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Integration—*It Takes Both*

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The source for many of the ideas, paradigms and concepts within the resources at Leader Breakthru come from the teaching of Dr. J. Robert Clinton. ([www.bobbyclinton.com](http://www.bobbyclinton.com)).

This resource is an excerpt of a Doctoral dissertation by Terry Walling on the revitalization of local churches in North America. Although its context is change as related to local church ministry, the paradoxes and principles discussed in this work apply to a variety of settings and contexts.

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# Integration—*It Takes Both*

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## EMBRACING PERSONAL RENEWAL AND CORPORATE REVITALIZATION

Webster's New World Dictionary defines integration as "to make whole or renew. . . to make whole or complete by adding or bringing together parts."<sup>1</sup> In recent years, the business sector has begun to acknowledge that current methods to bring about organizational change were incomplete. Across a variety of industries came the call for a more "integrated" approach to organizational change that also included the people of the organization.

In his book, *Deep Change*, Robert E. Quinn writes: "It is now widely recognized that to remain competitive in today's global environment, organizations must frequently make deep change. What is not so widely recognized is that organizational members must also make deep change. Deep personal change is being demanded with more frequency today than in the past."<sup>2</sup> Personal growth and renewal is being recognized as an essential part of bringing about structural change. "The organization can be renewed, energized, or made effective only if some leader is willing to take some big risks and by stepping

outside some well-defined boundaries as a leader."<sup>3</sup> Quinn points out that "when internal (personal behaviors and policies) and external (outside behavior and product) alignment is lost, the organization faces a choice: either adapt or take the road to slow death."<sup>4</sup> Like Quinn, others have now concluded that deep, personal change, must accompany and be part of effective, long term, organizational change. Business is seeing the need for integration.

The Church Growth movement that burst on the scene in North America in the late 1960s, brought with it seminars, training events, workshops, and books all packed with new insights. The movement was shaped by a sociological and missional understanding of local church ministry and presented the need for intentional, evangelistic

strategies for growth. C. Peter Wagner authored numerous books concerning church growth. One such book, *Strategies for Church Growth* gave churches tools for effective mission and evangelism. Wagner, along with the many others, helped pastors and churches apply missiological principles to communities across North America. Donald McGavran's small book, *Bridges to God* became a seminal work that helped to ignite the movement. In recent days, some leaders have rejected many of the core tenets. The emphasis on "numerical growth" and "parking lot spaces" has given way to a more "qualitative" paradigm for church health and growth.

The *Northwest Renewal* movement headquartered in Portland, Oregon is an example of such a movement. The *Promise Keepers* men's movement was focused upon building the character and personal holiness of men.

These movements that have occurred in the last forty years of local church ministry in North America may each hold a significant part of local church revitalization. Instead of disparaging former methods, each of these emphases may hold a piece of the overall puzzle God is seeking to bring to local churches in order to bring about revitalization.

The Church Growth movement may have served to heighten the need for intentional, missional strategies that now need to be employed in a post-Christian America. The prayer movement may have served to heighten the awareness that the revitalization of a local church is a "spiritual process," not simply a series of man-made programs. The pastor renewal movement may have helped break down the walls between pastors and churches, so pastors could stand shoulder to shoulder for support and accountability. The men and women's movements may have served to demonstrate the need for godly singles, spouses, parents and leaders. These movements may also have helped to link pastor and congregational leaders together in the battle for the local church.

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<sup>1</sup> Webster New World Dictionary of the American Language, second college ed. (1970), s.v. "integration."

<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

One thing is clear the leadership of the North American church can no longer afford to approach the challenge of revitalizing thousands of local churches equipped only with the latest book or method. The task before the North American church is too diverse and too immense. “Almost three times as many churches in America are closing (3,750) as opening (1,300) each year.”<sup>5</sup> Lyle Schaller, in *Tattered Trust: Is There Hope for Your Denomination?* predicts that 100,000 to 150,000 congregations will dissolve in the first half of the twenty-first century—an average of five to eight each day.”<sup>6</sup>

What is required is a movement of local church revitalization that integrates what God has revealed as essential to the revitalization of the local church in order to counteract the reality of an the declining number of in churches. A new, integrative, paradigm is needed that integrates the learning of the last decades and brings together two major approaches to transformation: the call for personal holiness and the need for new, missional structures and strategies. These two threads each provide a part of what God is at work doing in the church and hold a key to helping unlock local church revitalization.

