hypocritical lies as well as the gossip chain (1Timothy 4:6-8).

Several other obligations and instructions are also mentioned in 1 Timothy. Leaders set the pace for all believers (4:12). They are to read, preach, and teach the Word (4:13). A leader is to continue to exercise his God given gifts (4:14). He is to monitor his life and doctrine closely (4:16). Leaders are instructed in ways to deal with older and younger men (5:1), older and younger women (5:2), widows (5:3-16), and elders (5:17-20). The leader is to remain pure and not practice favoritism (5:21-22), but he should take care of himself (5:23). Then there is the way to handle masters and slaves (6:1-2), and the way to keep materialism balanced (6:3-10). Leaders must flee unrighteousness, pursue godliness, and keep in the fight (6:12-12). Next we have the way to help prosperous people balance life (6:17-19), and there is a charge to guard what has been entrusted to the leaders' care (6:20-21).

2 Timothy adds to this list. The leader is to bring to maturity the gifts God has given him (1:6). He is told not to be ashamed of the Lord or to fear suffering for His name (1:8). Keep the doctrine sound, guard what is entrusted, and endure hardship (1:13-14, 2:2-3). Remember the true gospel (2:8). Be a worthy workman who reminds the people of all these things as well as correctly handles the Word and avoids godless chatter (2:14-16). Flee youthful lusts and replace them with righteousness, faith, love and peace (2:22). Avoid foolish arguments (2:23-26). Have nothing to do with the godless (3:1-7). Stay true to the training received (3:14). Preach the Word whether it is popular or not (4:1-4). Keep your head in all situations, work hard, evangelize, and carry out all your duties (4:5).

The book of Titus adds to this list. Rebuke the rebellious sharply (1:10-16). Teach sound doctrine and apply it specifically to older men, older women, younger men, and slaves (2:1-10). Teach people to be obedient to authorities, refrain from slander, live peaceably with others, and act humbly (3:1-2). Avoid foolish controversies and quarrels. Warn the divisive person (3:9-11). These can be summarized with two principles: guard the flock and guard your life in all areas.

Key Passages for Turnaround Leadership

There are a few other biblical passages that have special application to the turnaround pastor. The first passage refers to the leader's attitude toward methodology in reaching the lost. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-27, Paul

states he is willing to do anything within his power to reach people with the gospel. This of course is within the parameters of Scriptural morality. In other words, to win the lost he would do anything that did not violate biblical standards.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I am become like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I become like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who goes into the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (1 Corinthians 9:16-23).

The attitude referred to in this passage is missing in most churches needing a turnaround. There is a great need to cultivate an attitude of willingness to do anything necessary in order to reach people for Jesus Christ. This means church outreach ministries will have to be adjusted to more culturally appropriate methods. Any and all attempts to share the gospel will have to be evaluated on the basis of cultural appropriateness.

Today most churches decide what appropriate ministry is based on the people that attend the church rather than what is appropriate for the people in the community. This is an inward focus rather than outward. This is not about becoming more like the world but about cultural appropriateness.

The summarizing principle in verse 22 of 1 Corinthians 9 makes this clear. Here Paul claims he has made every possible adaptation in order to

reach all the people he possibly can. If this attitude were present in many of our churches today, unbelievers from our communities would find it far easier to attend. In many cases the unbeliever cannot understand our traditions, vocabulary, or why we do what we do. The powerful gospel of Jesus Christ may seem irrelevant to them. There is nothing spiritual about doing things the way we have done them in the past. There certainly is nothing sacred about conducting ministry in ways that make no sense to the unbeliever in his current environment.

A dynamic tension will always exist between reaching people outside the church and ministering to the needs of those inside the church. Neither the lost of the community nor the regular church attender can be allowed to dictate totally the direction of the church ministry. Church leadership must hold these two in dynamic tension while leading both groups to a greater understanding of our biblical responsibilities to God.

The study of this text suggests four characteristics applied by Paul that demonstrate his intense desire for cultural appropriateness.

First, there is focus of ministry. Paul's focus is not his own desires or the needs or desires of believers to whom he ministers but on a culturally appropriate approach to the unbeliever in that community. After all, he did know the truth and he was mature. Paul's focus was not on what he preferred or enjoyed. He focused on the people he was trying to reach. He may or may not have liked making adaptations to the expectations of unbelievers but he did it in order to win them.

This in no way suggests that care and attention should not be given to the believers in the church. This is highlighted in other portions of Scripture. However it is necessary to achieve a healthy balance. Christians should elevate a heart for unbelievers above providing for their own desires. What has happened to this Pauline attitude?

We should recognize the value of maintaining some church traditions in order to connect with our evangelical roots. Many in the world around us are looking to connect with their roots. They may also want something that has been tried and proven. Historical richness and connection can be attractive. However, a healthy balance with our contemporary context is necessary.

The average church in need of a turnaround has forgotten the people of the community and has spent most of its time and resources on itself. Paul's example in these verses helps restore a balanced perspective.

The second characteristic of Paul's adaptability is a self-sacrificing ministry. Paul was willing to make any sacrifice necessary in order to bring others to personal faith in Jesus Christ. Such a mark of sacrifice is often missing in churches that need a turnaround. The balance between inward focus and outreach ministry is lost. Paul challenges believers to sacrifice their personal comfort levels for the sake of the unbeliever.

Paul gives up his personal freedom. This is counter-cultural not only in the world but even in many churches today. Paul actually says he is a slave (verse 19) in the matter of sharing the gospel. He is not a free man when it

comes to ministry. Too many Christians today want the freedom they perceive Christianity offers while ignoring the slavery aspects of the faith.

In verses 24 through 27 Paul illustrates his self-denying sacrifice by referring to athletic events that were very familiar to the Corinthians. He speaks of training for running a race and for boxing. Training with intensity, running all out, and fighting hard are the keys to winning the prize. Paul is out to win the race. He is fighting for the prize. The attitude of sacrifice is communicated through the personal discipline under which he places himself. Verse 25 emphasizes his “strict training” that refers not only to his sessions of training but also to his eating and the rest he gives his body.

In verses 12 through 18 he referred to his willingness to work for his personal needs rather than take money for preaching the gospel. He has waived his rights. He even says that he would rather die than hinder the gospel. This kind of attitude would go a great distance in turning a struggling church outward to its community.

A third characteristic of Paul’s methodology is personal maturity in ministry. It takes maturity to put aside one’s personal desires for another’s good. There must be an attitude of “keeping the main thing the main thing.” The main thing is the communication of the gospel to those who are lost. The Christian has to be mature enough to understand cultural differences while realizing that these distinctions are often inner convictions based on our upbringing. These are cultural, not biblical distinctions. Because of his understanding of culture, Paul circumcised Timothy as a concession to

Jewish culture in order to minister among the Jews. However, Paul would not circumcise Titus because it would have been a hindrance to ministry among the Gentiles. As a mature witness, Paul built bridges, not walls.

Ministering in the Jewish context, Paul performed the ceremonies, rituals, and traditions of Judaism according to Jewish standards. Those who are “under the law” are the Jews and perhaps the proselytes of Judaism as well. Those “not under the law” are the Gentiles. Paul knew how to live among them and communicate the gospel to both cultures. Those “who are weak” are those who were slow to comprehend. A repeated and simple presentation may have been necessary. “The weak” may also refer to the religious person who so easily stumbled over new concepts (1 Corinthians 8).

Today the battleground is not so much Jew versus Gentile but more about convictions over church traditions and changing methodology. Our training and backgrounds are easily confused with biblical standards. Often musical styles are a part of this confusion as well as personal preferences or maintaining certain programs. Are we willing to adjust in every possible, morally permissible way for those that need Jesus Christ?

This discussion is really not about musical styles. In recent years the contemporary worship scene has not only grown dramatically but has also been a serious source of contention. Too often when musical styles are discussed in connection with worship services emotional debates follow. In some cases contemporary music has resulted in worship enrichment, while in others musical immaturity and shallowness discourage the mature.

The point of this discussion is not styles of music but culture. Dr. James Kennedy was culturally wise to institute a very traditional style of worship at the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale. Such a style was most fitting for the community in which he ministers. The turnaround leader must look at the community in which he serves and select a style of worship that is fitting in his community. This requires maturity and a reasonable measure of flexibility on the part of both the leader and the congregation.

It is wise to understand the reasoning of those who argue in favor of maintaining a particular style of worship claiming it is best for worshipping God. Often it is merely a matter of preference. He/She then concludes this is the best way to worship God. With what authority can this person say this? God is not looking at the style but the heart of the worshippers. Those that worship Him must do so in both spirit and truth (John 4:24). Hence the facilitators of congregational worship face the very serious task of determining styles of worship that will best enable worship in their context. That context must include not only the traditional worshippers, but also those the church seeks to win.

The contemporary music lover can only claim at best two generations of effectiveness. The classical music lover can only claim a few hundred years. Are we actually saying before either of these styles people did not worship well? Issues of style do not relate to God but to culture and the

people of the church and the community whom we seek to lead into genuine worship.

To those who would tell us the message has to change in order to fit modern times, our response is that our message is eternal truth, the same “yesterday, today and forever.” It is truth for all cultures on the earth. To change the message would be compromise.

The Christian message will always be the same. It must never be changed. However the methods of communicating the gospel should always be changing to suit the cultural context. Our primary focus is the gospel, not the less essential issues of culture and methodology.

Finally we see a deep passion for ministry on the part of Paul. Paul states that he will make any cultural adaptation he can so that he might be able to win the unbeliever. There is real passion here. His willingness to change methods allowed him to begin where people are and then move them to Christ.

