



# In Church Revitalization, Going Slow IS Going Fast

MATT SMITH, D.MIN



# Brief Bio

Married to Alison

Five kids: 3 boys/2 girls  
Isaac, Noah, David,  
Leah, Anna





# Brief Bio

- ❖ Married to Alison
- ❖ Five kids: 3 boys/2 girls
- ❖ BA and MA from Piedmont – 2007; 2009
- ❖ MA in Christian Leadership from Liberty – 2013
- ❖ DMIN from Dallas in Church Health – 2020

# Dissertation

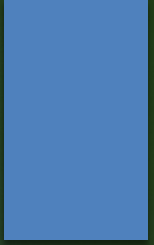


SELECTED CASE STUDIES IN WHAT REVITALIZED  
CHURCHES IDENTIFY AS THE MOST CRITICAL  
COMPONENTS FOR REVITALIZING AN ESTABLISHED  
CHURCH TO BE A HEALTHY, GROWING, MULTI-  
GENERATIONAL CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY





If a church in need of revitalization  
is going to experience revitalization,  
something has to \_\_\_\_\_!

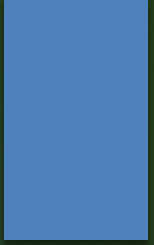


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“If nothing ever changes  
nothing will ever change.”



“The only person who likes change  
is a baby with a wet diaper.”  
-Mark Twain







WHAT **EVERY**  
**P**ASTOR  
SHOULD **KNOW**

**101**

Indispensable Rules of Thumb  
for Leading Your Church

GARY L. MCINTOSH AND CHARLES ARN

# Rules for Change



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4. Introduce a new idea as an addition not a substitute.
5. Rather than presenting what needs to happen, help them see what is wrong and ask for input on a solution.



