



Turn Around Leaders (Elective D)

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So, Why Should We Listen To This Easum Guy?

Bill Easum has a thirty year track record of growing congregations in two denominations. His last church, which he pastored for twenty-four years, grew to the largest United Methodist Church in South Texas. His record of "evangelization" and "social justice" ministries was acknowledged by Industrial Areas Foundation in New York as one of the finest examples in North America.

The past fifteen years, Bill has served as a consultant to congregations and denominations. In 1986 he founded 21st Century Strategies which in 2000 with Thriving Church Consultants and became Easum, Bandy & Associates (EBA) with his new partner Tom Bandy who offices out of Canada. EBA serves the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Bill has personally worked in over 500 congregations, some of which are the largest in the nation, and has taught hundreds of thousands of leaders.

Bill is the author of numerous best-selling books such as *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, *Leadership on the OtherSide*, *Unfreezing Moves*, and *Beyond the Box*. His most recent book, written with Bil Cornelius, is titled *Go Big: How to Have Explosive Growth*.

A few of the areas in which Bill consults are church planting, multiple site congregations, demographics, local church consultations, church growth seminars, stewardship, lay ministries, social justice, small groups, spiritual gifts, postmodern ministry, small church dynamics, systems thinking and organizational transformation, strategic mapping, using the Ministry Audit, and leadership development, to mention only a few

Bill is a graduate of Baylor University, B.A., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, M.D., and Perkins School of Theology, S.T.M.

Turn Around Leaders

- I. The purpose of this session.
 - A. Our mission is to explore the *kind of leader* it takes to turn around a dying or stagnate congregation. So this is not a “how to” session on how to turn a church around.
 - B. Three out of four congregations today are either dying or stagnate. God is raising up men and women to change this picture. This session focuses on what we are learning about them.
- II. Above all else, turn around leaders spend the necessary time to keep their faith strong.
 - A. Jesus is our model here. He took care of himself. When he needed to he would withdraw from the crowds.
 - B. It is not uncommon for these leaders to spend two or three years per day on their own spiritual development, not counting their preparation for Bible Study. Bill Hybels has said in a tape that it is not uncommon for the great leaders he knows to spend up to 50% of their time on themselves and their families.
 - C. Why do they do this?
 1. They have an insatiable desire to be obedient to God.
 2. They know the church won't be any healthier than their leadership.
 3. They know they can't give to others what they do not have.
 4. They also know that turn around usually results in spiritual warfare. Their devotional life also prepares them for the battle and the inevitable stress that comes from opposition and running down two tracks much of the time.
 - a. Track One is the old track where you have to take care of people; Track Two is the new track where you have to equip people. Their spiritual preparation allows them to carefully prioritize their actions.
 - b. The normal stress points occur when:
 - (1) Controllers are pressured to leave office.
 - (2) Making the attempt either to change an existing worship service or begin an additional worship service.
 - (3) The pastor begins breaking the personal-chaplain mold and begins trying to be an empowering leader.
 - (4) The transition begins to cost money.
 - (5) A desire for high commitment begins to encroach upon the entitlements usually afforded to longtime members.

Notes

- (6) New leaders make mistakes trying to implement the innovations.
- (7) Churches with paid staff find that before the turnaround can happen, they must replace some long-term paid staff.

c. Because of their spiritual depth, they never take any conflict personal. They know it goes deeper than that. They are not mad at you, they are mad at the changes. 46% of the people hate change. They are not mad at me, they're just mad about change. There is a great article called "How to Swim With Sharks." The number one thing to remember is that when doing so, do not bleed.

III. Turn around leaders believe that taking part in fulfilling the Great Commission is a given for every congregation, not an option.

- A. They know that it is God's will for the kingdom of God to expand to cover the earth. They do not confuse a church with the Kingdom but they know it is part of the earthly expression of the Kingdom. Failure to understand this puts everything else in jeopardy.
- B. They do not ask the church if it wants to grow; that is a given. Failure to understand this is probably where many of the want-a-be turn around pastor's fail.
- C. They feel called to the ministry of turn around because they know God wants the kingdom to grow.
- D. Everything they do is geared around the turn around - sermons, articles, conversations, studies, etc. They live and breathe a thriving congregation. Pastors who fail often spend too much time on solving or ignoring problems and taking care of the membership.
- E. As such these leaders are willing to pay an enormous price. Make no bones about it; the hardest ministry on the planet is turning around a church that does not want to be turned around which is the vast majority of dying congregations. The pastor becomes the brunt of the anger and three out of four who attempt a turn around lose their jobs.
- F. This is why pastors with high mercy gifts have the hardest time with turning around a dying church.
 - 1. A Barna study showed that only 35% of the turn arounds are accomplished with pastors with high mercy gifts. If your mercy gift is high, you will have to make decisions that you would rather not make. Which means you have to work even harder on your spiritual life and physical well being.
 - 2. Sooner or later some people usually have to be replaced in a turn around. Those who got the church into the mess can seldom lead them out of the mess. Making this move is harder the higher the mercy gift.

