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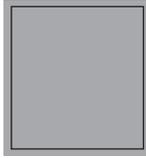
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Introduction

Eleven miles out in the middle of nowhere—miles beyond the paved roads, beyond the gravel roads, and even off the muddy, rutted logging roads—my brother and I hunted deer every fall. Our deer stands were scattered deep in the big woods of northern Minnesota, along the faint game trails in the midst of birch, pine, and maple trees carpeted with dense, bushy undergrowth. Those woods went for miles—make a wrong turn and a man could be lost for a long time.

Years ago my brother got lost in the dark cold as evening descended at the end of a day of hunting. I still regard that day as one of the most frightening times in my life. I heard Randy call to me from the increasing darkness, a note of uncertainty in his voice: “Tim?” I called back to him, urgency in mine: “Randy, I’m over here!” We called to each other for a long time as I coached him toward me until he saw my waving flashlight and we were reunited. Because he was exhausted from trying to find his way in the dark, boggy underbrush, I nearly carried him out of the woods to our hunting cabin, where our father waited anxiously. I’ll never forget my dad’s call across the dark meadow as we came toward him: “Are there one . . . or two?” Later, after Randy collapsed exhausted

into bed, my dad said to me, “I’m sure glad you went back in after him.” My response without even thinking was, “I wasn’t coming back without him.”

The words *lost* and *found* have never been the same to me since.

As I reflected on that transformational night in my life, I realized that life got very simple when I knew how clear my mission was, knowing my brother’s life was at stake.

A couple of years later, my brother and I were on a four-wheeled ATV trying to locate one of those deer stands and then find our way out of the woods. I was driving, and Randy was on the back. He’d been where we needed to go and knew we could get through the tangled forest to our goal. I could only see the obstacles that impeded our progress. “Go ahead; we can make it,” Randy said. Skillfully he helped me see the nearly nonexistent path through the trees, advising me when to give our ATV gas to get traction, letting me “see” and turn when we needed to get past what appeared to be barriers, and encouraging me. He didn’t do the driving, but his capable coaching finally got us out of the woods and back to our cabin.

Both of us are competent woodsmen and hunters, but we needed each other’s help in those two incidents. I was able to coach him back to me when he was lost. He guided me while I drove the ATV. Both times we got to our desired destination.

In both cases our quest had taken us off all paved roads, even “off the map” in a sense. In each instance we’d have been in big trouble without the other. The two of us together did much better than either of us could have done alone.

My friend and teammate Steve lives in Southern California. Four-wheeling for him is more along the lines of desert dune buggies and Jeep CJ4 mountain off-roading, yet he also testifies to the value of having someone alongside when he's trying to navigate dunes or boulder-strewn trails. Whether you're just off the road or literally off the map, the journey's better together than alone.

The journey of ministry often takes us off the road. As leaders, we may have a good idea of where we want to go, but often we find ourselves feeling uncertain, stuck, overwhelmed, excited, courageous, and hopeful at different points along the way. We are conscious of the fact that God is not only helping us perform constructive tasks; He is also purposefully transforming our character. His heart beats for both those who are in His family and those who are still separated from Him, and He wants our hearts to beat in rhythm with His as we join Him in His redemptive purposes. That amazing blend of inward, outward, upward, and alongside redemptive movement makes ministry coaching a uniquely rewarding relationship.

In this book we'll look at coaching, especially coaching in a ministry context. Each of us wants to passionately and productively follow the path the Lord of the Harvest has designed for us. Sometimes that path seems to take us beyond our comfort zone and off the map of our understanding and experience. We'll help you understand how coaching helps you get traction and make progress both in your own personal growth and in your ministry productivity. That's why we've named our book *Transformational Coaching*. Great coaches

TransforMissional Coaching

come alongside leaders so that leaders can be transformed into the image of Christ and join Him on His redemptive mission here. Entering and experiencing the Great Commandment and also expressing and engaging the Great Commission go together. You can't truly have one without the other. That's why we strongly believe both sides of that biblical coin—and why we've coined the word *transformissional*.

