

1-1-2012

# Fingerprints of God: change and innovation at work in the church

Kristin D. Longenecker Bullock  
*George Fox University*

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

---

## Recommended Citation

Bullock, Kristin D. Longenecker, "Fingerprints of God: change and innovation at work in the church" (2012). *Doctor of Ministry*. Paper 30.  
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/30>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.

**FINGERPRINTS OF GOD:  
CHANGE AND INNOVATION AT WORK IN THE CHURCH**

**KRISTIN D. LONGENECKER BULLOCK  
PORTLAND, OREGON  
JANUARY 9, 2012**

This written statement and project was originally submitted to the faculty of the George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in January 2012.

George Fox Evangelical Seminary  
George Fox University  
Newberg, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

---

D.Min. Dissertation

---

This is to certify that the D.Min. Dissertation of

KRISTIN BULLOCK

has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on March 14, 2012  
as fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics and Future Studies

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Ronald R. Clark, Jr., D.Min.

Secondary Advisor: Jared D. Roth

Tertiary Advisor: Leonard I. Sweet, Ph.D.

Expert Advisor: John Kyle Minor

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 1: The Problem .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 2: Other Proposed Solutions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Approach 1: Innovation is avoided. ....	11
Approach 2: Innovation is only for business.....	12
Approach 3: Ideas from the past should be revisited.....	12
Approach 4: Only certain people can be innovative.....	13
Approach 5: Innovation is unique and unusual.....	13
<b>Section 3: Thesis.....</b>	<b>16</b>
The Model: In the Image of A Creator... ..	17
Jesus the Innovator.....	18
Looking for God’s Fingerprints .....	21
What Growing Companies Know? .....	21
Learning from Innovation in the Free Market .....	22
Risks and Lessons from Innovation .....	27
Theology and Urgency of Risk.....	29
The Church Innovating in the Footsteps of God .....	32
No Fear of Change .....	35
How to Know When to Innovate? .....	36
Key Ingredients to Making Change .....	38
Innovation for the Soul.....	38
Final Thoughts .....	42
<b>Section 4: The Artifact.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Section 5: Prologue .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Project Bibliography.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Books.....	51
Radio, Podcasts, Websites, & Interviews.....	54
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>56</b>

## ABSTRACT

Since the early days of the industrial revolution, the pace of progress and changes in developed countries have led to a fragmentation of cultural orientation, globalization, shifts in understanding of gender roles, protections for minorities and weaker members of cultures, and an acceptance of a faster pace of life than ever in history. Society is more connected than ever, but more fragmented and divided on every matrix of life.

There is no question that any group finding purpose in existing must discover new ways to thrive in this culture. Companies focus on research and development, and finding ways to innovate and compete for a better future. For churches<sup>1</sup>, the major questions should concern sustainability, growth, and ultimately, how to both embody and proclaim Christ.

A key challenge for believers is not just how to maintain our personal faith, but how to reach out and grow both spiritually and numerically. This requires innovation. In a culture of innovation people find meaning in contributing to help solve problems. They find time to work, think, and grow. Church leaders and members can foster innovation in the church and in the world through a study and experiment of innovative Christianity.

Christ called disciples to be dynamic. The simple move from synagogues to the early church was not easy. The change from Rabbis to disciples and apostles was hard. In the book of Acts, we read that the early church returned to the upper room after Jesus ascended to heaven. But God did not come quietly to the believers. God decided to work, not in the hidden body of believers, but in the world, on public display, engaged with the

---

<sup>1</sup> When the word “church” appears, it references the collection of churches, Christians, and gathered communities of believers in Christ primarily in North America. A working definition of the church by Robert Barrow in 1589 is, “The church is the body of people called by God’s grace through faith in Christ to glorify him together by serving him in his world.”

people. Innovation in God's economy involves helping the world express their creativity, ushering forth the best of what each individual revelation of God can express. If we are created in love, it is completely within our abilities to express that love.

Even more, the hallmarks of innovation—**risk, flexibility, resourcing, and hope** are the key abilities that organizations need to remain viable and vibrant in the coming years. Turbulence in education, business, markets, people, places, and environments create times of change that stimulate or even force innovations. Real innovation involves maintaining an awareness of God; a readiness for what God is doing in the world. It is keeping in touch with global human events and engaging them with active participation.



## **SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM**

In reviewing history, it would be clear that the world has experienced massive changes. Yet in the last hundred years, the rate of change in daily life has increased dramatically. While the world takes pride in civilization and abundance, it struggles with the same core human basics of survival. Centuries ago, people fought for their existence against inhospitable climates and flesh eating animals. Now people fight for existence with technology and time. Once again in history, standing still is deadly and moving forward doesn't quite feel fast enough

### *Keeping Up*

It was from a warm sleepy dream that the clock shook her. As her breath quickened and her muscles flexed, she could already feel her mind preparing her body for the day. It was 4:00 a.m. She had a job to do. She quickly scanned the plan in her mind. She would have to be out the door in thirty minutes and there was no time for coffee or anything to eat. That would have to wait for later in the day. She could not forget either phone today. There was too much at stake. What if her boss or her rapidly growing, nonprofit organization called for some random question and she did not have her phone again. Her commitment was already in question because she was not always accessible by phone, even at night. What if her husband called to check in or let her know that one of her daughters were sick? Well, at least if she forgot that phone she would keep her job.

She quickly dressed and was headed out the door. It was raining so even though she had an umbrella she would be wet all morning. As the cold air hit her face, anger began to rise in her chest. It was nothing that she would act on, but if someone had tried to take her purse, she would have welcomed the chance to hit someone or at least chase

him or her. But then again, she was already almost late for the bus and so she would have to hurry to catch that instead.

### *Life on the Edge*

Many people already live each day on the edge. Whether it is good stress like a new relationship or promotion or the death of a loved one or a divorce, more and more regular life events are piling up with changes at work and at home to create challenges that strike fear into even easy going adults.

It is in this climate where the church seeks to minister and share life transformation. To make a difference in the lives of people who are hyper-connected, out of time, and stressed to death, the church has to consider what it means to be transformed. It is more critical than ever. Since the 1960's mainline denominations have struggled with declining memberships, shrinking budgets, graying congregations and clergy, to the point that faith groups like the United Methodists are trying unprecedented rhetoric and are beginning dramatic action to change the trends.<sup>2</sup> What will it take to make a difference in this new context of rapid change for individuals and communities?

In addition, individuals want to grow and even be a part of spreading their faith. Yet trying to get people to come to a Bible study or convincing the younger people that they need to slow down does not work. Laying guilt on people to give up vacations to help at church or do a mission project also does not seem like a good option since so many people are struggling with stress and emotionally distant families. So what can a believer do to make a difference in the world today?

---

<sup>2</sup> Jerome W. Berryman, *The Complete Guide To Godly Play An Imaginative Method for Presenting Scripture Stories to Children.*, vol. 6, 6 vols. (Living the Good News Inc, 2006), 30.

### *A Historic Church*

First Church was a historic church. It had made a mark on the city. So much so, that members and pastors were rumored to have been a part of the mysterious elite group of forty power players that guided and controlled the money and resources of the city. For decades, the best and brightest of the city attended the church, bringing wealth and power with them. Lawyers, doctors, civic servants, even starlets flocked to the pews of the historic church like a sunny beach during Spring Break.

But over time the sparkle of the historic church seemed to tarnish. It wasn't anything special really. Nothing significant happened. There were no spectacular battles or infamous scandals. In fact, it was all rather unremarkable how the downfall of First Church began. A handful at a time would leave, finding other more inspiring venues to worship in. When a new pastor once called the church to get out of the pews and do something, they responded by getting out of the pews and not returning. There was a clear message in this church that change was not welcomed in what they all observed as a perfect church. So the slow drain of power and passion continued.

Today, the pews are not filled with the elite of the city. That was a different time. There are still doctors, but now they aren't the doctors featured in magazines on long plane flights or the specialists who pull down huge incomes. They are general practice doctors and nurses and medical technicians. The lawyers are construction lawyers or legal secretaries. The civic servants are long retired. The few starlets left appeared on television decades past. Everything about the church is only a shadow of what once burned brightly.

To the children that had grown up in the church, they had only known the decline. They had been the ones who had grown up, not really doing much of anything and watching their parents not do much of anything. They had been a part of a youth group that they were proud of, although it too had been in decline. Now they were in college and taking on their first jobs.

When it came time for them to “take their place” in the long line of leaders at the church, when young adults are elected to boards and take up leadership, the “children” of the church were surprisingly silent. They had gone through all the passages of children, youth, and young adults. But then they disappeared. More than two hundred people were still listed on the church membership list that had not attended the church in two years but were kept on because their parents requested their names to stay on the list.

Those “young people” who actually attended the church were new to the area. The small group of eight to ten people started something very small. It did not have the numbers of past groups, nor did it have the resources. While the young adults from the church were invited to attend the new “young adult” group, they would come once, if at all, and then talk about how big the group used to be when they were kids.

But the young adults who grew up in the church were missing something special. They were leaving the church because they had never seen the church start something new. Everything they had grown up experiencing was a continuation of something that had been before. They had not learned the value or possibility for change that could come from starting something new and building it.

The young adults who had just joined the church were willing to do the hard work of calling each other and getting together with a small group. They could see the

possibility and the hope for a group where they had helped build something great, something that they could be a part of. Even though it was small, they would build it into something to be proud of.

While those who had always been in the church could not see the potential, those who were new were willing to try something different and innovate. As long as things are calm and comfortable, there is no reason to do anything different, even if things are not as good as they once were. The time to take risks and innovate should be ongoing for a healthy organization and even for a healthy person. The problem is that too often the church waits too long before they innovate and even then, they are not sure how to do what needs to be done.

I am studying innovation because I want to find out, the role and impact of innovation in organizations and for the people who are a part of them in order to help my readers better understand the role of innovation, recognize innovation around them, and incorporate innovation as an ongoing practice so that the readers can find hope and fulfillment in their lives and ministries and create Christ-like transformation in their context.

## **SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

There are many ways that churches have approached innovation and change. For some churches innovation is a part of the way that problems and opportunities are addressed. For others innovation and change are avoided. Examining the approaches that churches use to view innovation and how they react when faced with change may be helpful.

***Approach 1: Innovation is avoided.***

There are two reasons that innovation might be avoided. First, a church may avoid innovation based on convictions. Primarily relying on certain interpretations of scripture, some people believe that the church is not supposed to innovate or change. They view creation as God's territory whereas humans function as caretakers for what God has created. Or they may subscribe to the view that God is unchanging and therefore there may not be a need for innovation among God's creation. As a result, the emphasis tends to be focused on reformation of a religion or restoration of the world. Advances or changes in technology, science, and medicine are not acceptable or are moderated by theological interpretation of leaders in relationship to God's will.

Another reason innovation may be avoided has more to do with human preference. At a core level, humans avoid pain and perceived threats that could result in pain. Whether pursued intentionally for improvement or are naturally occurring, change is often a source of pain. The risk that is associated with innovation and change is high and the costs can be tremendous. Emotions like fear and anxiety also cause individuals to resist innovation. As a result, even if people genuinely want change they may avoid it.



***Approach 2: Innovation is only for business.***

For others, the idea of change and innovation is a worldly concept, only for businesses or organizations. While some churches have embraced business concepts like growth, bottom lines, boards, and markets, others reject anything related to businesses at face value. The argument is that anything from business is created without the core understanding of the Gospel, the fruits of the Spirit, or the miracles of God. Furthermore, business concepts are designed to make profit and often use gimmicks or tricks to reach their goals.

The more that innovation gurus like Seth Godin, Robert Sutton, Chip Heath and organizations like IDEO and Deloitte write and research innovation, the easier it is for the church to ignore it. The very fact that the word “guru” is used shows that it is almost seen as another religion. But ignoring something does not change the need. Churches that ignore the needs of those around them eventually die.

***Approach 3: Ideas from the past should be revisited.***

In this approach to innovation, the best way to proceed is to rely on the tried and true ideas from the past. There is a reason that the church became great; it was because of the great ideas of the past. So the best plan of action is to revisit the past ideas and find ways to use them again.

Instead of changing programming that does not work, it is time to “get back to basics” and try to recapture the meaning of past programming. This would

be fine, except trying to recapture the passion and inspiration of the original is tremendously difficult.

***Approach 4: Only certain people can be innovative.***

Many people believe that a few special people do innovation. They relegate creativity to “artists” or a “Research and Development” team, and expect specialists to lead the innovation. They are the ones who make the critical decisions and are even awarded the right to criticize those who attempt creativity without their approval. This limits the number of people who undertake innovation and restricts new ideas.

It may also be believed then that perhaps certain groups of people are more creative than others and get better results. In this case, one group that has had success with an idea might make their solution available to other groups to use. It is like transferring innovation like a prescription or formula. For example, what works in one city to revive a Sunday school program will also work in another place. While the principles may be helpful, it is more likely that if a formula does not take into account the context of the church, it may be very ineffective at the least and toxic to the church at worst.

***Approach 5: Innovation is unique and unusual.***

In this form of thinking, innovation is done for certain purposes at certain times. When an organization is new, it is allowed to take certain risks for the good and growth of the organization. They invite anyone to attend. They spend large sums of money on venues or equipment or to advertise their events. They create

new liturgy and wonder about the boundaries of theology and take risks on new ways of welcoming people.

But as time progresses, risk is minimized in order to guarantee continuity. Essentially, the risk that they took to welcome new people becomes the risk that they begin to manage. They may continue to place advertisements or use the new liturgy, but the risk becomes more and more minimized as the church ages. Making what was originally innovative into an institution. Rather than find new ways to innovate, the church continues to do what it did successfully and reduce the possibility of failure. In the life cycle of the church, innovation becomes something that is marginalized and shelved until it is needed again, at a critical moment in the church's future.

In short, innovation itself is met with mixed acceptance in the church. While all churches are faced with both opportunities and challenges in their ministry, it is obvious that many churches have a hard time seeing themselves as change agents. The key is learning how to use the tools that are available to a church and its leaders and how to navigate resistance to innovation and change so that the church could take advantage of opportunities and manage challenges.

All churches will experience both challenges and opportunities and regardless of their views of innovation, they will deal with them. Opportunities and challenges that may be solved with new ministries or approaches in one church may be met in other churches with skepticism, reflection, a call to reform, or even indifference. Still, it is

important to remember that all of these approaches arise from an awareness of God and a desire to come close to God and follow God's will.

**SECTION 3: THESIS**

The church has been stuck. Being a Christian is supposed to be transformational and life changing. Yet about 50% of those who attend churches report that their lives have not changed and that they have not gained any significant insight from church<sup>3</sup>. It might be easy for someone to choose something else like sleeping in, grocery shopping, or watching football games.

And this is not isolated to a few churches either. While the church has been exonerated to some would be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in fact, most churches struggle with basic evangelism and outreach. The majority of churches program only 5% of their ministry for people outside of their church<sup>4</sup>.

Ignoring the problem does not make it go away. In fact, it makes it worse. The truth is that what is killing the church is the absence of creativity, change, and innovation in the world because the gifts of the Spirit are being suppressed and hoarded by the church. Humans were given gifts birthed by the Holy Spirit and released into the world.

It is critical that churches everywhere begin to recognize God's fingerprints in the world and remember the forgotten language of creativity, innovation, and change.

### **The Model: In the Image of A Creator...**

Humans are made in God's image. Jesus was a perfect example of an innovator. From the opening passages of the sweeping story of the creation of the earth where human flesh was created out of the earth to the epic battles for the soul on land and in the heart, God set the example for humanity to be creative. Made in the very image of God

---

<sup>3</sup> "What People Experience in Churches", Barna Group, January 9, 2012, <http://www.barna.org/new-topics/church-impact> (accessed February 2, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Rainer, Thom S. "7 Deadly Sins of a Dying Church," *ChurchLeaders*, 2012, <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/139400-seven-sins-of-dying-churches.html?p=2> (accessed February 4, 2012). In a survey of churches across the U.S., he found that 95 percent of the ministries within the church are for church members alone.