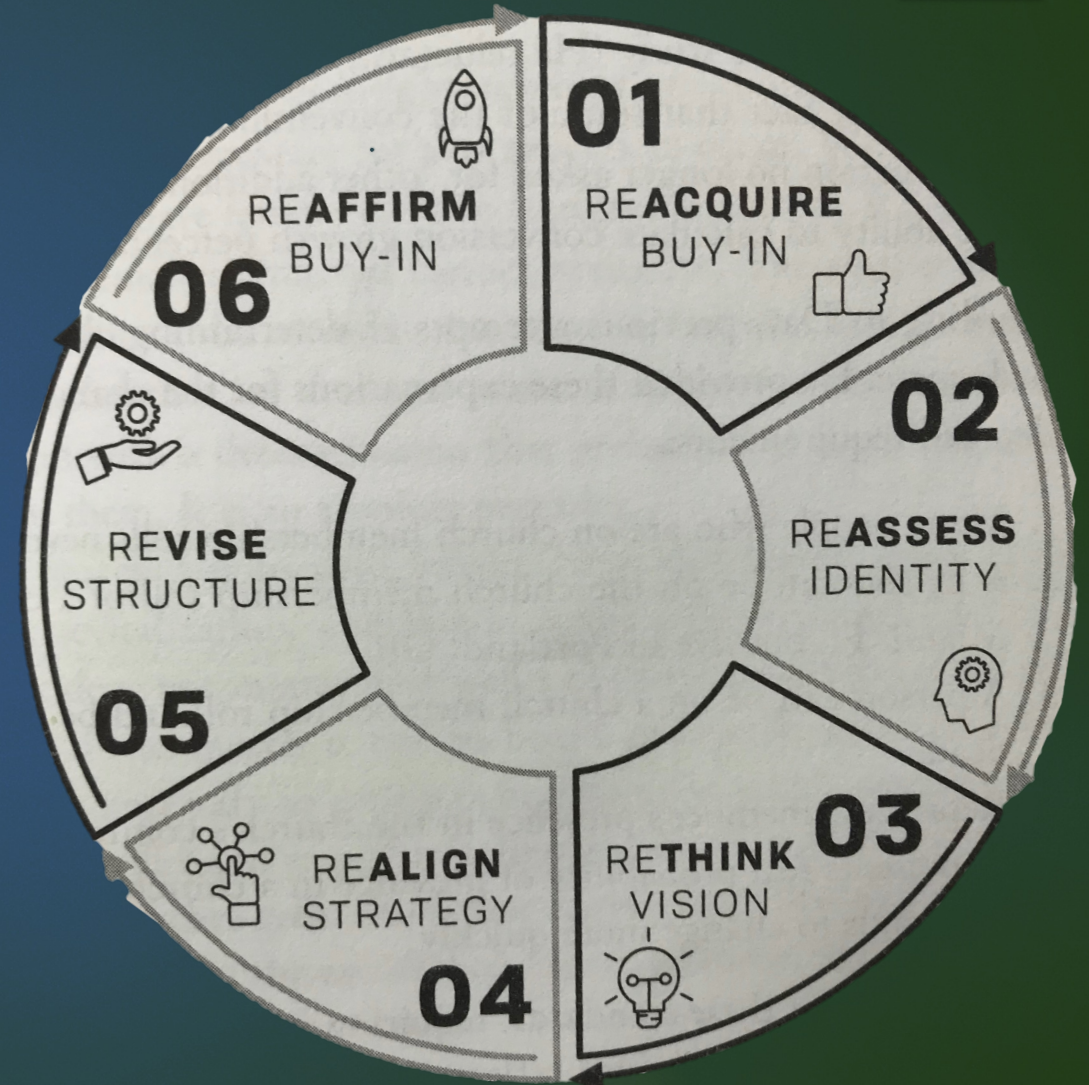
BILL HENARD

# ReClaimed Church

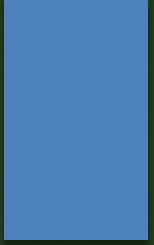
*How Churches Grow, Decline,  
and Experience Revitalization*



Foreword by **MARK CLIFTON**, Author of *Reclaiming Glory*







People won't follow the vision until they can follow the leader; they “buy-in” to the leader *before* they “buy-in” to the vision.



BUILD TRUST



**Four P's a Revitalization Pastor  
Must Prioritize at the Start:**





# Four P's a Revitalization Pastor Must Prioritize at the Start:

1. Preach the Word



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2. Practice Personal Evangelism
3. Pastor the People
4. Prioritize Congregational Prayer



# Two Essentials for Revitalization

- ▶ A strong *personal* ministry of prayer and the Word.
- ▶ A strong *public* ministry of prayer and the Word.



# Case Studies Revealed...

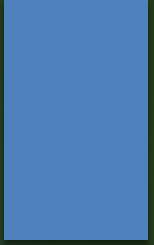
- ▶ Strong evidence of bringing their people back to the Scriptures.
  - ▶ “A conviction I’ve always had with ministry is let the Word do the work, and the Spirit uses the Word to work in people’s hearts from salvation through sanctification all the way up to glorification... The best tool that we, as ministers of the gospel have, is to say what God says through His word.”



# Case Studies Revealed...

- ▶ Strong evidence of bringing their people back to the Scriptures.
- ▶ Strong evidence of pervasive commitment to prayer being re-established.





“God may not be moving because the church never attempts anything that requires His power nor offers any prayer that genuinely reflects this absolute dependence and need for Him. Jesus spoke of vain repetitions (Matt. 6:7) in the prayers of the Pharisees; so make sure that the prayers offered in the pastor’s study do not reflect that level of praying. Be desperate. Be honest. Be faithful.”

-Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?* P.72



# Prayer




- ▶ Prayer preceded the outpouring of the Spirit in the book of Acts!
- ▶ Church history also confirms prayer as a critical ingredient for revival.
- ▶ Prayer changes us.
- ▶ Prayer changes things.



# What to pray for?

- ▶ Pray for power.
- ▶ Pray for wisdom.
- ▶ Pray for vision.
- ▶ Repent of prayerlessness and lack of obedience to the great commission.





“Most churches I’ve worked with are willing to seek God in prayer, asking Him to renew their church. What they are not willing to do is turn from their wicked ways. Based on my experience, few churches need to repent from sexual or ethical sins (although some do). Most need to repent from a lack of love for the lost, a loss of passion for God’s mission, and bitterness toward their fellow Christians.”

-Gary McIntosh, *There’s Hope...* p.60



# Saturate Everything in Prayer

- ▶ Pray privately for extended periods.
- ▶ Lead your leadership teams to pray.
- ▶ Teach on prayer from the pulpit and lead your church in seasons of focused prayer (21 Days, 40 Days, Around the Clock, etc.)
- ▶ Pray for greater passion to reach the lost.



# Preaching



“The most significant force in the revitalization of any local church is the ongoing ministry of the Word of God from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday.”

-Andy Davis, *Revitalize* p.88



# Preaching



“The most significant force in the revitalization of any local church is the ongoing ministry of the Word of God from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday... I believe that expositional preaching is by far the most effective and powerful form of preaching in the revitalization of a church... That the main point of the sermon is the main point of the text being preached. I would also say that the consecutive preaching of line upon line and chapter upon chapter and book upon book can be used by God to build a foundation of solid doctrine that will enable the church to flourish for generations to come.”