We'll help you develop the skills necessary to become an effective coach so that no matter where you may find yourself—from deep woods to church buildings, to coffee shops, to living rooms, or to places you've never gone before—you can come alongside to help others live out their call and make a difference in their world.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

CLARIFYING CALLING: “I’m Stuck”

Tom” sat across from me at our local coffee shop and said, “I’m stuck.”

“What do you mean you’re stuck?”

“I don’t think I can do church the way Pastor Ted wants me to. Everything’s about attracting people to church. The people I hang out with aren’t attracted by the stuff we do. I mean, why would they want to come to a Super Bowl party at church when they’ve got beer, a big screen, and a recliner at their place? And then when I get to church, I have a hard time worshipping God because we’re too busy trying to entertain people. I’m really excited that my friends are opening up to me about spiritual things, but I don’t think I’d want to invite them to my own church. I know our church is attracting a lot of people to Jesus, but it just doesn’t feel right to me.”

I let that sit for moment, letting his frustrated words soak in. Part of me wanted to reprove him, and a larger part of me agreed with him. So what should I say that could help this sharp young leader deal with a moment of truth in his ministry journey?

“So what should church look like for you and your friends?” I asked.

A look of gratitude mixed with relief crossed his face. I could tell he had not expected anyone to even ask him about his heart for what church could look like, but he had been longing for someone to hear him. Then his eyes lit up, and he leaned forward with an eagerness that told me he’d been doing a lot of thinking about that very question. “Do you think church could be more of a community and less of an event?” he asked. I could tell he already knew the answer.

“What would church as a community look like? What would it

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

sound like? What would be happening? What would make it the kind of environment your friends would like?” I asked.

He was thoughtful for a moment, then said, “I’m not completely sure . . . but I do know that I enjoy doing life with my secular friends more than doing church with my Christian friends. My secular friends are not coming here—so how can I bring Jesus to them?”

This was the beginning conversation of what turned out to be a three-year coaching relationship. It provided a safe place for a young leader to wrestle with, explore, and develop his understanding of what a church could look like if it created an environment where his friends could explore faith in a relational community instead of at a religious event. During the first year we explored and contrasted the traditional evangelical church that Tom grew up in with the modern contemporary church he was currently ministering in, and then with the missional church God was birthing in his heart. Some of our conversations focused on submission and survival in the ministry where God had placed him, while other conversations focused on cultivating the dream God had placed in his heart. As a result of this journey, Tom was able to develop a young, missional subcongregation called “The Wave” within the broader context of the contemporary church. Even as God led him to develop that ministry within an existing church, the Lord placed a vision in his heart to establish a missional, postmodern congregation among the marginalized young adults of Boston.

CHAPTER

1

TransformMission: *Ministry and Mission in a Changing World*

“*The times, they are a-changin’.*” We are living in a time of profound and rapid change. The world has changed, leaders have changed, and the church is changing as it seeks to accomplish the Great Commission in these times. The goal of this chapter is first to identify the transformation of church, leadership, and evangelism in a postmodern culture, then to suggest “transformissional coaching” as a new paradigm to empower leaders.

So what do we mean when we use the word *transformissional*? Coaching, as we see it, enables transformation, which in turn leads to missional ministry. Great coaches come alongside leaders so that leaders can be transformed into the image of Christ and join Him on His redemptive mission. Entering and experiencing the Great Commandment goes together with expressing and engaging the Great Commission. You can’t have one without the other. That’s why we’ve coined the word *transformissional*.