His passion is also clearly seen in his desire to run and fight hard. Obviously he longs to win people to Jesus. To work at something this hard, with this much commitment, you have to really want it.

Paul never compromised any basic standard of the Christian faith for the purpose of reaching people. Just so, our biblical standards are never to be compromised. The challenge is to hold to a pure biblical doctrine and yet adapt in all other matters in reference to culture and methodology. Let the gospel offend if it must, but let us never offend.

To the immature Christian, Paul's ways may seem inconsistent. In reality he was very consistent because he was out to do whatever he had to do to win people to Jesus Christ. We must remember Paul was an ambassador, not a politician. He did not change simply to fit in. He made changes in order to more effectively communicate His message of good news.

Another key passage is found in Luke 5:33-39:

They said to him, 'John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.' Jesus answered, 'Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.' He told them this parable: 'No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the skins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'

This passage has application to the battle that too often is experienced when the church attender insists on maintaining past traditions and outdated methodology. Under attack by the religious leaders of his day, Jesus brings a new wine to people that only want old wine. These religious leaders are not interested in change.

In verse 33 the attack begins. The spirituality of Jesus and his disciples is questioned by comparing them to John and his disciples. The critics ask why Jesus and His disciples did not follow what John and his disciples did. The implication is that Jesus and his disciples are not as spiritual as John and his disciples because they did not do what was expected of them.

It is interesting to note that these religious leaders did not approve of John and his disciples. They only acted like they did. This brings up a question concerning their motives. Is there deception here? Their reference to fasting and prayer also sounds so spiritual. Historical background tells us the religious leaders fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. They spent time in prayer at noon, 3 PM, and 6 PM. However, all fasting and prayer is not necessarily spiritual. Fasting and prayer can be done as a meaningless habit.

Spirituality is not measured by self-made standards. Also we are not spiritual just because we do what the Bible says. Spirituality is produced by the Holy Spirit and is based on obedience in action and attitude. Standards of holiness are set by God, not us. When we set the standards, legalism is the result.

Legalism is one of the great and often unrecognized joy killers in Christian circles. The legalistic approach may imply to the unbeliever that Christianity is a great burden. It communicates that you have to punish yourself by maintaining numerous spiritual disciplines in order to be a Christian. This attitude is disastrous in a church that desires to reach others for Jesus Christ.

When Jesus replies in verses 34-35, He draws on the analogy of a wedding. When a couple was married in Jesus' day they did not go on a honeymoon as people in our culture often do. Instead, they dressed up and stayed at home and had an open house for a week.ⁱ Jesus was saying that He was the groom and His disciples were the wedding guests. His point was

that guests can fast when the groom is taken away but not while the groom is with them.

This statement is actually a prediction of His coming death. Such a prophecy would not fit with the traditional understanding of the Jewish leaders. Jesus' mission called for a radical break from the old religious traditions. He knew the groom would be taken away soon enough. That would be the time for prayer and fasting.

Jesus continued His reply with a parable that contained the three illustrations found in verses 36-39. These illustrations are clearly marked off by the phrase "no one" (verses 36, 37, 39).

The first illustration refers to patching a torn garment. Today it would be like tearing a denim patch out of a new garment in order to patch an old pair of denim jeans. Once the new patch is sewn into the old garment there will be trouble. As soon as the garment is washed the new patch will shrink and tear away from the old garment. This results in loss to both garments.

This illustration communicates that Jesus is bringing an entirely new approach to faith living. The old ways will not work with the new ways. The religious leaders are still under the old system and they do not want to let go of it. They expect Jesus and His disciples to live by their system. Jesus knows this will not work.

The second illustration concerned wineskins that were made from the skin of goats and sheep. The neck of the animal would serve as the bottleneck. The first time a new wineskin was used it would stretch like a

balloon as the wine fermented. But this could not happen if new wine was placed into the already stretched skin a second time. The second attempt would result in the rupturing of the old skin and the loss of the new wine. Judaism was the old wineskin and was no longer flexible enough to handle the new approach. Jesus' mission called for a radical break from the old system.

In this third illustration Jesus shares how hard it is for people to change. They like their old wine and do not want even to sample the new wine. Jesus is not contradicting what He has taught in the first two illustrations by saying the old way is better. Most people would rather stay with what they have known in the past and do not want to make a change or give up their old established ways of doing religion.

These leaders must have thought what they had was better than what Jesus offered. They did not really know what they were missing. They were simply content with the old ways.

This difficulty with change is experienced in our churches today. Change is hard because we are comfortable with the way we have always done things. Our focus is inward. Church people struggle with change and therefore churches will often face substantial decline. Many times Christians cannot understand why change is necessary. They refuse to look beyond their personal preferences. The old wine tastes better to them. Failure to change when change is appropriate prevents our churches from reaching the people in our communities.

Turnaround leaders have to pour their new wine into new wineskins. This means change must take place in our evangelical churches, yet many refuse such change. Jesus had to battle traditionalism and legalism and so does the turnaround leader. Traditionalism and legalism tend to kill an outward focus because ministry is no longer people centered. These factors result in a ministry that is not culturally appropriate for reaching the lost of our world today.

Today society is different than it was in the 1950s. Many churches in need of a turnaround are still using the methods they used in the 1950s. Today we live in a post-Christian era that necessitates change in ministry approaches. The people in our communities are different than they were in previous decades so our approach must be different.

The challenge for the turnaround pastor is to adopt appropriate methods for carrying out ministry in our era. This means constructing new wineskins. The old wineskins will not get the job done. The challenge of the turnaround church is to become a new wineskin that is open to receiving new wine. This is a church with an outward focus for a thirsty world.

Some churches in need of a turnaround cannot be changed because of deeply entrenched legalism and traditionalism. These churches are old wineskins where the turnaround pastor's time and effort would be wasted. He would be better off moving to some other church that is ready for a change. He should not attempt to put new wine into old wineskins.

One final passage that has significant application to a turnaround leader is Proverbs 29:25:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).

This is a contrasting proverb. The fear of man is contrasted with trust in the Lord. The proverb teaches that when we fear people we get caught in a trap. Others can control us with their opinions and attitudes. This pressure can keep us from speaking the truth or doing what we should do.

In contrast, the truth can set us free. Those who trust in the Lord will be set free from the control of others. Truth can set us free from people traps. Luke 12:4-5 instructs us not to fear those who can kill the body. Instead we should fear the One who can destroy both body and soul.

The proverb says that the one who trusts in God will be kept safe. The word “safe” means, “set on high”. This refers to being set on a high rock where no one can harm us. When our trust is in God no one can harm us. This is what gave confidence to the Hebrew teenagers in Daniel 3. They desired to serve God rather than the pagan king who threatens them with execution in a fiery furnace. Peter and the disciples also boldly proclaimed in Acts 5:29 that they must obey God rather than man.

When it comes to turnaround leadership there is little room for fearing people. Leaders who have an unhealthy fear of people tend to place a spin on the truth. They try to tell people what they want to hear. They often are trapped into trying to please people. The leader’s decisions are often

adversely affected. The turnaround leader has to be brave and take risks but if he lives in fear of people nothing good or new will happen.

A fearless attitude should never keep a turnaround leader from listening to and responding to people. As a leader he does have to listen. Yet he does not have to be wrongly influenced. Proverbs 29:25 can be a good motto for the turnaround leader. He does not try to serve the two masters, God and people. This is a settled issue. He serves God. This gives him the freedom to lead in God's way whether the people follow or not.

Endnotes

¹ William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 66.

CHAPTER FOUR – DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

My research question is, "What changes will a struggling church have to make in order to become productive in ministry?" To answer this question I chose to compile statistics of the criteria from turnaround churches and leaders. This data can be used by church leaders to determine the possibilities for turning around a struggling church. This information can also help leaders understand the overwhelming importance of changes suggested throughout this study. If church leaders are not willing to make these needed changes, they are almost definitely not going to turn around their church.

Description of the Project

Barna's work is the foundational writing in the area of turnaround church ministry. Barna knew that his original study of thirty churches would not be enough to exhaust the subject of turnaround ministry. His work was only meant as a starting place for future studies. Now that we are several years further into turnaround ministries it is possible to update Barna's original work. This update can include a larger number of churches. It can also construct a statistical basis for turnaround ministry.

After reading widely concerning the turnaround process and after a careful study of Barna's book, I constructed two surveys. One summarized Barna's major principles for the turnaround church and the other summarized

his principles for the turnaround pastor. Each of the two surveys was sent to turnaround churches and their pastors. Copies of the surveys and the cover letter can be found in the appendix. Self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes were enclosed as well.

The surveys developed were simple in structure. Before the surveys were mailed out they were field tested by two pastors completing them. It was determined that the survey for pastors could be completed in about eight to ten minutes. The survey for churches could be completed in approximately ten to twelve minutes. A few minor changes in wording and structure were made to improve the surveys as a result of the field test.

Both surveys were mailed to sixty-two churches. Fifty-one copies of each survey were completed and returned. These results were achieved through two mailings. Originally the two surveys were sent with a cover letter. Thirty-nine returns were received within two weeks of the original mailing. A second mailing containing only a reminder letter was sent ten days after the first mailing. The final twelve copies of the completed survey were returned over the next two weeks. As the surveys were received the two surveys from each church were stapled together to ensure the possibility of studying the matching surveys from the same church and leader. In this way, responses concerning the leader could be compared to the data of that particular church.

After the surveys were returned I entered the results into a database so that questions could be cross checked against each other. This proved helpful in comparing one question with another. Basically the surveys were

filled out completely. The leaders followed the written directions well. There were very few additional comments written in.