### The Paradigm of Integration

The word ‘paradigm’ comes from the Greek word “paradeigma” which means “model,” “pattern” or “example.” “Paradigms do give us the added advantage of being able to create a valid set of expectations about what will probably occur in the world based on our shared assumptions.”<sup>7</sup> Paradigms can help us define the new realities and establish the boundaries in which we choose to operate. Like looking intently into the now famous “3D” picture books, a new view of revitalization can be pictured as we seek to bring together previously unrelated topics.

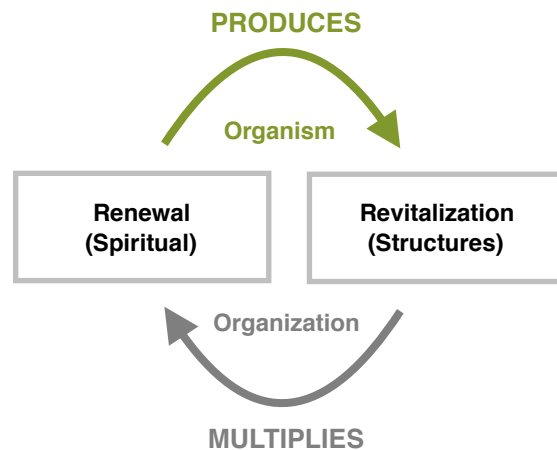
The paradigm of integration is defined as seeing people and structures as one in the refocusing of a local church. Two previously separate components are now viewed together as one model or pattern of change. The paradigm of integration sees that what

occurs in the life of people and what occurs in the life of the structures are both now part of the larger work of revitalization. These two parts are not only brought together, but are interrelated. People

breathe life into structures, and structures exist to serve and multiply the efforts of people. “Renewal of an organization requires renewal of its people.”<sup>8</sup>

The paradigm of integration creates a new “model” or “pattern” for viewing the task of local church transformation. The integration of renewal (a new work of God’s Spirit within the people) and revitalization (a new work of God within the structures) brings together the two major thrusts of the past years. The separation of these two focuses has often led to an incomplete view of revitalization. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.  
**TWO THRUSTS OF CHANGE**



In recent decades there has been an acknowledged “assumption of integration” by

leaders who have served to catalyze the revitalization of local churches. Good structuralists and organizational refiners have called for plans to be bathed in prayer and preceded by the renewal of people. Prayer warriors and leaders committed to personal holiness have spoken of the need for and the validity of structures and strategies. A subtle, unspoken, assumption has been made that the integration of these two arenas would occur on its own, and that church leaders would “automatically” know how to integrate both components into local church revitalization. For the most part, this simply has not occurred in North American churches. The impact of the movements described above has yet to reverse the trends of local church decline.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Arn, “Article Title,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*. (Spring, 1995), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Lyle Schaller, *Tattered Trust: Is there hope for your denomination?* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1992), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Smith, *Power of the Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ed Oakley and Doug Krug, *Enlightened Leadership* (New York: Fireside, 1991), 34.

As a result, two fields of resources have continued to emerge: resources focused on the spiritual renewal and the transformation of believers (e.g., prayer, spiritual formation, city-wide movements, spiritual life conferences, etc.), and resources focused on leadership, ministry enhancement and change (e.g., leadership conferences, networking events, skills training, etc.) Instead of integration, what has often occurred is just the opposite. Churches live in one extreme for periods of time and then the other, placing over confidence at times in either a “mystic spirituality” (God does it all) or “model worship” (man has a plan).

In his book *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, Christian Schwarz has provided much needed help in explaining the reality of the two dynamics (people and structures), and offered keen insight into the need for their integration. “The nature of the church is made up of two elements: a dynamic pole (organism) and a static pole (organization). Both are necessary for church development, and both poles are implied in the New Testament concept of ekklesia.”<sup>9</sup> Schwarz goes on to state that “the development of the church as an organism inevitably leads to the creation of institutions. On the other hand, the aim of these institutions is to be useful in stimulating the development of the church as an organism.”<sup>10</sup>

