

A person is rappelling down a dark rock face on the right side of the image. The person is silhouetted against a sky filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The person is wearing a blue shirt, shorts, and a climbing harness. A rope is attached to their harness and extends downwards. The overall mood is one of adventure and challenge.

# *Leadership Courage*

Book Four

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Compendium</b> .....	<b>3</b>

## Introduction

My name is Kirk Kirlin. I'm a leadership coach for pastors and executive leaders. My passion is to champion Christian influencers to live **all-in**. And, most of us don't. Mark Twain once said: "*Most men die at 27... we just bury them at 72.*"

If you're at all like me, you sprinted into your 20's with great aspirations, brimming with confidence, and filled with hope to change the world. Yet, somewhere between then and now, most of us have pulled back. Back from our hopes, our dreams, our noble ideals, our best intentions. **If American society is to be rescued from its own self-consumption, the Church will have to be vastly different—from the inside out.** This can only happen when she is guided by clergy who with clarity, vulnerability and courage are leading **all-in**.

This four-part eBook is an exploration of Leadership Courage. It came from a series of articles that I originally posted as blog entries. My hope is that more eBooks will follow, which I hope you'll also benefit from. More than that, I hope that what you think about *as you read and reflect* **will fundamentally change you.**

This fourth eBook captures the "compendium": the nine-part summary of what I've attempted to contribute to the conversation about what it takes to lead the Church in North America today. In it, we reexamine nine leadership traits that will be essential for pastors, lay leaders, and denominational executives to *embody* if the Church is to be awakened from her slumber and to again "salt" and "light" our society. Leadership is not management, and management is not show production. Yet, many examples of church leadership success are those who've optimized the management and production of religious education and entertainment events. While impressive in their efficiency, maybe, they fail to produce the changed lives consonant with the redemptive work of Christ.

As you, by now, know, I am indebted to Edwin Friedman's seminal work: *A Failure of Nerve* which inspired much of the thought behind what you'll read here. Please feel free to share this eBook with others, especially your pastor and anyone in Christian leadership. As always, I invite your feedback. Please visit my website [www.kirlincoaching.com](http://www.kirlincoaching.com) to contact me and subscribe to my free email newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you!

## Compendium (part one)

The blog series on **Leadership Courage** ran for more than a year. Inspired by Edwin Friedman's *A Failure of Nerve*, I set out to do two things.

**First, to establish the context: the Church in North America is, as they say in the South, “eat up” with anxiety.**

Chronically anxious, the Church exhibits a **culture of cowardice** in hundreds of ways.

**Unwilling to stand with clarity and self-differentiation, the Church has surrendered much of what makes Christianity distinctive.**

And for what?



**For the chance to have a seat at the table with the cultural elites.** Trouble is, those at the table tolerate our being there only as long as we toe the party line. In other words, **the Church must surrender what makes Christianity Christian.** And, have

you noticed, the cultural progressives keep moving the “line”.

Farther and farther from Christian orthodoxy.

**And, as they do, the Church keeps surrendering truth so it can stay at the “table”.** What some fail to see is that as the Church *prostitutes herself* in this way, the greater culture, more and more, views us with disdain, not esteem.



**Our chair's been moved to the children's table... and we don't even seem to mind.**

Compromised.

Capitulated.

Silenced.

Adrift of our biblical moorings we float aimlessly downstream along with the culture... a culture that's destroying itself with self-indulgence.

**Second, my aim is to invite you to embrace the kinds of leadership that are most necessary for the Church, in this condition, in this hour.**

Again, Friedman's genius has been my guide.



Nine leadership distinctions were offered. In a season of immense challenge, of unprecedented pace of change, and of undeniable urgency for Christian ministers to step into the leadership void, ***nine essential leadership traits*** will define those who will lead the Church out of its decades-long regression.

Here they are:

One: **Courageous leadership is not about skill, technique, or knowledge. It is, most of all, about the *presence* of the leader as he or she moves through life.**

Christian ministry is *people development*.

We are called to "*equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may ... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*" [Eph 4:12-13]

That Christian leaders misunderstand the primacy of developing mature disciples may help explain why the Church is impregnated with immaturity in this hour.

Our job, as Christians, is to make mature disciples of Jesus. Not to run programs that

educate and entertain receptive religious folks.