-Andy Davis, *Revitalize*, 88-89.



# Preaching



“The first mark of a healthy church is expositional preaching. It is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all the others should follow.”

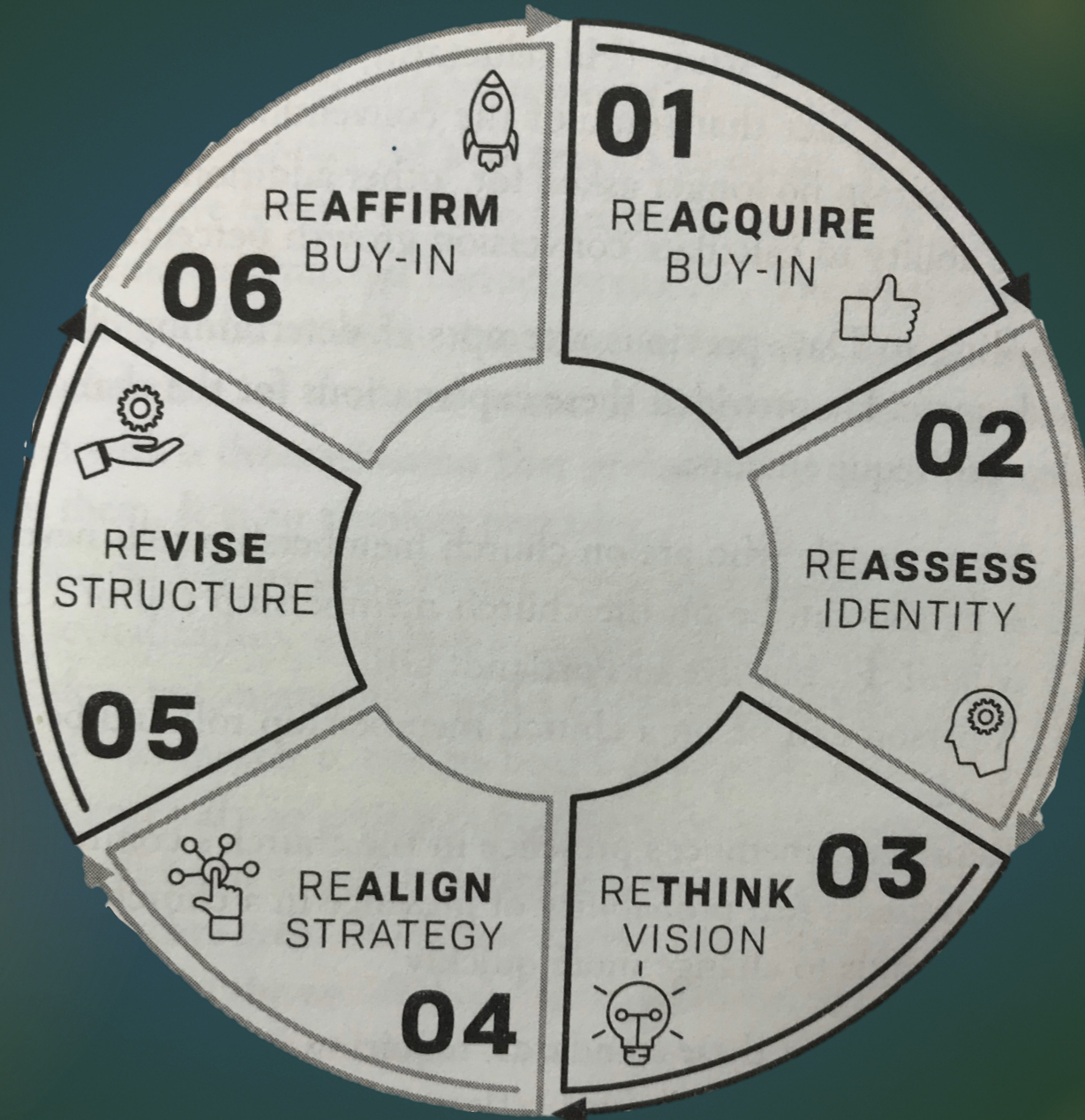
-Mark Dever, *Nine Marks* p. 39



# Preaching for Revitalization is...

- ▶ Preaching that is expositional.
- ▶ Preaching that is contextual (but not in the way you'd think).
- ▶ Preaching that stimulates the hearer to go deeper.
- ▶ Preaching that focuses the church on the mission of reaching the lost and making disciples.
- ▶ Preaching that exemplifies the church's obedience to the mission.
- ▶ Preaching that applies the text specifically.