(Genesis 1:27) who had just finished creating the world and everything in it, men and women were created as the final piece. Like a signature on a painting, God gave man and woman life and set them to care for all that God had created.

What is unique about this particular story is that humanity is made in God's image, the very God who was a creator. So that they too would have the same creative spirit that operated in them. They were not slaves to God, but God walked with them in the Garden. Even after they had chosen to disobey God and were sent out of the Garden, God went with the humans. Now they would learn how to use their creativity in new ways.<sup>5</sup> The Old Testament is filled with stories of the people of God innovating the world around them, sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. The Old Testament is also filled with stories of God walking with the people and guiding them, as they would allow, toward life. Just when it would seem that there was no hope left, God would innovate again and everything would change. Perhaps the greatest innovation that God made was sending Jesus Christ as a baby. But the innovation was not just that God acted in the world again, but also how Jesus acted while in the world. Because Jesus transformed how people saw God and the work God was doing among people.

### **Jesus the Innovator**

From the early moments of Jesus' ministry, he operated outside of the religious establishment. Because of that, he delivered his teaching in untraditional ways. Frequently Jesus would spread his message in outdoor settings like on boats, on a hillside, or as he walked. His messages and teachings were often named from the natural setting rather than at a certain building or house like the Sermon on the Mount. Right before this

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 30.

famous sermon in Matthew it says, “And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.”<sup>6</sup>

He was always moving and traveling from town to town, which created an ideal environment for him to meet new people. In fact, because he was outside instead of in one location, many people knew him and followed him to hear his teaching. Since he had no daily job or position that would offer consistent food or shelter, he had to rely on the kindness and support of others.

Since he was outdoors, he also taught using new methods and tools—namely common things. He wrote in the dirt, met people at wells, used fig trees, sparrows, and bread and wine as examples. He often used stories to communicate with people, instead of directly telling them what they had to do.<sup>7</sup> He also used common objects like a vine as a metaphor for faith in. It was very common for him to take commonly known scriptures like he did in his hometown of Nazareth and give them new semiotics.<sup>8</sup>

He was dealing with problems that were larger than one person could change by cultivating disciples. He solved problems in new ways. For example, while most people would row back to shore in a storm, he would calm the sea. When being questioned by a lawyer, he would redirect the question and ask the lawyer the question saying, “Who is my neighbor?”

In the truest sense of innovation, Jesus perceived the real needs of those around him and responded to them. He healed the sick and disabled and loved those who were

---

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 4:25. The section called the “Sermon on the Mount” begins in the next verse, 5:1, and continues through 7:27.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 4:33-34.

<sup>8</sup> In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue corresponding to Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6.



rejected or condemned. He saw those who felt unloved and gave them hope. In acts of resurrection, he returned the outcast lepers and possessed to society and gave life to those who were dead.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, through his teaching, actions, ways of communicating, and responsiveness to needs, he enhanced the way that people related with God. With Jesus' example in ways like the Lord's Prayer, the relationship with God became more personal. He put into question the hierarchy of humans and their relationship to God and the traditional places where worship and teaching had to happen. He also made conversion possible, not just through birth, but through new birth through faith, including foreigners, Samaritans, and even slaves.<sup>10</sup>

Today, Jesus continues to work in the world through humanity and divine sharing in the building of a new garden where together the gifts of God and the people of God can realize together what can now be made. Just as God gave up walking with humans in person to go with them on their journey, so Jesus gave up walking with humanity in flesh to walk with them in Spirit. Like a gardener who gives up his yard to go help a neighbor, God gave up the perfect and eternal of creation and allowed the creation to have a part in creating. Now the Spirit of God is at work in the souls and spirits in places where the church could never imagine.

He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side; He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: *'Follow thou me!'* and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the

---

<sup>9</sup> John 11:23-44

<sup>10</sup> An excellent example of Jesus responding to faith is found in the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28. While she was a Gentile she clearly recognized him as the Messiah and despite his own goals of bringing Jews back to God, Jesus honored her faith and healed her daughter.

sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.<sup>11</sup>

### **Looking for God's Fingerprints**

God is at work not just in and with people who can claim to be Christian, but in the entire world. (John 3:16-17) It should not be surprising to see the fingerprints of God outside of the church. But often Christians have ceased looking and listening for God. In corporate culture, change and innovation are vital to the growth and ongoing vitality of an organization. It is also true in personal lives and in the life of the church. Not surprisingly, business is discovering the power of innovation to adapt to the changes that culture is making. But what is really remarkable is that the discoveries that business is making are incredibly similar to basic Christian beliefs about the world and humanity. If examined, it does not take long to see the fingerprints of God in the research and business.

### **What Growing Companies Know?**

Alex F. Osborn defines innovation as “the process of creating and delivering new customer value in the marketplace.”<sup>12</sup> Innovation can take many forms. It is customer based, either improving something that already exists or improving the delivery or cost of something that already exists.<sup>13</sup> Innovation is a key component of growing companies and strategic non-profit organizations, finding ways to trim the bottom line, improve customer experience, and create new products. Innovation is about creating products that

---

<sup>11</sup> Albert Schweitzer, “The Quest of the Historical Jesus: Chapter 20,” *Early Christian Writings*, 2001, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/schweitzer/chapter20.html> (accessed November 10, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Curtis Carlson and William W. Wilmot, *Innovation : the five disciplines for creating what customers want*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Business, 2006), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Clayton Christensen, Scott D. Anthony, and Erik A. Roth, *Seeing what's next : using the theories of innovation to predict industry change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), xv–xvii.

consumers want because it makes life easier or better.<sup>14</sup> While innovation is a specific discipline in business, it encompasses elements of what the church has experienced as creativity, artistry, change, and responsiveness to human need.

### **Learning from Innovation in the Free Market**

There are different basic categories of innovation. The easiest type of innovation to employ with the least at risk is to improve an existing product for an existing market. Clayton Christensen, Scott D. Anthony, and Erik A. Roth define this as a “sustaining innovation”. These are the innovations that keep customers interested in buying the same products and increase brand loyalty. Examples of products on the market that exemplify this “sustaining” category are new colors and sizes of M&M’s, batteries that have longer lives, vacuum cleaners that have more powerful suction, or improved flavor of ice cream.

A Christian company like OUTREACH<sup>15</sup> that provides a designer look to a church through signage, postcards, and logos is an example of a sustaining innovation. While designed for use in outreach campaigns, it is arguably just as effective to reach established Christians from other churches than to reach new believers. It is a better way to do what the church was probably already doing “in house.”

The more dramatic form of innovation is a “disruptive” innovation. These innovations are either “low-end disruption” or “new-market disruption”. The key difference between these two disruptions is that the “low-end” brings the cost down and the “new-market” brings the product to a new market.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>15</sup> Outreach.com

In “low-end disruption” innovations, companies bring reduced prices to the consumer through lower-cost business models. It also can mean that competitors are at a disadvantage as customers move their business. But either way, the model means more people are being reached—in church terms, better stewardship.

On October 15, 2009, news agencies and bloggers around the world began reporting the news that Wal-Mart would drop the price of their new book releases on their retail site to \$9.00 with free shipping. Not to be outdone, Amazon.com quickly matched their prices. Four days later, Target retailer followed suit.<sup>16</sup> These three retailers represent the power of “low-end disruption” innovation. Each is able to offer products that consumers value at a lower cost than traditional retailers. Often the losers are the small independent stores that cannot afford to purchase volume at discount.

The church that grows large enough to minister to congregations of more than one thousand becomes classified as a “mega church”. These organizations are able to deliver goods and services like community and global mission projects and age level and singles programs to a larger group of people more efficiently and effectively than smaller churches. These are disruptive, low-end innovations, essentially still reaching a primarily churched audience but with a better set of programs at a more cost-effective price (stewardship).

The second type of disruptive innovation is the “new-market disruption”. Christensen, Anthony and Roth define this as a product that makes it “easier for people to

---

<sup>16</sup> “Analysis: Why Small Independent Bookstores Will Be a Casualty of the Walmart.com and Amazon War - Associated Content - associatedcontent.com”, n.d., [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2299401/analysis\\_why\\_small\\_independent\\_bookstores.html?cat=3](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2299401/analysis_why_small_independent_bookstores.html?cat=3).

do something that historically required deep expertise or great wealth.”<sup>17</sup> Personal printers, computers, and cameras are all examples of “new-market disruptions.” Each of these products opened up new markets for consumers by making the products more accessible through cost and technology.

Businesses like VistaPrint have changed the way small businesses market themselves. With radically low prices compared to the local bricks and mortar shops, they have brought the prices down on conventional printing and marketing and made print projects affordable and available to individuals for personal use.

Evangelism in the church has always been on the move when it comes to innovation. Through history many examples of new market disruptions could be referenced: house churches, church planters, missionaries, and even reformations. These movements are designed in a way to reach people with the gospel that did not require special education or even a common meeting place. The key was that they by-passed traditional church structure to make the gospel accessible to a greater audience.

These approaches to innovation are commonplace in the best companies. But then there are the companies that all the other companies look to for cutting edge products, ideas, and inspiration. Companies like Google, Apple, Proctor & Gamble, IDEO, 3M, and Facebook, set the pace for other businesses. I will call these paradigm shifting products and services “revolutionary innovations.”

When Apple came out with the iPod, it impacted all traditional products in the music industry—Walkmans, CD’s, radio stations, radios, royalties, music purchasing, electronic music rights, online music businesses, and the consumer. Further sustaining

---

<sup>17</sup> Christensen, Anthony, and Roth, *Seeing What’s Next: Using the Theories of Innovation to Predict Industry Change*, xvii.

innovations to the iPod brought smaller versions, less expensive products, better technology, and new features like video. The innovations led to mp3 players, the wireless ITouch, and the 2, 3, and now 4G-networked iPhone.

For the church, revolutionary innovations are not as common as those in business but they are far more profound. One could point to the shift from rabbi and synagogue to apostle and house church as one of the early revolutionary innovations or the division of the Eastern and the Western Church. Traditional cell phones became virtually obsolete when smartphones came out, but in the church when equally revolutionary innovations are made they seldom make other beliefs obsolete. While it has been found that brand loyalty to Apple products engages the same parts of the brain as faith to a religious belief<sup>18</sup>, belief in a product is still different from alignment with certain religious beliefs.

What was a revolutionary innovation in theology in the Protestant Reformation was the motto, “sola Scriptura” which translates from Latin as “scripture alone. It was a revolutionary innovation that questioned the significance of the “extra-biblical” doctrines, rituals and structures of the Catholic Church.<sup>19</sup> The Catholic Church attempted to prove the validity of their case by emphasizing the legitimacy of these claims and the significance of them, even to the point that the unfinished Vatican I addressed papal infallibility.<sup>20</sup>

So then in a long overdue need for sustaining innovation to correct the conflicting views on scripture and tradition that had occurred for centuries as well as how the church

---

<sup>18</sup> Chris Matyszczyk, “Scientists: Apple Makes Your Brain Go All Religious,” *CNET*, May 20, 2011, [http://news.cnet.com/8301-17852\\_3-20064577-71.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-17852_3-20064577-71.html).

<sup>19</sup> “Protestant Reformation,” *Wikipedia*, January 6, 2011, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant\\_Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation).

<sup>20</sup> “The Need for Vatican II”, 2011, <http://vatican2voice.org/2need/need.htm> (accessed December 19, 2011).

interacts with the modern world, Vatican II was convened from 1962-1965.<sup>21</sup> The result, however, was a revolutionary innovation on the part of the Catholic Church as they not only addressed scripture and tradition, but also fundamentally recognized the mystery of the humanity of the church.

Whether it is well researched and documented or not, the church has been involved in innovations on many levels. For good and bad, the church and individual Christians employ the words of the scriptures to bring about small and large changes in their faith and in the world. Often even without intending to make revolutionary changes, innovations bring about significant changes in the world.

Business has been able to make monumental strides in their effectiveness. It has even opened significant growth sectors for small business and non-profit groups. Those who are adventurous and are willing to take the risks associated with innovation are already making ventures into territories that were once only for the most daring corporations. For example, in an outrageous pitch, the Internet to mailbox video company, Netflix, designed a contest where the winning team would receive one million dollars. All the teams had to do was improve the movie recommendation system for the multimillion dollar corporation. Robert I. Sutton, author and professor of organizational behavior, management science and engineering at Stanford Business School, pointed out how this type of innovation in a company may seem outrageous, but is highly effective in

---

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Wells, "The Need for Vatican II," *Vatican II-Voice of the Church: The Church's English Voice-Bishop Christopher Butler, OSB*, December 4, 2011, <http://vatican2voice.org/2need/need.htm>.

solving problems that may have taken the company years and several million dollars to figure out.<sup>22</sup>

Considering all this, the question for the church might well be, if this kind of innovation is effective in business, innovation that has a huge impact, what kinds of innovations might the church be capable of that could make a dramatic difference in the world?

### **Risks and Lessons from Innovation**

While innovation and change can bring about extraordinary results, they are also tremendously risky. They can be the direct or indirect cause for major company failure. According to the Standish Group research the typical enterprise software project (ERP) to coordinate and streamline corporate activity and information storage, is twice as expensive and takes twice as long to implement as originally projected. 30% of all ERP projects are cancelled before they are completed and 51% of all completed projects are rated as unsuccessful.<sup>23</sup> And while those rates are for large companies, churches experience the same difficulty when attempting to select and incorporate new databases into their offices. Innovation, even if it should be a dramatic improvement, is not always successful and can sometimes be harmful.

It might be assumed that new businesses are better positioned and are more willing to take risks. That may be true, but those who risk by starting a new business face amazing odds. Researcher Robert Sutton points to Dun & Bradstreet “that only a third of

---

<sup>22</sup> “Innovation in a Recession,” *KQED Forum* (KQED, September 25, 2009), <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R909251000>.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton, “Change or Die?: An Evidence-Based Approach to Change Management,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 3, 2009): 6, <http://www.amazon.com/Change-Die-Evidence-Based-Approach-Management/dp/B00122HDR8>.



retail and service businesses live longer than five years.”<sup>24</sup> Even when financing is available through the companies that provide microloans to new businesses, the new business owners do not have the skills they need to keep the new company growing through the first five years. When all new businesses are added to the retail and service businesses, only 50% will survive after five years.<sup>25</sup> There is tremendous risk in doing something new.

Booksellers online and in stores have thousands of books that help individuals and organizations cope with change, manage change, and adapt to change.<sup>26</sup> But unfortunately what seems to work for one organization can destroy another. There really are high stakes for innovation that may or may not lead to success.

On the other hand, without innovation and change in a company, other companies come out with better technology as consumer values and interests change. The reality is that most companies make about 50% of their income from products that are less than five years old.<sup>27</sup> So regardless of a company’s *feelings* about change, it is in the change that the future lays. The very definition of extinction is that creatures fail to adapt to the changing environment.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>25</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions”, <http://web.sba.gov/faqs/faqIndexAll.cfm?areaid=24> (accessed November 27, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> “BARNES & NOBLE | change, Professional & Education, Books”, <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/change?dref=1%2C2&keyword=change> (accessed January 3, 2012). Barnes and Nobel have 16,678 books for sale in the category of “Professional and Education” books on “Change.”

<sup>27</sup> Pfeffer and Sutton, “Change or Die?: An Evidence-Based Approach to Change Management,” 7.

