



**It's Time to Lead, Pastor
Positioning Yourself for
Explosive Growth
(Elective E)**

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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.

Positioning Yourself for Growth

Notes

A pastor once told me he had been praying for God to double the size of his church but that it hadn't happened. I asked him, "What have you done besides just praying for it to happen?" He said, "What do you mean?" I then asked him "If God sent a hundred more people to you tomorrow, do you have places for them to serve?" He looked at me and said, "No. Why should I do that until I have the people?" He just told me why his church was declining – He hadn't positioned himself or the church for such growth to happen.

God doesn't bless those who don't position themselves for it to happen. Another way of putting it is, God responds to us based on the size of our dream and the amount of work we are willing to do. Let's look at what that means.

The amount of explosive growth you can have is tied very closely to how much you resonate with what follows. The more we say that either grates on your nerves or that seems impossible in your situation, the less likely you are to experience explosive growth.

Remember two things:

- All big churches were once small churches.
- If your dream is small enough for you to accomplish, you don't need God. God is found in the impossible dreams.

Positioning Yourself For Explosive Growth

You must believe God wants explosive growth for your church

Fast growth is biblical and God expects it today. Acts 1 and 2 tell us that the early church went from one hundred and twenty believers to three thousand one hundred and twenty believers overnight. But that's not all. Acts 2:47 tells us that "Each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved." The number of Christians was growing daily!

But God is just getting warmed up. Acts 6:1 says "The believers rapidly multiplied." It is only now that they use the word "rapidly". So from zero to twenty thousand, Luke didn't use the word rapidly

God Wants Your Church to Reach the Tipping Point. This wildfire of growth was not over. Acts 21 uses another word to describe the growth - myriads. That means tens of thousands of believers now in Jerusalem. The number of believers at this point in the story is staggering. Especially when you realize that Jerusalem had only around fifty-five thousand inhabitants at the time. The church in Jerusalem passed within their city and region what Malcolm Gladwell calls the Tipping Point.

You must get your people to understand that they are missionaries to the city, and their job is to go reach the people and to continuously put the word out again and again and again, and when you put the word out

enough eventually you have an evangelistic explosive tipping point, to where all of a sudden it just goes crazy.

The Lead Pastor Is the Stopping Point or the Catalyst. If your church is not growing, you are the stopping point. If your church is growing, you are the catalyst. It's that simple. When God wants to change the world He raises up leaders. God does not change the world by committee.

Your church is not going to go to the next level until you do. Mark 9:23 says, "Anything is possible if a person believes." Read that one again out loud. Anything is possible. Do you believe that? Then act upon it.

The vision of the church never outgrows the vision of the pastor.

- How often do you cast the vision? Remember how often Nehemiah reminded the people why they were building the Wall.
- How many other leaders are casting the vision with you?
- What do you have in place to insure that the vision is cast on a daily basis?
- Do you spend the majority of your time on the issues surrounding managing the vision and insuring that the vision manages you and the church?
- Is every leader in the church focused on insuring that the vision is being managed?

Journal time

- What's keeping you from asking God to multiply your ministry? Take time now to pray for God to open your heart for your city.
- What one thing is standing in your way?
- Do you really really believe that God wants your ministry to grow and that if it isn't, you are the problem?
- When was the last time you encouraged your people to invite their networks to worship with them?
- Are you willing to go to the next level of leadership? If so, have you figure out yet what would that take?
- What things are still getting in the way of you stepping out of faith to accomplish the impossible for God?
- Are you allowing the lack of money to stand in the way of your Big dream?

A Church Structure That Doesn't Impede Growth

Three forms of church governance dominate the Church landscape today.

- Congregational (where the congregation gathers to vote on all mission, administrative, and management issues).
- Representative Democracy (where a group of nominated and elected members gather to vote on important mission, administrative, and management issues).
- Apostolic or Pastor Led (where the pastor makes most of the strategic mission decisions and delegates the administrative and management decisions).

- Neither congregational nor representative democracy is biblical. Most dying churches are either congregational or representative.
- Most thriving churches are Apostolic or Pastor Led (We will use pastor led from now on).
- The rule of thumb we see working in the thriving churches today is ***the less democracy in the church the more authentic and effective the church can be in advancing the Kingdom of God!***

What is the size of your board? If it is over seven people it is impeding your growth.