“One of the most characteristic marks of any reformation movement is that it subjects all institutional forms to the question: How useful are they for developing the church as an organism? This approach is in competition with two other thought patterns which are far more widespread within Christianity: First, a “spiritualistic paradigm” (Institutions aren’t important), and second, an “institutionalistic” paradigm (you must use certain methods or programs).”<sup>11</sup> Schwarz has identified the same two streams of renewal as has been evident in the past decades. He goes on to point out the that “major parts of church history are characterized by a conflict between. . . spiritualism and institutionalism. . . in other words, by a conflict between two misunderstandings of the Christian faith.”<sup>12</sup>

Essential to the transformation of local church ministry is the integration of renewal and revitalization. Renewal reflects the fresh work of God’s Spirit on his people, and revitalization distinguishes the corresponding change required in the structures to help to multiply the work of God. Transformed church leaders are better able to courageously transform the church structures they lead. Transformed local church structures are better able to conserve and multiply a new work of God’s Spirit.

In an “instant change” world that demands immediate results and change, some leaders struggle with adding more time and complexity to local church revitalization. “The need is too great, and the time is too short,” is often

cry of leaders and churches in desperate need of change. “Can’t we skip to the church, and come back later and work on our individual walks?” is a common reaction to the paradigm of integration. Modern, Western, rational approach to problem solving would say “if it is not broken, then don’t fix it!” But it is broken. The tragic need for local church revitalization in North America is paralleled only by the tragic need for renewal in the lives of leaders and church attenders. “Battered,” “hurt,” “exhausted,” “starving,” and “burned out” are just a few words to describe condition of those who have fought in local churches fighting for survival.

The acquisition of new skills, the ability to use new technology and provision of better resources are an important element of local church revitalization. But the answers are more than getting the pastor to attend the latest workshop, or updating software on the church computers.

Transformation will require doing the “long” work of spiritual re-surrender of lives and the ministries back to God, as well as going through the pain of adjusting and ending structures that no longer help accomplish the mission of the church. Obedience and perseverance are staples of any, true work of God. “The phenomenon of short-term improvements leading to long-term dependency is so common, it has its own name among system thinkers—it’s called “Shifting the burden to the Intervenor. . . all help a host system, only to leave the system fundamentally weaker than before and more in need of further help.”<sup>13</sup>

It is essential that church leaders not take a “pragmatic approach” toward local church revitalization. Revitalization is more than just a task of assembling right methods and programs. It is too easy to turn the challenges facing a local church into an either-or proposition.

### **The Great Divorce: Living in the Land of Either-Or**

The move toward specialization and market segmentation found in the secular culture has impacted the resourcing of local churches as well. Niche, specialty marketing has led to diverse numbers of resources and materials seeking to serve the revitalization of local churches in North America. The problem is magnified as local church pastors and leadership boards attempt to decipher and decide which direction to go in terms of obtaining help. Every day, a vast array of promotional material arrives at church offices. A non-integrative approach to revitalization has led to a growing polarization of two extreme points of view: mysticism (spiritual) or institutionalism (structural).

The mysticism point of view is the over-emphasis on spirituality and a “spiritual” point of view that can lead to subjectivism and isolation. In this view, everything

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 20.

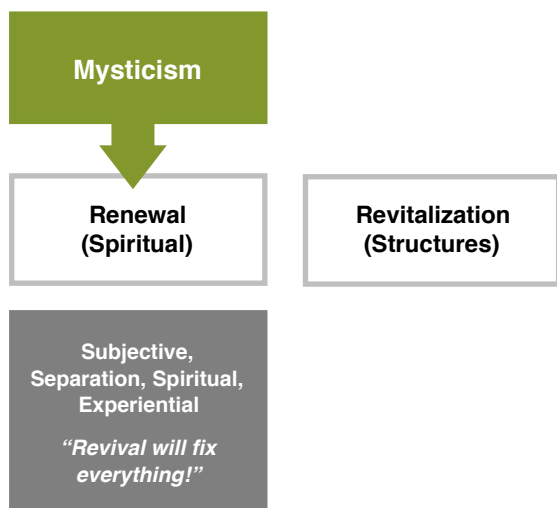
<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>13</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Doubleday-Currency, 1990), 61.