Anonymity in the survey process was promised to each pastor and church in the initial letter sent with the surveys. This was to protect the identity of the churches and the pastors and was necessary due to the sensitive nature of some of the information. On the basis of survey tabulations, statistical data was drawn up and information was gleaned.

The percentage of surveys returned was eighty-two percent. This high rate of return can probably be explained by the felt need for the study, as well as the careful selection of churches and pastors who received the surveys. At least two factors were significant in this return rate. First, I have a personal relationship with several of these churches and pastors. Such a personal relationship helps influence leaders to return surveys. It would seem where a personal relationship exists, people are usually more cooperative in filling out educational surveys. Several of these pastor friends called me after receiving the first mailing and stated how encouraged they were to know such a project was underway.

A second factor influencing the high rate of return is the topic being studied. Even in cases where I did not personally know the pastor or the church, I believe the subject matter was compelling enough to gain attention. Since each survey went to a turnaround pastor and church it can be assumed these people know at least some of what God has done in their ministry. Therefore they know the importance of this study. Due to the condition of

many churches today, they have a heart for this subject. Therefore the rate of return was high.

The Methodology for the Project

The reason for using surveys for this research was to obtain an accurate statistical base of information regarding how turnaround ministry can be developed. When Barna originally wrote his book he used the case study method. His interview of thirty churches proved foundational. However today there are far more turnaround church ministries, so a broader study could be completed. I believe this study pioneers the process of developing a sizable statistical basis for understanding turnaround ministry. Furthermore, surveys are a more practical means of covering a larger number of churches and pastors. Large amounts of factual material can be gathered quickly and easily concerning both the turnaround church and the turnaround pastor.

A case study method could have been used to follow up Barna's conclusions. However there is a need for the statistical information found through these surveys. The body of information obtained through the surveys will prove more helpful in answering the research question of this study, namely, what changes will a struggling church have to make in order to become productive in ministry.

Assumptions for the Project

My major assumption is that Barna's principles are still true today. I built my assumptions upon several principles stated in his book. First, there was my assumption that Barna's definition of the turnaround church is correct. Second, I assumed no basic difference exists in turnaround ministry when it comes to the size, ethnicity, or denominational distinctions among these churches. Third, I assumed the data obtained through the surveys would confirm most of Barna's conclusions.

Criteria for Churches Included in this Study

The purpose of this study was to examine turnaround churches and turnaround leadership. Therefore appropriate criteria were developed to conduct the study. Limits had to be set on what was to be studied and what was not to be studied.

Denominational Ties

While several of the churches involved in this study were Baptist, a significant number of other denominations were also represented. From the surveys that were returned, the following denominations were represented.

Denominational Ties

| Denominational Tie | Number of Surveys |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Baptists Churches | 22 |
| 2. Independent Churches | 8 |
| 3. Presbyterian Churches | 6 |
| 4. Evangelical Free Churches | 5 |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 5. Nazarene Churches | 5 |
| 6. Methodist Churches | 4 |
| 7. Alliance Churches | 3 |
| 8. Congregational Churches | 3 |
| 9. Lutheran Churches | 3 |
| 10. Reformed Churches | 2 |
| 11. Other | 1 |

Church Size, Race, and Location

No particular distinctions were used as limiting factors for the study.

Churches from under one hundred to over one thousand attendees were surveyed. Ethnic issues were not a consideration in gathering the data. The location of each church was not a determining factor either. No significant difference seems to exist between turnaround churches of differing size, ethnicity, or geographical location.

Limiting Factors

Each church had to fill the definition of the turnaround church provided in chapter one of this study. In particular each church had to:

- have been in existence more than ten years
- have experienced a multiple year plateauing or decline, and
- have experienced church renewal and growth.

After the initial selection of the churches, the cover letter sent to them mentioned each of these three factors in order to help preclude unqualified individuals and churches from participating.

CHAPTER FIVE – STUDY RESULTS

Results of the Turnaround Leaders Survey

Question One

An introductory question set the timetable for classifying the rest of the questions in the survey. This question asked the pastor how long he had been at this particular turnaround ministry. There were three possible categories for response. The results are recorded in Table One. It should be noted that the great majority of turnaround pastors stay in their churches longer than the average pastor. While the average length of pastoral ministry in one place is three years, seventy-six percent of turnaround pastors in this study had been at their churches five or more years.

Table One – Current Years of Service in a Turnaround Church

| | | |
|----------------------|----|-------|
| Less than five years | 12 | 23.5% |
| Five to ten years | 11 | 21.6% |
| More than ten years | 28 | 54.9% |

Question Two

Question two attempts to discover how many of these turnaround pastors served in other staff positions within their turnaround churches before achieving the senior pastor role. Interestingly thirty-one percent of all these pastors have served within their present churches in some previous staff

position (see Table Two for results). These pastors held a variety of positions, including associate pastor, youth pastor, assistant pastor, and Christian education director.

Obviously some of the seventy-six percent of pastors (derived from question one) staying in their present churches five or more years is partly explained by the data derived from this question. Some who have served five or more years in their present ministry have been in more than one position. It would be interesting to know how long these men have been serving only as a turnaround pastor. Exact data on this matter cannot be determined from this study.

Table Two. – Percent of Turnaround Pastors Serving Their Churches in Previous Roles

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| Yes – I have served in other positions in this church | 16 | 31.4% |
| No – I have not served in other positions in this church | 35 | 68.6% |

Question Three

My third question in this survey demonstrates that Barna's original findings need some modification. Barna contended that almost all turnaround pastors were coming into their first senior pastorate. This survey shows that the majority of pastors in turnaround ministry are still first-time senior pastors as Barna suggests. However this still leaves a significant number of turnaround pastors who were not first-time senior pastors. This survey reveals

that thirty-three percent have, in fact, been senior pastors previously (see Table Three).

One reason for this may be the maturity of the turnaround ministry scene. As the years pass some turnaround pastors are moving to other turnaround ministries. Therefore they are no longer in their first senior pastorate. As word about the successes of turnaround ministry spreads, other senior pastors are growing tired of struggling in a church unwilling to change. They move to churches that appear to be desperate to change and turnaround. This may help to account for the increase of turnaround pastors not serving in their first senior pastor position. I propose that this trend will continue as more pastors with turnaround experience are called to accomplish this feat in another church that desires to move out of their position of decline.

Table Three – Turnaround Pastors and Previous Senior Pastorate Experience

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| Yes – I have been a senior pastor before | 17 | 33.3% |
| No I have not been a senior pastor before | 34 | 66.7% |

Question Four

Question four simply tabulates the age categories of the turnaround pastors. Table Four divides the age groups of the pastors into eight different categories.

It is interesting to note that of the seventeen turnaround pastors who have previously been senior pastors, seventy-one percent (twelve out of

seventeen) are in age categories five and six. This suggests that the older, more experienced pastor with previous experience is most often the pastor who becomes a turnaround pastor. The age of turnaround pastors appears to be on an increase. Therefore I conclude that maturity and experience coupled with a passion to bring about life-producing changes may be a key mix of the successful turnaround pastor.

Table Four – Age Groupings of Turnaround Pastors

| | | |
|------------------|----|-------|
| Ages 20-25 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Ages 26-30 | 1 | 1.9% |
| Ages 31-35 | 8 | 15.7% |
| Ages 36-40 | 5 | 9.8% |
| Ages 41-45 | 11 | 21.6% |
| Ages 46-50 | 19 | 37.3% |
| Ages 51-60 | 7 | 13.7% |
| Ages 61 and over | 0 | 0.0% |

Question Five

Question five attempts to determine the driving force behind a pastor becoming a turnaround pastor. The results of this question support Barna's early study stating turnaround pastors sense a divine calling to turnaround ministry and are driven by vision. All fifty-one pastors stated they sensed a direct leading of the Holy Spirit to become a turnaround pastor. Forty-nine of the fifty-one sensed they had a vision for what their ministry could become.

Few turnaround pastors are simply excited about becoming a turnaround pastor. Furthermore, few fail to understand the task they are tackling. Barna is correct in stating that many turnaround pastors are reluctant

leaders. They are realistic about what they are tackling. The results obtained in this question are detailed in Table Five.

In the place provided for write-in reasons, only one write-in was recorded. This pastor is in a unique situation where a cultic denomination was making a turnaround. That denomination has now become evangelical. The pastor in this turnaround ministry stated one reason for his involvement in turnaround ministry was that his denomination was turning around.

Table Five – Motivation for Becoming a Turnaround Pastor

| | | |
|---|----|--------|
| Sensed a direct leading of the Holy Spirit | 51 | 100.0% |
| Had a vision for what the ministry could be | 49 | 96.0% |
| Felt excitement of becoming a senior pastor | 8 | 15.7% |
| Lacked understanding of the real conditions | 4 | 7.8% |
| Other written comments | 1 | 2.0% |

Question Six

Question six is an examination of important factors influencing the turnaround pastor in his turnaround ministry. Five categories were provided with a sixth write-in category offered in cases where there was some unique issue the pastor felt he could share. Not all pastors scored all five categories. Some scored only two or three. Therefore the total number of items checked is not equivalent to the number of surveys received.

There were only two write-in comments. Neither was prioritized among the other five categories. These two comments pointed out 1) the overwhelming need for turnaround ministry and 2) the need to reach the lost.

The evidence from this question shows these pastors take their walk with God very seriously. Walking with their Lord is the most influential factor in all of life when it comes to turnaround ministry. Vision possessed by the pastor and the core of committed people are also high on the list of influencing factors.