IV. Turn around leaders are team players.

- A. Successful turn around pastors always gather and nurture a team of called, gifted, and equipped laity before beginning the turnaround. They know this is bigger than the gifts they possess.
- B. See their role as empowered of and role model for turnaround. Often this takes two years.

V. Turn around leaders empower people rather than take care of people.

- A. Their first priority in life is to transform, equip, and empower people and communities.
- B. However, they know that part of transformation is also caring for people. In order to empower people you have to first love them. This is where the Great Commandment enters the picture.
- C. They role model grace without being a chaplain. They refuse to make people dependent on them.
- D. This means that they develop systems and equip people to care for one another as directed in Galatians 6:2 instead of doing all of it themselves. In order for this to happen:
 - 1. Pastors have to give up most forms of ministry.
 - 2. Laity has to give up most areas of administration.

VI. Turn around leaders take the long view.

- A. Most turn around take 3 to 5 years even though they usually begin the first day the new pastor arrives.
- B. They invoke the two-year-old rule.
 - 1. They push until you get told No then pull back only to begin pushing again as soon as the dust settles.
 - 2. They take advantage of the situation anytime you can since you know it is God's will for the kingdom to grow.
- C. These leaders often sacrifice much for the moment because they are able to envision what the church could be like in five or ten years.
 - 1. They are then able to articulate this vision to others so clearly that they want to be part of turn around team. One of the most important things a leader can do in the transformation process is to provide an atmosphere in which people feel as if it is okay to change.
 - 2. The pain of transformation must be overcome by the promise of the future. For example: Moses had to paint a picture of a land with milk and honey in order for the people to see beyond the mud pits. One

would think it would be easy to help people leave the mud pits. Not so. They were not willing to leave until the promise of something better overcame the pain and fear of leaving what is familiar even if it is filled with pain. For the joy that had been set before Him, He endured the cross, despised the shame.

3. Developing and managing the vision is the most important aspect of transition. You don't manage the transformation process; you manage the vision. Most organizations are over managed.

D. Still, many set limits on how long they are willing to give the turn around. Most studies show that if it hasn't begun within the first year, it won't happen. Beginning often means nothing more than the gathering of a few people who have caught the vision of a better day.

VII. So before beginning the transformation process, do the following:

A. Count the cost. Be prepared for conflict. It is rare to transform without conflict, especially if you are successful. You may lose some members and friends. You may lose your pulpit.

B. Once you start, never under any circumstances stop the process. To blink, leaves everyone in a mess. Those who are mad are still mad and those whose hopes you elevated will be crushed and will lose faith in you.

VIII. The overview of such a leader:

A. Faith

Jesus Christ is the leaders focus. Excellence is present in most aspects of the leaders ministry. Integrity of the leader is above reproach. Courage is basic to decision making. When this strength is not fully functioning, career/professional clergy emerge.

B. Vision

The primary Tool of leaders. A built in compass (personal mission) is what keeps leaders on course in the wilderness. You can learn more about the compass in my book *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*, Abingdon. You can also find this chapter on my web site. Self-defined keeps leaders from being swayed by divergent ideas. Shared Vision is always the leader's goal. The leaders' vision resonates in the guts of the key leaders or else the vision becomes a nightmare. For more on how to develop shared vision, see our website in the FAQs section under "Mission Statement".

C. Mentor

The leader is an equipper instead of a doer of ministry. For more see the chapter on leadership in *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*. Interns are always somewhere in the picture. Every one of these leaders has someone in training. No one leads without an intern. Long-Term

View is always more important than a quick fix. It is better to spend the up front time training someone to do ministry than to do it oneself. Team player because of the enormity of the mission. Several minds with the same agenda can always achieve more than one person acting alone.

D. Realism

The leader has no illusions that keeps the leader from fooling her/himself. It is imperative to know your strengths and weaknesses and to surround yourself with people who have those strengths that you lack. Responsible for own actions. Never blame someone else or thing for your mistakes. Details are important. Having the big picture is not enough. You have to have some awareness of what is being done with it. Care for Self is essential instead of allowing oneself to run down. This is the biggest downfall of most leaders. Down time for personal growth is essential.