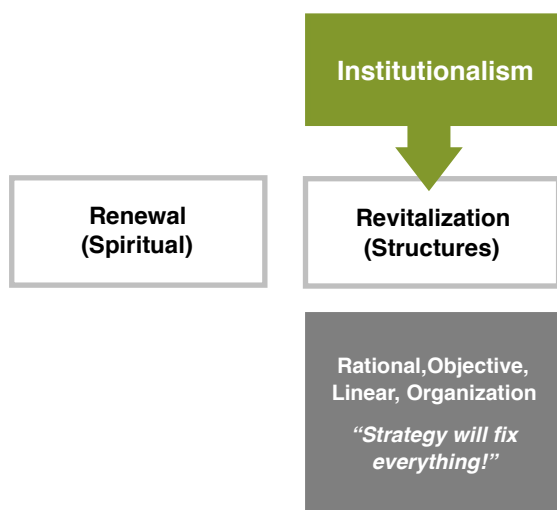
(including truth already revealed in Scripture) becomes captive to subjective experience. Revitalization can only be a result of new revelation from God. Structures and organization are seen as non-spiritual and therefore non-essential. See Figure 3.

**Figure 3.**  
**RENEWAL ONLY**



The other-point-of view, the institutional point of view, places over-emphasis and confidence in the ability of man to solve problems through organizational expertise. "Never mind those deep yearnings of the soul; never mind the nagging awareness that God is not cooperating. If the system isn't working, it's because we're not doing it right. There is always something to work on, with the promise of abundant life just around the corner."<sup>14</sup> See Figure 4.

**Figure 4.**  
**REVITALIZATION ONLY**



And so the gap widens. The accelerated pace of change has served only to heighten the propensity to live on one side or the other: mystic or institutional. Instead of re-thinking our approach and delivering a more holistic approach, leaders in the church- industry are networking but not integrating. Instead of sharing notebooks and fully integrating our methods and resources, a growing menu of specialized ideas and resourcing organizations continue to vie for church attention and income.

The result is the recurring cycle of short-term ministry excitement followed by a long term erosion of the impact and viability of the church. Churches and leaders have now trained themselves to await the newest and latest idea. There comes a time when leaders risk disobedience when they have heard from God and refuse to step forward and make changes that God's will would mandate. In these particular instances, churches move into a mystical paralysis. A polarization occurs where leaders cannot act or move because of the appearance of "not listening to God" or going against the "will of God."

Brian McLaren, in his book, *The Church on the Other Side*, summarizes that "before us lies a new world—a world empty of spiritually, which makes it hungry and thirsty for good spiritual bread and wine. It is a world hostile to dogmatism but ready to be sown with good seeds of vibrant, living faith."<sup>15</sup> What is needed is an integrative, revitalization model that brings the renewal of new wine to the lives of congregational attenders and will transform the structures of the church to offer the Bread of Life to a world starving for true spirituality. McLaren goes on to say: "If we as Christians do not fill the need, someone else will."<sup>16</sup>

"The eminent French statesman and priest Talleyrand said it well, "Without individuals, nothing happens; without institutions, nothing survives."<sup>17</sup> Local churches and their leadership must step forward and accept the challenge of seeing new, refocused, local churches. They must join with those of the past who have been willing to embrace the need for a fresh, inspiring, vision of living out God's purposes in this generation (Acts 13:36). To do so will require holding in tension two competing needs. On the one- hand, local churches must accept the truth that refocusing is a work of God. It is a spiritual process. Leaders must resolve within themselves that nothing will occur unless God is its author (John. 15:5,6). God has the right, and must always be "in control" of their personal lives and the ministry of the church. While at the same time, church leadership must embrace the call to obedience and the need for living out the purposes of Christ in relevant structures designed to promote the work of God. Churches and their leaders must confront the reality that their current structures may not be adequate to follow Christ back out into the streets of a post-Christian America.

<sup>14</sup> Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, *Sacred Romance* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), 1997), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Brian McLaren, *Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2000), 171.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>17</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call* (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1998) 104.



At the core of effective revitalization is embracing both sides of this paradigm.

Refocusing is the integrative process that seeks to embrace the personal renewal of leaders and church attenders, while at the same time working to revitalize the structures of a local church, in order to multiply this renewed work of God. *ReFocusing*, the name of the CRM process, has attempted to bring this integration to local church revitalization in North America.

In Philippians 1:6, Paul demonstrates both sides of this journey when he proclaims to the church at Philippi: “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” From Paul’s perspective, it was God who was at work making ongoing life to occur and prosper in the church. Based upon that truth, Paul calls the church to conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27).

