

## **“Make or Break Your Church in 365 Days”**

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**Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft**

Academic training cannot by its very nature prepare someone to run a complex volunteer organization that requires business, political (managing the values and agendas of constituencies), social, psychological, and cultural skills. A call doesn't guarantee competence.

Without knowing what to do and doing the hard work of learning and implementing key principles and practices, calling and gifting don't guarantee someone's effectiveness.

I believe the church of Jesus Christ is doing so poorly in North America because the church is most often seen as a custodian of the saints. Most Christians believe in mission, but I sense that most Christians don't view the church as a missional entity designed more to mobilize believers than to serve them. The choice is that the unbeliever is the primary customer and the believer is the secondary customer. Once the understanding is clear and the choice has been made, leaders are then ready to develop tactics and strategies. A missional congregation understands that its bottom-line purpose is to achieve the mission of continually making more and more new disciples for Jesus Christ and then equipping those disciples to develop and be committed to a ministry of reproduction, both individually and collectively.

First, in this day and age there is no reason not to know what it takes for a congregation to become healthy and grow.

Second, pastors need to become competent in gathering people.

Third, pastors need to become much more competent in understanding the nature of money, how to get more of it, how to spend it wisely, and how money determines the effectiveness of ministry.

Fourth, pastors need to become competent in understanding the nature of congregational governance and how to have influence over the polity in which they find themselves.

Fifth, pastors need to become competent in how to relate to people in their congregations. In this area EQ is far more important than IQ.

Sixth, pastors need to become competent in learning how to read, understand, and adapt to their local culture.

Seventh, pastors need to know how to fish for the souls of women and men in the twenty-first century in ways that fit their local culture.

When leaders go into an undesirable situation, they recognize that their responsibility is to create a sense of urgency so that individuals and the group become dissatisfied with the status quo. The leaders then paint a picture of a preferable future that motivates people to reject the status quo in order to pursue a new and better tomorrow. Missions are led, not managed, and the leader is called to inspire a group of sheep to change the community in which the sheep exist.

Key things to focus on to grow the church:

- Learn the Congregation
- Learn the Community
- Develop a First-Year Plan

- Gather People

Planters recognize that if they cannot gather people, they cannot grow a congregation, and if the congregation doesn't grow, the new church never gets started.

- Create Big Events

The congregation in essence holds big events to enter into a dating relationship with new people.

- Improve Curb Appeal
- Energize Worship
- Communicate with excellence
- Recruit Leaders

This is one of the most common errors I see among many, if not most, pastors: the failure to intentionally develop leaders. The most important thing I do as a pastor and a leader of a network, after casting vision, is recruiting, training, developing, and releasing leaders. Often a major reason that congregations are in decline or on a plateau is that the wrong people, for whatever reason, are in positions of leadership.

- Be Present in the Community
- Evangelize
- Address Money

Often congregations value facilities over ministry, value saving money over paying servants for their labor, or value spending money on themselves rather than on conducting mission for others.

- Pray

Pastors knew that congregations are not built on discouraged and disgruntled folks returning, regardless of the original reason for leaving. Life and vitality come with introducing new people—and especially new believers—into congregational life.

Effective transformational pastors work fifty- to sixty-hour weeks at least thirty-five weeks a year.

Wise pastors shouldn't be out more than two nights a week, except when very special events are happening. Therefore, to work a minimum of fifty hours a week, they must start early in the morning and work late into the afternoon.

If there are no new people and if there are no new dollars, the congregation probably won't have many new disciples.

Part of being seen as a credible leader is staying on top of **communication**. In some cases if the pastor is beloved for meeting needs within the congregation, the pastor is given a pass as a preacher, and her or his communication sins are forgiven. God's number one way of revealing truth in Scripture is through story and narrative. People learn and are motivated best through story. All communicators agree, regardless of the content of the communication, that we can communicate only one idea at a time. Yet most preachers communicate a myriad of ideas in twenty to forty minutes of preaching.

Does the audience need to understand this idea? Does the audience need to believe this idea? Do people in the audience need to implement this idea in their lives?

I'm assuming that pastors need to spend a minimum of eight to ten hours preparing for Sunday, and this preparation needs to be done in two halves on two separate days.

Perhaps one of the most neglected resources for a pastor is the handful of pastors in the wider geographical area leading larger, effective, outward-focused congregations.

Most pastors preach deductively. Pastors usually move from the general to specifics, but people listen and learn by hearing specifics and then move to the general truth or concept. Stories start with specifics and then move to communicating a general truth. Very few people are moved to change by reason and logic alone. The old adage "experience is the best teacher" demonstrates that I learn inductively before I learn deductively.