<sup>28</sup> “Can We Save the Polar Bear,” *KQED Forum* (KQED, December 10, 2009).

The church's figures are very similar to this. For new church plants, after four years of existence, 68% survive.<sup>29</sup> Figures are not available for the fifth year in the survey, although in year five, only 70% of those church plants are self-sustaining. According to leaders in church growth like Ed Setzer, these numbers are very good compared to earlier reports of survival closer to 20%.<sup>30</sup> Setzer and others suggest that through better selection, mentoring, and education of church planters that the numbers are improving and even turning the trend on the church decline numbers in the United States.

While the news sounds good, the church is still facing the same challenges as business. Entrepreneurs may expect certain degrees of risk, but established businesses must innovate in order to survive. Churches don't really have a product, so new product growth would not be a major concern, but keeping a church positioned toward new people, new ideas, and new groups is important to remain vital. The most important "new product" of the church would be the establishment, growth, and outreach of new members.

### **Theology and Urgency of Risk**

"Babies did not go to war. They never made hate speeches or littered or refused to play with each other because they belonged to different racial or ethnic or political groups. They depended on other people for everything necessary to their lives and a phrase like, "self-made baby" would have made them laugh until their bellies hurt. While no one asked their opinions about anything that mattered (which would have been a smart thing to do) almost everyone seemed to love them, and that gave God an idea. Why not become one of these delightful creatures?...There was a risk. God knew that. Okay, there was HIGH risk, but that was part of what God wanted these loved ones to know: that God was willing to risk everything to get close to them, in hopes that they might again love God."<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Ed Setzer and Phillip Connor, *Research Report: Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007* (Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, February 2007), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ed Setzer, "Equipping Church Planters for Success," *Enrichment Journal: Assemblies of God USA*, n.d., [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200904/200904\\_036\\_equipping.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200904/200904_036_equipping.cfm).

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, "God's Daring Plan", *The Bread of Angels* (Cowley Publications, January 25, 1997). A parable about the incarnation of Christ.

An important concept in innovation and change is the willingness to risk. It may seem more fitting in a conversation about business and government or even gambling, but risk is native to God. It was incredibly risky to send the Son of God into the world with the very people who could not be trusted to follow God. Whether it was overturning tables or eating with tax collectors and prostitutes, Jesus expanded the Kingdom of God through risk. The Son of God also saw people who were unseen by the religious system, went places that “good” people did not go, and transformed things in ways that others thought were impossible<sup>32</sup>. So it would make sense that the theology and practice of the church would include risk as a vital part of practice.

Risk is authentic and real. When it is unclear if something will fail or succeed, it does not diminish humanity, but highlights the gifts of humanity. Risk pushes people to the place where they must trust others and hope. When every point is planned and each step is measured, the calculations overtake the process and something human is lost.

Risk welcomes the new and different. Predictability and “business as usual” does not incorporate newness. The goal of most companies when they are hiring is not to welcome new ideas that they may learn from new employees, but rather to educate new employees on policies and company ethos. But innovation does not come from “business as usual.” It comes from welcoming newness and diversity. So the church that risks has the opportunity to grow in diversity of age, culture, background, race, and thought.

---

<sup>32</sup> An illustration of the risk Jesus took in the stories in the Bible is found in Luke 19. A tax collector named Zaccheus climbs a tree to see Jesus in a crowd. Jesus looks up at him and tells him to come down and that he will come to his house. In the culture of the day, a tax collector was compared to a sinner. So for Jesus to look up and see Zaccheus and to be willing to go to his house for a meal, Jesus was moving against the normative culture of the Jewish establishment.

Risk forces participants into a place where they are not dominating. When one is in control, they are in power and there is little need for help or collaboration. But the teaching of the early leaders of the church and Christ are not filled with examples of powerful rulers who establish an ultimate authority based on power and control. Rather the practice of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit is collaboration and risk. Theology suffers when it is delegated to a few. When a church takes a chance that is not certain, it has the opportunity to follow the Holy Spirit as the guide rather than planned actions.

While it may be the hardest thing the church does, risking for the sake of humanity is what is needed and demanded most in the world now. Culture is pushing the church to risk and innovate. Whether the church is prepared or not, people are seeking a place where their faith is not controlled by judgments and facts that were established long ago, but is set free by a theology of risk.

Still, the culture waits to see if that historic church can make the crucial turn, because if not, the emptiness of the cavernous sanctuaries and the silence of the followers of Christ in popular culture will grow. The church has made the mistake many times<sup>33</sup> of holding on to one ideal only to realize a bit too late that they should have taken the risk to change. Yet the hope is that for those who are willing to risk and sacrifice their own security and position they can discover what it means to be fully human, welcoming and open to relationship with others.

---

<sup>33</sup> Historically, the church has maintained interpretations of scripture on social issues long after the culture has abandoned the practice as archaic or, worse, dehumanizing. So like turning a massive ship with no rudder, the church finally concedes. Whether it was slavery, rights of women, clergy sex abuse, or any number of issues the church has delayed on, in the wake are those oppressed and abused by the very scripture that is supposed to free the oppressed and care for the poor, widowed and orphaned.

### **The Church Innovating in the Footsteps of God**

While it may be tempting and easy to count up new converts to define the efficacy of a church or compare attendance figures from different years, new members are not the only product of a church. Church leaders like Charles Wesley and Mother Theresa exemplified church growth and innovation on a different front. Sometimes called “Social Justice” or “Social Action”, the work of the church in the world is a recurring theme of Christianity. It is as easy as seeing the need of a neighbor as Matthew 25:34-40 suggests.

Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

But seeing need in the world and addressing it can sometimes be much more perplexing.

Not all human actions are good. What makes things even more complicated is that even without intending to cause harm to another, when one person gains wealth, another loses wealth, which creates a continual imbalance of “have and have-not”. These factors combined with natural disasters and cultural and political differences are the groundwork for problems that are far more involved and complicated to solve than simply providing food for someone who is hungry.

Problems that have no easy solution and are multi-discipline in nature are called “wicked problems.” This is a global term for a problem, not related to the Christian

concept of evil, although relationships could be drawn. The following are the descriptions of wicked problems by Horst Rittel and Melvin M. Weber.

- *There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.*
- *Wicked problems have no stopping rule.*
- *Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but better or worse.*
- *There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.*
- *Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly.*
- *Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.*
- *Every wicked problem is essentially unique.*
- *Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.*
- *The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.*
- *The planner has no right to be wrong (planners are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate).<sup>34</sup>*

Perhaps the best contemporary example of a “wicked problem” was the collapse of the banking industry. One after another, financial institutions began to falter. As the dominoes began to fall during President George W. Bush’s last days in office, it was clear that the problem was more complex than any country had dealt with in decades. Finance was no longer a “small business.” It had become a multi-billion dollar enterprise with global roots that could make a foreign market collapse while the company still benefitted from the fall out. There was no obvious solution. Any possible solution could be described as complex and long term. Any government that attempted to solve the problem could create greater problems and be blamed for the entire problem. As time

---

<sup>34</sup> “Wicked problem - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia”, n.d., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked\\_problems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problems) (accessed November 26, 2009).

would go on, more problems would emerge that were related to the problem, like unemployment figures and foreclosures. A president could lose an election just by being in office during the event. That is a wicked problem.

From the description of “wicked problems” it is clear that approaching any global challenge requires more than any one discipline and incorporates people from around the world, from every walk of life, and from many perspectives. There are few organized groups that naturally fit that description. Businesses are beginning to understand the impact that they can have and that it is within their profit margin to be a part of the solution.

Starbucks Coffee Company is one business that is attempting to address problems on larger scales. With a full menu of foundations, initiatives, and ideas to be a responsible company, the sales of their products seek to be responsible by providing products that are fair trade, environmentally sound, and are “ethical, local, global” and has led them to fund a myriad of projects around the world like clean water efforts.”<sup>35</sup>

Obviously if companies see the impact and value of working to solve problems in the world, the church has been working in the right place. For every business that begins to help starving children, there have been millions of churches globally that have been doing this since the dawn of time. That won’t change, thankfully. But the church can learn something from business about how to make a bigger impact in the world’s largest problems.

---

<sup>35</sup> “Responsibility | Starbucks Coffee Company”, n.d., <http://www.starbucks.com/responsibility>.

## No Fear of Change

Change is a way to describe making something different in a particular or radical way, to give a different course or direction to something, to replace with another, or to make a shift.<sup>36</sup> In all churches, people are loved just as they are by Christ. But in order to be forgiven and saved, change is required. For the purposes of this paper the question is, to what degree must the person come to God and to what degree does the church participate in this event. In the past, the church has used almost any means including crusades, revivals, and marketing campaigns to stimulate and facilitate conversion of the individual or family to Christianity. Each church views their role in the conversion process differently.

Some churches and leaders choose to maintain the same path they are on. It is not the problem of the church that people don't respond to what happens through their ministries. If people were different, they would join the church and appreciate the ministries that they have. The church must continue doing what it is doing so that when people do change, the church will be there for them.

Other churches suggest a middle road. Both the church and the people must change to meet each other. The church needs to modify their programs and create outreach programs to be in places where people are. But people must also change. People must learn how to be a part of church and must change themselves to be able to understand and appreciate the ministries of the church.

Finally there are some churches and leaders that see the work of the church to find

---

<sup>36</sup> "Change - Definition and More from the Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary", <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/change> (accessed November 28, 2009).



ways to go out to where people are and create programs that match the people. Outreach and mission is primary to this form of ministry.

All forms of ministry assume that there is something new that is happening, whether it is outside of the church or inside the church. Whether the church places the change on the new believer or on the established group to initiate and foster Christ-like transformation.

But what creates the largest problem for the church and for new believers is something else. It is so pious and so perfect, that it seems that it should be the ideal answer. It is what we are taught and learn in Sunday school across the country and around the world. God can do anything. The work of changing a soul or meeting a need is really God working through each of us and through ministries. Regardless of the work of our hands, God is what makes our work fruitful.

But it is also just as true that God's will is done through the lives and souls and minds of people. There is choice in the world, freedom from God. Freedom to choose God or freedom to walk away that was given in the first story of the Bible. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and walked out of the Garden. But they did not go alone. God went with them and the rest of the Bible is the story of how God walks with creation and about how creation begins to create with what God has given them.

### **How to Know When to Innovate?**

Since God has come with his people and works with them to create, it would be helpful to examine the ways that other organizations create and make changes. While many businesses seem to make changes just to continue being innovative, they understand the importance of change and seek to find ways to keep their organizations in

motion and minimize the negative outcomes.

So it is not uncommon for the following seven questions to be asked in a business before making changes.

- Is the practice better than what you are doing right now?
- Is the change really worth the time, disruption, and money?
- Is it best to make only symbolic changes instead of core changes?
- Is doing the change good for you, but bad for the organization?
- Do you have enough power to make the change happen?
- Are people already overwhelmed by too many changes?
- Will people be able to learn and update as the change unfolds?<sup>37</sup>

It should be clear that there is more at stake than just making a change for the better or developing an innovation because there is a need. Every risk has real consequence. Some consequences are more significant than others. So the cost of any change should be carefully measured and considered.

Once it is clear that it is time to make a change, the actual change does not have to take long to implement. In fact, researchers like James March and Karl Weick show that the opposite is true.<sup>38</sup> It is a myth that change should be slow and painful. But in reality most people don't sense urgency to prepare for an event until it is time to begin the event. In fact if the change takes too long to complete, there is greater potential for the planned change to be amended, not implemented as it was intended, resisted by staff, and irrelevant by the time it is done. It seems that the ancient wisdom to "rip the Band-Aid

---

<sup>37</sup> Pfeffer and Sutton, "Change or Die?: An Evidence-Based Approach to Change Management," 8–18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 21.

off” would hold true even for the largest corporations. But the good news is that people are amazingly adaptive.

### **Key Ingredients to Making Change**

Robert Sutton and Jeffery Pfeffer additionally have compiled a list of four key components for leaders to understand when making a change. These are the four elements that make change the most likely to be successful.

1. **Dissatisfaction:** Common feeling of “dissatisfaction” with current situation.
2. **Direction:** The direction for the organization is clear and members stay focused.
3. **Overconfidence:** There is a strong communication of the anticipation of the success of the change, even if the leaders are secretly not sure. Success is more likely when success is expected.
4. **Embrace the mess:** Understanding that change is “messy” and people may feel confused and anxious about the change.<sup>39</sup>

An important note to make on Robert Sutton and Jeffery Pfeffer’s list of four important understandings for company leaders is the theme of overconfidence. They describe it as acting as if something will happen, no matter what. Yet perhaps secretly having doubt. This is perhaps the greatest legacy of creativity that has been translated into business terms. In the business world it is called “overconfidence.” In the Christian world it is called “Hope.”

### **Innovation for the Soul**

It should not be quickly overlooked that innovation inspires something greater than statistics can capture. The effects of innovation are far greater than bottom lines or improvement of a product. Innovation is also the most effective way to address problems

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 20.

and challenges because it has an emotional, mental, and spiritual effect on those involved and impacted by the innovation. Innovation can be so powerful because changing the equation, even slightly, creates new results. So for the human soul, innovation can have many positive benefits.

Approaching a problem to innovate it diffuses what might be a very real and immediate threat. This is significant because when humans are confronted with things that are threatening, they experience stress. What was once known as the “Flight or Fight” response is now expanded to include five possible ways of responding: Freeze, Flight, Fight, Fright, or Faint.<sup>40</sup> Stress navigated even in small amounts over time creates health impacts. Innovation on the other hand helps subjects deal with stress from problems by changing elements of the situation around them, taking control of their situation. Part of the benefit comes from dealing with problems directly.

But also, change of all kinds is hard on the mind and body. Whether it is a store remodeling and moving the milk to the back of the store, a company discontinuing products, or a family member who goes on a diet, change produces stress. A common tool used to help individuals gauge their level of stress and its potential for a negative effect on their health is the Holmes and Rahe Life Event Stress Scale.<sup>41</sup> On the scale are forty-three unique life events like the death of a spouse, a divorce, personal injury or illness, and dismissal from work. It also includes life events like changing schools, a change in sleeping habits, and outstanding personal achievements. Not all items on the event scale are negative events either. Many events could be positive or negative, but

---

<sup>40</sup> H. Stefan Bracha, MD, “Freeze, Flight, Fight, Fright, Faint: Adaptionist Perspectives on the Acute Stress Response Spectrum,” *CNS Spectrums* 9, no. 9 (September 2004): 679.

<sup>41</sup> “Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale,” *Wikipedia*, n.d., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes\\_and\\_Rahe\\_stress\\_scale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_and_Rahe_stress_scale).

they are on the scale because they have an effect on our bodies and minds regardless of how we perceive them.

The ability to change and remember how to navigate change is a skill that can be learned. So if we are able to create change in our lives, we can help ourselves develop skills to handle even the largest changes like the death of a spouse, the end of a marriage, or the addition of a new family member. While it still may be difficult, we can experience the glimmer of hope instead of fear and illness.

One further consideration in the soul and how humans relate to change is the Rogers Adoption Curve. Some people handle change better than others. Some people seem to be better skilled at juggling changes, even seeking them out. This is what a tool called the Rogers Innovation Adoption Model recognizes. Essentially, the Innovation Adoption Model is bell shaped curves of how likely individuals adapt in relationship to others.

In the curve, the first group, most likely to adapt are labeled innovators. They are the first to try something new. They are always carrying around the latest, newest thing, whether it is clothing, technology, or whatever their passion is. Only about 2.5% of the population prefers this extreme form of living on the edge and right behind them is the early adopters at 13.5%.<sup>42</sup> The early adopters are the group who lead popular opinion.<sup>43</sup> They talk up products they like and move on to new things when they don't.