Changing Worldviews

The first transmissional issue we must address is the massive *cultural* shift from a modern worldview to a postmodern worldview. There's no denying that this is a big change—not just a fad, experiment, or generational adjustment. Major cultural shifts are always fueled by significant change. The modern to postmodern shift has been fueled by changes in technology, from television to computers to the Internet and beyond. These technological changes have led to even bigger changes of globalism, which has led to the pluralism of cultures and faith. Within our own culture the change has also been fueled by materialism and consumerism, leaving people stressed and unfulfilled. In addition, the breakdown of the family has left people lonely and looking for community in alternative ways. All of this change and discontent have caused people to realize that the old system is not working and is not supportable. This, in turn, has led many to deconstruct their cultural values and worldview, even while being unsure of what is next.

Transformation in the Church

The North American church is in trouble—and in great need of a transformation on some foundational levels. Eighty percent of Americans are unchurched. Of those who do attend a church, only 52 percent are committed believers. Eighty percent of churches have either plateaued or are in decline. There is no statistical difference in moral behavior between persons in churches and those outside. In the past fifty years

we have failed to win even 2 percent of the population to Christ—and that includes our own children. More than four thousand American churches close their doors every year. At any given time, 75 percent of clergy want to quit.¹

The North American church is in trouble because it has lost its purpose, its place, and its passion. Most congregations in America have lost their sense of purpose or mission. They do not strongly identify with either the Great Commission or the Great Commandment. Instead, they have become defenders of doctrine or tradition in the face of a changing culture. Those who have not taken a defensive posture are busy serving one another, attracting new believers from other congregations, or just trying to keep the lights on and a few leadership positions filled.

The North American church has lost its position in the culture. Most churches no longer hold a place of prominence or influence in their community. That is to say, they are significant only to their members. Their contribution beyond themselves is no longer seen as viable or significant by the community. Often, the pastor who was once viewed as a professional and a civic leader is barely known in the community. Sometimes the church or pastor may be better known for evil than for good. Even church facilities, which were once central to the community, are instead giving place to cultural centers, concert halls, and coffee shops. The church has been marginalized, or worse.

In the face of this loss of purpose and place, many congregations have lost their passion for ministry. Although they may still have passion for God and love for one another, their

passion for their city and for ministry beyond themselves has been replaced by survival instincts and cultural irrelevance.

The “traditional” church is not alone in this struggle. Even “contemporary” and “seeker” churches are having trouble keeping their children involved and attracting secular people. Recently, a group of young church planters was asked to clarify to whom they were referring when they referenced the traditional church. Their response: “Saddleback and Willow Creek, of course.”

The North American church must rediscover its calling and find a new place in culture. While it may never regain its place in the center of culture, it can once again exert great influence by engaging the culture from the margin, as the New Testament church did.

To accomplish this, the North American church is changing ministry paradigms. During this author’s lifetime, it has practiced three major paradigms of ministry. First was the *traditional church*, the paradigm in which I grew up. The second was the *contemporary church*, beginning with the church-growth movement and including the seeker-church movement. This is the paradigm in which I have done ministry for the past twenty-five years. The third paradigm—what I call the *transformational church*—has been on the scene since about the year 2000. This is the paradigm that is beginning to minister to a postmodern world.

In his book *The Younger Evangelicals*, Robert Webber suggests three similar paradigms expressed by the evangelical church in the past one hundred years.² The “Traditional Evangelicals” is the first paradigm, which he dates from 1900 to

1980. I suggest it still exists in many neighborhoods and rural areas today. Traditional Evangelicals are characterized as modern with a rational worldview. They are pastor- and program-centered in their ministry and traditional in their worship style. Spirituality is determined by attendance, adherence to rules, and position in the church. Their facilities are easily recognized by their architecture, including steeples and stained glass. Finally, their most visible religious figure is Billy Graham.

The second paradigm is identified as the “Pragmatic Evangelicals,” a name reflecting the high value of ministry effectiveness. This paradigm, which dates from about 1980 to 2000, includes the church-growth and seeker-church movements still prominent today. Bill Hybels and Rick Warren are the prominent leaders for this paradigm. Webber identifies this as a transitional paradigm between the modern and postmodern worldviews. Pragmatic Evangelicals are primarily boomers, and their churches make great use of media, technology, and innovation. They are market driven and success oriented. Many are megachurches, and most want to be. Their worship is contemporary and performance oriented. They tend to be ahistorical and minimize religious symbols and architecture.