Refocusing, the integration of spiritual renewal and structural revitalization, brings together two core-components of local church revitalization, and counteracts the two polarized approaches to stymied change. The personal renewal component provides the momentum necessary for leaders to bring about the missional change. The corporate revitalization brings into existence the structures that multiply the new wine expressed by God’s presence. When personal renewal and corporate revitalization become divorced, institutions may still exist, but the presence of God will depart. The process of embracing the paradigm of integration requires that leaders make some essential, core commitments in order to see people and the structures brought into alignment with God’s unique calling.

With the advent of the DVD industry has come a growing popularity of going “behind the scenes” of major motion pictures. Because of the added storage space, a DVD often comes with a documentary on the making of the movie contained on the disc. It is often fascinating to see all the elements that go into the making of a major motion picture. The look often reveals the working together of hundreds of core components that are used to produce the final product.

Local church revitalization is not the product of one event or one effort, but the combination of many forces coming to bear to unlock new potential and life. There are essential core commitments that are behind the scenes that turn refocusing into a spiritual discovery process as opposed to just another exercise in organizational planning. A key skill essential to understanding and embracing the making core commitments of refocusing is the ability to embrace paradox thinking.

“If we are to live our lives fully and well, we must learn to embrace opposites, to live in a creative tension between our limits and our potentials.”<sup>18</sup> The components required to facilitate the refocusing of a local church consists of the ability to hold in tension competing, seemingly incompatible, life-giving paradoxes. Embracing paradoxes is no simple task. It is the reason that many shrink back from revitalization efforts and why a process like refocusing requires time. For leaders who desire certainty and seek to avoid risk, the creative tension of paradox living causes stress and fear. Embracing paradox requires both courage and perseverance. The loss of personal and corporate control speaks to the core issues of refocusing.

Webster defines paradox as “a statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but may actually be true in fact.”<sup>19</sup> A life-paradox seeks to hold together two elements of life and leadership that appear to be impossible. The typical response to a life-paradox is that both cannot be true and held simultaneously. Logic would dictate that leaders and churches should side with one idea or the other, but not both.

“In a paradox, opposites do not negate—they cohere in mysterious unity at the heart of reality. Deeper still, they need each other for health, as the body needs to breathe “in” as well as to breathe “out.”<sup>20</sup> But in a culture that prefers the ease of either-or thinking as compared the complexities of a paradox, we have a hard time holding opposites together. We want light without darkness, the results without the journey, the fruit without the labor.

Choosing to live with paradox drives leaders deeper in search of the plans and designs of God. By embracing opposites, individuals are forced to look beyond their insights and abilities and to an omnipotent Lord. Paradoxes serve as a stimulus for the creation of the new knowledge needed to address new problems, they push us beyond. As with any new behavior, embracing a paradox brings apparent chaos. Chaos is the beginning of creation. As leaders sit with a paradox, the new begins to emerge.

Embracing apparent paradoxes requires faith. An example: It is much easier to focus on equipping the saints alone, rather than trying to work simultaneously on equipping and evangelism. You will hear churches addressing the tension in one of two ways. We cannot go outside and receive new members until we more fully equip and disciple, the people that we have! or “we must first focus on reaching out to the unchurched or we will not have a church to come back to!” Revitalization today requires embracing both to be true. We must simultaneously develop the believers we have to become passionate about evangelism, while also focusing on attracting new attenders.

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<sup>18</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 55.

<sup>19</sup> Webster’s *Dictionary*, s.v. “paradox.”

<sup>20</sup> Palmer, 99.

The genius of the Life Development Process<sup>21</sup> (101-201-301-401 discipleship class system) developed by Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Southern California is that the sequential progression of meetings simultaneously enfold new attenders (many of who are unconverted), while at the same time it serves to disciple believers. It is an example of holding to the paradox of developing more disciples, while at the same time seeing new people come to Christ. The classes are so effective because they address two, often times competing needs of the church, simultaneously.

Paradox thinking requires that we must learn to embrace mystery and ambiguity. These two elements are characteristics of a post-modern approach to living, and work against the logic driven, rational approach to life of modernity. It requires rejecting simplistic answers, both religious and scientific. As a whole, the Western culture both hates and loves mystery. But mystery surrounds every deep experience of the heart, our culture (legacy of modernity) wants to turn mysteries into puzzles to be explained or problems to be solved, because “maintaining the illusion that we can straighten things out” makes us feel powerful.