---

<sup>42</sup> "Innovation adoption curve of Rogers - Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, Laggards - innovations diffusion change model", n.d., [http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/methods\\_rogers\\_innovation\\_adoption\\_curve.html](http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/methods_rogers_innovation_adoption_curve.html).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Then come the Early and Late Majority at 34% each.<sup>44</sup> The Early Majority wants to see that the things they invest themselves in are worth their time and effort. They are a little cautious, but still quicker than the average person to adopt something new. The late majority is a little more skeptical of anything new. But when they see that everyone else is using it and it is working well, they too will try it.

Finally, there are the Laggards with 16% of the population. These are the people who have to “see it to believe it.” And not just that, but they need to see that everyone else sees it too.

The church is often criticized as being behind the times and many in the church would prefer the church to be more on the cutting edge when it comes to technology like having all the latest bells and whistles for media or worship. Those with new ideas are criticized or have to go through so much “red tape” that the idea becomes irrelevant by the time they take action on it. But the bottom line on this adaptation curve is that those who are innovators are the ones who spend most of their money on new technology and new ideas that no one else has. When a product is new, it is expensive like a one-of-a-kind piece of art. It is not until more people are on board and the product has been reproduced, that prices begin to come down. It is not always that the church is simply “behind the times” and refuses to innovate. Rather a contributing factor to the “lagging” nature of the church is the “non-profit” label. There is no extra money for anything new.

But technology is not the only area in which one can innovate. If there were those in the church who seek innovation, it would be for the good of the church if the innovations were more than technological. Instead of trying to be on the forefront of

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

pricey technology, innovation leaders can help congregations find lower cost or free innovations or help them pioneer new ways to meet needs in their community and even consider how to make changes that could impact the largest problems in the world.

Just like countries and governments need innovation to develop a full range of jobs for citizens, our souls need innovation and creativity to spark life within us. We may have the resources of health, wealth, and family and friends, but without the creative spark within our souls we are missing the center of who we were created to be.

Ultimately proof of the creative role of humanity is displayed in the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and is evidenced in the soul of the believer. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”<sup>45</sup> It is the Holy Spirit that helps humanity problem solve and create. The work of God never stops on earth. Jesus set a path for believers to follow and the Holy Spirit inspires humans through abilities, interests, passions, and skills to be able to respond to the needs of humanity.

### **Final Thoughts**

In a culture of innovation people find meaning by contributing to solve problems. They have time to work, think, and grow. Innovation in the church and in the world can be fostered through a study and experiment in innovative Christianity.

Any discussion of innovation must be founded on Biblical concepts. Christ called disciples to be dynamic. The simple move from synagogues to the early church was not easy. The change from Rabbis to disciples and apostles was hard. In the book of Acts,

---

<sup>45</sup> John 14:16-17

the early church-moved forward, but went back to the upper room. As a result, God decided to work, not in the hidden body of believers, but in the world, on public display, engaged with the people in the giving of gifts.<sup>46</sup> Innovation in God's economy involves helping the world express createdness, ushering forth the best of what each individual revelation of God can express. If we are created in love, it is completely within our abilities to express that love.

Innovation involves maintaining an awareness of God; a readiness for what God is doing in the world. It is keeping in touch with global human events and engaging them with active participation. But further than that, innovation is a participation in something that contains both hope and uncertainty.

Knowing all of this does not take away the risks or challenges nor does it make innovating easier. But through the study of the **role** of innovation, how to **recognize** innovation, and learning to **incorporate** innovation and risk as an ongoing practice, the Christian church can discover the hope and fulfillment that innovation inspires in life and ministry. The church can also discover and act on what the world longs for from the gathered body of Christ...the willingness to grow in diversity, be authentic, and work with others.

Wherever there is creativity there are signs of the Creator. Wherever there is innovation there are the fingerprints of the redeemer at work. Wherever there is hope and inspiration, there is the Holy Spirit creating a new thing, making possible what was once only imagined.

---

<sup>46</sup> Acts 2:1-12



## **SECTION 4: THE ARTIFACT**

January 1, 2012  
Kristin D. Bullock  
3049 E. Michigan Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85032  
602-317-0642  
kdlbullock@yahoo.com

Dear Editor,

My name is Kristin D. Longenecker Bullock. I pastor on the margins of the church as a woman, serving two denominations and a connection with a collection of ecumenical church groups. All of my life experiences point to how the church is often irrelevant when it should be irresistible.

Currently I am writing a manuscript entitled, *Secrets of the Future: Remembering the Forgotten Language of Innovation in the Church*. The church has been stuck in declining numbers, irrelevant ministry, and a clear lack of people who live out what the Bible says. The people who make their way to congregations every week seldom make the choice to go since it is a habit. If they did choose, something else like football games or grocery shopping for the next week or even sleeping in might easily win.

Unfortunately, this is not isolated to a few unique churches. In fact, many of the pastors of these churches may feel the same way—wondering what the point is, busy doing lots of stuff, always feeling like there should be something more meaningful to do. They live generally good lives. They try to live like they are supposed to. But they are bored.

Part of the problem is all the choices they have. Another part is leadership. Still there is a sleeping desire to do great things, change the world, and know that their lives make a difference. That is what *Secrets of the Future* is all about. It not just a wake up call, but a way of living that inspires faith and artistry in souls.

This book would have the potential for multiple audiences that could produce spin-offs to particular audiences and workbooks and study guides for Sunday School classes and Bible studies.

It is an honor to be able to share with you my vision for this project and the people it could impact. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kristin D. Longenecker Bullock  
3049 E Michigan Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85032  
602-317-0642  
[kdlbullock@yahoo.com](mailto:kdlbullock@yahoo.com)

**Title:** Secrets of the Future: Remembering the Forgotten Language of Innovation in the Church

**Author:** Kristin D. Longenecker Bullock

**Overview:** What it takes to risk and make changes for people and churches that have lost their spark.

**Purpose:**

- What is innovation and what it can mean for the Christian
- How to turn problems and challenges into opportunities
- The No-More-Boring-Church Rule
- Rediscovering hope through innovation
- Putting faith into action

**Promotion and Marketing:** I am a pastor at First United Methodist Church of Phoenix, a congregation of over 500 members. I have 1,500 Facebook friends and through speaking nationwide I can reach 5,000. I can place articles about the book in Signatures Magazine and K! Magazine, which reach 15,000 people.

**Similar Books:**

Robert Johansen and Books24x7, Inc., *Leaders Make The Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for An Uncertain World*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009).

Simon Sinek, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Portfolio, 2009).

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2009).

**Uniqueness:** This book is unique because it is not just for leaders. In fact, research shows that the most effective leaders provide an environment for innovation to happen in. And it is the people in the environment that make the difference. This book inspires those who begin to create and in turn, those who see them innovate are inspired to innovate themselves.

**Endorsements:**

Leonard Sweet, author and speaker

Gloria Gaither, lyricist and author

Sandi Patty, musician and author

Phil Vischer, VeggieTales creator and author

Andy Andrews, speaker, author, and CNN commentator

Elisa Morgan, speaker and author

John Flowers and Karen Vannoy, Pastors and authors

Dottie Escobedo-Frank, Pastor and author

**Book Format**

## Chapter Outline

### Part 1: Innovation As It Is Intended

Chapter 1: A Little History of Innovation

Chapter 2: Leaving the Garden

Chapter 3: Looking for the Path

### Part 2: Innovation All Around

Chapter 4: The Second Creation

Chapter 5: The Tools of Innovation: AKA “The No Boring Church Rule”

Chapter 5: Where Do We Start?

### Part 3: Igniting Innovation

Chapter 6: Innovation for the Church

Chapter 7: Innovation for the City

Chapter 8: Innovation for the Soul

## Intended Readers:

- Pastors
- Church lay leaders
- Christians
- Business people

**Manuscript:** Included in this packet are chapters one through four of eight chapters. The complete project could be finished in two months.

## Author Bio:

Known for her reflective insights and graceful compassion, Kristin shares a piece of herself with each group with whom she speaks. From age five to twelve, Kristin was a recording artist with Bill and Gloria Gaither, singing on the LIFE album released in 1984. She performed at *PraiseGathering* in front of thousands of attendees. Kristin also sang and spoke on albums for Sandi Patty, church musical demos, and jingles. In high school and college she regularly spoke and performed.

Kristin earned her Bachelor of Arts from Anderson University with a major in German, with an emphasis in Mass Communications and History. In May 2004, graduated from the Anderson University School of Theology with a Master of Divinity in Pastoral Studies and in 2012 a Doctor of Divinity in Semiotics and Future Studies at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Kristin and her husband Joel and two daughters live in Phoenix, Arizona.

## Publishing Credits:

“A Place to Teach: Educational Facilities” and “Intercultural Education” published in *Discipleship That Transforms: An Introduction to Christian Education from a Wesleyan Holiness Perspective*, John H. Aukerman, editor. Anderson, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 2011.

Contributing writer for *Events That Worked for Us*, edited by Judy Comstock and published by Abingdon Press, January 2011.

Missions Magazine, Church of God Ministries, January-February 2000, November 2003,  
November 2004  
Christ's Birthday Observance Materials, Women of the Church of God, 2003, 2004, 2005,  
2007  
Selected devotions in *Pathways to God*, Church of God Ministries, February 1-4, 2003;  
November 20-23, 2003; September 9-12, 2004  
Program Resource Packet Studies: 2008, 2011

**SECTION 5: PROLOGUE**

For the author, this time of listening and watching the horizon for signs of innovation has been a remarkable experience that has both defined me and stretched me.

It has been three years and a lot can happen in three years—loosing a parent, moving across two states, and changing jobs. Somehow in all of this change in my own life, it has been easier to manage because I have been so deeply engaged in this process of shaping and refining my own thoughts about innovation and change. Even though I have studied innovation, wicked problems, and human realities extensively in this three-year process, I have been overwhelmed by the very real encounter with the topic. Even as I write these words, the emotion I feel compels me to stop doing what I am doing and leave this place—returning to my house and my family and daily activities. I feel like I should stop spending all this time on this process and go back to what I know, what I do well.

In fact, I almost fantasize at times about cleaning the dishes in the sink that I have put off while I write another page here or there. I dream about sitting in my chair in the living room and not thinking about all of this. Sometimes I have succumbed to my deep desire for all this to stop. Turned it all off, pretended like it was time to stop and not continue in my work. Then I read something or I see an advertisement that is so interesting and provocative, I have to talk about it. I have to explore where it is taking me in my thoughts and I need to find other people to share with and wonder about what it all means. That is when I know it is time to put away these emotions I have, the very emotions I am studying. It is the urge to keep things the same in my own life. I realize again that I have wandered off into some comfortable space where there is not change, there is no innovation required of me. Sometimes it is just too much.

But like anything worth doing, innovation calls me back. It is time to write and make a change in my own life. It is time to take a risk and put thoughts and research on paper. There will be a lot of emotions that pull me back, urging me to stop and give up. It would be easier.

But it is not easier to give up on passion or put your dreams on hold. What if this time I take the risk? What if this time I follow the dream and find out where it is leading me?

Risks come from dreams—ideas of how the world might be, what the future might look like, or how things might end up. Dreams can be small or big, but they make the difference. With dreams come passions. It is the passion that moves you forward, that calls you ahead and makes you willing to risk.

Without risk, there is no failure. But without risk there is also no success.

That is my hope for the church. That in studying innovation and change, it does not make it any easier to make needed changes and step out in innovation, but at least we know what the rewards are for the work that we risk to do.

## PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Bennis, Warren. *On Becoming A Leader*. 20th ed. New York: Basic Books, 2009.
- Berryman, Jerome W. *The Complete Guide To Godly Play An Imaginative Method for Presenting Scripture Stories to Children*. Vol. 6. 6 vols. Living the Good News Inc, 2006.
- Bilezikian, Gilbert. *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church As Community of Oneness*. Grand Rapids Mich. ;Barrington Il: Zondervan Pub. House; Willow Creek Resources, 1997.
- Brown, Tim. *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*. 1st ed. [New York]: Harper Business, 2009.



- Cameron, Kim, Robert I. Sutton, and David A. Whetton. *Readings in Organizational Decline: Frameworks, Research, and Prescriptions*. Cambridge Mass.: Ballinger Pub. Co., 1988.
- Carlson, Curtis, and William W. Wilmot. *Innovation: The Five Disciplines for Creating What Customers Want*. 1st ed. New York: Crown Business, 2006.
- Carnegie, Dale. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Simon & Schuster hardcover ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.
- Christensen, Clayton, Scott D. Anthony, and Erik A. Roth. *Seeing What's Next: Using the Theories of Innovation to Predict Industry Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.
- Cole, Neil, and Leadership Network (Dallas, Tex.). *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church*. 1st ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Collins, James. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap--And Others Don't*. 1st ed. New York NY: HarperBusiness, 2001.
- Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons for Personal Change*. Concordville, PA: Soundview Executive Book Summaries, 2007.
- Crutchfield, Leslie, and Heather McLeod Grant. *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- D'Souza, Dinesh. *What's So Great about Christianity?* Carol Stream Ill.: Tyndale House Pub., 2007.
- De Pree, Max. *Leadership Jazz*. New York: Dell Pub., 1993.
- . *Leading without Power: Finding Hope in Serving Community*. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- DeYmaz, Mark, and Harry Li. *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan, 2010.
- Dieter, Melvin, Anthony A. Hoekema, Stanley M. Horton, J. Robertson McQuilkin, and John F. Walvoord. *Five Views on Sanctification*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan Pub., 1996.
- Downes, Larry. *The Laws of Disruption: Harnessing the New Forces that Govern Life and Business in the Digital Age*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.
- Drucker, Peter. *The Effective Executive*. New York: Collins, 2006.
- Ferguson, Dave, and Jon Ferguson. *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start A Missional Church Movement*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan, 2010.
- Fernández-Armesto, Felipe, and Derek Wilson. *Reformations: A Radical Interpretation of Christianity and the World, 1500-2000*. New York: Scribner, 1997.

- Florida, Richard. *The Rise of The Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Fuller, Robert. *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank*. Pbk. ed. Gabriola B.C.: New Society Publishers, 2004.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*. 1st ed. New York: Back Bay Books, 2007.
- . *Outliers: The Story of Success*. 1st ed. New York: Little Brown and Co., 2008.
- . *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference*. 1st ed. Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002.
- Godin, Seth. *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* New York: Portfolio, 2010.
- Goleman, Daniel, Richard E. Boyatis, and Annie McKee. *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence*. Boston Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.
- Groeschel, Craig. *It*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.
- Halter, Hugh, and Matt Smay. *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan, 2010.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Kao, John. *Innovation Nation: How America Is Losing Its Innovation Edge, Why It Matters, and What We Can Do to Get It Back*. 1st ed. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- Kelley, Tom, and Jonathan Littman. *The Ten Faces of Innovation: IDEO's Strategies for Beating the Devil's Advocate and Driving Creativity Throughout Your Organization*. New York: Currency/Doubleday, 2005.
- Kouzes, James. *The Leadership Challenge*. 4th ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Maxwell, John. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*. 10th ed. Nashville Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- Micklethwait, John. *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009.
- Minatrea, Milfred. *Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*. 1st ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Nieman, James, and Thomas G. Rogers. *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies*. Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2001.