The third and newest paradigm is what Webber calls the “Younger Evangelicals” because they are mostly young. (We do not agree with the “younger” designation because the postmodern worldview shaping their paradigm is not generationally bound.) Webber dates this paradigm from 2000 forward, as most of these ministry expressions have emerged in the past five years. Younger Evangelicals are prone to deconstruct and reconstruct ministry. They have an aversion to performance

and programs in the church. They prefer to emphasize the development of authentic Christian community. They love to blend the ancient with the contemporary in their worship and environments, such as presenting stained glass on video screens. They prefer an authentic spirituality in which the leader is a sojourner with them. They see themselves and their church as a small part of something larger that God is doing, not as the center of spiritual activity. Leonard Sweet and Daryl Guder are the most recognized leaders among the Younger Evangelicals.

Transformission

Each of the above paradigm changes represents a change in how the church has engaged in mission. Traditional Evangelicals engaged in mission through world evangelization, wherein a few went, a few more gave, and others prayed. Their primary missionary focus was overseas. This was partly based on a perception that America was a Christian culture and that most who wanted to be reached here had been reached. Proclamational preaching and crusades were preferred more than personal evangelism.

To Pragmatic Evangelicals, everything was about evangelism, both personally and corporately. The focus was on church growth, and the most effective means to achieve that growth was the “seeker service,” a Sunday or weekend service solely focused on the attraction and conversion of the unchurched. There were many unchurched and dechurched people available, too, as the previous paradigm had all but

ignored them. People came “back” to church by the thousands because church had been made relevant for them and for their kids.

Younger Evangelicals hold an entirely different view of evangelism. Recognizing that most people with a postmodern worldview have had no experience with church and will not be attracted to church and God through a seeker service, Younger Evangelicals seek to engage the culture by caring and relating to individuals on their own turf. Whereas the seeker church had developed a theology that said, “Come unto us, and we will give you Jesus,” Younger Evangelicals—or what I prefer to call the *transformissional church*—say, “We will show you Jesus as we share life together.” I believe this is much more consistent with the Great Commission: “As you go into the world, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to follow Me.”

Consistent with postmodern values, today’s culture wants to experience relationships and evangelism in the context of spiritual community—where people can experience Christ and Christians together in close, authentic relationships in the midst of normal, difficult lives. These communities are focused on experiencing faith—vicariously at first through believers, then gradually on their own as they experience God and come to faith. They see “coming to faith” as a process not an event. They place higher value on *experiencing* God than on *knowing about* Him. Understanding comes with experience not before. In short, a transformissional approach to evangelism encourages people to belong to a community of faith before they believe and then to come to faith as they experience God through authentic relationships in the life of that community.

Transformational Christians have a holistic worldview and a broad understanding of the kingdom of God. They do not hold to a dualistic worldview that separates Christian from non-Christian and the church from the world. Instead, they see the church not as the kingdom of God by itself but as God's agent in the world to usher in the reign of God. For this reason they do not strategize to take people from the world and put them in the church: they engage the church in the world to represent the kingdom of God and His desire to reconcile the world to Himself.

This reconciliation is more than the reconciliation of souls. It includes the reconciliation of communities and nations as well as the structures within them. It also includes the reconciliation of creation itself. For this reason the transformational Christian and the emerging church are not content only to bring people to faith; they must engage the culture and meet needs, serve and strengthen communities, strengthen schools and other community structures, as well as engage in political agendas as necessary. They are also willing to be global citizens, engaging in global causes and ecological concerns for the sake of the planet as well as the gospel. Members of the emerging transformational church will find authentic spiritual community and develop spiritual friendships with lost people while engaging the culture and serving the community rather than creating programs to serve only the converted and attract the unconverted. The mission is personal, collective, spiritual, and social. The church is only truly transformational when it is able to engage in both the social transformation of the culture and the spiritual transformation of individuals.