How are decisions made in your church? Most tribes within traditional mainstream Protestantism have placed so many checks and balances on their pastoral leadership to keep them from doing something bad to the church that they have almost insured that nothing good can happen. You cannot fulfill the Great Commission. If you must have a congregational vote, your growth is hampered.

But what about the abuse of power? Who holds the pastor accountable? We admit, some leaders will abuse power. No question about it. But why build a structure around something bad that could happen? Why not build a structure around trust that can result in good things happening?

The one constant we see in explosive growth churches of any size is these pastors function as *spiritual leaders who listen to God rather than corporate leaders who lead based on democratic rule.* Even if these pastors function in a denomination that requires democratic rule, they find ways to get around or minimize the effects of democratic rule and provide biblical leadership.

Journal time:

- What attitudes and structures stand in your way of having explosive growth?
- What means do you have at your disposal to do something about them?
- What was the last big dream you had? Was it big enough for only God to accomplish? If not, what will it take for you to dream bigger?

The Lead Pastor Must Lead

The role of the lead pastor is the single most important role in the church. It doesn't matter how the church is structured, as goes the pastor so goes the church.

According to Ephesians 4:11-12, the role of the lead pastor is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." Nothing is said about the pastor taking care of people, going to hospitals, preaching sermons, or sitting on committees. The pastor's role is to equip the church. Period. In the case of a large church, the pastor's role is to ensure that the work of equipping the church is accomplished - usually through the staff.

Set your own agenda based on your call from God and not what the church wants. Do the things you are gifted to do.

Do not feel as if you have to be everything for everyone or do everything that needs doing. Instead, work toward doing as little as possible. That's right, as the church becomes larger, the less you do, the faster the church will grow.

Make a list of everything that you are currently doing and ask yourself, what on this list am I called to do and what can I delegate so I don't have to do it? When your list is down to three or four things that light your fire, work toward focusing on them and nothing more.

Don't waste time with the Naysayers - "They" never exist. Live an exemplary life. Admit your mistakes. Be humble and accountable. Cast and manage the vision. Establish clear lines of authority.

Some details on leading

- The lead pastor should make all the decisions about hiring senior staff and delegate that power to other staff to hire and fire those they supervise and work alongside. In a small church, gaining the right to hire and fire is one of the most important steps a pastor can take toward actually being able to lead effectively.
- In the smaller church, the lead pastor is responsible for selecting the lay leaders of the core lay teams that are led by paid staff in larger churches.
- The lead pastor hires and supervises an Executive Pastor and turns over all of the hiring and firing of the senior staff to that person.
- The lead pastor or Executive Pastor hires a Business Manager and the Business Manager hires, supervises, and fires his or her team.
- The lead pastor decides the church will become a church of small groups but leaves the details to the person in charge of small groups.
- The lead pastor is responsible for making recommendations on major budget decisions.
- The lead pastor decides when, how, and where to do an existing or new worship service but delegates the logistics of the service to other staff.
- The Board holds the lead pastor accountable to the DNA of the church but does not meddle in the mission decisions of the lead pastor. If the Board does not like the direction the church is going, the board can fire the lead pastor.
- The Board, chosen by the lead pastor and not nominated and elected, partners with the lead pastor in making policy decisions. Together, they set executive limitations, such as the lead pastor can not make unilateral mission decisions that go beyond the agreed upon financial resources of the church. Or the lead pastor can not do anything or make any decisions that violate the agreed upon DNA of the church.
- The lead pastor should delegate all clerical, maintenance, and most management issues.

Journal Time

- Are you convinced that it is God's plan for you to lead the church? If so, what do you need to change in the way you lead? If not, why?
- Make a list of the things you do well. Are these leadership related? If so, what can you do to spend most of your time on these items?
- Who do you spend most of your time with – leaders or Naysayers?
- Think about the last big mistake you made. How did you handle it? If you cannot remember one, then perhaps you don't take enough risks, because no one is perfect.
- How much time do you and your staff spend casting, managing, and embedding the vision? Do you spend more time managing and embedding as you do on anything else? If not, you should.