- Oden, Thomas C. *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology: Volume Three*. Vol. 3. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2001.
- Quinn, Robert. *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. San Francisco Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.
- Rath, Tom. *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*. New York: Gallup Press, 2008.
- . *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*. New York: Gallup Press, 2010.
- Simson, Wolfgang. *Houses That Change the World: The Return of the House Churches*. 1st ed. Carlisle Cumbria U.K.; Waynesboro Ga.: OM Pub., 2001.
- Stafford, Gilbert W. *Theology for Disciples: Systematic Considerations about the Life of Christian Faith*. Rev. ed. Anderson Ind.: Church Ministries Division Warner Press, 1996.
- . *Vision for the Church of God at the Crossroads*. [Anderson Ind.]: Warner Press, 2002.
- Sutton, Robert. *Weird Ideas That Work: How to Build A Creative Company*. 1st ed. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- Sweet, Leonard. *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church: Missional, Relational, Incarnational*. 1st ed. Colorado Springs CO: David C. Cook, 2009.
- Tichy, Noel, and Stratford Sherman. *Control Your Destiny Or Someone Else Will*. New York NY: HarperBusiness, 2005.
- Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2008.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *It's Okay to Be the Boss: The Step-by-Step Guide to Becoming the Manager Your Employees Need*. 1st ed. New York: Collins, 2007.
- Useem, Michael. *The Leadership Moment: Nine True Stories of Triumph and Disaster and Their Lessons for Us All*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.
- Van Yperen, Jim. *The Shepherd Leader*. St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003.
- Webber, Robert. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2002.

### **Radio, Podcasts, Websites, & Interviews**

- “April 6: Sen. Bob Casey, Gov. Ed Rendell, Tom Brokaw, Michael Eric Dyson, Amb. Andrew Young - Meet the Press - msnbc.com,” <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23980325/>.
- “Can We Save the Polar Bear.” *KQED Forum*. KQED, December 10, 2009.

- Chapman, Graham, John Cleese, and Terry Gilliam. *Monty Python's the Life of Brian (of Nazareth)*. London: Methuen, 2001.
- “Debian Social Contract.” *Debian*, [http://www.debian.org/social\\_contract](http://www.debian.org/social_contract).
- “Faith Communities Today (FACT) 2000, Combined File | Analysis.” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG\\_Var8\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG_Var8_1.asp).
- “Faith Groups within Christianity.” *ReligiousTolerance.org*, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ7.htm>.
- “Frequently Asked Questions.” *U.S. Small Business Administration*, <http://web.sba.gov/faqs/faqIndexAll.cfm?areaid=24>.
- Gibbons, Dave. “The Idea Camp at Exponential 2010 with Dave Gibbons.” Vimeo, April 21, 2010. <http://vimeo.com/channels/theideacamp#11197519>.
- “Hamlet's Blackberry.” *KQED FORUM with Michael Krasney*. KQED, <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R201007141000>.
- “Open Source Initiative,” <http://www.opensource.org/>.
- “Innovation in a Recession.” *KQED Forum*. KQED, September 25, 2009. <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R909251000>.
- “Next Steps in Afghanistan.” *KQED Forum*. KQED, November 10, 2009. <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R911100900>.
- Longenecker, Vickie. Interview by Kristin Bullock, November 30, 2009.
- “Obama Nobel Peace Prize Speech: FULL TEXT.” *The Huffington Post*, December 10, 2009. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/12/10/obama-nobel-peace-prize-a\\_n\\_386837.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/12/10/obama-nobel-peace-prize-a_n_386837.html).
- Poupard, L. Vincent. “Analysis: Why Small Independent Bookstores Will Be a Casualty of the Walmart.com and Amazon War - Associated Content - associatedcontent.com.” *Associated Content*, October 19, 2009. [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2299401/analysis\\_why\\_small\\_independent\\_bookstores.html?cat=3](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2299401/analysis_why_small_independent_bookstores.html?cat=3).
- Stallman, Richard. “Why Open Source Misses the Point of Free Software - GNU Project - Free Software Foundation (FSF),” <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/open-source-misses-the-point.html>.
- “The Association of Religion Data Archives | Data Archive | Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, 1991 - Core Component | Codebook.” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, 1991. [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE\\_CB.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE_CB.asp).
- “The Family Tree of the Church.” *The Evangelical Covenant Church*, <http://www.covchurch.org/home/who-we-are/history>.
- Tickle, Phyllis. “Mirrors and Maps.” Conference Speaker presented at the Off the Map, Seattle, WA, November 21, 2009.
- “U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001, Random Attenders | Analysis.” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA\\_Var122\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA_Var122_1.asp).
- “Victor Davis Hanson.” *KQED FORUM with Michael Krasney*, July 29, 2010.
- “Wicked problem - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.” *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked\\_problems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problems)

**APPENDIX**

**SECRETS OF THE FUTURE:  
REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE  
OF INNOVATION IN THE CHURCH**

Kristin D. Longenecker Bullock  
Portland, Oregon  
January 2012

## **INTRODUCTION: WHY INNOVATE...**

When I first started in ministry, I was shocked by the interest in the church to hear what “young people” thought. I worked for the national ministry of a church group that had been struggling to be relevant for some time. What they had concluded was that to move forward they had to stop clinging to past ideas of how to make the church viable and move forward with new ideas and new ways of doing things. It gave a twenty-one year old a good place to learn about ministry and how the church worked...and did not work.

Fast forward to now. I work in a local church to bridge the gap between youth and older adults. In the church this “gap” is often defined as roughly 18-30 and a young adult is anyone under fifty. What is funny is that when I tell people under fifty that they are “young adults,” they are shocked. Everywhere else in life, a “young adult” is under twenty-five.

My husband and I have served at five different churches in four different faith groups in four different states. Each one is very unique and each one has been dealing with the same challenges. Internal conflict in their own faith group over dropping membership, declining giving, limited resources, and the disappearance of a younger generation almost completely.

The way most of the churches have addressed this issue has been to accept the decline as normal. Everyone is doing it, after all. Allow the decline to happen and sell off the dead churches to serve other churches that are still viable.

Perhaps they saw the decline as “what everyone else was doing” and decide to fight against it. They hired specialists in “Young Adults” (remember a young adult in the church is any one under fifty) and use the latest mailers for a direct mail website and put screens up in their sanctuary. They fight it on every front they can think of.

But for me personally, the wake up call came while I was working on my dissertation. During my research I spoke with leaders in the frontier of innovation: business people, leaders of industries, the heads of consulting firms, and professors and authors in innovation. All of them were surprised that I was suggesting that the church was innovative, should innovate, and could innovate. One such author, consultant for IDEO, and professor at Stanford University for innovation summed up all their thoughts when he said to me, “What does innovation have to do with the church?” So this is the answer to that question. It is not the leap that they all seem to think it is. In fact, in the books, research, and examples of innovation in our world, the fingerprints of God are all over the creativity, insights, and examples. But maybe they are holding a mirror up to the church to say that the church is not innovative. And yet, that would be the one thing that should be a mark of God in God’s people...to be creative. After all, the people of God were made in the image of God and God’s fingerprints are all over the world. Now it is time for the church to start acting like their creator.

## **PART 1: THE ROLE OF INNOVATION IN THE CHURCH**



## **CHAPTER 1: A LITTLE HISTORY OF CHANGE IN THE CHURCH**

### **The Oracle**

She had heard about those people. But when they all got the email, she really couldn't believe what she was reading. Jill and John were nice people. They were greeters at funerals and Jill was on a committee at Church. When she saw them they smiled warmly and looked like the sweetest people.

But here was an email that they had written and in it was the most unbelievable content. It detailed the events of the last leadership committee meeting, a closed meeting, where they selected officers for voting at the next church meeting. It blamed the current pastors for all the change that was happening, which the pastor did initiate.

When she first arrived at the church, things were bad. Somehow in the past, even with five really great pastors, the church had started to bleed members and ministry. The budget was never met. The people who came as new attendees never received follow up calls. The church grounds were in disrepair from decades of little improvement and maintenance. Throughout the church, things were in the same place as they were years ago. No one was caring for the place or the members.

The new pastor remembered walking through the church and opening doors to cabinets with neatly piled curriculum. It had a layer of dust over the top book and she actually had to wipe the dust off of the corner to see the date. 1991. It had been ten years that this pile of curriculum had occupied this space. The books below it were even older than the top one. The only thing in the church that seemed to be cared for was the "parlor".

The parlor was a room close to the sanctuary and main office. As you walk into the parlor, you first notice the light blue carpet and the big windows that are covered in

heavy white drapes. Then her lungs began to fill with a stale, dusty smell, like when she walked into her grandparent's house as a child. Everything was perfectly placed and there were even fabric flowers that adorned the fireplace.

On the walls were paintings and wall hangings from decades past, like someone had cleaned out their house and brought the best of the unwanted things to the room. All around the perimeter were glass sided curio cases like mummies caskets that held small china and memorabilia from days long gone. It was like a museum but it was meant to be a special area of the church.

Her first experience with this room was when she had been at the church for a few weeks. She was looking for a spoon and walked over to the little kitchenette in the parlor. While she was pulling out drawers, an elderly lady came in and directly told her that she was not allowed to be in the kitchen or use the supplies there. They were only for the Sunday school class that met there. The pastor could not believe what she was hearing.

And it had been like that with many things in the church. As the membership grew older and new people were no longer invited to be a part of the church, the church started to be more like an aging person's house. Some rooms just were not used anymore and were closed off. Things were neat because they were never used. Whether it was the library or the choir room, the no longer used but kept furniture, books, and supplies were overwhelming.

And that also seemed to describe their leadership structure that was more like an empty carnival where a few kids ride any amusement they want because they are the only ones who are there. They felt like they were doing a find job of keeping the church going. But that's all they were doing. They were keeping the lights on.

The first weeks, she had been direct about the changes that needed to happen. They did not understand what she meant. As they argued about the needs of starting new ministries, she had to fight like the sole survivor of a platoon. As she fought, her diplomacy began to wear her out. One day she finally said, “You are just too old. We need people who are younger to be on committees, to read scripture, to sing in worship.” And they were as shocked by her as she was. As they sat in the painfulness of that moment, she knew it would all change.

From that day on, she heard echoes of her words. People who would turn down vital jobs at the church so that young people could lead, young people who were not yet at the church. Others retaliated, sending awful notes to her and the boards about her inability and ineffectiveness as a pastor. Choir members stopped inviting her and her husband to their parties and greeters welcomed people, “Welcome to our church. We don’t like our pastor, but we are glad you are here.”

So as she sat there at the conference table with the email in her hand, she was worn out, exhausted more than someone of her age should be. Sometimes she wished that she could get really sick, just so she could rest for a while and get some sympathy. Her staff could see it. She looked up at the young staff and with the wisdom of an oracle said, “This is what pastors are going to have to do in the future. More and more, the church needs people who can help churches walk through what I have been through. I regret a lot of what I have had to do, but for so many years perfectly good pastors just allowed things to stay the same. No one changed anything. Now, it has taken so much energy just to help the church do what it should be doing.”

Hesitantly but a little too forcefully, one of the newer staff members asked, “Couldn’t the church just die?” He was not sure that what she had done was the right thing. After all, she had hurt so many people. Wouldn’t it be better if they just kept doing what they had been doing to see what might happen?

The pastor responded, “If all our energy is used to maintain the past, there is no energy used to care for the present or to grow in the future.” Then she sighed as if she had just finished a difficult task. “God will continue to work without this church, but if the people in this church will allow God to work through them, how much more can we make a difference in this community and to individuals?”

They all sat there silently. She was right. God would be there even if the church did stop being effective or even closed eventually. The church was supposed to be about bringing new people around them to a relationship with Christ. But was what she had done really necessary?

She looked down at the agenda and smiled. The next item on the list was to assign staff members to contact the visitors over the past week. The average of three each week was giving way to more people who were visiting and staying. It was this group in the room with her that was starting to make the difference. She was not the same person anymore, after all the battles, but she knew that she had taken the route to help the church begin to innovate and move forward, so there would be a future.

### **A Time for All Things**

Whether it is called the emerging church, the missional church, the younger evangelicals, church planting movement, multicultural movement, or whatever the emphasis is in the local or international church, it is clear that the contemporary thrust in

the Christian world is *change*. Not just Christian history, but in global culture too, change is what is required. The campaign that Barak Obama ran in 2008 was on a platform of Change, “Yes, we can.” That message resonated with countries around the globe and of course when he could not deliver “change” in epic proportions, people did not like him as much. But what he initiated still rippled through the political debates, campaigns, and consciences of people around the world. Change was here to stay.

Change is perhaps one of the most meaningful words in the English language. This powerful little word is blamed, exulted, cursed, and blessed. It strikes fear in the hearts of presidents and gives hope to the abused. It literally is a word that can have big impact, for good or for bad.

Change can happen whether people are involved or not. Change happens when fires destroy forests or when children are born into families. Change happens when buildings are erected and marriages of decades end. Change is a broad category to describe anything that happens in the world that is different, even slightly, than what it was before, for better or worse.

Unfortunately, the word *change* has received a bad reputation. Mentioning change in a work environment can bring fears of downsizing and mergers. Suggesting change to a group of people can cause chaos without even implementing anything new at all. In a room full of Christians, planning change is a recipe for warfare, and not “spiritual” either.

The problem for Christians is that we have confused innovation and change. Yes, innovation is a kind of change and all innovation is change. But innovation is what humans do. Whether you recognize it or not, innovation is all around you. It is in the car

you drive, the food you eat, even the bed you sleep on. It is everywhere that humans have inhabited.

Humans, unlike God, cannot create something from nothing. Humans work with the creation God has given us and make something new, putting it together in a new way. Innovation is not just something done for fun or because it makes us a buck. But it is something that makes a difference in our souls. We were made in the image of a creator. So we create with what we have been given.

Mark Dyer says the church goes through change about every 500 years.<sup>47</sup> It is like a great rummage sale where value is in the eye of the beholder. During this time of change, beliefs are examined and new themes of faith emerge.

That may be true of churches up through the first reformation. But what ensued following the emergence of the printing press was a seismic shift in Christianity. As new faith groups emerged through a period of second reformation, new systems of leadership also emerged. These new faith groups were not necessarily based on a strong central authority like a pope or bishop as the previous church movements had been.

A group out of Canada that focuses on religious tolerance numbers the varieties of Christian faith at more than 12,000 in North America and upwards of 30,000 world-wide.<sup>48</sup> If the church were described like a family tree, all Christian churches and movements could be traced back to Jewish roots.<sup>49</sup> With the emergence of more

---

<sup>47</sup> Phyllis Tickle, *The great emergence : how Christianity is changing and why* (Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> "Faith groups within Christianity", n.d., <http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ7.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> "The Family Tree of the Church," *The Evangelical Covenant Church*, n.d., <http://www.covchurch.org/home/who-we-are/history>. The Evangelical Covenant Church draws their understanding of their relation to other faith groups in the "Denominational family tree".

expressions of Christian faith, discerning how to address the contemporary needs and desires of the Christian church become much more complicated.

With all that change in the world and even in the short history of this huge number of Christian faith groups, the church as a whole has had a great opportunity to learn about what it means to be the people of God at this time in history where change is more common place than historic. The church has paid a price in all this change. In the process we have become suspicious about each other, refusing to work together, vilifying, discrediting, even questioning the fundamental salvation of other churches. In reality the fragmentation of the church has been more like many brothers and sisters fighting in the back seat of a car—calling each other names, pulling the little one's hair, fighting, and quietly suggesting that another is really adopted. Instead of learning lessons about how to deal with change in this time of great transition, our churches have tried to rise above it and instead pretend like no one else exists. They have forgotten all the lessons, good and bad, of navigating change and are repressing any insights they have learned from it all, as if they were the only ones ever created by God.

The people who can see through this are those who are not Christians. They are called “Chr-Easters” or “CEO’s” because they attend on Christmas and Easter Only. Or some call them “visitors” because they attend so infrequently. And when they go, they may have one church they prefer to attend on that one day, but for the most part, they can attend almost any church and see the same basic things—everyone sings together, someone talks about God, and maybe they will recite the Lord's prayer. And if they meet the church on a mission or in the neighborhood, they would probably notice that the



people were generally nice (even if those same people can't get along for five minutes in a church council meeting).