Transformissional Leaders

The role and requirements of leaders have shifted greatly in my lifetime. Leaders have gone from being viewed as dictators, to directors of others, to implementers of the collective will of the people, to facilitators of resources (including people).

The importance of a leader's moral character has shifted in our country. In 1992, Gary Hart was forced to give up his race for the presidency because of an adulterous affair, and George Bush was elected partly for his moral integrity. Six years later the world looked the other way while President Bill Clinton had an affair. In 2004, Clinton was making millions on a book in which people could read about his affair, while George W. Bush was being routinely criticized for his integrity and faith. Leadership has also changed in the church. We've seen many nationally known pastors experience personal and moral failure under the pressures and demands of church leadership.

Bob Fryling describes three people, each representative of a leader in a different cultural paradigm:³

1. The robed priest represents a leader in the traditional culture bound together by divine authority and beliefs.
2. The scientist clad in a white coat represents modern culture, feeling skeptical and superior to the traditional.
3. The rock musician clad in almost anything represents the postmodern culture. He or she is disappointed with and suspicious of both the priest and the scientist.

TransforMissional Coaching

Each of the three major paradigms of ministry described earlier requires a radically different kind of leader. The Traditional Evangelical paradigm requires a *pastor/priest*. He is a preacher whose job is to pump up and inspire believers. This often involves getting them excited about what they already know (“preaching to the choir”). Sometimes the traditional pastor is not a preacher but a priest who represents God to them and them to God, demonstrating a life of prayer and devotion. Most often the pastor is a chaplain who makes visits; gives occasional counsel; performs weddings, baptisms, or funerals; and serves Communion when needed. They are needed only to hatch, match, patch, and dispatch. This pastor’s value is determined by his availability.

The pastor in the Pragmatic Evangelical paradigm is expected to be the CEO, *the chief executive officer*, of the church. This position includes the functions of a visionary, recruiter, organizer, trainer, program director, decision maker, board chairman, fund-raiser, financial manager, and building contractor, while still managing to preach a good message and be a chaplain to the people. It is no surprise there is such a high rate of burnout and personal failure among leaders in this paradigm. This pastor’s value is determined by his vision and his ability to achieve that vision.

The transformissional church requires a new kind of leader, *a leader who engages the surrounding culture for the sake of the gospel*. In that sense he is a cross-cultural missionary. He is different from the traditional preacher or the CEO pastor. This new pastor leads by doing. He leads by the example of his own spiritual journey and practices. He leads by his own

authentic participation in spiritual community. He leads by taking, not just sending, his people into the culture to meet needs and make relationships. He prioritizes his time for authentic, redemptive relationships with lost people. Finally, he minimizes typical church work to make time to engage the culture and lost people. He is not a conservative but a revolutionary. This pastor's leadership is validated by the practiced values of his life, including:

- *Spiritual Formation*—the practice and priority of individual spiritual disciplines, including and beyond the basics of Bible reading and prayer.
- *Authentic Community*—living in close relationship with believers and nonbelievers to experience and demonstrate the presence of God in relationships.
- *Engaging Culture*—intentionally living incarnation-ally to transform the secular culture or community and to establish spiritual friendships with pre-Christians in the process.

In 1970, Francis Schaeffer saw the change coming: The church today should be getting ready and talking about the issues of tomorrow and not issues 20 and 30 years ago, because the church is going to be squeezed through a wringer. If we found it tough in these last few years, what are we going to do when we are faced with the real changes that are ahead?

One of the greatest injustices we do to our young people is to ask them to be conservative. Christianity is not conservative, but revolutionary. To be conservative today is to miss the whole point, for conserva-

tion means standing in the flow of the status quo, and the status quo no longer belongs to us. . . .