Do you live to champion people into Christ-likeness?

So they live like Jesus would be living if Jesus were living in their place.

**The most important person for you to champion to maturity in Christ is *you*.**



## Compendium (part two)

Nine earmarks of courageous leadership were proposed in this series. As we wrap, here's a review. The first is this: **Courageous leadership is not about skill, technique, or knowledge. It is, most of all, about the *presence* of the leader as he or she moves through life.**

Since Christian ministry is about moving people into ever-greater Christ-likeness, we're seeing people continuously transformed into maturity all over our churches and ministries. Right?

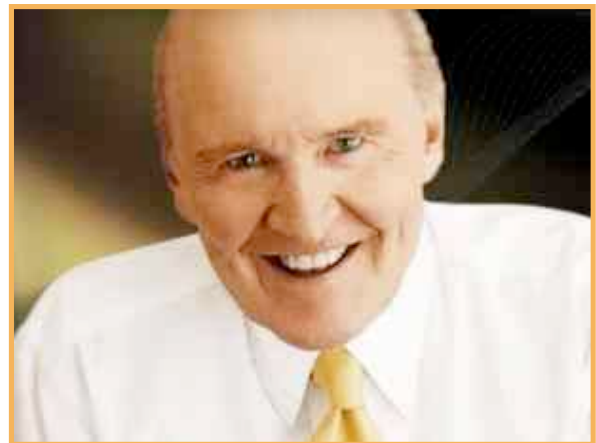
Uh, no. Not so much.

And, it's not surprising.

**Interview two dozen Senior Pastors and ask them to explain *why* they do what they do** in just one or two sentences. Few would identify their central task to be that of producing maturity-in-Christ in those they influence. Since ministers don't recognize the game they're in, it's no wonder there's little spiritual maturity in American congregations.

Jack Welch, the legendary CEO of GE is credited with advising someone starting a career with a new company: *"Find out how they keep score... and then score!"*

**In the body of Christ, "scoring" means *growing people into Christ-like maturity.*** Imagine if every one in Christian ministry was devoted to this outcome.



Once you've set your priority as people development, you'll begin to see *everything* thru this lens. In all you do: planning, teaching, budgeting, conducting services, enfolding guests, you'll be thinking *developmentally*. You begin to recognize every situation, crisis, and setback as a great opening to champion your people toward maturity.

**And, there's no one whose progress in spiritual maturity is as important as that of the senior minister.** In seminary you were trained to present the truths of Scripture with integrity. Many do this well enough. But few recognize the priority to

presence those same truths with just as much integrity.

I don't know why this is such a shock to professional pastors. Maybe it's an unintended consequence of the post-enlightenment focus on rationality as the primary means of Kingdom advance.

Paul's counsel to Pastor Timothy applies to all of us: "*Watch your life and doctrine closely*" [I Tim 4:16a]. As the key influencer in Ephesus, Timothy's way of life was as important as his doctrine.

So, what is "presence"? **A pastor with presence has a clear sense of who she is and who she's not.** In other words, your sense of "personhood" is solidly anchored in who you are in Christ. You're also very clear about what you're for.

*Why* you're alive.

What you're committed to bring to the world God's placed you in.

**You're sense of self and your value is neither augmented nor diminished by the actions and decisions of others.** So, you can be bold, consistent, and clear despite your circumstances.



Presence is the difference between Russell Crowe's *Spaniard* and Joaquin Phoenix' *Commodus* in the fantastic movie Gladiator.

The slave has it.

The Emperor does not.

Got it?

## Compendium (part three)

We're making a brief, final lap through nine traits called for from pastors and influencers in the Church in North America. The second is: **Take full responsibility for your own emotional being and destiny.**

**Pastor, more than you know, you are the model of what maturity in Christ is.** Regardless of your age, the congregation looks to you to see how to "walk as Jesus walked". [1 Jn 2:6]

Paul urges Timothy to "*set an example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity...so that everyone may see your progress.*" [1 Tim 4:12b, 15b] Notice that only one of these has to do with the sermons you devote all those hours to, each week.

**Pastor, how you live is far more influential than what you teach.** That's why, when you blow your stack one time with a parishioner, it eclipses decades of faithfulness in the pulpit.