What this all means is that it is important to recognize differences. But it is more important not to get lost in the differences. So let's look back at some of our usual assumptions about what it means to be a Christian.

### **Assumptions about Creation, Innovation, and Inspiration**

It is a funny thing to describe the concept of the Trinity to children. Some people suggest the Trinity is like an apple: seed, skin, flesh all making one. Others suggest that the Trinity is like a father, son, and husband all at once and together. Still others jokingly liken the Holy Trinity to a 3-in-1 shampoo that cleans, conditions, and shines all in one. All of these are good ideas to try to consider the Trinity, but in reality, it may be far more complex than all of that. For those who try to describe it in terms of modalism, tritheism, or other gymnastics to make the mysterious real, it gets downright complicated. So for the purpose of discussion and a starting place, here is how I will describe the Trinity without getting too simple or too complex.

The first person in the Trinity is God, the father and creator. The male pronoun is more commonly used for God, although it is recognized that God encompasses both genders and yet is not one either. The second person is Jesus Christ the redeemer, male on earth and male in pronoun. The third person in the trinity is the Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God. The pronoun used to refer to the Holy Spirit has varied depending on the tradition and as a compromise many traditions opt to use a neutral pronoun in languages where it is available.

The Trinity exists as three independent, completely connected parts that are historically described as the “Three in One.” While each has its own office and unique attributes, all three function together as one. None is more important than the other, yet together they are all of God.

Before anything else, God was. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>50</sup> As a creator, God created something out of nothing. God created all things, but with special attention, formed humankind. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”<sup>51</sup> Note that God is already innovating in creation, inspired to create humanity, man was formed from dust and woman from the side of the man. In both cases, these were not completely new substances, but a new form of something that already existed. God also created woman with the same care and man and woman would share the same being and beginning. “The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man.”<sup>52</sup> And together they would be with God.

An interesting transition in the story comes in Genesis 3:1-13. After the humans had the knowledge of good and evil and had disobeyed, God moves out of the role of creator and into the role of maintainer or even being in opposition to those God had created. In Genesis 3:14-19 God is no longer breathing life in, but is taking life away from the man and woman. The same dust that Adam was created from he would return to one day.

---

<sup>50</sup> Genesis 1:1 New American Standard Bible. All Scripture references will be from the New American Standard Bible unless specifically notated.

<sup>51</sup> Genesis 2:7

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 2:22

And in the person of Jesus Christ, the concept of humanity that was made in the image of God came full circle. Jesus was God, who was formed in the image of humans. Christ brings new life where there was only death. After the fall of Eden, humanity was separated from God. The ramifications of this separation resonated through creation in forms of death and things that are like living death. Men were condemned to endlessly toil on the ground to produce little. Women would feel longing, not only for sexual fulfillment, but also companionship and closeness that would be painful and complicated and would end in childbirth.

What this act of innovation shows is that God is not only a creator, but also a redeemer. God took what was lost or damaged and brought it to fullness and completion. The very world God created was made complete in the Christ who walked on earth in life, filled the ground in death, and rose in spirit at Pentecost. The presence of God gave creation new meaning.

Jesus was always using metaphors of change and growth to describe the kingdom of God. Using the creative format of parable, he would teach about faith being like a mustard seed, the tiniest seed of all. With very little, this redeemer could create great kingdoms. He was an innovator of creation, building souls and minds like God built rock and flesh.

But of course, while humans had walked away from God, God did not walk away from humanity. From the very beginning, the Spirit of God moved on the face of the earth.<sup>53</sup> This is the same presence that came like a mighty wind in Acts 2 that caused

---

<sup>53</sup> Genesis 1:2

people to experience God and respond with worship and a desire to be baptized. It is the same spirit that reconciles us to God and pursues humans even before they know God.<sup>54</sup>

These three—creator, redeemer, sustainer—work together as models of creation that inspire humanity.

### **The Created Creating**

Made in the image of a creator, humans have a desire to create. The big difference is that when humans create it is with something that already exists. Humans cannot create out of nothing. While an artist may create a new painting, the materials, colors, tools, and even the subject existed before the canvas was painted.

Just as Christ became human to redeem humanity from sin and death, humans are inspired to redeem things that were once useless or meaningless and give them new purpose and meaning. Through the process of invention, individuals find new ways to solve existing problems and make life better. The “green movement” is redemption in another form; reusing and recycling disposed items and giving them new life as new things.

And working together with the impulse to create and redeem is the great sustainer, the Holy Spirit, which gives the gifts of creativity and abilities needed to create. The spark of the imagination that lights thousands of torches is the Holy Spirit that enlivens the hearts and minds of people and gives humanity a desire to be better and improve other’s lives.

---

<sup>54</sup> This pursuing grace is called Prevenient Grace.

And whenever the creator, redeemer, and sustainer act in the world, it is observable. Nothing can be created, inspired or innovated without others taking notice. Inspiration and artistry is infectious. Unlike many of the other gifts of the Spirit, artistry and creativity draw others in and awaken feelings and thoughts that may have been long silent.

### **The Recreated Church**

Anyone who saw the church would probably not have noticed anything exceptional. It looked like one of those old churches with the perfect shrubs and water-worn stone façade. In fact, when you walked in, you could see through the floor into the basement. It was a little startling. But it was a church plant and was growing pretty fast. They would probably fix the floors and do a facelift on the exterior soon.

But upon further examination, there were some strange things around the church. The rickety stairs wound around like a string on a finger and led to a room filled with the smell of coffee and beautiful artwork. Some of the art was disturbing. Some of it was smiling pictures of children. But the art did not end there.

In the men's bathroom, around the pipes that lead to and from the urinal was a crocheted mess of yarn. It was like a cozy for a toaster, but it was on the urinal. There was another one on the handrail on the way down the stairs. There on the ceiling was another crocheted bit of what looked like plastic bags in a large design and on the wall was a sign that said, "Organic!" to describe what was taking over the church. Around tree trunks, on the pulpit, around light switches, everywhere, there was this art display that reminded the church that they were growing. None of it was traditional. Their growth was in an urban environment that was designed to transform their blighted community as

members bought houses in the community and sent their children to the local school. This “organic” artwork was an unconventional way for this community to communicate with themselves and the world. There would be nothing traditional about what was about to happen here. It would be everywhere.

## **CHAPTER 2: LEAVING THE GARDEN**

### Getting Back to Basics

It is not hard to recognize Legos. The small pieces have smooth sides with the iconic raised circles that connect to other pieces. I have a picture of my dad and I working with Legos to build a house. I think it was actually a set that was his when he was a kid.

As a business, Lego had had a meteoric and successful rise from its early founding in a small toymaker's shop traced from the early part of the twentieth century until January of 2004 when the Danish toy making company reported a \$205 million dollar loss with debts of \$1 billion<sup>55</sup>. The problem was not that they were not innovative, but that they were literally trying almost everything, bringing everything to market. It was at that point that the family owned company put the faith of their organization's future in the hands of an outsider, Jorgen Vig Knudstorp. Lego had become a huge industry with diverse lines of products extending even into amusement parks. Knudstorp helped the company streamline their efforts and return to profitability in an atmosphere where kids were wishing for iPods and gaming systems. With the focus back on what was most important to the company, which for a company should be profitability, they made the hard decision to focus on innovation for the future instead of clinging to the past.

The company still made popular sets like Harry Potter and Star Wars. But also began to institute sophisticated market research and sophisticated networks of "ambassadors" who helped them shape the products and ventures they explored. With the success of all the changes they made in the area of "boy-centric" products, they began

---

<sup>55</sup> "The rebirth of Lego - Taipei Times", n.d., <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2009/03/29/2003439667/3>.



work to find LEGOS that girls would like. They used the same sophisticated research and developed LEGO: *Friends*. The girls' sets are in pastel colors, have curvier bodies more like a doll, and are much simpler in design than the boy's models. The major concern is that the play sets for girls are neglecting one of the key elements that parents love about LEGO...the creativity that it inspires in children. The girls' sets, while it matches what the girls say they want, miss the one critical element that parents think is most important. They hit the mark on the execution, but missed the spirit perhaps all together. They had become structured enough that they were producing a consistent kind of product, but were missing the "dynamic" element of play that was the essence of LEGOS. They knew girls would buy them, but was it still LEGO?

### **The Dynamic and Stable**

The late Dr. Gilbert Stafford described two forms of ministry that are the heartbeat of the Christian church. The first is the dynamic dimension of God. It is the experiential, present, unknown element. The second is stability with emphasis on continuity of life, learning from the past, and planning for the future.<sup>56</sup> Both of these dynamics are not only true of Christian life, but of all creation and life. As an example, for plants to survive, they must maintain reserves of water and nutrients because of the irregular patterns of the environment but must also use these reserves constantly to grow so that they can maintain greater reserves. The dynamic and stabilizing function together seamlessly.

---

<sup>56</sup> Gilbert W. Stafford, *Theology for disciples : systematic considerations about the life of Christian faith*, Rev. ed. (Anderson Ind.: Church Ministries Division Warner Press, 1996), 202–203.

It could be argued that in recent years the majority of the church has been focused more on the stabilizing force of structure, leadership, and programming than the dynamic dimension. Although George Montague notes that the emphasis of one dimension over the other is a “modern invention not founded in the New Testament.”<sup>57</sup> So it must be noted that divorcing the two and placing more emphasis on one over the other creates an imbalance that is artificial and perhaps even futile.

In several surveys of congregation members, it seems that congregations tend to recognize both the stability of their church structures and the dynamic nature of leadership. 61% of congregation members felt that their congregations programs and activities are well organized.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, 58% of congregation members would stay at their current congregation even if there were leadership or financial problems.<sup>59</sup> And the majority (46%) of congregation members also believe that their leadership works to inspire people to action rather than take charge (19%).<sup>60</sup> Yet according to popular Christian conferences, books, and blogs a disproportionate amount of time and money is being spent on programming, finances, and leadership.

Clearly there seems to be a disconnect between the pastoral office and the congregational pew. While leaders seek to establish stable organizations, their congregations see the leaders roles serving as more inspirational functions despite the

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>58</sup> “Faith Communities Today (FACT) 2000, Combined File | Analysis,” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, n.d., [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG\\_Var8\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG_Var8_1.asp).

<sup>59</sup> “The Association of Religion Data Archives | Data Archive | Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, 1991 - Core Component | Codebook”, n.d., [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE\\_CB.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE_CB.asp).

<sup>60</sup> “U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001, Random Attenders | Analysis,” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, n.d., [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA\\_Var122\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA_Var122_1.asp).

actual programmatic concerns the leaders may have. It would not be surprising then that the perceptual separation of the dynamic and stabilizing forces actually causes corrective patterns in church movements. Those like the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) tend to correct toward the dynamic as evidenced in Presbymergent, the emergent body of the Presbyterian Church. Or the spirit-led Church of God Reformation Movement (Anderson, IN) tending toward the stabilizing seeking structure and leadership as evidenced by a complete restructure of church offices in 2000.

It is as if once the church knew the difference between the stabilizing force of structure, planning, and history and the dynamic force of the present, unexpected, and unexplainable that we could not go back. We now knew too much. Undoing knowledge is very difficult. Once you know how to look for differences you always see them.

### **How Did We Get Here?**

*"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."<sup>61</sup>*

People throughout history have been challenged with how to “know” and not use that knowledge as power. The church has been no exception. But of course with the freedom to choose between good and evil also came the separation from God that only faith in Christ could overcome. But there is hope for all creation because the Holy Spirit is actively working to bring about relationship with God in every sphere of life.

In the Old Testament, the people of God were led by both the dynamic force of God acting in their world and the stabilizing force of the religious system that God had helped them construct. God was something very serious because God could do terrible

---

<sup>61</sup> See Genesis 3:5

things when disobeyed. The religious system, however, helped the people of God avoid the omnipotent destruction of God. Failure to follow God's direction could be disastrous like the stories of the great flood, the hardened heart of the Egyptian Pharaoh and his people, and the deserter Jonah. But God was also generous and surprising—a barren woman becoming pregnant, a beautiful woman who could save a nation, the uneducated fisherman becoming a leader of men. The Spirit of God would act in surprising and unexplainable ways.

Immediately after Jesus died, the followers of Christ began to meet together to carry out the commission Christ had given them in Matthew 28:19-20. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." But early problems and disagreements arose not because of awareness of the Good News, but because of beliefs about what was right and wrong.

Historically, divergent views on what the church was and should be date back to the Bible when there was a dominant view that the Christian faith was only for those who had previously been Jews. Peter's revelation of salvation extending to gentiles was clearly divergent from the typical faith of the time. But Peter was considered a leader and could soundly claim this revelation.

And as the faith was handed down to the apologists of the next centuries, however, there was great suspicion of anything that was not clearly from the scriptures. The scriptures themselves supported suspicion of those of other religions. Of greater concern were the idols that were viewed as demons and evil spirits and the people who persecuted

Christians who were influenced by evil spirits.<sup>62</sup> And perhaps the most frightening were scriptures about how the church would be attacked from within: “God's Spirit clearly says that in the last days many people will turn from their faith. They will be fooled by evil spirits and by teachings that come from demons. They will also be fooled by the false claims of liars whose consciences have lost all feeling.”<sup>63</sup> This began a pattern of unwritten thought that innovation in any form is not just risky but evil.

For the next thousand years because the Bible was not widely available as it is today, only church specialists generally spent time with the Bible. Copies were made at monasteries and reserved exclusively for spiritual leaders. Implicit with this system was the overarching system of church tradition that shaped and bound the interpretation of the scripture. Traditionally, the church understood its identity as divine holder of truth. It was the keeper and supplier of all things related to God, which meant that the role of church leader was very powerful.

A desire to bring people closer to God prompted the religious reformers (also called heretics by the orthodox view) of the reformation. A key aspect of the reformation was to make the Bible accessible to every believer. But it was the invention of the printing press that brought about the critical shift. Between the spread of unorthodox translations and new canonical interpretations, and the later Authorized Version now known as King James, the Bible spread into the hands of believers across Europe. The question then became not what the text said, but what tradition would inform the interpretation.

---

<sup>62</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the gentiles : Greco-Roman religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> I Timothy 4:1-2 CEV

For the discussion at hand, one of the points that later reformations held as a matter of divergence was over the exclusiveness of the priesthood. Luther had no intention of challenging the concept of hierarchy, but instead wanted to establish ministers as being for the people.<sup>64</sup> The change however came not because of strong ideology but because of opportunity. With the emergence of democracy, authority structures around the world and not just in the church, fell into question.<sup>65</sup>

What followed in the years to come were continuing reformations. With religious fervor reformers were free to address the things about church life and faith that seemed wrong. With it was an arising awareness of the difference between the dynamic and stabilizing force in the church. As new groups were birthed, they were free and dynamic. Since one cannot control or contain the Spirit of God, when new groups entered the second generation the human impulse was to conserve what had been formulated to maintain the integrity of the group. But often the stabilizing force dominated the new group rather than the dynamic force of God. Over time the disproportionate emphasis placed on the stabilizing force became overpowering and an attrition of the dynamic force began.

While clearly an important part of the Christian faith, the practical role of the Holy Spirit in the church is unpredictable and uncontrollable. It is certainly easier to refer to it and call on it when convenient and necessary. Yet the Holy Spirit is so much more and means so much more to the people of God.

---

<sup>64</sup> Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Derek Wilson, *Reformations : a radical interpretation of Christianity and the world, 1500-2000* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 144.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 152-153.

“The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit.”<sup>66</sup>

That is the power that calls and convicts, gifts for ministry, and makes unity possible through the love of Christ. New attention to the possibility of the work of the Holy Spirit among the people of God will lead the church closer to God in all ways.