If we want to be fair, we must teach the young to be revolutionaries, revolutionaries against the status quo.⁴

Traditional approaches to ministry are ill equipped for ministry in a postmodern context. We must make the shift from the traditional/modern leader to the transformissional leader. The traditional leader is driven by performance, success, and growth. The transformissional leader is motivated to encourage spiritual formation, to create authentic community, and to engage culture redemptively.

Transformissional Equipping

Paul said in Ephesians 4:12 that it is the responsibility of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers to train “the saints in the work of ministry.”

Each of the three major ministry paradigms has had its own way of equipping leaders for its expression of church. The traditional church has trained leaders in Bible and theology at Bible colleges and seminaries. Training has focused on the accumulation of knowledge, with some emphasis on personal spiritual formation. The pragmatic church has trained leaders in specific strategies and models of ministry, such as the seeker church or the purpose-driven church. The favored delivery has been through short-term, focused, and practical seminars. Most “successful” megachurches have developed a seminar to teach others how to do it their way. The focus has been on

the communication of models and skills, with little emphasis on personal spiritual formation and a decreased emphasis on biblical and theological knowledge.

This readily available diversity of seminars has increased knowledge of ministry but has not necessarily increased ministry effectiveness, with the exception of a relatively few megachurches, many of which have grown primarily through transfer growth. For others this availability of seminar training has resulted in great frustration because the models and tools do not work for them. For all of us, the availability of this training has resulted in several linear feet of seminar notebooks on our library shelves. We (Steve and Tim) personally each have twenty feet of seminar notebooks in our libraries. The problem is that most of these materials are never truly implemented in ministry. We go to the seminar, get the notebook, and come home inspired, but the urgent demands of ministry cause us to set the dream and the notebook aside. Pretty soon it is back to business as usual, and the seminar notebook goes on the shelf with all the others.

Neither seminary nor seminar will prepare us to do ministry in the postmodern future. We believe that ministry equipping for transformissional church leaders will be just in time, on the job, on the Internet, in the church, and in the trenches.

Equipping will be *just in time* to keep pace with the rapid changes in culture and ministry.

Equipping will be *on the job*; skill formation and spiritual formation will take place in the midst of ministry.

Equipping in Bible and theology will take place *on the Internet*, where knowledge is easily and immediately accessible.

Transformissional Coaching

For economic and other practical reasons *the church* will regain its place as the center of ministry training rather than the seminary. Most of that training, however, will take place *in the trenches* of culture. Ministry that exists within the culture—to engage the culture on its terms and to meet needs and transform communities—cannot be learned in a seminar or classroom, or even in the church. It must be learned in the trenches. We need a new kind of equipping for new kinds of leaders in a fast and diverse postmodern world.

A whole new transformissional approach for equipping leaders will be needed. That approach will be personal ministry coaching—coaching that will pull together training and experience with context and reality.

Transformissional coaching is useful with *changing leaders* because coaching is based in the life experience of the individual leader. Coaching is relational; it values the individual needs of the leader and can address both the interior and exterior life of the leader.

Transformissional coaching is useful with leaders of *changing churches* because coaching is not model-specific; it can be useful in any context. Because coaching is “on the job,” it ensures implementation. Coaching provides guidance and accountability to help leaders successfully implement new learning into the life of the church so that real change is accomplished.

Transformissional coaching is useful in light of *changing approaches for mission and evangelism* because the coach will help the leader understand the prevailing culture and find a place of entry and contribution to that culture while seeking

to develop redemptive relationships in the culture. Often this involves helping church leaders determine what Christian-focused activities to prune from their schedule so that they can be more fruitful for the kingdom of God.

We are indeed caught in a world of changing cultures, changing churches, and changing leaders. New approaches to equipping leaders will be needed to empower a new kind of transformissional leader. We have chosen to embrace the changing worldviews and changing ministry paradigms as an opportunity to engage the future with the gospel. Specifically, We believe that authentic coaching relationships will be a primary means of releasing a new generation of Younger Evangelicals and the emerging transformissional church they represent.