Table Six – Influential Factors for Turnaround Pastors

| | Rated 1 st | Rated 2 nd | Rated 3 rd | Rated 4 th | Rated 5 th |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Your walk with God | 32 (62.7%) | 13 (25.5%) | 4 (7.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| A committed core of leaders | 2 (3.9%) | 11 (21.6%) | 29 (56.9%) | 8 (15.7%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| The vision you possessed | 11 (21.6%) | 17 (33.3%) | 12 (23.5%) | 5 (9.8%) | 4 (7.8%) |
| The challenge of turning the church | 2 (3.9%) | 5 (9.8%) | 5 (9.8%) | 25 (49%) | 8 (15.7%) |
| The risk you were taking | 4 (7.8%) | 5 (9.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 7 (13.7%) | 32 (62.8%) |

Question Seven

This seventh question seeks to determine the most important characteristics turnaround pastors possess. Six characteristics mentioned by Barna are all given as suggestions with opportunity to write in other key influencing characteristics. There were no write-in additions on any of the fifty-one returned surveys.

Personal integrity and love of the people rank the highest. These were closely followed by spiritual disciplines, and preaching and teaching

ministries. Strategic planning, while important, was considered a key characteristic by only 59% of the pastors surveyed. Charisma scored below the fifty percentile. This means charisma of the turnaround pastor is not necessarily critical in turnaround ministries.

Table Seven – Critical Characteristics Aiding in Turnaround Ministry

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|-------|
| Personal integrity | 50 | 98.0% |
| Love for people | 48 | 94.1% |
| Spiritual Disciplines | 46 | 90.2% |
| Preaching and teaching ministries | 46 | 90.2% |
| Charisma | 24 | 47.1% |
| Strategic thinking and planning | 30 | 58.8% |

Question Eight

Turnaround pastors are hard working individuals. This question derives information concerning the amount of hours these pastors work in an average week (see Table Eight).

Table Eight – Hours Turnaround Pastors Work Weekly

| | | |
|----------------|----|-------|
| Under 40 hours | 0 | 0.0% |
| 41-50 hours | 0 | 0.0% |
| 51-60 hours | 24 | 47.1% |
| 61-70 hours | 25 | 49.0% |
| Over 71 hours | 2 | 3.9% |

Question Nine

Question nine determines the numbers of pastors that take a day off on a weekly basis (see Table Nine).

In comparing this question with question eight it is clearly observed that the more hours a pastor works the less likely he is to take a day off each week (see Table Ten).

Table Nine – Turnaround Pastors and a Weekly Day Off

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Yes, I take a day off each week | 25 | 49.0% |
| Sometimes I take a day off each week | 20 | 39.2% |
| No, I do not take a day off each week | 6 | 11.8% |

Table Ten – Comparing Total Hours Worked with Days Off

| | Under 40 hours | 41-50 hours | 51-60 hours | 61-70 hours | Over 71 hours |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Day off – Yes | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 21 (41.2%) | 3 (5.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Day off – No | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (19.6%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| Day off – Sometimes | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (5.9%) | 12 (23.6%) | 1 (2.0%) |

Question Ten

The purpose of question ten was to rank the most difficult things the turnaround pastor faced in his turnaround ministry. Eight options were given with additional space to write in other difficulties. There were no write-ins. Each pastor was asked to rank the three most difficult issues he faced, scored on a basis of one to three with one representing the most challenging issue. In addition to the totals given for each of the eight, a total number of responses for each option is given (see Table Eleven).

Table Eleven – The Most Difficult Issues Facing Turnaround Pastors

| | Ranked 1 st | Ranked 2 nd | Ranked 3 rd | Totals |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Maintaining walk with God | 13 (25.5%) | 4 (7.8%) | 4 (7.8%) | 21 (41.2%) |
| Loneliness | 4 (7.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 3 (5.9%) | 8 (15.7%) |
| Handling the workload | 6 (11.8%) | 4 (7.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 11 (21.6%) |
| Myriads of tasks facing you | 1 (2.0%) | 3 (5.9%) | 3 (5.9%) | 7 (13.7%) |
| Taking hard stands | 2 (3.9%) | 5 (9.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 8 (15.7%) |
| Resistance to change | 15 (29.4%) | 17 (52.9%) | 5 (9.8%) | 37 (72.6%) |
| Limitations on resources | 2 (3.9%) | 8 (15.7%) | 16 (31.4%) | 26 (50.9%) |
| Negativism | 8 (15.7%) | 9 (17.7%) | 18 (35.3%) | 35 (68.6%) |

Clearly the three most difficult issues turnaround pastors face are resistance to change (72.6%), negativism (68.6%), and limited resources (50.9%). Next to these three difficulties comes maintaining the pastor's walk with God (41.2%).

Results of the Turnaround Church Survey

Question One

When the original sixty-two surveys were sent out, they included churches from eleven denominations. The denominational breakdown of the original mailing is recorded in chapter four (p 55).

The first question on the turnaround church survey was meant to determine which denominations were included in the study. The results are recorded in Table Twelve. In cross-referencing this question with all other questions in the survey no notable differences existed between the various denominations included. Therefore Barna's conclusion that turnaround ministry principles apply across denominational barriers is supported by this study.

Table Twelve – Various Denominations Included in this Survey

| | | |
|------------------|----|-------|
| Baptists | 18 | 35.3% |
| Independents | 7 | 13.7% |
| Presbyterians | 5 | 9.8% |
| Evangelical Free | 4 | 7.8% |
| Nazarene | 4 | 7.8% |
| Methodist | 4 | 7.8% |
| Alliance | 2 | 3.9% |
| Congregational | 2 | 3.9% |
| Lutheran | 2 | 3.9% |
| Reformed | 2 | 3.9% |
| Other | 1 | 2.0% |

Question Two

Question two simply gathers information on how long each church has been in existence. It should be remembered that one of our criteria for turnaround church ministry is that the church must be more than fifteen years old. The answers to this second question were cross-referenced with other questions in the survey and no significant differences were found. Therefore another of Barna's original contentions still stands: The principles of turnaround churches do not vary with the age of the church (see Table Thirteen).

Table Thirteen – Ages of the Churches Surveyed

| | | |
|------------------------|----|-------|
| Less than 10 years old | 0 | 0.0% |
| 10 to 20 years old | 3 | 5.9% |
| 21-40 years old | 18 | 35.3% |
| 41-100 years old | 20 | 39.2% |
| 101 or more years old | 10 | 19.6% |

This information suggests that younger churches do not need turnaround ministry as often as older churches. As a church ages it is more likely to become ingrown and less focused on its mission. It should also be noted that there is a fall off in turnaround church ministries when churches are more than one hundred years old. There are probably at least two reasons for this. First, there are not too many churches over one hundred years of age. Second, many churches which would have been old enough have already died out. They experienced death before they could be led in a turnaround ministry.

Question Three

Question three was constructed to analyze the geographical setting of each church. Again there is not a significant difference in turnaround ministry principles as applied in rural, suburban, or urban settings. The data of church settings is recorded in Table Fourteen.

Table Fourteen – Geographical Settings of Turnaround Churches

| | | |
|------------------|----|-------|
| Rural setting | 9 | 17.7% |
| Suburban setting | 28 | 54.9% |
| Urban setting | 14 | 27.5% |

Question Four

This question provides data on attendance totals for the turnaround churches studied (see Table Fifteen).

Table Fifteen – Average Attendance of Turnaround Churches Studied

| | | |
|-------------------------|----|-------|
| Attendance under 100 | 9 | 17.7% |
| Attendance 100 to 200 | 23 | 45.1% |
| Attendance 201 to 400 | 6 | 11.8% |
| Attendance 401 too 1000 | 7 | 13.7% |
| Attendance over 1000 | 6 | 11.8% |

Question Five

In the turnaround church, declining or plateauing has been a way of life. Rates of declining and plateauing as well as the length of the declining

and plateauing vary from church to church. No discernable pattern could be found when cross-referencing the size, age, or setting of the church (see Table Sixteen).

Table Sixteen – Length of Decline or Plateau before Turnaround Ministry

| | | |
|---------------------|----|-------|
| Less than two years | 3 | 5.9% |
| 3 to 5 years | 24 | 47.1% |
| 5-10 years | 18 | 35.3% |
| 10-20 years | 6 | 11.8% |

Question Six

This question provides insight as to how far into the turnaround process these pastors are. Many of these pastors have been at their turnaround ministries for several years. Here we again see their staying power (see Table Seventeen).

Table Seventeen – Length of Time Turnaround Ministry has been Underway

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|-------|
| Under 3 years | 9 | 17.7% |
| More than three but under 5 years | 10 | 19.6% |
| More than 5 but under 10 years | 15 | 29.4% |
| More than 10 years | 17 | 33.3% |

Question Seven

The purpose of question seven was to distinguish between churches that plateaued and churches that were in decline (see Table Eighteen). No significantly discernable patterns were recognized when the data from this question was cross-referenced with questions two through five.

Table Eighteen – Turnaround Churches that have Declined or Plateaued

| | | |
|---------------------|----|-------|
| Churches in decline | 38 | 74.5% |
| Churches plateaued | 13 | 25.5% |

The number of people lost in the declining church varied with the size of the church ranging from forty to eight hundred people.

Churches in decline were found to be in that pattern for periods from twenty-four months to twenty years.

Question Eight

Question eight researches the difficult experiences that propel a church toward turnaround ministry. These nineteen challenges are called crisis situations in this section. A twentieth option was given for a write-in of some unanticipated crisis. Since most churches experience multiple struggles as a prelude to turnaround ministry, this question was constructed to determine as many significant difficulties as possible.