And as the church struggles with the separation that has formed between the dynamic and stabilizing forces of life, the Holy Spirit always is working and bringing the world closer to God. It would be a vanity to think that God can and will only act in and through the church in the world. As Leonard Sweet says, “There is no neat line of demarcation between the things of the world and the things of the Spirit. God uses the profane and the ordinary to reveal the sacred and the holy.”<sup>67</sup>

So we can trace the footprints of God as we go on our journey.

---

<sup>66</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 Contemporary English Version

<sup>67</sup> Leonard Sweet, *So beautiful : divine design for life and the church : missional, relational, incarnational*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

## **CHAPTER 3: LOOKING FOR THE PATH**



*“Flower, gleam and glow. Let your power shine. Make the clock reverse. Bring back what once was mine. Heal what has been hurt. Change the Fates' design. Save what has been lost. Bring back what once was mine, what once was mine.”* –The healing Incantation to restore Mother Gothel’s own life, made possible only by imprisoning the young Rapunzel, sung by Mother Gothel, Disney’s 2010 movie, “Tangled”

Historically, great children’s stories of Knights and Kingdoms begin with the phrase, “Once Upon a Time.” It was a magical beginning to tales of love and stories that transferred simple, but timeless lessons. Today great stories of heroes and Kingdoms are better recognized not by the “Once Upon a Time”, but by their continued existence. In today’s environment, it is not the past that is lauded, but the future. For the best examples of this, consider the books people buy. People don’t buy old books but want new books and lots of them. Of all those new books, huge numbers are books that help leaders and organizations cope with change, manage change, and create change. From Google to 3M, the stories of innovation successes are chronicled for all to read. Each month, new books about great leaders of our day are published. Leaders write their own stories about their personal skills and gifts that made them great.

And why are there so many books? It would be great if they were all very helpful and created the kind of positive change that companies and organizations need. But it turns out that what is actually happening is that there are few, if any, answers that work for everyone. Unfortunately what is the “magic bullet” for one person is irrelevant to another. What seems to work for one organization can destroy another. When it comes to leadership, there are few magic solutions or formulas to turn to. No one can decide if the pathway that you take is right except the one who stands in the middle of the path. The stakes are high. Any course of action, to preserve or to innovate, may lead to disaster.

On the other hand, without innovation and change in a company, other companies come out with better technology, consumer values and interests change. The reality is that most companies make about 50% of their income from products that are less than five years old.<sup>68</sup> So regardless of a company's *feelings* about change, it is in the change that the future lays. The very definition of extinction is that creatures fail to adapt to the changing environment.<sup>69</sup>

When an organization is born, it thrives off of innovation and creativity to gain substantial momentum. Once that momentum is reached, an organization may be inclined to slow down or stop doing the very things that made it viable. As an organization ages, it begins to set patterns and routines to accomplish routine tasks, setting in place a perpetual motion that leads from one year to the next. Over time then the emphasis shifts away from the new ideas and creative inspiration that birthed the organization and shifts into a sustaining force that propels the organization toward longevity. The newness of innovation and sustaining force of preservation are both important, but incorporating both into an organization is a tremendous puzzle that is not full of simple formulas to replicate or certain principles to establish.

### **The Keeper of the Past**

For generations, the church has survived by handing down stories from one generation to the next. Over time the church began to create something more than words and emotions and began to build buildings and save important artifacts from the past so

---

<sup>68</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton, "Change or Die?: An Evidence-Based Approach to Change Management," *Harvard Business Review* (March 3, 2009), <http://www.amazon.com/Change-Die-Evidence-Based-Approach-Management/dp/B00122HDR8>.

<sup>69</sup> "Can We Save the Polar Bear," *KQED Forum* (KQED, December 10, 2009).

that they could pass on visible reminders of the past. Books and writings were treasured and shared in collections and libraries.

With this change began a feeling of stability in the church. One church built in the 1960's reported to its members that the building would be "maintenance free" for the lifetime of the building. Today the copper pipes are completely eroded, held together only by the incredible build up of deposits from decades of water usage. The roof leaks regularly throughout the campus and creates large water circles on the vaulted ceiling. The once "state of the art" building has more asbestos and lead paint in and on it's walls, ceilings, and floors than it is possible to remove. Generally, this once "ideal" building that could withstand the ages has become a beautiful albatross to a new generation rather than the treasured altar that was intended.

The Bible reads, "Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is."<sup>70</sup> Yet churches are known for inscribing liturgies, church buildings, and names on pews and pianos as virtually eternal, protecting them as if they were living beings or divine symbols from God. But planning that anything we do is a permanent solution is a mistake, and may even be an obstacle to loving God as we should.

### **Innovation and Preservation**

Most people hear the word, "innovation" and immediately associate the word with something new. It could be a way to do something or making a new product for market.

---

<sup>70</sup> Matthew 6:19-21

That is part of innovation, the creative portion. But innovation is not actually creating something brand new or magically creating something from nothing. To innovate, there was already “something” there. The Latin roots of the word “innovation” are “in-” meaning literally “into” or “in” and “Novus” meaning new.<sup>71</sup> So innovation means to turn or make something new. It is closer to “re-invention” than to invention.

Innovation, then, is a process that takes something and changes it in a measurable way. It could be a change to a system or a network or products or people. It may have a tangible ripple effect on those same things.

It is important to remember that innovation means that there is already something that exists to make it new. That “something” could be liked, disliked, loved, hated, or have no significance at all. Innovation is taking that thing and finding new ways to think of it, to repurpose it, to redesign it, or to create something even more.

### **Innovation and Preservation in the church**

There is an art to the delicate balance of the new and the innovative movement and the established and unbroken tradition. We are capable of preservation and innovation in the church. But the church has largely forgotten the role of innovation and how it interconnects with preservation. What are the modern views in the church on preservation and innovation?

Many people think of preservation as a canonizing of “the way we do things.” Anything that is not compatible with preservation of the faith is wrong and perhaps even evil. It is an honest view that puts a high view on the past and the proven as the key

---

<sup>71</sup> Douglas Harper, “Innovate,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d., <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=innovate>.

indicators of faith. Regardless of the “spirituality” of an idea, if it is new, it is grouped into a category as potentially heresy.

From a different perspective, it is possible to see reluctance to change as a form of stagnation that is caused by inaction, immobility, and even ignorance to the value of new ideas. In this case, those who see change as positive may see those who hold their traditions strongly as being “unspiritual”, in denial, or closed to the contemporary work of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

For those who embrace innovation, it is largely because they see the present and future as key elements of the work of the church. Their form of religion is a form of risk-taking that is led by the Holy Spirit. But they can also be criticized because manipulation of faith is easy to practice and one person’s preference or a group’s may dominate.

Certainly neither preservation nor change is an ideal way of being. Nor are either ways of being necessarily without soul and Spirit and holy intention. Without learning to allow the peacefulness of the sustainability alongside the passion of innovation, the church cannot have a full picture of what the Holy Trinity truly looks like on earth.

There must be the stability of the work of preservation alongside the work of innovation for the church. It is a pattern that is woven together that blends new and old, known and unexplored, stable and dynamic. It would be ideal to believe that all of these things can stand together in one place. But the reality is that for the church these two act as correctives. If the church is very good at preserving the faith of the past, then it is time to bring in some innovation. If it has been changing dynamically, it needs to assert the stability of preservation. Our preference and what comes easiest, of course, is to preserve and stay the same.

### Why Has The Preference Occurred?

When I was younger, I thought that I preferred change. I liked creativity and trying new things. But as I have grown and worked and experienced more of the world, I have found that as much as I push myself to change, I really was not changing anything significant. I might try a new kind of coffee, but had my same routine of going to the same coffee shop and sitting in the same place. But where I really started to recognize my preference against change, it was when I went on vacation. It is impossible for me to get a good night's sleep in a new bed on the first night.

A 2007 research study by Barna Group found that more than two thirds of Americans are open to new ideas and adapting to change as long as it promises positive results and has minimal if no required difficulty or sacrifice.<sup>72</sup> In other words, what the research firm discovered is that people are essentially supportive of the idea of change. But in order to go through change, they require a good outcome and no losses.

This finding is confirmed by a review done in 2001 in the *Review of General Psychology*. Literally, the title of the study is "Bad Is Stronger Than Good". Essentially there are forty pages of review of major studies and the outcomes of human preference for avoidance of bad outcomes and situations. Good is just not as compelling a reason to do something. In the concluding remarks of the paper the authors state, "In our review, we have found bad to be stronger than good in a disappointingly relentless pattern."<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> "The Barna Group - Barna Finds Four Mega-Themes in Recent Research," *The Barna Group*, December 3, 2007, <http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/89-barna-finds-four-mega-themes-in-recent-research>.

<sup>73</sup> Roy. F Baumeister et al., "Bad Is Stronger Than Good," *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 4 (2001): 323-370.

Consistently, people prefer staying the same, even if the pay off would be good, because there may be something bad that could happen.

Consider the desire in the last decade for the “positive” election campaign—the ideal of a candidate who is more concerned about a platform than the faults of their opponent. It has such an allure that candidates and their campaigns have flirted with the idea, even though it just does not work. In the race to the presidential election in 2011, one candidate, Newt Gingrich pledged, ““What we will not do is, we will not engage in negative ads. We will not engage in tearing people down. If anybody does go out and create any kind of super PAC using my name, if they run any negative ads, we will attack them. We will encourage people to give them no money.”<sup>74</sup> But a truly positive campaign does not seem to exist.

The reality is that positive campaigns seldom win elections. The power of the negative is so strong in the minds of people, that when they hear negative things about a person, they are influenced, even if the negative is not true.<sup>75</sup> And it is the hesitation that campaigns put in the minds of people that make the difference to a winning campaign.

For further evidence of “Bad Is Stronger Than Good,” consider Jane. A mother of three boys, she is a strong woman. She has always been married to one husband, a gentle man who supports her. But for Jane, the bad in her life has such a strong presence that all she can think of is the negative or bad events and situations of her life. Even on Christmas Day she recounts a situation at her church where another woman shamed her for having a dinner with their Bible Study. The woman accused her of having a “party.”

---

<sup>74</sup> “Newt Gingrich vows not to attack Republican rivals - Los Angeles Times”, n.d., <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/10/news/la-pn-gingrich-iowa-20111210>.

<sup>75</sup> “Viewers Are Repulsed by Negative Campaign Ads”, n.d., <http://newswise.com/articles/view/545187/>.

But in reality it was a simple dinner that was quiet where the only drinks served were water and iced tea, “because coffee was too strong and might keep the guests up all night.” For Jane, the memory of this “bad” event was so powerful that it was all she could think about, even when she was celebrating Christmas with her family and friends. And that is also consistent with the study, “Bad Is Stronger Than Good.” Even when good things have happened to someone, the memory of the bad is still stronger than the current good event in life.

Yet one significant caveat exists in the way the human brain works. “As long as the individual perceives a pattern of consistent goodness, life may seem strongly good overall even if nothing strongly good ever happens.”<sup>76</sup> It is a selective memory process, attributing perceived “bad outcomes” to variables, essentially blaming. This enables the possibility of someone who does many “bad” things to still see him or herself as generally “good”. This is the same principle that is operating for the prisoner who can easily overlook his past crimes, wondering why people don’t see him the way he sees himself. Or the woman who can see past the negative messages in media about body image and see herself as beautiful.

However, the book of Ecclesiastes states,

Even though a person sins and gets by with it hundreds of times throughout a long life, I'm still convinced that the good life is reserved for the person who fears God, who lives reverently in his presence, and that the evil person will not experience a ‘good’ life. No matter how many days he lives, they'll all be as flat and colorless as a shadow—because he doesn't fear God.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Baumeister et al., “Bad Is Stronger Than Good.”

<sup>77</sup> “Ecclesiastes 8 - Passage Lookup - The Message,” *BibleGateway.com*, n.d., <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+8&version=MSG>.



In faith, there is something operating that is not just the fear of bad and a glass-half-full view of the world. It is the hope that comes from God that there is something more that is unseen, which is not experienced. Hope is an ingredient in the Christian life that makes even the most negative of outcomes bearable because not all the cards are on the table.

The heart of Christianity involves moving beyond sacrifice and a fear of bad outcomes and allows Christians to even move beyond seeking a good payoff all the time. Because of hope, Christians are able to make sacrifice and step out in risky faith to do the right thing. That is the reason that the church should no longer merely preserve what has gone before, but step out and add innovation to the marvelous colors of faith.

### **People Who Live In Glass Houses....**

The church was sold. My husband woke me with the news, but I was not as impressed as he was. I had grown up hearing the church services every Sunday before we headed off to church. We even visited it a few times as I got older, like visiting a tourist trap. That should have been my tip that something was wrong.

It was back in 1955 that Robert and Arvella Schuller from the Reformed Church in America started what would someday become the Crystal Cathedral in a drive-in preaching from the top of the snack bar.<sup>78</sup> It was not their first choice, and it drew a lot of criticism, but the innovative choice to do something in a new way started something fresh. Alongside the “positive” message that Schuller preached, it was a success. From that

---

<sup>78</sup> “Crystal Cathedral Ministries : About Our History”, n.d., <http://www.crystalcathedral.org/about/history.php>.

point, Schuller had a platform to start some of the most innovative and successful ministries of his generation including a national television broadcast of their services, a sanctuary made of glass in an earthquake zone, and eventually international broadcasts of their services. They were lauded for their positive take on the world and for their forward thinking. But when Schuller retired, it was his son, Robert A. Schuller, who first succeeded him in 2006. That was the beginning of a new phase for the ever “positive” and innovative cathedral. The son of Schuller began to take the cathedral into a new direction and suggested rather dramatic changes to the structure of the cathedral for the long-term health of the entire ministry. It was even clear to an occasional viewer that changes were happening when the spontaneous baptisms occurred after their celebrity guest for the day, Evel Knievel, testified and brought the congregation to tears and revival. All that was planned for the day was put to the side as streams of people came to the front to be baptized and rededicate their lives. Schuller commented to Christianity Today, “It may be too early to call it a revival, but it was clearly a moving of the Holy Spirit, and everybody has been talking about it. Our congregation and church keeps saying, 'Okay, where do we go from here?' I'm not exactly sure. But I think the Holy Spirit will assist me in the doing the right thing.” It was only a year and a half later that Robert Schuller Sr. announced his son’s lack of “shared vision” for the ministry.<sup>79</sup>

But as Schuller’s daughter was instituted as the new Senior Pastor of the church and lauded for her willingness to carry out her father’s vision rather than her own, it became clear what the agenda was. There were no more news stories about innovative

---

<sup>79</sup> “‘Hour of Power’ Preacher Removed by Father | Fox News”, n.d., <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,444085,00.html>.

new ideas or “positive” ways of thinking. Instead news of preserving the ministry and the “Hour of Power” emerged and not long after, rumors of bankruptcy began to emerge.

One of the few Schullers to speak out about the bankruptcy and new owners of the Crystal Cathedral, Angie Schuller-Wyatt said, “The Crystal Cathedral isn’t a person, it is an institution. As such, its problems were not terminal. They could have been solved. My father attempted to fix these problems during his short tenure as senior pastor. He saw the Crystal Cathedral was headed toward bankruptcy. He attempted to restructure the board, cut his sibling’s salaries and establish fiscal responsibility. For these actions, he was fired by the board, which consisted of . . . you guessed it, his siblings.”<sup>80</sup>

What is most ironic is that while there was hope of a miracle that would resurrect the dying beauty, their only hope would lay only in the ability of those in power at the church to lay aside everything from the past and take comfort in possibility. What would the church look like if it moved forward again, innovating where there was something left, not preserving something from the past. After all, spending all your energy on the past makes caring for the present and growing into the future impossible.