To use the preaching experience to communicate God's word effectively and see change, pastors need to think about how they can communicate in ways that encourage people to listen and engage both their hearts and their minds. When one studies the text of Scripture and other materials in order to prepare a sermon, one studies inductively. The pastor looks at the Bible and other specific relevant data to see what is being said and then arrives at a conclusion.

The first functional question is, Does the congregation understand this concept? The second functional question that needs to be asked is, Does the audience believe this idea? If the answer to this question is no, the congregation does not believe it, the pastor understands that much of the sermon must be persuasive, not explanatory. The third question is, If people understand this idea and believe it, how do they behave to demonstrate such understanding and belief?

Most of the transformational pastors understood that they could not continue to be perceived as the primary person offering caregiving ministries to the congregation. It is very important that you set a policy with the congregation's board before you start the job. This policy is that you will see a person only once, twice, or three times for the same issue.

Transformational pastors are not committed to counseling. If you as the pastor are committed to a lot of counseling, recognize that you probably will never lead a congregation through systemic change. The tasks required for leading transformation won't be accomplished if the pastor or the congregation sees his or her role as that of caregiver and personal problem solver.

In their first years with a congregation, transformational pastors develop strategies to share the ministry. Many pastors live with unrealistic expectations of who they should be and how they should act. Most pastors/planters are not prepared for the work, stress, and conflict they will often face. The ability to continually recreate is crucial if health and growth are to occur. Unhealthy pastors and unhealthy spouses don't lead healthy congregations. The first boundary that the pastor needs to set is the expectation that he or she will share which activities are being pursued and why. Pastors must be people of integrity in their use of time. Character traits, good or bad, are often reflected more in the smaller aspects of life than in larger ones.

Each pastor must find a form of true recreation. And just as the pastor is intentional about working, meeting deadlines, keeping appointments, and being disciplined, so too must he or she be about carving out recreation, which is required to be energized for the work. I also need to understand that if I don't get a hold on the pace of life and change, it will get its hold on me. The better I know myself, understand the task required, and know and understand my God and God's expectations, the more I'm able to work wisely. Finding time to recreate is a wise choice.

The bottom line is that if a pastor does not feel complete trust in any friendship, it is better to err on the side of caution.

Wise pastors read a minimum of three books a month related to leadership and congregational health.

Many of our pastors have become avid self-learners, reading constantly, attending seminars and conferences, and taking advantage of other forms of learning. Self-learning is crucial for any pastor who desires to lead congregational transformation.

All good transformational pastors and planters are gatherers. They are constantly gathering people, even on their day off. It is part of their lives and ministries.

Hardworking pastors need to take their recreation seriously. These pastors follow the pattern of their Creator and their Savior and rest. God has made us for work and rest, and both are important. Finding the right balance between the two is a spiritual matter that requires much wisdom.

In most congregations there is a group praying for individuals, but in many congregations there is no group praying for the congregational community as an entity and how that community will change the larger community in which the congregation is located.

This group needs to consistently pray that God will break the heart of the congregation, individually and collectively, so that the congregation might have a burden to see lost people in their community become new disciples of Jesus Christ.

The pastor needs prayer in knowing how to generate urgency for the vision in the congregation, how to cast vision, how to motivate and lead others to help implement the vision, how to lead positive systemic change, and how to be the person and leader whom God will use to help this congregation become obedient to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Development of leaders is crucial to congregational growth at any level. A fundamental issue that causes any congregation to bump up against any of the growth barriers is the lack of trained leaders. Almost all the transformational pastors I interviewed clearly articulated, in a variety of ways, the need to develop leaders.

The heart of all good preaching is persuasion. As good speakers, they understood that information, while fundamental to all change, does not in and of itself get people to change.

They wanted the congregation to understand and then embrace God's thoughts about the purpose and nature of the church of Jesus Christ, evangelism, obedience (individually and collectively), and the transformation of the larger community through the congregational community.

Boring people with the word of God, particularly because the pastor exerts too little effort, is poor stewardship of everyone's time. If the pastor has planned an element in the service to either create urgency or cast vision, he or she needs to be involved. Creating urgency and casting vision are the pastor's responsibilities, and the pastor assures that these elements are carried out with excellence. The pastor's desire is to match as much as possible the dreams and visions of the guests to the mission and vision of the congregation. If new people are going to make friends, the friendships should be with others new to the congregation.