Besides checking each crisis a church experienced, the individual completing the survey was to classify the top three influential challenges (see Table Nineteen).

In terms of overall challenges, the following insights were gained from this study.

- First, vision is mentioned by nearly everyone (98.0%)
- Second was resistance to change and lack of leadership (94.1%)
- Third was division over philosophy of ministry (90.2%)

- Fourth, there was a tie score between loss of evangelism and discipleship and personality conflicts (86.3%)
- Finally, still close to the first four categories was losing touch with the community (84.3%)

In terms of the most popular challenges the following insights were gained.

- First was the division over philosophy of ministry (27.5%)
- Second was the lack of leadership (35.3%)
- Third was a resistance to change (23.5%)

Table Nineteen – Crisis Situations Experienced Prior to Turnaround

| | Ranked 1 st | Ranked 2 nd | Ranked 3 rd | Total Response | Percentage of Total |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Moral failure | 1 (2.0%) | 2 (3.9%) | 3 (5.9%) | 13 | 25.5% |
| Major financial Trouble | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 26 | 51.0% |
| Building program | 2 (3.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 8 | 15.7% |
| Pastoral revolving door | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (3.9%) | 26 | 51.0% |
| Lack of Leadership | 2 (3.9%) | 18 (35.3%) | 6 (11.8%) | 48 | 94.1% |
| Loss of vision | 10 (19.6%) | 8 (15.7%) | 10 (19.6%) | 50 | 98.0% |
| Poor management and administration | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (3.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 32 | 62.8% |
| Resistance to change | 1 (2.0%) | 4 (7.8%) | 12 (23.5%) | 48 | 94.1% |
| Loss of evangelism and discipleship | 2 (3.9%) | 1 (2.0%) | 3 (5.9%) | 44 | 86.3% |
| Pastoral burnout | 3 (5.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 27 | 52.9% |
| Personality conflicts | 0 (0.0%) | 9 (17.7%) | 6 (11.8%) | 44 | 86.3% |
| Lost touch with surrounding culture | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 43 | 84.3% |
| Abuse of church funds | 1 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 15 | 29.4% |
| Division over philosophy | 14 (27.5%) | 2 (3.9%) | 5 (9.8%) | 46 | 90.2% |
| Division over doctrine | 1 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 11 | 21.6% |
| Church split (s) | 3 (5.9%) | 1 (2.0%) | 0 (0%) | 15 | 29.4% |
| Departure of Senior Pastor | 4 (7.8%) | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 15 | 29.4% |
| Departure of key staff member(s) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 9 | 17.7% |
| Demographic shift | 6 (11.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 | 19.6% |

Question Nine

Question nine details the major contributions that turnaround leaders experienced in their churches. Sixteen options were provided with an additional seventeenth option for writing in a contribution. There were no write-ins. Table Twenty contains the results. These contributions were not prioritized in any way. Those completing the survey were simply allowed to select all major contributions to their turnaround process.

Table Twenty – Major Contributions to the Turnaround Process

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| Core of committed leaders | 50 | 98.0% |
| Building of lay leadership | 48 | 94.1% |
| A new senior pastor from outside the church | 37 | 72.6% |
| A new senior pastor from inside the church | 16 | 31.4% |
| One or more crisis experiences | 45 | 88.2% |
| A renewed church vision | 42 | 82.4% |
| A spiritual revival | 26 | 51.0% |
| A willingness to desert the past and move on | 33 | 64.7% |
| Lots of hard work | 26 | 51.0% |
| Prayer ministry | 44 | 86.3% |
| Pulpit ministry | 45 | 88.2% |
| Marketing/Advertisement | 10 | 19.6% |
| Planting another church | 9 | 17.7% |
| Outside consultants | 23 | 45.1% |
| Hiring new staff | 4 | 7.8% |
| An intentional focus on outreach | 41 | 80.4% |

The top seven contributions made to turnaround churches include:

- A core of committed leaders (98.0%)
- The building of lay leadership (94.1%)
- One or more crisis situations (88.2%)
- Pulpit ministry (88.2%)

- Prayer ministry (86.3%)
- A renewed church vision (83.4%)
- An intentional focus on outreach (80.4%)

Question Ten

Question ten was devised to tabulate the numerical growth turnaround churches had received since their turnaround took place. While in many cases these are not completed turnarounds the results do indicate growth is taking place. A percentage of each growth category compared to the whole survey base is included (see Table Twenty-One).

Table Twenty-One – Numerical Growth Experienced in Turnaround Ministries

| | | |
|-------------------|----|-------|
| Growth of 0-10% | 4 | 7.8% |
| Growth of 11-25% | 14 | 27.5% |
| Growth of 26-50% | 11 | 21.6% |
| Growth of 51-75% | 9 | 17.7% |
| Growth of 76-100% | 8 | 15.7% |
| Growth above 100% | 5 | 9.8% |

Question Eleven

The final question of this survey was constructed to determine the kinds of numerical growth turnaround churches were experiencing. Six possibilities were given. The one completing the survey was asked to rank these six in order. They were to record the most obvious sources of growth. Not everyone completely ranked all six possibilities. In many cases only two or three were ranked (see Table Twenty-Two).

The choices selected show that turnaround churches are effective in reaching out to their communities. They are seeing the largest number of people coming into their churches as first time professions and as new people coming into their community. This means that the church has become more outwardly focused. The turnaround has been successful in terms of changing the old inward focus.

Table Twenty-Two – Categories for Growth in Turnaround Churches

| | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th | 5 th | 6 th |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| First time professions of faith | 22 | 18 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Believers who were not attending any church | 1 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| Believers who were attending non-Bible teaching churches | 4 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 2 |
| Believers who were attending other Bible teaching churches | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 7 |
| New people to your community | 15 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Past attenders who returned to the church | 7 | 6 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 7 |

CHAPTER SIX – A SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES LEARNED

Solomon said, "...of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the mind" (Ecclesiastes 12:12b) So that this study does not cause weariness the following summary of turnaround church and leadership principles is offered.

The four major sections in this chapter will summarize the concepts learned in this study. Section one will summarize the symptoms of the church in need of a turnaround ministry. Section two will describe the characteristics of the church that is prepared to turnaround. The third section will summarize the common characteristics of the potential turnaround leader. Finally the fourth section will conclude with a summary for helping leaders to determine when the turnaround ministry has been successfully completed.

Symptoms of a Church Needing Turnaround Ministry

Following is a list of symptoms for a church in need of turnaround ministry. Any church fitting these conditions could be considered a candidate for a turnaround church.

#1 - Attendance

Attendance and/or membership have at least plateaued. Often the numbers have been in decline for years. Because fewer people attend the

church many ministries of the church are suffering from lack of volunteers. Normally, lower attendances also means the church is struggling for financial survival.

#2 - Budget Driven

Not only is there a shortage of finances but the church has also become a budget-driven ministry. Vision no longer drives the ministry. The budget determines whether or not ministries can be carried out. Furthermore, a decreasing percentage of money goes into ministry and an increasing percentage of the budget goes toward overhead and maintenance.

#3 - Staff

In a church with multiple staff, the staff will often grow while lay involvement declines. Vision has been lost so attenders are less motivated. They hire the work of ministry out to “professionals”. Instead of the pastors training laypeople to do the work of ministry, they do it themselves. Often there will be frequent changes in staff. Many declining churches have experienced a series of pastoral changes with terms of three months to two years. It seems like staff move in and out through a revolving door. Usually the staff is blamed for the decline of the church.

#4 - Visitors

The church receives fewer and fewer visitors. Of those few that may come, few will be assimilated. Therefore there is little or no new growth.

#5 - Crisis

Often the church will have experienced one or more crisis situations. These may involve immorality, stealing, scandals, church splits, failure in a building program, and/or power plays. Death of the church becomes a real possibility in the minds of some people. Actually such feelings of desperation can be helpful in turning such a church.

#6 - Relevance

There is usually a lack of relevance to people living in the community. The church has become inwardly focused struggling to meet the needs of its people. There are few resources left over to reach out to the community and world, causing the church to retreat from the community. In the eyes of the community the church lacks relevance to “real life”. Most declining churches focus on the needs of long-time members, becoming ingrown.

#7 - Evaluation

Generally this church will not take the time to study the reasons for decline. Perhaps they don't know how to evaluate, or bringing in outside help is considered too costly or unspiritual. Ministry continues as it always has been. The philosophy of ministry is, “We always have done it this way.” Many people know something is wrong but they really do not know what it is. At best everyone has his or her own opinion on the matter.

#8 - Management

Usually there is inadequate and ineffective management of the church. The bigger the church the worse this is. This is caused by one or more of the following:

- Burned out staff
- Staff who are too busy with other things, trying to keep all the bases covered themselves, with very little lay involvement.
- An emphasis on doing things right but not necessarily doing the right things

#9 - Change

Most of the time there has been a resistance to change. This results in ministry being an activity rather than a passion.

Often the surrounding community has experienced significant demographic changes. Since the church did not transition with the community, the church is out of touch.

#10 - Vision

The senior pastor is no longer casting a vision for the church. Often this pastor once provided the type of leadership the church needed. However, over time, one or more of the following took place: burn-out, loss of will or energy, the need for a change in the philosophy of the church ministry, and/or the church grew to the point where the pastor could no longer effectively lead.

Programs and activities prevail, sapping strength and energy that should be available for reflection and vision casting.

Characteristics of Potential Turnaround Churches

Some churches that have experienced the symptoms described above can be turned around but many cannot. The following characteristics can help us select the churches most likely to turnaround.