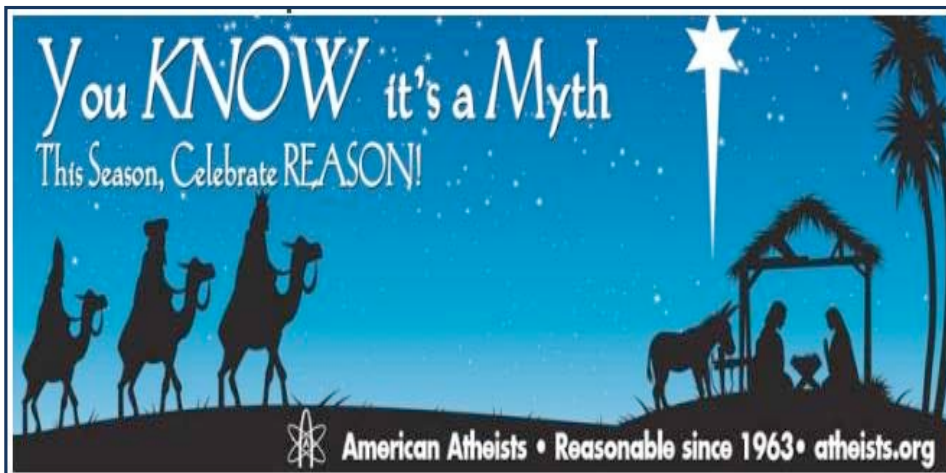
Doesn't it?



In a Church culture teeming with cowardice, you model spiritual and emotional maturity. **So, how completely do you take responsibility for your emotional wellbeing?**

These are dispiriting days for many ministers. Once-vibrant congregations are aging. Dying. Young adults stay away en masse. **Social and political winds are blowing**

**cold and hard in the face of the evangelical church.** Clergy are viewed with disdain, churches with suspicion, denominations with contempt. Giving's dried up, budgets slashed, staffs cut. And there's no turn-



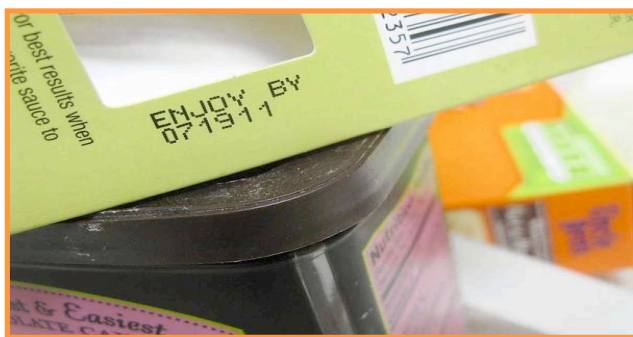


around in sight.

### How completely have you taken responsibility for your emotional wellbeing?

Were you more confident when there were 20 more cars in the parking lot?  
More sure of God's favor when giving was \$2,000 a week more?  
Are you grumpier, more stressed, less gracious now than six years ago?

### What meaning have you attached to your circumstances that you're not unaware of?



Just yesterday a pastor shared a string of difficulties he's been in. An insubordinate staff member, a church split, and a financial decline. **He wondered if pastors have a "shelf life"**. Maybe his has expired? The meaning Mike attached to these challenges was that they somehow indicated that God was "done" with him at his church.

### What assumptions are you holding as if they were true?

Perhaps you see yourself as victim to a poor economy, squabbling elders, resistant congregation, or denominational freefall. **Does your emotional state bound from pole to pole based on Sunday's headcount, the offering, or whether so-and-so is leaving or staying at your church?**

When my world is spinning, here's a practice that works. First, **I remind myself that God was not caught off-guard** by the troubles that snuck up on me.

Next, I ask myself: "Kirk, *does God have you?*"  
"Are you sure?"  
And, "Does God have ... [your child, your finances, your congregation]?"  
I ground myself in the truth that God has me, you, and it all under control. **Not my control. God's.**



We're held.

We're loved.

We're secure.

We're good.

**Then, I consider my destiny.** I am bound for heaven. That is sure. As long as I'm pursuing Christ, there's no doubt. So, I check myself... repent where needed... turn toward Christ and follow all-in.

Simple.