We must each decide how we will respond to what we've described in this chapter. Alan Roxborough suggests a five-stage process for paradigm change.⁵

Stage 1: Stability—where life is working fine, to . . .

Stage 2: Discontinuity—when the old way is working less well, to . . .

Stage 3: Disembedding—when we feel the current system is unsupportable, to . . .

Stage 4: Transition—when we haven't yet left the old or quite entered the new, to . . .

Stage 5: Reformation—when we decide to go for it in the new world.

Where are you in the process of accepting the changes discussed in this chapter (see table 1)? What issues are the hardest for you to accept?

Church	Traditional	Contemporary	Missional
Mission	Missionary	Seeker Services	Engage Culture
Leader	Preacher/ Chaplain	CEO Visionary	Missional Leader
Equipping	Classes and Seminary	Seminars	Coaching and Mentoring
Representative	Billy Graham	Bill Hybels, Rick Warren	Leonard Sweet, Daryl Guder

Table 1. Changing Paradigms in the Church

Personal Application

Consider the following questions:

1. Do you see the changing worldviews as a threat or an opportunity for the gospel?
2. Which approach to church ministry most closely represents your church?
3. Which leadership paradigm do you currently practice?
4. How would you describe your current approach to mission?
5. What is the approach and focus of your current approach to equipping?
6. Are the leaders you want to coach more modern or postmodern in their worldview?
7. Are your current attempts at coaching more focused on expanding ministry or expanding mission?

Are you ready to discover a transformissional approach to coaching? In what ways are you willing to adjust to become a transformissional leader and coach?

CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION

CLARIFYING CALLING: “*Midlife Ministry*”

Mark” is an elder at his church. I was curious when he invited me out for breakfast. As we ate, we chatted about the weather and our families for a few minutes before he stopped with his fork in midair and said, “I hear you help guys figure out whether they’re supposed to be in ministry.”

“Well, I usually help guys already in ministry determine whether they should be church planters,” I said.

Mark is fifty and the manager of a major supermarket in our city. He looked across the table at me and said, “I had a call to ministry once.”

I looked right back at him, leaned in, and gently said, “What do you mean, you *had* a call to ministry?”

Mark said, “I was going to a Christian college and was involved with Young Life, anticipating a career in ministry. Then one of my leaders had a moral failure, and the other got divorced. I said to myself, ‘If that’s what ministry does for you, I don’t want anything to do with it.’ So I went and got a job at the supermarket. But recently, I’ve been so excited about what God’s been doing through our church, I’ve been wondering whether He is calling me to ministry.”

I said, “What do you think God is saying?”

He said, “I don’t know, but if you’re willing, I’d like to talk about this some more.”

Over the next several months, it became very obvious that Mark was indeed called to ministry. He became increasingly fulfilled and fruitful in his volunteer leadership at the church and increasingly unfulfilled and frustrated at his job. It took some time for Mark to realize that God could still be calling him at this stage of life, and once he did realize it, he could not imagine how he

CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

could complete his education or how he could possibly live on a pastor's salary. He was very uncertain of what contribution he could make as a professional in ministry. Our coaching conversations helped him clarify the biblical training he'd already gotten in college and the skills he had developed in mobilizing teams and managing people in his job. Within a year, his church had an opening for an executive pastor. His human-resource experience and business-finance training fit a great need at the church. His spiritual gifts of leadership and administration were obvious as Mark stepped into the role of executive pastor at his church. Even with all that confirmation, it was still a process for Mark to trust the Lord to meet his family's needs. We had many coaching conversations about trusting God, living by faith, and seeing the Lord provide for his family. Even after he took the position full time, he attempted to keep a second income through business consulting. It wasn't until he let that go that God made full provision for his family's needs.

Today Mark leads and coaches a team of six full-time ministry professionals. As his coach, I continue to meet with Mark, occasionally filling in his lack of experience but mostly encouraging and helping release his God-given potential. Mark is having the time of his life fulfilling his call to ministry.