#1 - A Church that is Anxious to Change

The turnaround church usually turns because of a conscious decision to change. The significant decline often will force the church to either change or decline further and die. Desire for change is usually orchestrated by a new pastor called for that purpose because a major section of the congregation is unwilling to accept the alternative: namely, more decline and failure in ministry.

#2 - A Church that Responds Quickly

Often appropriate change can be made rather quickly because of the desperate condition of the church. In such cases it is usually wise to make some changes in order to help administer hope. Many pastors have been taught to make no changes during their first year. This is a bad procedure in the turnaround church. A few corrective changes can sometimes be made immediately in order to give hope. Positive responses to these changes will

fuel the fire for future changes. Then those changes can take place as the time is appropriate.

#3 - A Church with New Leadership

The church will hire a new senior pastor. There is hardly an exception to the fact that turnaround ministries are led by newly hired leaders. The previous pastor usually weathered storms that cost the pastor his credibility and/or the sense of integrity needed to lead his people. The confidence people once had in their leader has eroded. It is almost always best for the church and the pastor to have this pastor move on to another ministry. While the previous pastor may not have been the reason for the decline, he probably does not have the skills or the positive attitude demanded for the job, and certainly will not have the support of his people.

Where the church is large enough to have additional staff, the staff have to be very supportive and committed to the vision of the new senior pastor. They must have the competence to handle their area(s) and report regularly to the senior pastor as well as be encouraged and challenged by his leadership.

Often in the larger churches, an associate may move up to the position of senior pastor. This can often be a win-win situation for the church and the staff. The associate knows the church and its people. The people know the associate. There should be very few surprises or disappointments should he take over the senior pastor position for the people already know him.

#4 - A Church that is Desperate

Churches that experience significant decline in attendance or membership rarely make a comeback. Such churches usually either die or stabilize at the smaller level. Therefore the turnaround church is the exception and not the general rule. The more desperate the church is to survive, the more willing they may be to change.

I cherish the piece of advice I once received concerning serving as the senior pastor of a turnaround church. I was told to take the position only if I believed the people of the church were ready for change. If they were not ready for change, I should leave and drive a taxicab until I found such a church.

Churches that refuse to change are usually not desperate enough. Death may have to occur. A church that has faithfully served God has touched many lives. Like an old athlete there is a time to call it quits. There is no shame in stopping. The shame is in not doing what is best for the kingdom of God.

Sometimes the declining church must first die before it can be re-born. In this case the church actually closes for a period of up to a year before reopening. During this time, training and refocusing take place and the new church actually becomes a church plant with new leadership, vision and a desire to change.

#5 - A Church Focused on Basics

The turnaround church is a church committed to the basics of the Christian faith. Interestingly all churches think they are. A return to evangelism and discipleship is key for a turnaround church, shifting its gears from an inward focus to an outward focus. Old time “defense of the faith” is not enough to bring renewal. This change in focus will result in complaints from some within the church who feel neglected and forgotten. They may feel a loss of power and control within their church. This is the price to be paid by the former traditional power centers within the local body.

The church must now focus onto reaching people for Jesus Christ rather than maintaining programs, procedures, or methodology. In fact, the church willing to turnaround should also be willing to cut back on some ministries in order to do a few things well recognizing their limited resources.

#6 - A Church Willing to Evaluate

The turnaround church will often need some outside perspective and help. If they could figure their way through their own problems they probably would have already done so, and would have avoided the difficulty they now face.

The potential turnaround church sees a need to deeply evaluate the church ministry in order to establish new patterns of ministry. Often expertise in these areas will have to be sought outside the church. The results of such

evaluation will be a more objective analysis of the challenges of the church. New paths for ministry can then be established.

#7 - A Church with a Committed Core

In a potential turnaround church there are at least a half dozen laypeople who are capable and highly committed to the turnaround process. In far too many churches the best and brightest of people bail out before the new leader is on board. Turnaround ministry then becomes next to impossible because the ones remaining have often been the source of the problems. They refuse to change, wanting the church inwardly focused for their own comfort and security rather than outwardly focused on the world needing a creative witness.

Characteristics of Potential Turnaround Pastors

Following is a summary of the characteristics of the typical turnaround pastor. This summary can help a struggling church evaluate potential new leadership with the capability to lead them through the turnaround process.

#1 - A Man with Vision

This is one of the most critical characteristics of all turnaround pastors. The turnaround pastor creates an atmosphere where vision and planning can grow. This vision and planning is balanced with pragmatism. Interestingly, the turnaround pastor was usually not known for being a visionary before taking

the church. He often had evidenced leadership but not necessarily visionary leadership.

The turnaround leader will be future focused and outward focused. He will not hold to a philosophy of ministry that simply desires to minister to people already within the local church.

#2 - A Man Who is Youthful

Generally speaking, the turnaround pastor comes into the turnaround position before age forty-five. Sometimes it is his first senior pastorate. The youthful age is of particular interest for three reasons. First, the turnaround ministry takes tremendous amounts of time and energy. Second, his youthfulness generally means he will not do things the way the older generation of leadership did things. He presents a new paradigm in church ministry. Thirdly, he will tend to attract to the church younger families who make up a critical segment of a turnaround church. This is what it takes to turn a church around.

#3 - A Man Who is Called

Not all pastors are able to serve as turnaround pastors. It may even be a special calling. Barna concludes that such pastors are rare. Often the leader with turnaround gifts may choose not to work within the constraints of the established church. He often will choose to be a church planter and start

without the baggage of the more established church. But a few of these specially called people will see the potential of the turnaround ministry in the established church.

The turnaround pastor is in touch with his Lord, often sensing a specific call to turnaround ministry. He considers his walk with the Lord as a growing leader to be one of his highest priorities.

4 - A Man Who Enjoys a Challenge

Often the turnaround pastor loves a challenge. Risk is a part of his thinking and planning and is managed intelligently. He leads the way as the change agent and is not afraid of the few that will not change. He does not always lead by consensus. Usually he is handling a number of challenges at the same time. He finds himself working on many fronts at once.

#5 - A Man Who is a Reluctant Leader

Often the turnaround pastor is not interested in becoming a turnaround pastor. He may turn down an invitation to candidate at a church needing turnaround ministry. He is realistic in tackling the church he pastors, understanding what he is getting into. Therefore he is often a reluctant leader. He often will only take the church because he truly believes he is called to do so.

#6 - A Man Who Can be Trusted

It is critical that the pastor establish a bond of trust and credibility between himself and the congregation of the church. He will often prove himself through times of fire and conflict. Such credibility is critical to the leadership process.

People must sense the pastor truly loves them. This love is seen as the pastor cares for people. He often will slowly walk through the church on Sunday mornings, meeting and talking with people. The people must perceive that the pastor is not out so much to build attendance and increase the church budget as he is to encourage and build people. They sense he cares.

#7 - A Man Who is a Historian

The turnaround pastor knows and respects the past glory days of the church. However, he spends little time focusing on the past. He focuses on the future. The past is not allowed to limit the future of the church. He is wise to refer to the past in order to help people understand the future vision. Not to mention the past can be dysfunctional. To dwell in it is to be inwardly and backwardly focused.

#8 - A Man Who is a Hard Worker

Turnaround church pastors are especially hard workers. Some claim this as a task for the superhuman. Energy, passion, commitment, and wisdom are all a regular part of the many hours each week that will be required to turn

a church around. Some feel that a turnaround pastor can only turnaround one church in his lifetime. This gives an indication of the time and hard work involved.

#9 – A Man Who is Strong in Spiritual Disciplines

In many cases, turnaround pastors are expository preachers that emphasize practical application. They may not be the greatest preachers, but they are generally pleased with their preaching. The hard work of preparation is readily accepted.

The turnaround pastor gives priority to spiritual disciplines including regular time away for prayer and reflection. There is a deep spiritual life developing within him. Often the difficulties of the church drive the pastor to an even deeper relationship with God.

Characteristics of Churches Completing the Turnaround Process

While there is no such thing as “arriving” at a completely turned around church, several characteristics will be true of the church that has basically come through the cycle successfully.

#1 - A Sense of Change

The desperation of the church in decline will be gone. A change in attitude has taken place. The negativism is gone. The church is not overly focused on methodology. The focus on methodology has been replaced with

a focus on relevance to today's world. There is now a conscious attitude to focus outwardly rather than inwardly. The philosophy of ministry no longer revolves around former methods and programs. New ideas can now be attempted.

#2 - A Sense of Hope

Slowly a new atmosphere has developed. Hopelessness and/or desperation sensed throughout the declining or plateauing period is gone. It is replaced by a growing sense of hope. People truly believe that God is not finished with them yet and people are deeply moved by the miracle God is performing in their church. There is a sense of grace at work.

#3 - A Sense of Leadership and Vision

These two go hand in hand. Since the turnaround ministry usually necessitates a change in the senior pastor, a new pastor is in place. He is basically well liked and respected, his leadership is followed, and people sense there is a new vision or direction for evangelism and discipleship. They will honestly want to support the ministry because people are coming to Christ and being discipled. People will feel that they are finally doing what God called them to do.

#4 - A Sense of Prayer

There is a renewed sense of prayer throughout the church. This is critical to the whole turnaround process. If people do not pray they will not catch God's vision. Their hearts will not be aligned with where God is leading their church. People that pray develop more of a sense of ownership. They realize that anything accomplished without prayer will surely lack God's blessing.

#5 - A Sense of Growth

Attendance grows. Visitors began to be assimilated. But quantity is not the basic factor or goal. There is also a new sense of quality in the ministry. To achieve quality there may have been downsizing of programs, activities, staff, and ministries. Such a downsizing became urgent since the church probably entered the turnaround process with fewer resources –people and finances. Downsizing allows the turnaround church to increase quality by focusing more on what was left and on what the vision of the church was.