Effective.

Important.

**From a place of security in Christ, you can lead.**

Without it, you've got no shot.

## Compendium (part four)

We're reviewing nine traits essential to lead effectively in a Church caught in a culture of cowardice. Three: **Promote healthy differentiation within the church or system you lead.**

Healthy differentiation means to take full responsibility for your own being and destiny. Pastor, this means that you will discard the ministerial malpractice of taking responsibility for others.

**You *and* your members can't both be responsible for their wellbeing and destiny.**

If you take responsibility for them, they won't. Soon, you begin to over-function.

**Your over-functioning undermines the impulse toward initiative of your people.** Edwin Friedman writes: "When one over-functions in another's space, the existential reality is [that] it can cause another's being to disintegrate."

Here's a shock: ***Every over-functioner does it for himself.*** Over-functioning is selfishness.

Self-indulgent.

Self-serving.

Sure, you're exhausting yourself in the service of all those around you. The lie you believe is that you're doing it *for them*. Peel back the onion and you'll find that **you prefer it this way**. You love the control, the self-satisfaction, the esteem, maybe the sense of superiority it provides.



Trust me. I know.

**When you take responsibility for your congregation's emotional being and destiny, you assume a role Jesus didn't.** Jesus lived with his disciples as if *they* were responsible before God for their own being and destiny. The storm at sea [Lk 8], healing the epileptic [Mk 9], Peter walking on water [Mt 14], feeding the multitude [Jn 6].

**Jesus saw challenges, not as threats from which to shelter his people, but as opportunities for their growth to maturity.**



**Second, a well-differentiated person knows who she is *and* who she's not.** She doesn't look to her career, her friends, or her children – important as they are – to determine her value, identity, or wellbeing.

**The opinions, expectations, and**

**preferences of others don't define her.**

She is clear. Not arrogant. Confident in who God has made her to be, and clear about the difference she gets to make with her life.

**As pastor, you're a champion of your people's secure identity.** You get to champion them to stand in well-differentiated maturity.

The best way to champion your members secure identity in Christ, is to be with them as if they already are secure in Christ.

## Compendium (part five)

The fourth trait to lead effectively in a Church caught in a culture of cowardice: **Stand, as an exemplar, in the sabotage and backlash that must come.**

**A Christian leader is not simply someone who gets things done or who gets others to behave in desirable ways, in a religious context.**

A leader *is* different.

She presences herself in life and relationships in a uniquely beneficial way. This uniqueness transcends behavior, skill, and knowledge. **It's best described in terms of *being*.** A courageous leader's way-of-being is distinctive.

***Its exceptionality is that it provokes maturity in those she influences.***

The difference is palpable. One difference is **the way a leader *is* in the midst of sabotage and backlash.** My Fuller Seminary Professor and mentor, Dr. J. Robert Clinton identifies *leadership backlash* as one of the most common methods God uses to develop leadership character.



Backlash occurs when once-enthusiastic followers turn against their leader in the face of unexpected difficulties.

In *A Failure of Nerve*, Edwin Friedman elaborates: “*Mutiny and sabotage came...from colleagues whose will was sapped by unexpected hardships along the way.*”

**It is the leader's person and posture amidst this collegial sabotage that is so stunningly effective.**

A courageous leader recognizes that backlash and sabotage are normal and are the product of evacuated courage in those disheartened by difficulty. The leader interprets backlash as an opportunity to:

- a) model a way of leading that inspires confidence toward God, and
- b) deepen the maturity and faithfulness of colleagues and followers.

**The leader chooses to interpret opposition as *provision from Heaven*.**

Consider Jesus. In John 6:66 *many* of Jesus' disciples turned back and no longer followed him. Immediately, Jesus challenges the twelve: *Don't you want to go away too?* He saw the departure of many as an opportunity to test the resolve of the leaders closest to him.



**Embracing the reality of God's sovereignty and apprehending the security of God's unconditional love, she leans into the resistance with a posture of confident curiosity.**

Grounding herself in the shelter of a loving, all-powerful God, the leader can reach for people *for their benefit*. **"God has this!"** she might remind herself while *stepping toward* those who, unnerved by fear, have turned against her. Aware that God's

agenda is to grow all of us into Christ-likeness, the leader can stand, as Jesus did, for her parishoners' progress into maturity.