---

<sup>80</sup> “The Day the Crystal Cathedral Died, Christian News”, n.d., <http://www.christianpost.com/news/the-day-the-crystal-cathedral-died-62568/>.

## **PART 2: RECOGNIZING INNOVATION**

## **CHAPTER 4: KEEP MOVING**

Every summer, the church I attend participates in “Vacation Bible School.” With just under 70% of churches offering this event<sup>81</sup>, it is big business. Denominational publishing houses like Augsburg Fortress, Standard, and Cokesbury all supply their own versions of Vacation Bible School (VBS). Companies like Hobby Lobby and Oriental Trading Company sell products that can be used for VBS and match different themes for each year.

And then there is Group Publishing. A powerhouse of youth ministry and excellent Sunday school curriculum for churches, this group has built up a business and ministry around the idea that learning should be relational, experiential, applicable, and learner based. They set memorable themes like Crocodile Dock, High Seas Adventure, and Pandamania with trendy music and catchy lesson memory characters. The logo will undoubtedly dot the front lawns of churches all over the United States each summer.

But what is really important about this group of educators and business people, is that they are one of the most innovative mainstream Christian groups. With practices that often mirror some of the most successful companies in San Francisco and New York, this small Christian company creates mountains of products that are not only effective, but are meaningful. Because of their innovation, they have introduced new ideas to the church of how to reach out in evangelism like Lifetree Café, a conversation group for churchgoers and non-believers alike. Perhaps one of the most important lessons that the people of Group have learned is to take risks and use the lessons of innovation from companies and

---

<sup>81</sup> “Sunday School is Changing in Under-the-Radar But Significant Ways,” *The Barna Group*, July 11, 2005, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/175-sunday-school-is-changing-in-under-the-radar-but-significant-ways?q=vacation+bible+school>.

research firms. Good things come from good people who have lots of ideas. They have been criticized strongly for taking risks and trying new ideas.

Hearing the testimony of the lives that are changed because of the well-designed curriculum and innovation is what proves the risk was worth it.

### **A Second Creation**

Over centuries the church has become skeptical of science and technology. Primarily as science began to challenge territory that had been strictly the church's to explain, the church became suspicious. Copernicus and his discovery of a sun centered universe challenged many of the basic teachings of the church, for example, that the earth was the center of creation, that heaven was up and hell was down. Galileo Galilee's discoveries of heliocentrism, a sun centered universe, challenged scriptures like 1 Chronicles 16:30, "*Tremble before Him, all the earth; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.*" And the main question on everyone's mind was, "Could the church be wrong?"<sup>82</sup>

But that was not the only challenge that would face scripture. Scientists continued to make new discoveries about the world and how it related to the universe. With each discovery, the church pulled further away from science and technology. The church grew suspicious of anything new and marked "progress" and "innovation" as questionable at best and evil at worst.

On the current landscape of Christianity, many leaders still openly question technology as potentially evil. Yet with each generation, individuals, and even church

---

<sup>82</sup> Phyllis Tickle, "Mirrors and Maps" (Conference Speaker presented at the Off the Map, Seattle, WA, November 21, 2009).

leaders, begin to enjoy the fruits of technology and advancements like sewage systems, progress in education, improved products, discoveries in archaeology, and advanced communication systems. But still suspicion remains, like an explorer afraid of falling off the edge of the earth.

In the Godly Play curriculum for children, Jerome Berryman has developed a series of stories that are presented in a Montessori-based approach. Each one is designed to tell a story of the Bible through words and symbols. One particular story can help us understand the role of creativity in humanity. This is called the Second Creation: “The Falling Apart”.

When God created everything, God said, “It is good.” And God put God’s own image in the creatures that walk on earth. In the midst of creation there was a wonderful garden. It was God’s garden. Everything was there, but everything was so close it was all together. God was with the rocks and plants and animals, and they were with God and each other.

All the people were also together in one person who was called “Everyone” or in their language, “Adam.” Eve was there too. She was always there, for she came from Adam. She and Adam were a kind of **Adam-Eve**.

In the middle of the garden grew two trees. God told Adam-Eve that they should not eat fruit from these trees. One tree was about **differences** and one tree was about **forever**. If you ate the fruit of the tree of differences, you would know about differences, and if you ate from the forever tree, you would live forever.

Now, the serpent was cleverer than any other creature that the Lord God made. And he suggested that Adam-Eve taste the fruit from the tree of **differences**. And they did.

Adam-Eve ate from the tree of differences and things fell apart for them. They became Adam **and** Eve. The difference between them and God also came apart. The difference between good and evil did too.

God called for them and they hid, but God found them. They did not know how to be with God anymore, because of all the differences. There were good and evil, close and far, high and low, God and people, Adam and Eve...and many more.

The differences also did something wonderful. Now Adam and Eve could take things apart and put them back together again. They could be creators, almost like God. They couldn’t make something out of nothing, but they could make something out of differences.



After differences, Adam and Eve could not go back to when everything was all together in the Garden. They could only go forward and they did.

God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden. An angel and a sword was put at the edge of the Garden so they could not go back, but only god forward. God went with them on their journey to help them be the best creators they could be, and to be with God in this new way, and to stay one with God.<sup>83</sup>

In the story of the “falling apart,” the creations of God could no longer all be together with each other and with God. While they were still all there, something was very different and for the first time, they could see it. There was no more “eternity” but now there was “forward.” While they had been broken, now they could also take things apart and put them back together again in new ways.

For humanity to be healed in God’s image, creativity is a natural way to respond to God’s love. By the very nature of innovation, it is a shared process that is responsive and flexible. Creation is participatory in essence. In nature things that are no longer needed in the creation process begin to die. It is also true that the human soul needs inspiration from creativity to truly be alive. This is a foundational part of humanity that has been repressed and rejected by the church as it has been expressed more and more in business, science, and government.

Many of the problems in the church today may be tied directly to the forgotten art of creativity and the appreciation of innovation in the world. The church needs to remember their creative legacy so that it can be flexible enough to navigate changes in community, country, and around the world. Perhaps more importantly give validity to the artists and scientists and ideas that express themselves in creative ways.

---

<sup>83</sup> Jerome W. Berryman, *The Complete Guide To Godly Play An Imaginative Method for Presenting Scripture Stories to Children.*, vol. 6, 6 vols. (Living the Good News Inc, 2006).

### **The Legacy of Innovation and Creativity**

To go back to the roots of Christianity, Judaism has some interesting and useful innovative concepts and theologies that somehow did not translate into modern Christianity. I was first acquainted with the idea of Midrash when I was reading a book called, “The Red Tent.” In it, the author uses this technique that encourages “wonder” about the meanings of every word, phrase, and statement. It also works to fill “gaps” in the text with possibility.<sup>84</sup> In essence, it is a way for a reader or author to use experiences and life to “exegete” the text.

Another concept that originated in the early rabbinic period is called, “Tikkun Olam.” When translated from the Hebrew it means “repairing” or “perfecting” the world. The phrase has been used in many different ways, most recently in more social justice and action. But this concept that was more social mysticism, also had a connotation that “God intentionally left undone some creative work in the world so that mankind could joyfully partner with Him in its completion.”<sup>85</sup> Even though humans are so weak and imperfect compared to the divine, the light of God is somewhere in the soul of the created beings who have been given the ability to repair the world and right wrongs in a partnership with God.

For the Christian, these gifts of creativity history help us to see the gifts that God has given to us. That all of what God has created is a part of the resources that we have to

---

<sup>84</sup> “Filling in the Gaps - My Jewish Learning”, n.d., [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash\\_Aggadah/How\\_Midrash\\_Functions.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash_Aggadah/How_Midrash_Functions.shtml).

<sup>85</sup> Gary W. Oster, “Christian Innovation: Descending Into the Abyss of Light,” *Regent Global Business Review* 3, no. 1 (March 2009): 20.

work with and our responsibility is to be a partner with God to make a difference, right wrongs, and use the passion we have for good.

### **Making Connections**

“Thus says the LORD, who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters, who brings forth the chariot and the horse, the army and the mighty man (They will lie down together and not rise again; they have been quenched and extinguished like a wick): ‘Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it?’”<sup>86</sup>

According to the FACT2000 survey, when asked how their congregation welcomes change and innovation, about 97 percent felt that their congregation welcomed change and innovation to some degree, even if only a little. The majority of people (37.4%) felt that their congregation welcomed change and innovation at least “somewhat.” Only slightly less (31.6%) thought that their congregation welcomed innovation “quite well.”<sup>87</sup> Protestants were far more likely to say their congregation welcomes change and innovation than Catholics and Orthodox. Of those congregations that are liberal, moderate, or evangelical protestant, moderate and evangelical Protestants were slightly more likely to welcome change and innovation than their liberal protestant brothers and sisters. Additionally, congregations in the West and North Central regions rate their welcoming of change and innovation more positively than those of the North East and South.<sup>88</sup>

There are many styles of innovation and they can be leveraged for many different circumstances in the Church. Churches are often comfortable with post card campaigns,

---

<sup>86</sup> See Isaiah 43:16-19 NASB

<sup>87</sup> “The Association of Religion Data Archives | Data Archive | Faith Communities Today (FACT) 2000, Combined File | Analysis”, n.d., [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG\\_Var8\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG_Var8_1.asp).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

holding special programs, starting a preschool, education ministries, stained glass windows, or even the church bulletin. But at one time all of these current day practices at church were new and innovative. Over time they became accepted and normative to church life.

In the free market, innovation is responsive to consumers, either improving something that already exists or improving the delivery or cost of something that already exists.<sup>89</sup> For social organizations like churches, the same innovation structure can be noted. In fact, the concept of being responsive to need is something that the people of God have always been instructed to do. “The Lord defends the rights of orphans and widows. He cares for foreigners and gives them food and clothing. You should also care for them, because you were foreigners in Egypt.”<sup>90</sup>

What may be of importance to church leaders is that the free market concept of innovation is not that different from what scripture and tradition teach about what it means to be the church and to follow Christ. As previously stated, the Trinity sets the standard for the very kinds of creativity, innovation, and inspiration that are required to meet the needs of the world. In the church, the benefit of innovation and change is Holy Spirit leadership that brings hope, engagement, empowerment, gifting, and salvation.

In business and politics, innovation is not often engaged and is even feared because of the high risk for failure on any number of levels. On the other hand, in the church it is the very power of the Holy Spirit that moves in the work of the people and the very act of creativity is inspiring and can bring hope even in the face of failure.

---

<sup>89</sup> Clayton Christensen, Scott D. Anthony, and Erik A. Roth, *Seeing What's Next: Using the Theories of Innovation to Predict Industry Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004).

<sup>90</sup> See Deuteronomy 10:18-19 Contemporary English Version

Perhaps because of fear of losing the faith distinctives of a group, the group will collectively choose not to entertain creativity and innovation in religious expression and theology. But if they will faithfully engage the needs, unleash the ideas of the people with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, even in the face of possible failure, the outcome will far outpace any negative drawbacks and will set the pace for greater success as the people of God in the days to come.

## WORKS CITED

- Baumeister, Roy. F, Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen D. Vohs. "Bad Is Stronger Than Good." *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 4 (2001).
- Berryman, Jerome W. *The Complete Guide To Godly Play An Imaginative Method for Presenting Scripture Stories to Children*. Vol. 6. 6 vols. Living the Good News Inc, 2006.
- "Can We Save the Polar Bear" *KQED Forum*, MP3. KQED, December 10, 2009.
- Christensen, Clayton, Scott D. Anthony, and Erik A. Roth. *Seeing What's Next : Using the Theories of Innovation to Predict Industry Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.
- "Crystal Cathedral Ministries : About Our History", 2011.  
<http://www.crystalcathedral.org/about/history.php> (accessed November 16, 2011).
- "Ecclesiastes 8 - Passage Lookup - The Message." *BibleGateway.com*, 2003  
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+8&version=MSG>  
 (accessed march 19, 2010).
- "Faith Communities Today (FACT) 2000, Combined File | Analysis." *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, 2000.  
[http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG\\_Var8\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG_Var8_1.asp)  
 (accessed March 23, 2010).
- "Faith Groups within Christianity", August 4, 2011.  
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ7.htm> (accessed September 19, 2011).
- Fernández-Armesto, Felipe, and Derek Wilson. *Reformations : A Radical Interpretation of Christianity and the World, 1500-2000*. New York: Scribner, 1997.
- "Filling in the Gaps - My Jewish Learning", 2011.  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash\\_Aggadah/How\\_Midrash\\_Functions.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash_Aggadah/How_Midrash_Functions.shtml) (accessed October 18, 2011).
- Harper, Douglas. "Innovate." *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2001-2011.  
<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=innovate> (accessed November 15, 2010).
- "'Hour of Power' Preacher Removed by Father | Fox News", October 26, 2008.  
<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,444085,00.html> (accessed December 9, 2011).

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Among The Gentiles : Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

“Newt Gingrich Vows Not to Attack Republican Rivals - Los Angeles Times”, December 10, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/10/news/la-pn-gingrich-iowa-20111210> (accessed December 12, 2011).

Oster, Gary W. “Christian Innovation: Descending Into the Abyss of Light.” *Regent Global Business Review* 3, no. 1 (March 2009).

Pfeffer, Jeffrey, and Robert I. Sutton. “Change or Die?: An Evidence-Based Approach to Change Management.” *Harvard Business Review* (March 3, 2009). <http://www.amazon.com/Change-Die-Evidence-Based-Approach-Management/dp/B00122HDR8> (accessed April 6, 2010).

Stafford, Gilbert W. *Theology for Disciples : Systematic Considerations about the Life of Christian Faith*. Rev. ed. Anderson Ind.: Church Ministries Division Warner Press, 1996.

“Sunday School is Changing in Under-the-Radar But Significant Ways.” *The Barna Group*, July 11, 2005. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/175-sunday-school-is-changing-in-under-the-radar-but-significant-ways?q=vacation+bible+school>. (accessed November 28, 2011)

Sweet, Leonard. *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church : Missional, Relational, Incarnational*. 1st ed. Colorado Springs CO: David C. Cook, 2009.

“The Association of Religion Data Archives | Data Archive | Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, 1991 - Core Component | Codebook”, 1991. [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE\\_CB.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/ECECORE_CB.asp) (accessed November 26, 2008).

“The Association of Religion Data Archives | Data Archive | Faith Communities Today (FACT) 2000, Combined File | Analysis”, 2000. [http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG\\_Var8\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/FACTAG/FACTAG_Var8_1.asp) (accessed November 2008).

“The Barna Group - Barna Finds Four Mega-Themes in Recent Research.” *The Barna Group*, December 3, 2007. <http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/89-barna-finds-four-mega-themes-in-recent-research>.

“The Day the Crystal Cathedral Died, Christian News”, November 21, 2011. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/the-day-the-crystal-cathedral-died-62568/> (accessed November 29, 2011).

- “The Family Tree of the Church.” *The Evangelical Covenant Church*, 2012.  
<http://www.covchurch.org/who-we-are/what-is-the-covenant-church/history/>  
(accessed December 4, 2012).
- “The Rebirth of Lego - Taipei Times”, March 29, 2009.  
<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/feat/archives/2009/03/29/2003439667/3>  
(accessed November 24, 2011).
- Tickle, Phyllis. “Mirrors and Maps”. Conference Speaker presented at the Off the Map, Seattle, WA, November 21, 2009.
- . *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2008.
- “U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001, Random Attenders | Analysis.” *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, 2001  
[http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA\\_Var122\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/USCLSRA/USCLSRA_Var122_1.asp).
- “Viewers Are Repulsed by Negative Campaign Ads”, October 9, 2008.  
<http://newswise.com/articles/view/545187/> (accessed December 10, 2011).