#6 - A Sense of Patience

Church people will have been patient through the time needed for healing. Furthermore God's people will have learned patience through the time needed to rebuild the ministry. From the bottoming out point of the cycle to the point where the church is once again basically healthy there is usually a

time period of at least three to four years. In some cases it may take only one year and in other cases it will take much longer.

#7 - A Sense of Freedom

The turnaround church will be a freer church than the previously declining church. Power struggles and other conflicts will be conflicts of the past. Personality clashes and differing philosophies of ministries will fade. There will be a sense of rebirth. Some traditions will have been changed and others will have been maintained. Those maintained will have a refreshing purpose. There will be a freedom to try new things.

APPENDIX

- Survey Cover Letter
- Survey for Turnaround Leadership
- Survey for Turnaround Churches
- Survey Totals
- Turnaround Leadership Testimony
- Bibliography

Dear Fellow Servant

I believe you and I have something in common. We are both involved in the ministry of turnaround churches. George Barna in his book, Turnaround Churches, defines a turnaround church as a church that has been in existence for at least ten to fifteen years. The church went through a period when attendance plateaued and often declined. As a result of one or more crisis experiences the church refocused it's vision and "turned around." Attendance began to increase and the church once again became productive in ministry. If this is your experience please read on...

Since up to 85% of the churches in America are either plateaued or in decline (Lyle Schaller), there is a need for church leaders to understand what you and I have been through in the turnaround process. Today, all across this land there are hundreds of churches that have gone through the turnaround process. Since Barna wrote his book on the turnaround church in the early 1990's, many more churches have turned around. Many of the original turnaround churches have been living for a generation since their turnaround. Therefore much more can now be learned on this subject.

I am doing my doctoral studies at Biblical Theological Seminary. In my dissertation I am attempting to update the original findings Barna recorded. Therefore I am surveying a number of churches that I have been told are turnaround churches. This is where you come into play. I need your help in gathering updated information on turnaround churches and leadership.

There are two surveys enclosed. One is for the turnaround pastor to fill out and other can be filled out by the pastor or a key leader. Each survey contains questions based on Barnas' original writing. The surveys have been carefully worded and produced in a professional manner. Testing shows each will take only moments of your valuable time. The surveys will remain anonymous unless you sign them.

While your participation is voluntary, I ask you to remember the importance of sharing these turnaround concepts with other struggling churches and leaders. The investment of a few minutes of your time can make a great impact.

Please answer all the questions and return the survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you could drop the completed surveys in the mail by November 3rd, I will be able to include your input in my dissertation. I trust you will join me in making this impact in the kingdom of God.

Thank you for your help

Sincerely in Christ

Dan Young

A Survey of Turnaround Pastors (Survey #1)
Rev. Daniel R. Young (First Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA)

1. How long have you been at this turnaround church?
 Less than 5 years
 6-10 years
 More than 10 years

2. Have you served in other positions within this church?
 Yes (Which position[s]? _____)
 No

3. Were you ever been a senior pastor before coming to this church?
 Yes
 No

4. What is your age at present time?
 20-25
 26-30
 31-35
 36-40
 41-45
 46-50
 51-60
 61 and over

5. What drove you to become the turnaround pastor of the church you serve? (check all that apply)

A direct leading of the Holy Spirit

A vision for what could be

The excitement of becoming a senior pastor

You did not understand the real condition the church when accepting the position

(other) _____

6. Rank in order of importance the items that were most helpful in leading your turnaround. (#1 being the most important)

Your walk with God

A committed core group of leaders

The vision you possessed for the church

The challenge of turning the church

The risk you were undertaking

(other) _____

7. In your opinion what were the critical characteristics you possessed that aided the church turnaround?

Personal integrity

Love for the people

Spiritual disciplines

Preaching and teaching ministry

Charisma

Strategic thinking/planning

(other) _____

8. How many hours do you work in an average week?

Under 40 hours

41-50 hours

51-60 hours

61-70

Over 71 hours

9. Do you take at least one day per week off for rest?

Yes

No

Sometimes

10. Rank the three most difficult issues you faced in turning the church around? (#1 being the greatest difficulty)

Maintaining your walk with God

Loneliness

Handling of the work load

The myriad of tasks that faced you

Taking hard stands for what you believe

Resistance to change

Limitations of resources

Negativism

(other) _____

TOTALS - A Survey of Turnaround Pastors (Survey #1)
Rev. Daniel R. Young (First Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA)

1. How long have you been at this turnaround church?

12 __ Less than 5 years

11 __ 6-10 years

28 __ More than 10 years

2. Have you served in other positions within this church?

16 __ Yes (Which position[s]? _____)

35 __ No

3. Were you ever been a senior pastor before coming to this church?

17 __ Yes

34 __ No

4. What is your age at present time?

0 __ 20-25

1 __ 26-30

8 __ 31-35

5 __ 36-40

11 __ 41-45

19 __ 46-50

7 __ 51-60

0 __ 61 and over

5. What drove you to become the turnaround pastor of the church you serve? (check all that apply)

- 51 __ A direct leading of the Holy Spirit
- 49 __ A vision for what could be
- 8 __ The excitement of becoming a senior pastor
- 4 __ You did not understand the real condition the church when accepting the position
- 1 __ (other) Denominational Turnaround _____

6. Rank in order of importance the items that were most helpful in leading your turnaround. (#1 being the most important)

- 32 __ Your walk with God
 - 2 __ A committed core group of leaders
 - 11 __ The vision you possessed for the church who
 - 2 __ The challenge of turning the church
 - 4 __ The risk you were undertaking
 - 0 __ (other) _____
- Totals represent those
scored statement as #1

7. In your opinion what were the critical characteristics you possessed that aided the church turnaround?

- 50 __ Personal integrity
- 48 __ Love for the people
- 46 __ Spiritual disciplines
- 46 __ Preaching and teaching ministry
- 24 __ Charisma
- 30 __ Strategic thinking/planning
- 0 __ (other) _____

8. How many hours do you work in an average week?

0 __ Under 40 hours

0 __ 41-50 hours

24 __ 51-60 hours

25 __ 61-70

2 __ Over 71 hours

9. Do you take at least one day per week off for rest?

25 __ Yes

6 __ No

20 __ Sometimes

10. Rank the three most difficult issues you faced in turning the church around? (#1 being the greatest difficulty)

13 __ Maintaining your walk with God

4 __ Loneliness

6 __ Handling of the work load

1 __ The myriad of tasks that faced you

Totals represent those who
scored statement as #1

2 __ Taking hard stands for what you believe

15 __ Resistance to change

2 __ Limitations of resources

8 __ Negativism

__ (other) _____

A Survey of Turnaround Churches (Survey #2)
Rev. Daniel R. Young (First Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA)

1. Is the church you serve affiliated with a particular denomination or association?

Yes (If so, state name _____)

No

2. How long has the church you serve been in existence? _____

Less than 10 years

11-20 years

21-40 years

41-100 years

101 or over

3. Which of the three following best represents your church location?

Rural setting

Suburban setting

Urban setting

4. What is the Sunday morning average attendance of your church?

Under 100

100 - 200

201-400

401-1000

over 1001

5. How long did the numerical decline or plateauing of the church last?

Less than two years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-20 years

6. How long ago did the church begin turning around?

Within the last three years

Within the last five years

Within the last ten years

More than 10 years ago

7. If there was a substantial drop in the morning attendance of the church what was the approximate number of people that left the church?

_____ (write in number of people)

If there was no major decline, how long was the church tabled in its growth?

_____ (write in number of months or years)

8. Check all factors that were part of the crisis experience of in the church.

- Moral failure of a church leader
- Major financial problems
- Building program
- “Revolving door” of pastoral leadership (short pastorate)
- Lack of leadership
- Loss of vision
- Ineffective administration/management
- Major resistance to change
- Loss of focus on basics like evangelism and discipleship
- Burnout of pastoral leadership
- Personality conflicts
- Lost touch with the culture around us
- Abuse of church funds
- Deep division in the life of the church over philosophy of ministry
- Deep division in the church over doctrine
- One or more church splits
- Departure of the senior pastor
- Departure of one or more key staff member
- Demographic shift in the community population
- (other) _____

Rank the three top factors in the above list. (rank in order, #1 as high and #3 as low))

9. Check any item below that was a major contributor in the turnaround process. Leave blank any item that did not contribute in a major way.

- A core of committed lay-leaders
- The building of lay leadership
- A new senior pastor from outside the church
- A new senior pastor from within the church leadership
- One or more crisis experiences
- A renewed church vision
- A spiritual revival
- A willingness to leave the past behind and move on
- Lots of hard work
- Prayer ministry(s)
- Pulpit ministry
- Marketing/advertisement
- The planting of another church
- Outside consultant(s)
- Hiring of new staff
- An intentional focus on reaching out
- (other) _____

10. Please record any numerical growth experienced since the turnaround

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%
- over 100%

11. Rank in order (beginning with #1) the kind of individuals that best represented your numerical growth

- Those professing faith in Christ for the first time
- Believers who were not attending another church
- Believers who were attending non-Bible teaching churches
- Believers who were attending other Bible teaching churches
- People who were new to your community
- Past attenders who returned to the church after leaving
- (other) _____

TOTALS - A Survey of Turnaround Churches (Survey #2)
Rev. Daniel R. Young (First Baptist Church, Doylestown, PA)

1. Is the church you serve affiliated with a particular denomination or association?

51 __ Yes (If so, state name _____)

0 __ No

2. How long has the church you serve been in existence? _____

0 __ Less than 10 years

3 __ 11-20 years

18 __ 21-40 years

20 __ 41-100 years

10 __ 101 or over

3. Which of the three following best represents your church location?

9 __ Rural setting

28 __ Suburban setting

14 __ Urban setting

4. What is the Sunday morning average attendance of your church?

9 __ Under 100

23 __ 100 - 200

6 __ 201-400

7 __ 401-1000

6 __ over 1001

5. How long did the numerical decline or plateauing of the church last?

3 __ Less than two years

24 __ 3-5 years

18 __ 6-10 years

6 __ 11-20 years

6. How long ago did the church begin turning around?

9 __ Within the last three years

10 __ Within the last five years

15 __ Within the last ten years

17 __ More than 10 years ago

7. If there was a substantial drop in the morning attendance of the church what was the approximate number of people that left the church?