Having taken full responsibility, before the Father, for his being and destiny, Jesus lives as if his actions, attitudes, and words are on purpose: to establish the Kingdom of God in the lives of women and men.

**Acclimate yourself to the rigor of taking responsibility, before God, for your responses to your environment and circumstances.**

After all, everybody's watching.

## Compendium (part six)

As we review the nine leadership characteristics I think are necessary to lead the Church in this hour, we turn to #5: **Don't "push on the rope": the unmotivated are invulnerable to insight.**

Ever tried to get a kite out of a tree? If you're like me, there'll be moments when you'll "push" the kite string, mindlessly assuming you can dislodge the kite by this motion.

Of course, you can't. A string, or rope lacks the stiffness to propel the kite away from you.

Here's the thing. Those who are unmotivated lack the substance -- the firmness of character -- to be dislodged from their spiritual slumber by your orations--no matter how eloquent or convincing.

### Have you noticed?



A leadership expert and friend of mine, tells of leaving his home church for a five-year stint out East. Upon his return, he was shocked to find the people he'd left **were no more mature**. They struggled with the same issues, expressed immaturity in the same ways, and were just as susceptible to entitlement, sloth, and selfishness.

All their religious activity -- all those sermons, all the small group meetings, all those hundreds of Sundays later -- failed to produce any discernible progress to maturity in most.



Edwin Friedman explains why: ***"The unmotivated are invulnerable to insight."***

Every Sunday, well-intentioned ministers bring artfully-crafted insights from God's Word.

**They assume that *insight* will motivate change.**

And, people, by and large, are *not* changed—at least, not much. Too many are invulnerable to insight. **You discover it when some sort of crisis occurs—and Christians respond with stunning immaturity.**

Don't they?

**Without compelling motivation, there is insufficient hunger to embrace the price and pain of change.**

I urge pastors who are committed to bringing change, to work exclusively with those who are motivated.

**People have trained themselves to take one of three postures toward risk and change.**

One group will attempt something new if it holds the possibility that a more beneficial outcome could result. These, I call “**PIONEERS**”.

A second category engages life with the priority of fitting in. They'll entertain change when the majority of the group has decided that the change is *safe* and will be *successful*. Then, the “**BELONGERS**” will embrace change. Not before.

The third classification of folks interpret life through the lens of loss. “**RESISTERS**” strive to avoid loss whenever possible. These will not change until the pain and loss of not changing exceeds the perceived loss they associate with the change.

Employing the distinction: **Don't “push on the rope”**: the **unmotivated are invulnerable to insight**, Christian leaders must introduce, experiment with, and lead change with their pioneers. To invite belongers and resisters to participate in the front end of any change process is just about the dumbest thing you can do!

Like pushing on a rope.



## Compendium (part seven)

The sixth leadership characteristic needed in the Church today is: **Undermine the 80/20 Rule**. 80/20 is another evidence that cowardice is thriving in much of the American Church.

A week ago, my pastor announced that last year's tithes and offerings – totaling more than \$5 million – came from 15% of the congregation.

The rest – thousand of them -- gave nothing, financially.

### **Nothing.**

Sad. Isn't it?

We leaders get to become more determined and intentional if we're to break through the culture of cowardice and provoke our people toward love and good works. [Heb 10:24]

Here's how:

**One: Think like a people-developer, not a gatherer of spectators.**

**Get out of the Christian education and entertainment business.**

Jesus did not say: "Go and entertain people" in Mt 28. Nor did he say we're



to "Go and educate people."

**"Make disciples".**

The point of all discipleship is that we are to **be like** our role model, Jesus. [Luke 6:40]

**Two: Stop counting the numbers of spectators who show up for your events.** Instead, count those who are intentionally and fruitfully living like Christ— and summon the courage to count them only.

What does it matter how many people consume what you provide for free? What does it matter how many come and sit and leave unchanged. Un-matured. Un-disciplined.

Seriously.

Why do we care so much about numbers and ignore fruitfulness?

**Three: Innovate ways to involve everyone, every time.** What if you devoted 80% of the time your staff now gives to developing a slick religious education and entertainment event ---- you call it a “weekend service” ---- to innovate ways to challenge, involve, and stretch your people?