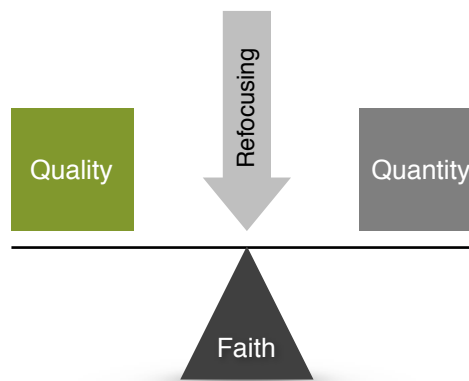
An additional example of embracing the paradoxes could be seen in the need for local churches to clarify their vision for future ministry. Churches often find themselves in a tension between understanding their past history, yet not allowing the past to confine future direction. This struggle of old vs. new often does divide congregations and destroys attempts at change. Churches often find themselves in an either-or moment. Members can find themselves forced to choose between the “known” of former ministry or the “unknown” of a new, untried approach.

What then is needed is to embrace the paradox of both the past and the future? Clarifying core values and lessons from the past will provide church leaders with help in informing future direction. Sometimes these values need to be embraced and leaders need to develop new methods that reflect these past lessons. At other times, these values need to be changed or altered to allow a church to obediently reflect the mandates of Scripture. In either case, the past can and does play an important role in informing future direction.

The courage to embrace two competing forces, at the same time, both requiring faith. See Figure 5, top right. It is the willingness to go deeper in dependence in the ‘plans of God,’ as opposed to resting in the insights of man. Holding two forces in tension is similar to the equilibrium point of a teeter-totter. The balance point is the fulcrum point of equal tension. Although it can appear foolish and chaotic to remain in the tension, the new knowledge and spiritual insight that emerges is created in no other place. This

exercise requires leaders to search to the depths of their understanding and dependence on God. They are required to “chase” after God, like never before. For “He is a rewarder of the men and women who diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

**Figure 5.**  
**LIFE GIVING PARADOXES**



**Transforming Leaders & Churches**

**Summary**

Leaders, since time began, have had to embrace a “both-and” versus “either-or” mentality in times of change. Moses embraced God’s covenant to his people was anchored in a covenant to lead them to a new land of promise, yet because of their rebellion, facing the dilemma of moving forward without the presence of God. Moses was called on to embrace the two competing forces, “But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way” (Ex. 33:3). Moses confronts God in Exodus 33:12: “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people. “Then Moses said to him, If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us from here” (Ex. 33:15).

Moses refused to separate and choose sides to these two competing truths of serving God and the need for the presence of God. His apparent demand to God was a statement of his willingness to embrace both truths, and to hold them in tension. He refused to allow the two paths to diverge instead he courageously held both the call to move forward with the need for the presence of God. “How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and your people unless you go with us?” (Ex. 33:16)

<sup>21</sup> Explained by Rick Warren in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1995), 144.



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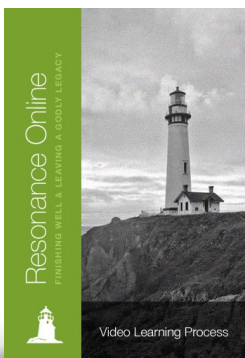
Today, more than in times of security and safety, the church and its leaders are faced with the same tension. On the one hand, out-date structures and systems must be embraced. But so must the competing truth that God's renewing work in the life of the people is essential. Some would rather address one without the other. We do not have that luxury. Both must be held, and because of our tendency to run to programs and made-made "fix-it" solutions which at best offer temporal hope, the two competing forces must be integrated if change is to occur. Personal renewal and change to the people must be embraced with the call to change structures and methods. Without the courage required to embrace both, most attempts to bring lasting change will fail.

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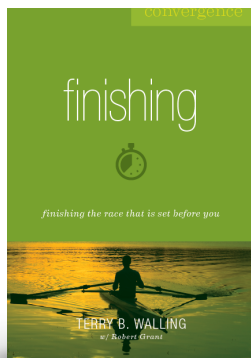
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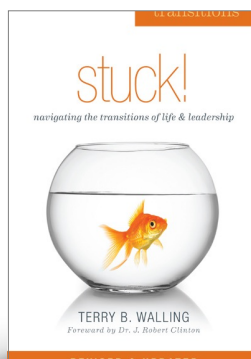
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