Double Your Vision

You get what you expect and believe will happen. Most people do not believe what we just said. So they do not try to picture or live into the future.

The Five Keys to doubling your vision

- Lead as if your church is twice its size.

You need to picture your church as if it is twice the size it is and live into that picture. Doing so will help you get a picture of how to spend your time. You will realize you cannot continue doing some of the things you are doing and personally survive. The question you need to ask is, *“What do I need to stop doing now that I’ve been doing and what do I have to begin doing that I haven’t been doing?”*

- Ask for explosive growth to happen and be prepared for it to happen.

When was the last time you challenged your people to pray for reaching your goal of doubling the number of people finding Christ and worshipping with you every Sunday?

But here’s the rub - you cannot ask your people to pray if you are not praying. So again we ask – “When was the last time you prayed for God to double the size of your church?” It is a huge deal, so make it a part of your life.

Do you want to prepare for God to double the size of your worship attendance? If you do, you must position yourself to receive from God in at least the following ways:

- Space: do you have enough seating and children’s space?
- Parking: do you have enough parking spaces, and enough time to transition cars on/off your property before the next service begins?
- Servants: do you have enough servants to keep up with the growth?
- Money: do you have the money to support the new services, extra support staff needed, etc?
- Appearance of space: when you walk into your building, does it rival the quality of a mall or other large venue such as a theatre? Does the atmosphere of your facility send the right message to visitors? Does it say “God is moving today; or does it say God moved here fifty years ago? This does not mean you have to have something new or expensive, but it does mean you need to capitalize on the facility you are using, to make sure it is visitor-friendly, clean, and has good signage.
- Preaching: if your worship services were filled with more non-Christians than Christians, would your preaching need to change? If you do not design your messages for the people who are not there, those one or two visitors who walk through the door are not coming back. Are you ready to handle the growth?
- Personal Appearance: does your appearance say nonverbally that you are current, or outdated? Do you stay current in your speech? Leader, remember you do not attract who you want, you attract who you are.
- How are you positioning your personal life, and your family, to receive from God? Have you prayed with your spouse and children about how a growing church will affect them?

- Keep in mind the importance of balancing between ministry and family, and the only way to balance is to unapologetically put family above the church.
- Bring in lots of new people from outside your church. If you invite five people, don't expect anyone to show up. But if you invite one hundred and fifty thousand people, you have a chance of filling the place up. So how do you invite that many people at once?
- Retain the lion's share of those new people.

Small groups primarily do three things: they are the training ground for the future leaders of the church; they are the incubators of faith for the new people coming into the church; and they are the catapults for sending Christians out into the world to invite their friends in to discover the Body of Christ. Our next book in this series will detail the ministry of small groups that multiply.

Call every visitor who signs in. If your church is running less than five hundred in worship and your pastor isn't personally calling every visitor, you're making a huge mistake

Add another worship service. If you are anywhere near eighty percent full in any of the prime hours, it is time to start another service. The only reason why you can't add another service is because of the limit you have placed on it.

- Equip and motivate the new people to invite their networks.

Challenge your people to bring someone that week. This is where you give them the direct mail piece or some kind of advertising you've written up, and pray over it in worship.

Develop a creative series with a high "felt need" appeal. When you put creativity and a high felt need together you get real growth.

Send out a direct mail piece on a sermon or series with a real hot topic you know people will want to hear about. Why not begin with a series on "What God has to Say about Sex?" That will get people's attention, especially if the mailing is provocative.

Journal Time

- Go off next Saturday and visualize your church twice its size. Write down what it would look like and how it would feel. Get ready to share this vision with your church next week.
- Make a list of the things that you need to quit doing if it were twice its size as well as the things that you need to start doing if your church was twice its size.
- Develop a sermon series on a hot topic and have a mailer designed to be placed in the bulletin to be prayed over and sent out to the public.
- What sections of your budget could be reallocated for advertising?
- What would keep your church from borrowing the money for the advertising blitz? What could you do to minimize those issues?
- Don't let a Sunday go by without calling the first time visitors or having someone do it if you are over five hundred in worship.