What if you gave them ways to practice being like Jesus *every time* you gather?

What if they were expected to risk, to try, to fail, and to learn from the experience?

**What if you measured your success by the impact your congregation is having on the surrounding community?**

“Oh no”, you say, “our people will leave if we expect this much of them!”

Are you sure?

My seminary professor, Dr. J. Robert Clinton, along with his doctoral students, studied more than 1,300 biblical, historical, and contemporary Christian leaders in a stellar



career spanning decades. One conclusion he calls “Goodwin’s Expectation Principle”. My rendering is this: **“People will rise to the level of the expectations of those whom they respect.”**

What if you began to expect your people—*all of them* – to live more and more like Jesus?

**What if your congregation became passionate about doing what Jesus did, both within the church and outside it?**

Or, what if they don't?

Do you not see American society disintegrating before you eyes?

Don't you see godlessness taking the culture by storm?

While ministers inform and excuse and soothe and placate those who gather in our sanctuaries, the society that Jesus gave us to redeem [2 Cor 5:18-20] is speeding to its destruction.

**It needs our salt and light.**

Doesn't it?

## Compendium (part eight)

The seventh of nine leadership characteristics needed in the Church today:  
**Disengage from an unreasonable faith in reasonableness.**

Let me ask you: ***How reasonable was Jesus when confronting opposition, faithlessness, and cowardice?***



Consider his arrest, in Gethsemane.

Jesus is betrayed *with a kiss* by one of his closest confidants, an armed mob seizes him, binds him, and Peter hacks off the guy's ear.

**Jesus is in charge.**

He's not negotiating with his captors. He's in the moment, training his disciples about *spiritual* warfare and teaching the mob about God's sovereignty: they are powerless to oppose the Father's will. Would you call this *reasonable* behavior, in light of Jesus' circumstances? [Mt 26:46-57]



**Thomas, I suppose, is a premier example of faithlessness.** Hearing about Jesus' appearance from the disciples, he's unconvinced. A week later Jesus steps into the room and begins to soothe poor Thomas in his doubt and distress: "Sheesh, Tommy, I know how hard it must've been for you to believe these guys... here, let me give you a hug..."

Reasonable, in light of the circumstances, right?

No, **Jesus expected Thomas to believe.** *“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”* [Jn 20:25-28]

**Maybe most unreasonable is the Lord’s response to cowardice.**

The term appears only once in the New Testament: *“To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. **But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.**”* [Rev 21:6-8]

Scripture portrays the human race as engaged in a very real, very important, very high-stakes struggle between the forces of darkness -- which conspire to enslave us in destruction unto death -- and the power of God which offers to free us to “life that is truly life”. **Those who understood this were unreasonable women and men.**

**Moreover, God’s intent is that we grow into the way-of-being of God’s Son.** To this end, God is continually pressing us beyond the limits of what we know, what we can do, and what we can control. So that, like his Son, we’ll trust God more and more confidently, immediately, and unwaveringly.

Reasonable?

Sure.

**If you’re trying to make Christians to be people who live like Christ.**

## Compendium (part nine)

**Reintroduce yourself to the adventurous life.** This is the eighth of nine characteristics necessary to lead the Church today.

Have you noticed how little risk-taking the Church does today? Other than making a bold “leap of faith” to finance a 400-seat sanctuary for the comfort and convenience of their own members, ***when did any church you’re aware of attempt anything great for anyone else?***

For what greatness are we admired in society today?

When I was a young believer, the *Signs & Wonders and Church Growth* video series by John Wimber inspired me. It challenged me to believe that God would “*confirm his word by the signs that accompanied it.*” [Mk 16:20] when sharing Christ with those outside the Church.



Wide-eyed, I watched people receive prayer and several being healed of various medical maladies. Soon after, Annie and I signed up to be trained in “Power Evangelism” ... **the adventure was on!**



Within weeks of the training, several of us were in Times Square chatting with pedestrians and offering to pray with them.

**I’d never done anything like it before.**

Many entrusted themselves to Christ and even more were miraculously healed: a punctured lung, alcohol addiction, paralysis, and

other conditions were remedied before my astonished eyes.