_____ (write in number of people) **(38 churches declined and 13 plateaued)**

If there was no major decline, how long was the church tabled in its growth?

_____ (write in number of months or years) **(2 to 20 years)**

8. Check all factors that were part of the crisis experience of in the church.

- 1 __ Moral failure of a church leader
- 0 __ Major financial problems
- 2 __ Building program
- 0 __ “Revolving door” of pastoral leadership (short pastorate)
- 2 __ Lack of leadership
- 10 __ Loss of vision
- 0 __ Ineffective administration/management
- 1 __ Major resistance to change
- 2 __ Loss of focus on basics like evangelism and discipleship
- 3 __ Burnout of pastoral leadership
- 0 __ Personality conflicts
- 1 __ Lost touch with the culture around us
- 1 __ Abuse of church funds
- 14 __ Deep division in the life of the church over philosophy of ministry
- 1 __ Deep division in the church over doctrine
- 3 __ One or more church splits
- 4 __ Departure of the senior pastor
- 0 __ Departure of one or more key staff member
- 6 __ Demographic shift in the community population
- 0 __ (other) _____

Totals represent those who scored statement as #1

Rank the three top factors in the above list. (rank in order, #1 as high and #3 as low))

9. Check any item below that was a major contributor in the turnaround process. Leave blank any item that did not contribute in a major way.

- 50 ___ A core of committed lay-leaders
- 48 ___ The building of lay leadership
- 37 ___ A new senior pastor from outside the church
- 16 ___ A new senior pastor from within the church leadership
- 45 ___ One or more crisis experiences
- 42 ___ A renewed church vision
- 26 ___ A spiritual revival
- 33 ___ A willingness to leave the past behind and move on
- 26 ___ Lots of hard work
- 44 ___ Prayer ministry(s)
- 45 ___ Pulpit ministry
- 10 ___ Marketing/advertisement
- 9 ___ The planting of another church
- 23 ___ Outside consultant(s)
- 4 ___ Hiring of new staff
- 41 ___ An intentional focus on reaching out
- 0 ___ (other) _____

10. Please record any numerical growth experienced since the turnaround

4 __ 0-10%

14 __ 11-25%

11 __ 26-50%

9 __ 51-75%

8 __ 76-100%

5 __ over 100%

11. Rank in order (beginning with #1) the kind of individuals that best represented your numerical growth

- | | |
|---|---|
| 22 __ Those professing faith in Christ for the first time | Totals represent those who scored statement as #1 |
| 1 __ Believers who were not attending another church | |
| 4 __ Believers who were attending non-Bible teaching churches | |
| 0 __ Believers who were attending other Bible teaching churches | |
| 15 __ People who were new to your community | |
| 7 __ Past attenders who returned to the church after leaving | |
| 0 __ (other) _____ | |

A TESTIMONY FROM A TURNAROUND PASTOR

For over twenty years I have had the privilege of working on the pastoral staff at First Baptist Church of Doylestown, PA. I started as a part-time youth pastor while I was in seminary. After two years of working only with the youth, my wife and I assumed additional responsibilities in the area of music ministries. Those two part-time positions combined to form a full-time position. During these years the church was growing me as a leader. I had actual hands-on ministry opportunities as I served under a senior pastor who had been in ministry as long as I had been alive. As the years passed I moved into other staff positions such as Christian Education pastor, assistant pastor, and associate pastor.

In the late 1980s the church attendance peaked just over 500 (including children.) This was the largest the church had ever been. But internal struggles developed. The church plateaued in its growth. Evangelism and discipleship suffered. The senior pastor was approaching retirement and he dealt ambiguously with the timing of his departure. Church problems began to plague him continuously. As his associate I supported him as best I knew how.

The plateauing of church attendance turned into a rapid decline as people left. During the ten months surrounding the senior pastor's retirement, three groups left the church to start three different churches. Several individuals also departed for other established churches in the community. The attendance dropped quickly to just under 350 individuals.

Of the three groups that left to plant churches, one group went with the senior pastor to start a gospel preaching work thirty minutes north of us in an area without a gospel witness. This was a Sunday morning only type ministry that he felt he could maintain. A second group followed a missionary from the church. This missionary theologically identified more with the Vineyard Movement than with us. Spiritual gifts and warfare ministries were a key focus of this division. A third group left to form a Reformed Baptist church. In each case the splits were somewhat amicable but there were many hurt people and unresolved issues.

During this period of time a pulpit committee was assembled. They decided to look within the church for a possible senior pastor. Actually the search began to focus on me. Actually I was not interested in becoming the senior pastor of the church in that condition. I knew all about the problems and therefore was not interested. I began searching for another church ministry and even candidated at a few churches. I accepted the interim pastor position at First Baptist so that I would not be considered for the senior pastor position. On two different occasions the chairman of the search committee approached me and asked me if I would consider candidating for senior pastor. Both times I refused.

I served the church for six months as interim pastor. During those six months I determined it was my responsibility to help the church solve as many of their seven major debilitating issues as possible. I determined this would be the best way to prepare the church for the new pastor. However, I

was not ready for the work God was about to begin in and through me. I knew nothing of the turnaround principles. I did not even know what a turnaround ministry was. Yet God worked in me and through me. I never expected the results we now enjoy.

The emphasis of my interim ministry was healing. I preached it and just tried to love people. I felt like there was no clear direction in the church. In fact, a church development survey taken about that time showed a gross lack of understanding concerning our purpose for existence. Of the over 400 churches that had taken that survey, our church scored the lowest score for understanding our purpose. Only sixteen percent of the attenders said they understood what our purpose was.

There were several things I wanted to see happen and as I prayed they started to happen. The turning point for me was the resolution of one of the seven major problems the church faced. The senior pastor before me had tried unsuccessfully to settle this issue. I believe God held the resolution of this issue until I was interim pastor so that the congregation and I would both see God was calling me to lead this local assembly. That resolution was truly a miracle for the church. This issue had plagued the church for years.

When it was clear the issue was being resolved through my leadership, I was no longer reluctant to candidate for the senior pastor position. The search committee approached me once again and asked me to candidate. The church voted me into the senior pastor position and then the real work of turnaround ministry began.

Turnarounds take time. This is especially true if the leader is not familiar with the turnaround principles. I was not. The first year or two there was little numerical growth. We actually went from two services back to one service. There was sufficient space in the church auditorium to do this. Healing was a major focus. Slowly healing occurred and numerical growth started to occur. Within a few years we started a second worship service that was different in style from the established service. The attendance at the two services divided just about equally. The more contemporary service began to grow while the more traditional service declined at the rate the older generation was dying.

Unfortunately, the difference in styles of music used in the worship services became a focus for several years. Our leaders tried not to make style of music the issue but some people were very vocal concerning their preferences. It has only been in the last couple years that the style of music issue has been settled. We settled the issues through persistence and numerous adjustments. We now have two identical worship services where we have the freedom to use anything from classical music to contemporary music. Now we can more freely concentrate on leading in worship rather than struggling with style issues.

Turning the church outward through these years has been a difficult task. Discipleship and outreach were critical components. There were many cries to turn our attention inward. However as people publicly started coming

to Christ the atmosphere in the church began to change. Discipleship structures were put into place and are still being built.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of the church turning outward has been the new thrust to plant churches. Sixteen months ago the church performed its first intentional church plant. In this plant approximately forty adults and children left the mother church along with an associate pastor to start the new work. At this time the church is averaging just over one hundred per Sunday. A second church plant is now planned for this September, 2000. The church planter is already in place and is starting to build a core of people to go with him from the mother church.

When I became senior pastor of the church, the average age of our congregation was sixty-two. Ten years later it was forty-two. It is obvious that most of the growth has been in the younger age groups. Some people have continued to leave the church because of the changes. Some have come to us from other local evangelical churches. Some have left us or come to us because of job changes. However a recent survey showed that the largest group of new attenders has been those who have come from liberal churches that do not major in teaching the Bible. This survey also demonstrated that forty percent of our congregation is new to the church in the last four years.

Today the average Sunday morning attendance has been just over 750 people. Turnaround ministries are not just about numerical growth. The bigger issue is about turning an inward-focused church back into an outward-focused church. The establishment of outreach and discipleship ministries

was critical. To the praise and glory of God this church has once again clarified and returned to its mission of worshipping God, winning the lost and building up the believers.

This church did not die or stabilize at a smaller size. Through its turnaround it has gone on to a new level of numerical growth and spiritual health while maintaining the strengths of its 153 year old tradition.

Appropriate cultural changes have been implemented so that more lost people can be reached. These changes had purpose. The church was desperate enough to make the changes. This congregation is to be commended for turning around a declining, stagnate ministry. May their tribe increase all across this land.

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² James E. Means, Effective Pastors for a New Century (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 18.

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