# Acquire Buy-in



“The process begins with buy-in. Note that buy-in is the beginning point for revitalization, and buy-in is the ending point. The reason is because it does not matter how well a church’s leadership plans for revitalization, if the church is not on board and ready to learn to embrace the changes necessary to get them and keep them on a growth plane, all of the work will be in vain.”



# Reacquire Buy-in



Buy-in is greatly over-rated while permission to try something new with a clear off-ramp is greatly under-rated!



# Get Buy-in from Key Leadership



1. Talk with people: formally and informally. Usually, more gets accomplished through 1-on-1 informal conversation than through official meetings.
2. Address the emotional responses: figure out how different ones are going to respond to the needed changes.
3. Communicate, repeat, communicate, repeat: when you are starting to get sick of hearing it, they are just beginning to understand.



# Get Buy-in from Key Leadership



4. Use various means to communicate: sermons, business meetings, emails, printed FAQ's, website, Bible-study classes.
5. Tell stories: use other examples of church turnarounds as a way of casting vision for what God can do in your church.
6. Continue to build credibility: your track record and behavioral example will go a long way in moving the church to turnaround.



# Reassess Identity



“Churches in need of revitalization usually have an identity problem.”



# Reassess Identity

## 1. Who does the community say we are?

- ▶ Ask people in the community key questions about the church.
- ▶ Visit local businesses and schools to solicit opinions.
- ▶ Have your members ask their neighbors for an honest opinion of the church.

## 2. Who does the church think they are?

- ▶ Oftentimes, the church has an uniformed understanding of who it is. The church may have lost touch with how well it is accomplishing the mission.



# Reassess Identity



The big flashy, mega-church model will slowly and gradually fade while the authentic, local “neighborhood church for the nations” model will grow in popularity.



# Rethink Vision



Mission... Defines the primary purpose of the church. Typically, in twelve words or less the church develops a mantra that answers the why question.

Why do we exist?...

The vision... paints a picture of where the church is going in the future... developing that vision for three to five years out... It includes actual numerical targets. Other times it names a specific initiative the church hopes to complete.



	<b>Mission</b>	<b>Vision</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Statement	Snapshot
<b>Length</b>	Short	Short/Long
<b>Purpose</b>	Informs	Inspires
<b>Activity</b>	Knowing	Seeing
<b>Source</b>	Head (Intellect)	Heart (Emotions)
<b>Order</b>	First	Second
<b>Focus</b>	Broad	Narrow
<b>Effect</b>	Clarifies	Challenges
<b>Development</b>	Science (Taught)	Art (Caught)
<b>Communication</b>	Written	Verbal
<b>Perception</b>	Abstract	Concrete



# Realign Strategy



Strategy takes the vision and mission and puts them into practice. Mission is the **why**. Vision is the **what**.

Strategy is the **how**. The strategy is the chosen means to accomplish the goal.



# Realign Strategy



1. Develop a strategic leadership team that will establish the mission and vision for the church. Don't complicate this process.
2. Examine the church's history and membership/attendance/giving, along with the community's demographics.
3. Evaluate the church's strengths and weaknesses based on the information gathered.



# Realign Strategy

4. Out of the vision and mission statements, determine:
  - ▶ How will we implement and define evangelism/outreach?
  - ▶ How will the church accomplish and define discipleship/spiritual formation?
  - ▶ How will the church provide and define worship?
  - ▶ How will the the church offer and define ministry/inreach?
  - ▶ How will the church provide and define fellowship/community?
  - ▶ How will the church develop and define stewardship?
  - ▶ How will the church attract and define new members?
  - ▶ How will the church ensure and define operation/facility effectiveness?



# Realign Strategy

5. Under each of the aforementioned categories:
  - ▶ Set goals that are specific, measurable, and attainable.
  - ▶ Show the benefits of each goal.
  - ▶ Detail possible obstacles and how they can be overcome.
  - ▶ List action steps for accomplishing each goal.
6. Get the congregation involved in affirming and implementing this strategy.



# Revise Structure

Churches often fall into decline because they have poor structure.



# Revise Structure



The purpose of good structure is to align the church with effectiveness, not just efficiency.



# Suggestions for Structure



1. Most decisions can be, and usually are, made by those leading that specific ministry.
2. Staff/team leaders are allowed to build their own teams.
3. Policies and procedures are kept to a minimum.
4. Votes are rare!
5. There is an annual financial audit along with strong internal controls regarding money.



# Suggestions for Structure



6. Organizational charts are kept fluid and nimble.
7. Hierarchy is avoided.