## What an adventure!

Returning home, fearing we might've left behind the ability to minister God's power, we threw ourselves into caring for the poor in our town—bringing groceries and offering to pray for **anyone** about **anything**. People unfamiliar with church responded eagerly. As they did, they began to experience forgiveness, freedom, restoration, and healing. Uncontrollable hemorrhaging, severe infections, cancers, and spinal meningitis conditions were healed. **Each encounter was a new adventure.** I was walking in brand new territory. Biblical, but new to me.

Someone suggested we throw a Christmas Day banquet for the homeless, the poor, and those with no place to go. **Without the time or resources, we leapt at the chance.** People from all over town donated turkeys, hats and coats, the use of a commercial kitchen, and a community center to hold it in.

**Adventures like this invigorate everyone.** It's now an annual event—where thousands are fed, clothed, and loved.



A couple years ago, somebody decided to “blow up” Vacation Bible School-- realizing that by having it at our church almost all the children who attended were churched kids.

That year, against all odds, “VBS” happened in almost 30 locations off our church campus: in parks, and garages, in driveways, community centers, and in back yards all across Orange County.

**Of the 900 kids who took part, more than 70% were unchurched.**

**Adventures like this aren't easy, comfortable, or predictable.** When you are trusting God and taking leaps for the benefit of others—especially those who are not Christian—you are “*living as Jesus lived*” [1 Jn 2:6]

Jesus, in his humanity, got to trust the Father as he took risks—with the woman at the well, raising Lazarus, freeing the Gadarene, etc, etc. Jesus, our model, lived the adventurous life.

**What about you?**

## Compendium (part ten)

### **Go first!**

Leaders move. They take action. They leap.

Managers, strategists, futurists, scholars, idea practitioners, educators, rhetoricians, and visionaries can all get by without *going*—and particularly without going first.

Leaders, however cannot.

**Leaders lead. It's just what they do.**

**That's what Jesus did. And, the apostles, as well.**

Somehow, as Christianity has passed from generation to generation the profile, role, and expectations of the local pastor has morphed—radically.

I work with pastors. Lots of them. They can exegete the biblical text, minister the sacraments, craft and deliver a sermon, counsel and comfort the hurting, and coordinate the dozens of moving parts that go into a weekend service.

All these things they do well. Seminary prepared them. Others modeled how it's done. And they are busy, busy, busy with ministerial commitments of all kinds.



**And yet, it doesn't seem to be working.**

Offering a pretty wonderful worship experience, a variety of ways for friendships to flourish, and reasonably good religious education and entertainment options are not provoking the kinds of life-change we intend. Christianity in the US *is not growing*.



Our influence in society is waning-- badly.

**Remember Tom Skerritt's character in *A River Runs Through It*? Reverend Maclean's**



brand of pastoral ministry just won't do—not in this day. The pastor of today has to be a leader and one who draws, develops, and deploys leaders who advance the Kingdom of God in the community *outside* their local church.

To lead like this takes risk. And, risk involves pain.

My friend and mentor Ennio Salucci says that fundamentally, there are two types of pain in life: ***the pain of sacrifice*** and the ***pain of regret***.

To go first, with all your chips in play, trusting Jesus to rescue you as you attempt God-honoring exploits ... this is to experience the ***pain of sacrifice***. To sacrifice the comfort and safety of what's familiar for the dangerous, exciting uncertainty of the unprecedented.



**To live the life God's given you -- with your whole heart engaged -- is to be fully alive, awake, and influential.**

To pull back from this to settle for what's safe, easy, and predictable--- is the short route to the ***pain of regret***. You know people in their later years who are going through the motions... asleep to the amazing life God has made them for.



Think about the movie **Rudy**.

The conversation between Daniel Ruettinger Sr. and his son: ***“Chasing a stupid dream ...causes nothing but you and everyone around you heartache...”*** his father intones, half-awake. You see the ***pain of regret*** all over this man's visage.

American society has become increasingly anxious. Do you notice its growing intolerance of difficulty and challenge? Now is the time for the Church to *leap* into the fray.

**Clearly, courageously, relentlessly on mission for Christ.**

The Church will be led by pastors who have grounded themselves in the fidelity and goodness of God. Ministers who've learned to govern their emotional reactivity.

Clergy who are willing to lead by going first.

**The question is, will you?**