Staffing the Church for Explosive Growth

As the church grows, staffing becomes one of the most important things a pastor does. Finding the right staff who are passionate about the mission of your church and placing them in positions that match their gifts and enhance your DNA (church culture) is a gift that the lead pastor must have or must develop. A mistake here throws out of balance everything else the congregation attempts.

The four primary roles of paid servants.

- Staff's primary role is to create an environment in which leaders, at every level, are equipped and encouraged to replicate the DNA of the church through living out their spiritual gifts.

Staff should not be hired to do ministry.

A rule of thumb, most staff who work directly with people should be able to pay for themselves within one year through the additional people they attract and equip for service.

- The second role of paid staff is to model and add value to the mission statement or core purposes/values of the church.
- A third role of the paid and unpaid staff is to be an extension of the goals of the pastor and congregation. Hopefully these two goals are the same. If they aren't, the church needs to change its goals or get another pastor. Loyalty to the pastor is as important as loyalty to the congregation. Staff should all compliment the pastor's goals as well as fill in the weaknesses of the pastor.
- Finally, the role of the staff is to loyally support all members of the paid and unpaid staff.

The most important first staff person

The worship leader. Loves Jesus more than music. (We cannot emphasize this enough). Can pull the talent out of people who don't have much talent. It's not really how much talent the person has but can they pull together a team. The two of you click as friends. And the person is on the same mission as you are. This is not a choir director who gives lessons and teaches good music

General staffing rules:

- The minute you decide a staff person needs to leave, let them go. The longer you wait, the more difficult the transition
- Pastors need to be responsible for hiring and terminating paid staff rather than a committee. Often, in denominational churches, a committee hires and fires staff. Such a practice sets everyone up for something less than a staff that functions like a team. Instead, we recommend that either the lead pastor do all the hiring and firing or the process be turned over to an Executive Pastor and/or Church Administrator.
- The most important role a pastor ever does in the large church is to bring the right staff on board and grow them without interference.
- The pastor shepherds the paid staff and key lay leaders rather than the whole church.
- All staff should be equippers rather than doers of ministry. Loyalty to the pastor and to the DNA of the church is a fundamental issue.

- Staff should be hired based on their passion for the mission of the church rather than their expertise or academic background.
- The second most influential paid staff is the worship leader.
- The primary role of all of the staff is to create two cultures: a culture of transformation and a leadership culture.
- It is always more productive to hire from within than to go searching on the outside.
- As long as we continue to make ordained leaders more important than non ordained people, we will never be able to staff as effectively from within the church.

Journal Time

- Make a list of your program staff. Which ones are growing; which ones are capable of growing and what training do they need; and which ones don't have a chance of growing?
- Evaluate your worship leader or choir director. Does this person love Jesus more than music? If not, why are they on your staff?
- Take a look at the general staffing rules. Which ones of these do you need to work on the most? What kind of training do you need?

Handling Problem People

If you're not ticking off someone, your vision is either too broad, or too small, or non-existent.

Every church experiences problem people now and then. The best practice is to show them the door ASAP, because the odds are they will never change. Some church has groomed them to be this way by allowing them to get away with murder. Don't you dare make this mistake or it will come back to haunt your ministry.

Never allow problem people to cause you to take your eyes off the priorities God has given you. The greatest danger is not the problem people but how you allow them to affect your leadership.

Handle problem people quickly, directly, lovingly and firmly. Warn them once and if they don't change, ask them to leave. It's that simple. We are encouraged in Titus 3: "Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him."

Confront the bullies. Almost every dying church has one or two bullies that must be dealt with before growth can occur.

Apply Matthew 18. *"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector..."*

Never take criticism personally. You are the thermometer.

Journal Time

- The last time a problem person acted out at your church, how did you handle it? Do you feel good about it? If so, why? If not, why? What did you learn about yourself?
- If you are having trouble confronting the problem people, perhaps you need to see if your mercy gift is high. Have you spent any time learning how your personality functions? Try taking a spiritual gift inventory or one of the more reputable personality tests to see how high or low your mercy gift is.